

OPINION 8
QUESTIONING PULLBACK
FROM AFGHANISTAN**WORLD 11**
CHINA ASKS US TO HALT SUPPORT TO
SEPARATIST FORCES IN TIBET, HK, XINJIANG**SPORT 14**
NZ BEAT AUS
IN 1ST T20I

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2021; PAGES 14 & 3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

I LOVE
COOKING:
ANURAG BASU
13 VIVACITY

Mega budget gives thrust to 'atmanirbhar' UP

No new taxes; farmers, basic amenities, infrastructure get priority for all-round development

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government on Monday presented its biggest ever budget of ₹ 5,55,270.78 lakh crore for the fiscal 2021-22, with the target of making Uttar Pradesh 'atmanirbhar'.

No fresh taxes have been imposed in the new budget.

Uttar Pradesh's Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna, in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, presented the budget which is around Rs 37,410 crore more than the size of previous year's budget, making it the largest budget so far. This 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' budget aims to bring tap water, electricity, roads, irrigate agriculture fields and provide basic amenities to every household, as well as make every village digital. It is focused on youth, women, poor and farmers.

This was the Yogi Adityanath government's first paperless budget and the fifth budget of the present government before the next assembly polls in March 2022.

Khanna, in his budget speech, said the target was to make Uttar Pradesh 'atmanirbhar' and ensure all-round development of the state. He said the budget was designed to pull Uttar Pradesh out of the most severe global economic crisis due to COVID-19 and ensure its holistic develop-

ment.

In the budget, the government disclosed that it has realised over ₹ 23 lakh from offenders involved in riots and arsons during the anti-CAA/NRC protests in the state in January last year.

Though the government has not restored the Vidhyak Nidhi (MLA Local Area Development Fund) suspended in April last year after the COVID-19 outbreak, the government has proposed to provide ₹ 1,512 crore for development works to be done on the recommendation of the 402 MLAs of the UP Assembly during 2021-22.

The finance minister said a web-based survey and distribution module had been prepared for ascertaining the damages caused to crops by the floods. He said under this module, the compensation amount was being directly credited in the savings accounts of the farmers. He said in 2020, a sum of ₹ 113.20 crore was credited in the accounts of 3.48 lakh farmers whose crops were damaged by floods.

For the welfare of minorities, a provision of ₹ 829 crore has been proposed in the budget for providing scholarships to students of the minority communities. For the minority community-dominated population, a provision of ₹ 588 crore has been made under multi-sectoral development plan for provision of basic



Uttar Pradesh's Finance Minister Suresh Khanna seen with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath before presenting the state Budget in the Vidhan Sabha on Monday

amenities like health, education and drinking water.

On tax collection during 2021-22, the finance minister said a target of ₹ 1,04,385 crore had been set for GST; ₹ 41,500 crore from excise, ₹ 25,500 crore from stamps and registration and ₹ 9,350 crore from road tax.

The finance minister said the fiscal deficit was estimated to be ₹ 90,729 crore which was 4.17 per cent of the state gross domestic product (SGDP). He said the total indebtedness of the state was 28.1 per cent of the SGDP.

For the current fiscal 2020-21, against the target of state's

own tax revenue of ₹ 1,66 lakh crore, the collections are estimated to be short by ₹ 41,154 crore at ₹ 1.24 lakh crore. The revenue collection is under all heads, including GST, VAT, excise duty, road tax, land revenue, stamps and registration.

■ Reports related to UP Budget on Page 2

Budget all-inclusive, represents sentiments of 24 cr people: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has called the UP annual budget of 2021-22 as an all-inclusive budget representing sentiments of 24 crore people of the state.

He said the budget was a true representation of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas and would become a medium to give new hope, new energy and new possibilities of development in the state during the Covid period.

Addressing a press conference after the budget was tabled in the state assembly by Finance Minister Suresh Khanna; the chief minister said the first budget of the Bharatiya Janata Party government of 2017-18 was farmer-oriented budget,

the 2018-19 budget focused on industrial development, the 2019-20 budget focused on women welfare, the 2020-21 budget on youth welfare and entrepreneurship development and the latest 2021-22 budget was all-inclusive with focus on empowerment of the different communities and



deprived sections of society.

The chief minister congratulated the finance minister and his entire team for creating history by presenting the first-ever paperless budget.

He said the budget reaffirmed the resolve of the government to provide tap water in each household, electricity supply to every house, water to every farm and work to every hand.

"Not only this, efforts like connecting rural areas with banking facilities through village secretariat, common service centre, banking correspondent Sakhi in every village, employing women in community toilets, will give a new dimension to women empowerment and self-reliance and

Continued on Page 11

Covid upsurge after Nov hints at second wave

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the fifth consecutive day, active Covid-19 cases in the country continue to rise, crossing the 1.5 lakh mark in 17 days, which is the steepest overall increase since November-end, an indication of the second wave of infection setting in.

The increase in active cases is also double than 1.5 per cent recorded this time last week.

The total number of new cases reported per day has also increased from a low of 9,121 on February 16 to 14,199 on Monday, with the seven-day moving average increasing by 13.8 per cent. The total tally of Covid-19 cases on Monday crossed 1.10 crore and the toll reached close to 1,56,500.

The spike in national numbers comes as five States — Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh — report increased daily numbers. The Centre has warned all five States that continued "adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour" is critical to breaking the chain of transmission and contain coronavirus.

"Over 74 per cent of active cases are in Kerala and Maharashtra... there has also been a spike in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh... Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir are also witnessing a surge in daily new cases," the Health Ministry said on Sunday.

Continued on Page 11

Modi vows to resurrect Sonar Bengal

BJP will bring real 'poriborton' by ending extortion, cut-money raj, pledges PM

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ CHINSURA

Amra ashol poriborton chai (we want real change)." That is how Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday referred to the political will of the people of an election-bound Bengal.

"The people have made up their mind to bring about the real poriborton... the one that will restore Bengal to its glorious past converting it to the real Sonar Bangla (Golden Bengal)," the Prime Minister told a mammoth rally at Shahganj in Hooghly district about 50 km from Kolkata.

The Prime Minister inaugurated the extension of Metro Railway from Noapara to Dakshineswar and flagged off the first service on this 4.1 km stretch — constructed at a cost of ₹464 crore — joining the two famous Kali Temples of Dakshineswar and Kalighat.

The PM used the occasion to launch a scathing attack on the Mamata Banerjee Government for "only perpetrating appeasement politics and doing nothing for the people of the State who brought her to power with great hopes."

Slamming the alleged "cut-money culture, syndicate raj,"



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a public meeting in Hooghly district on Monday

criminalisation of politics and politicisation of administration, the Prime Minister said, "Bengal will continue to lag behind till syndicate raj and cut money culture continues in the State," reminding how in the past people from other States came to Kolkata for earning their bread "but today the local people have to move out to other States for employment."

"This situation will not improve till there is a real poriborton," the Prime Minister said

and referred to "little" progress made in the implementation of the Central schemes like "Jal Jeevan Mission" aimed at reaching drinking water lines to every household.

"At a time when other States are implementing the scheme quickly so that their women do not have to go miles away to fetch drinking water and so that all the citizens can get clean potable water free from disease, the Government here is sitting over the scheme," Modi said.

The PM added that the Centre had sanctioned ₹1,700 crore for the project targeting 1.75 crore families... but the State has managed to cover only 9 lakh families spending ₹609 crore. "It has siphoned off the remaining funds," he said.

Attacking the Trinamool Congress Government for promoting Tolabaji (extortion), syndicate, and cut-money, instead of nationalism, the PM alleged the farmers of Bengal who produce paddy, jute, etc, were being looted. "There will be no relief for them till we do not set up modern industries like food processing industries," he said, adding there was an urgent need to modernise infrastructure in the State.

"When I meet Bengali people abroad they say that they want to come and invest here but cannot do so because of cut money culture... even if you go to hire a house you need to pay up cut money here so how can the State develop... for this you need real change," he said.

"When our party would come to power, we will convert Bengal known for its Tolabaji into Sonar Bangla. We will take quick decisions to ensure steady development," he said.

CBI quizzes Abhishek kin, wife may be grilled today

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The CBI on Monday questioned Maneka Gambhir, the sister-in-law of Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee for more than three hours in a coal smuggling case. Abhishek is the nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Rujira Banerjee, the wife of Abhishek Banerjee, is likely to be quizzed on Tuesday. The CBI had on Sunday sent a notice to her for questioning. According to sources, Rujira has agreed to meet the CBI officials on Tuesday.

Two women officers of the agency questioned Gambhir at her residence in Patrasayar area on Monday and reportedly asked questions regarding some "significant" transfers of funds from Kolkata to her two accounts in Bangkok. She was

also asked to share details about a third account in London.

The CBI had registered an FIR in November last year against Anup Majhi, alias Lala, the alleged kingpin of the coal scam, Eastern Coalfield Ltd General Managers Amit Kumar Dhar and Jayesh Chandra Rai apart from ECL Chief of Security Tanmay Das, Area Security Inspector, Kunustoria Dhananjay Rai and SSI and security in-charge Kajor area Debashish Mukherjee.

In a related development, the Enforcement Directorate sent a notice to Priyadarshini the daughter of Bengal Minister Firhad Hakim asking her to appear before it in relation to alleged irregularities in the transactions of her bank accounts, sources said.

Continued on Page 11

Puducherry Govt falls as CM resigns ahead of trust vote

PNS ■ NEWDELHI/ PUDUCHERRY

The Congress Government in Puducherry fell on Monday after Chief Minister V Narayanasamy resigned ahead of the confidence vote in the Assembly after his coalition Ministry was reduced to a minority due to a spate of resignations of party MLAs and a DMK legislator recently.

Narayanasamy met Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and submitted the resignation of his four-member Cabinet, ahead of the Assembly elections due in April-May.

With the exit of the Congress Government in Puducherry days after the visit of former party president

Rahul Gandhi to the Union Territory, now Punjab, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh are the only three States in the country ruled by the grand old party.

Holding that Speaker VP Sivakolundhu did not put to vote the motion moved by him for a confidence vote, the Congress veteran said the former's ruling that it stood defeated was "incorrect and invalid." He said the party will see legal help surrounding the issue of voting rights of nominated members.

DMK chief MK Stalin, whose party is an ally of the Congress here, also slammed the Opposition for the fall of the Government and hailed Narayanasamy for "upholding democracy."

Continued on Page 11

Introducing

Your key to a bright future

GUARANTEED

LIC's BIMA JYOTI

Plan No.:860 UIN: 512N339V01
(A Non-Linked, Non-Participating, Individual, Savings Plan)

Also Available Online

Get **Guaranteed Additions*** every year

- ✓ Age Eligibility: 90 days - 60 years
- ✓ Basic Sum Assured: ₹1 Lakh - No Limit
- ✓ Policy Term: 15 to 20 years
- ✓ Premium Paying Term: Policy Term minus 5 years
- ✓ Loan Available

Call Centre Services (022) 6827 6827

*Guaranteed additions @ ₹ 50/- per thousand Basic Sum Assured will be added at the end of each policy year till maturity/death in case of inforce policies.

For details, contact your Agent/Nearest LIC Branch/visit www.licindia.in or SMS YOUR CITY NAME to 56767474

Follow us: [f](#) [You Tube](#) [t](#) [i](#) LIC India Forever | IRDAI Regn No.: 512

BEWARE OF SPURIOUS PHONE CALLS AND FICTITIOUS / FRAUDULENT OFFERS. IRDAI is not involved in activities like selling insurance policies, announcing bonus or investment of premiums. Public receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint. For more details on risk factors, terms and conditions, please read sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale.

LIC
भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम
LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

Har Pal Aapke Saath

LIC/PRA/20-21/25/Eng



NOTICE

I have change my name Asikun Nisa to Safeekun Nisha W/o Isahak Ahmad for future purpose. 17-Anjana Kabir Alampur Geriya Fatehpur.

NOTICE

I have change my name Shilendra Nath Mishra to Shailendra Nath Mishra S/o Dhani Ram Mishra for Future purpose. 7/210-H Swaroop Nagar Kanpur Nagar.

सूचना

मेरे प्लॉट नं- बी-59 MIG ग्राम कपली शताब्दी नगर, फेस-3, गंगागंज, कानपुर नगर का मूल आवंटन पत्र कहीं खो गया है, मनोज कुमार पाण्डेय एउ श्री राधा चरण पाण्डेय, 139, EWS-2, पनकी गंगागंज, कानपुर।

NOTICE

I Rajkumari Spouse of EXJWO604423R Rajendra Tewari presently residing at 7/290 Vikas Nagar, Lucknow-226022 have changed my name from Rajkumari to Rajkumari Tiwari as per Affidavit

NOTICE

Jamaniya Shashikant Ti. Patkar: No. 14628696A Rank Hav, Surender singh , S/o Sudma Singh Village. Darauli , zamaania , ghazipur (u.p) pin-code 232329, that my son's name Prince is given in my service record but correct name is Prince Singh Yadav.

NOTICE

I, Omkar Singh Yadav, R/o Type II/158, Akanksha Colony, Sector-F, Jankipuram, Lucknow-226021, hereby inform that I am changing the name of my daughter Saloni to Saloni Singh. She will be known by this name Saloni Singh for all purposes in future.

NOTICE

Jamaniya Shashikant Ti. Patkar: No. 14628696A Rank Hav, Surender singh , S/o Sudma Singh Village. Darauli , zamaania , ghazipur (u.p) pin-code 232329, that my daughter's name chandni is given in my service record but correct name is chadni yadav.

NOTICE

Jamaniya Shashikant Ti. Patkar: No. 14628696A Rank Hav, Surender singh , S/o Sudma Singh Village. Darauli , zamaania , ghazipur (u.p) pin-code 232329, that my wife's name Indu and Dob. 01-03-1973 is given in my service record but correct name is Indu devi and Dob. 01-01-1977

NOTICE

Be it known to all that my Original Marksheet and pass certificate of ICSE (10th) and ISC (12th), bearing ICSE Index No-T/1914/112 year 2011 and bearing ISC (12th) Index No-B/9722/094 year 2013 issued from Bishop Johnson School and College, have actually been lost. Faraz Ahmad S/o Hamidullah Khan, R/o-3A/4D, 19 Tashkand Marg Civil Lines, Prayagraj.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice

I Indu wife of Rajesh R/o H.No. 14 Lane No. -9 Chhoti Bharwara Kaushalpur Colony Gomti Nagar Lucknow, informing that I have lost receipt of my plot no. 46 and 47 i.e SC1- 047 Receipt N. GDN/CRB/00043/0216. Receipt N. GDN/CRB/00104/1116 SC1- 046 Receipt N. GDN/CRB/00045/0914 Receipt N. GDN/CRB/00012/1014 Receipt N. GDN/CRB/00042/0216 Receipt N. GDN/CRB/00105/1116 near my house in between 15/01/2021 to 18/01/2021.

UP BUDGET

Emphasis on improving health infrastructure

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, the Yogi Adityanath government has given emphasis on improving the health infrastructure in the state. In this endeavour of 'Health for All', the government has made several budgetary provisions which will not only strengthen the health infrastructure but also provide the latest technology for treatment.

The vaccination drive is already underway in UP and the state is about to enter its third phase. The government, in its budget, has made a budgetary provision of Rs 50 crore for the vaccination scheme for prevention of COVID-19.

Reckoning the National Rural Health Mission budget as an important tool to spread health facilities in rural areas of the state, a provision of Rs 5,395 crore has been made in the budget for it. Among other budgetary provisions, Rs 1,300 crore is proposed for Ayushman Bharat Scheme, Rs 142 crore for Ayushman Bharat - Chief Minister Jan Arogya Yojana, Rs 320 crore for Pradhan Mantri Matruva Vandana Yojana while a provision of Rs 1,073 crore has been made to create diagnostic infrastructure at primary health care facilities.

In addition to this, a budgetary provision of Rs 425 is proposed for urban health and Arogya centres and Rs 54 crore for strengthening the state drug control system. Besides, a budget of Rs 50 crore has been earmarked for the construction of food and drug laboratories' divisional offices in 12 divisions of the state. A budgetary provision of Rs 77 crore is proposed for establishment public health units at the block level.

A provision of Rs 1,950 crore has been made for establishing medical colleges in 13 districts.

Since the last budget of the Uttar Pradesh government, a special thrust has been given on establishing medical colleges and universities apart from creating better health infrastructure and facilities in the state.

In line with the Yogi government's commitment for having a medical college in each district of the state, Rs 1,950 crore has been proposed for completing under-construction medical colleges in 13 districts including Bijnor, Kushinagar, Sultanpur, Gonda, Lakhimpur Kheri, Lalitpur, Chandauli,

Bulandshahr, Sonbhadra, Pilibhit, Auraiya, Kanpur Dehat and Kaushambi.

The MBBS courses in these medical colleges are expected to commence in the academic year 2021-22 itself.

Besides, Rs 48 crore has been allocated for the operation of medical colleges in the public-private partnership (PPP) mode in 16 districts of the state. A sum of Rs 23 crore has been earmarked for National Health Digital Mission as well as Rs 960 crore for under-construction medical colleges at Etah, Hardoi, Pratapgarh, Fatehpur, Siddharthnagar, Deoria, Ghazipur and Mirzapur.

The budget has also provided Rs 175 crore for establishing new medical colleges at Amethi and Balrampur and Rs 100 crore for Atal Behari Vajpayee Medical University in Lucknow.

A Biosafety Level-4 Lab under the Institute of Virology and Infectious Diseases in Lucknow will also be set up.

The budget has also been proposed for setting up diabetic retinopathy treatment centre in King George's Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow as well as at government medical colleges in Prayagraj and Meerut.

The government has also decided to establish an advanced diabetes centre at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI), Lucknow. Besides, there is a proposal to strengthen two government medicine manufacturing units at Lucknow and Pilibhit to supply quality medicines to Ayurvedic and Unani hospitals in the state.

THRUST ON WOMEN'S WELFARE, EMPOWERMENT

Continuing its thrust on pro-women, pro-rural and pro-poor initiatives, the Uttar Pradesh budget 2021-22 has laid special emphasis on the welfare of women and empowerment of the daughters in the state.

The budget reflects the vision of the Yogi Adityanath-led UP government to empower women at the grassroots levels in the state. The government has reiterated its resolve towards women safety, dignity and empowerment.

For improved implementation of Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana which revolves around the uplift of the daughters of the deprived sections of society, Rs 1,200 crore has been earmarked. Under this scheme, tablets will be distributed to equip the

talented daughters with advanced technology. The budget also proposes a provision of Rs 100 crore to resolve the problem of malnutrition among women and children under the Mukhyamantri Saksham Suposhan Yojana.

Along with this, provisions of Rs. 4,094 crore and Rs 415 crore have been made for the Nutritional Programme and National Nutrition Campaign, respectively. The government's new scheme Mahila Samarthyta Yojana too gets a boost for women's welfare.

The government has also proposed Rs 200 crore for its new initiative Mahila Samarthyta Yojana to push women and daughters on the path of development. With this, a provision of Rs 32 crore has also been proposed for a special drive to strengthen women by establishing Mahila Shakti Kendras in the state.

RS 250 CR PROVISION FOR ODOP SCHEME

For promoting entrepreneurship spirit in youth and with its focus on all-round development of the state, the Yogi Adityanath government has made a provision of Rs 250 crore for the ODOP (One District One Product) scheme. This is one of the flagship schemes of the Yogi government.

To provide skill development and impart training to the traditional artisans of urban and rural areas and to keep them updated with the latest technology, the government had earlier launched the Vishwakarma Shram Samman Yojana. In this regard, a budgetary provision of Rs 30 crore has been proposed by the government.

Similarly, to promote the art of clay artisans of the state, a budget of Rs 10 crore has been proposed for the Mati Kala Board. Also, a budgetary provision of Rs 100 crore has been made for the Chief Minister Youth Self-Employment Scheme.

Under the Chief Minister Gramodyog Rojgar Yojana, interest-free loans up to Rs 10 lakh for general women and reserved category beneficiaries and on 4 per cent annual interest for male beneficiaries of general category, are targeted to be made available through banks.

The government has also taken the decision to revive the closed spinning mills of UP State Spinning Company and set up industrial parks/locations/clusters under the PPP model. For this, a provision of Rs 100

crore has been proposed in Uttar Pradesh's budget for 2021-22 fiscal.

EMPHASIS ON CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity and development complement is crucial for a land locked state like Uttar Pradesh. The UP budget 2021-22 has given ample emphasis on it with a provision of Rs 7,200 crore for acquisition of land for the country's longest Ganga Expressway. Another Rs 489 crore has been allocated for its construction work.

This expressway will connect Meerut with Prayagraj. Apart from this, it will also connect Hapur, Bulandshahr, Amroha, Sambhal, Budaun, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Unnao, Rae Bareilly, and Pratapgarh. In future, this six-lane expressway will be extended to eight lanes. The budget also has made a provision of Rs 1,107 crore for Purvanchal Expressway, Rs 860 crore for Gorakhpur Link Expressway and Rs 1,492 crore for Bundelkhand Expressway.

An allocation of Rs 2,000 crore has been made for increasing the runways of Asia's largest Noida International Greenfield Airport from two to six. A provision of Rs 101 crore has also been made for the under-construction Maryada Purushottam Sri Ram Airport in Ayodhya. The number of active airports in UP have increased from four to seven under the Yogi Adityanath government.

Besides, provisions of Rs 597 crore and Rs 478 crore have been made for Kanpur and Agra metros, respectively.

A provision of Rs 100 crore has been made for Metro projects of Varanasi, Gorakhpur and other districts. In addition, a provision of Rs 1,326 crore has been made for the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Rapid Road Transport System.

PUSH TO STRENGTHEN ROAD NETWORK

The Uttar Pradesh budget aims to strengthen the road network in the state. There is an allocation Rs 12,441 crore for the construction of new roads and bridges. The government has made provisions in the budget of the Public Work Department (PWD) keeping in mind the connectivity of villages with roads and connectivity in rural areas. In its fifth budget, the government has made an allocation of Rs 4,135 crore for the maintenance of roads and bridges.

Govt to give tablets to Abhyudaya students

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's government will provide tablets to the students registered with its ambitious Abhyudaya scheme which provides a preparation platform for students preparing for competitive exams.

A provision of Rs 20 crore has been made in this regard in the budget presented on Monday.

Presenting the budget, Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna said that there was immense enthusiasm among the youth of the state for the free 'Mukhyamantri Abhyudaya Yojana' coaching scheme launched to make the youth of the state successful in various competitive examinations.

Under the scheme, the state government will provide tablets to the students on the basis of eligibility, so that they may prepare for competitive examinations through digital learning. Appropriate funds will be arranged in this regard.

The Yogi government's fifth budget has a special focus on youth.

According to the finance minister, the youth power and energy are strong carriers of development of society. "We have given special attention to the all-round development of the youth section of society. Our priority is to enhance the skills of the youth of the state so that they may make full use of employment opportunities," the finance minister said.

While referring to the concept of 'Digital Village', the finance minister said that the development of digital villages would provide better connectivity to the

youth of rural areas so that they were familiar with the global scenario of education and employment.

Not only this, it has been decided to develop and strengthen the infrastructure facility in aided non-government secondary schools and government Sanskrit schools. Poor students studying in Sanskrit schools will be provided free hostel and food facilities as per Gurukul system.

The minister said that by organising career counseling programmes in the state, unemployed youth were provided information about available employment opportunities and employment training, etc., so that they could get employment according to their skills and abilities.

In the current financial year up to October 2020, as many as 943 such programmes were organised, in which more than 52,000 youth participated.

Model Career Centres have been set up at various places in the state under the National Career Service Project. Now there are also plans to set up model career centres in 12 other districts of the state.

Khanna informed that in the last four years more than seven lakh youth have been trained by Uttar Pradesh Skill Development Mission and more than three lakh youth have been linked with employment.

A provision of Rs 8.55 crore is proposed for the Youth Sports Development and Promotion Scheme in the budget. To provide better sports opportunities to the youth in rural areas, a provision of Rs 25 crore is proposed for the construction of rural stadium and open gym.

BUDGET AFFIRMS GOVT COMMITMENT FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

Affirming its commitment for quality education, the Uttar Pradesh budget for the next fiscal 2021-22 has allocated Rs 18,172 crore for the Basic Education Department.

The budgetary grants for the education also include integrated education campaign, Rs 110 crore and Rs 40 crore respectively for providing free school bags and uniforms to all students of classes 1 to 8 every year. In addition to this, Rs 3,406 crore has been earmarked for the mid-day meal programme and Rs 300 crore for providing shoe-stocking and sweaters to all children.

For the secondary education, Rs 200 crore has been allocated for development of infrastructure facilities in aided private secondary schools, Rs 100 crore for completing the remaining works of the government inter colleges under construction.

Rs 90 crore has been earmarked for the construction of a new Sainik School in Gorakhpur and completion of the remaining works at the Sainik Schools in Mainpuri, Jhansi and Amethi.

A provision of Rs 15 crore has been made for construction of a girls' hostel and an auditorium in the Captain Manoj Kumar Pandey Sainik School in Sarojini Nagar, Lucknow. In addition to this, Rs 5 crore has been proposed for the formation of Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Education Directorate and an office of Uttar Pradesh Secondary Sanskrit Education Council and construction of aided non-government secondary schools.



High Commissioner of Trinidad & Tobago Rojer Gopal pays a visit to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow on Monday

Funds for all-round development of Ayodhya, tourism

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Ayodhya is fast emerging as one of the most preferred tourist places for national as well as international tourists and devotees. In the UP budget for 2021-22, a provision of Rs 300 crore has been made for the construction of approach road to Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya Dham.

A provision of Rs 140 crore has also been proposed for the all-round development of the city of Ayodhya, including the development of Suryakund in the temple city. A provision of Rs 100 crore has been made for the development and beautification of tourism facilities in Ayodhya. Also, a budgetary provision of Rs 200 crore has been proposed for the Ayodhya airport which is named Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram Airport.

The Uttar Pradesh government has decided to confer Uttar Pradesh Gaurav Samman to eminent writers and artists who have not been honoured with any other award in the

state. Under this scheme, a maximum of five people will be honoured every year with a sum of Rs 11 lakh.

Earlier, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had stated that Uttar Pradesh connects its borders with seven states and one country which made it a cultural centre of the entire country. For this, the Yogi government has earmarked a budget of Rs 8 crore for the construction of the Uttar Pradesh Tribal Museum in Lucknow and Rs 4 crore for building the freedom fighters museum in Shahjahanpur.

To boost tourism in the state, provisions of Rs 100 crore and Rs 200 crore have been given for the development and beautification of tourism facilities in Varanasi and for various schemes of tourism development in Chitrakoot, respectively.

Also, a provision of Rs 200 crore has been proposed for the Chief Minister Tourism Development Scheme. Apart from this, Rs 30 crore has been proposed for site development in Vindhyachal and Naimisharanya.

THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL (9/2-A, Panna Lal Road, Allahabad-211002, U.P.) (Area of Jurisdiction, Part of Uttar Pradesh) Summons for filing Reply & Appearance by Publication		Form No.5
Date: 18.02.2021		
(Summons to defendant under section 19(3), of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Acts, 1993 read with Rules 12 & 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules, 1993).		
HDFC BANK LTD. Applicant Bank	Versus	M/s Saturn Organics Pvt. Ltd. & Others Defendants
1. M/s Saturn Organics Private Limited through its Directors having Registered Office at 54/5, Babupurwa, Kanpur U.P. - 208011 (PAN No. AANC9770M) 2. Smt. Risha Gupta W/o Sri Rajesh Gupta (Director) Office 54/5, New Babu Purwa Colony, Kanpur U.P. - 208011 (PAN No. AMMEG3520H) 3. Sri Rajesh Gupta S/o Bal Mukund Gupta (Director) Office 54/5, New Babu Purwa Colony, Kanpur U.P. - 208011 (PAN No. AIAPG9023H) 4. Sri Shashank Dixit S/o Late Shyam Bihari Dixit (Director) R/o 62/153, Harvansh Mahaul, Kanpur Office 54/5, Babupurwa, Kanpur U.P. - 208001 (PAN No. AMBPD3010G) 5. Sri Anil Kumar Bajpai S/o Sankata Prasad Bajpai R/o 67/18 Daulatganj, Kanpur-208011 (PAN No. AIYPB7440D)		
In the above noted application, you required to filed reply in Paper Book from in four sets alongwith documents and affidavits (if any), Personally or through your duly Authorised Agent or legal practitioner in the Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel / duly authorised agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on 15.04.2021 at 10.30 AM failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.		
		Registrar, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Allahabad

NOTICE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST	
No. RMSA/School Safety/1212/2019/4551	Date: 22/02/2021
This is an invitation to submit an Expression of interest from party(s) for implementation of Centrally Sponsored Scheme for providing Orientation Programme for Teachers on School Safety & Security" of secondary schools across Assam through e-procurement system of Govt. of Assam i.e. https://assamtenders.gov.in	
Detailed Eol document may be seen at https://assamtenders.gov.in for eligibility conditions, technical evaluation criteria, scope of work, Eol terms and conditions etc. The Eol document can be purchased by registering at https://assamtenders.gov.in from 23/02/2021 to 04/03/2021, 14:00 hours and making payment of non-refundable Eol processing fee of Rs.5,000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of DD/Banker cheque in favour of Mission Director, RMSA, Assam payable at Guwahati.	
The Eol is to be submitted online through e-procurement portal of Govt. of Assam i.e. https://assamtenders.gov.in only on or before 04/03/2021, 14:00 hours.	
Details of Eol: 1.Rs.12,04,860/- (Twelve Lakhs Four Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty Only) as Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) have to submit in favour of Mission Director, RMSA, Assam payable at Guwahati. 2.The Eol can be downloaded from the website https://assamtenders.gov.in . 3.The proposal has to be submitted as described in the Eol. 4.Submission start date : 24/02/2021 at 12.00 Noon. 5.Last date/time for submission : 04/03/2021 at 2.00 P.M. 6.Date of opening of Eol : 04/03/2021 at 3.00 P.M. RMSA, Assam reserves the right to amend or cancel the Eol without assigning any notice or reason thereof. Moreover, in case of non-availability of sufficient bidder (or less than three bidders), authority has the right to take decision without prior notice.	
Sd/-Executive Director, RMSA, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19	
Janasanyog/CF/5229/20	

100% turnout for Covid vaccination

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

For the first time since the launch of Covid vaccination, it was for the first time that 100 per cent target was achieved with 5,942 frontline workers getting the vaccine jab on Monday. District immunisation officer MK Singh the sessions went off smoothly at all the booths and no problems cropped up anywhere.

A total of 1,042 frontline workers were vaccinated in rural areas and 4,900 in urban areas. Covishield vaccine was administered at all the hospitals. The vaccination drive was carried out at 21 major hospitals. The drive was also held at 'Dial 112' and Signature Building.

At RMLIMS, the pace of the vaccination was good and there were a number of police personnel who got the vaccine jabs. Senior resident Dr Anjuman, who got vaccinated at RMLIMS on Monday, said he was vaccinated for the first time and he faced no problems. "I was not vaccinated earlier because the message which I received got accidentally deleted," he said.

Radha Raman Singh from the IG Police office said he turned up at the mop-up



round because he had not received any message from the CoWin portal earlier.

Kaushal Prasad, a policeman posted in Nagram, said he received a message according to which he had already been vaccinated at KGMU on February 12. "I immediately visited the Nagram CHC where I had a talk with the doctors. I contacted the district immunisation officer who he told me to meet him on Tuesday to sort out the problem," he said.

Head constable Arvind Singh from Jankipuram police

station said he went to the Gudamba CHC to get himself vaccinated and was told that he had already been vaccinated. "I was told that though my name was on the list, I had already been vaccinated," he added. The district immunisation officer said he would look into the matter.

Dr Nishant Verma from KGMU said over 500 frontline workers were vaccinated by 2 pm. Speaking about the anomalies, he said: "When the vaccination for the frontline workers started at KGMU on February 12, we found multi-



ple entries on the same number and if any one of them gets vaccinated, all the others will receive the message of having been vaccinated."

Meanwhile, president of People's Health Organisation Dr Ishwar Gilada said the current escalation of Covid cases in some states is a cause of concern. "However, it can still not be said whether or not it is the second wave. The rise in Covid cases is only in two states — Maharashtra and Kerala. We need to wait and watch if this affects other parts of the country," he said.



On Monday, 21 people tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow on Monday while 16 patients recovered. There are 396 active cases in the district.

In the state, 85 people tested Covid positive, including four each in Kanpur & Meerut and two each in Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddh Nagar, pushing the UP case tally to 6,02,869. There was one death in the state and it was in Pilibhit, taking the UP toll to 8,716. Besides, 87 patients recovered, taking the recovery figures to 5,91,787. There are 2,366 active cases in the state.

3 dead in separate road mishaps

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three people were killed in separate road mishaps in different parts of the state capital on Sunday evening.

In the first incident, a youth was fatally knocked down by a loader in Banthra. The victim, identified as Nitesh Singh of Harauni, was going to purchase medicines for his mother and was on a bike. When he reached near a hotel in the area on his bike, he got stuck in a traffic jam. Around 7:30 pm, a speeding loader hit his bike from behind and he suffered grievous injuries. He was rushed to a private hospital where he died during treatment.

Elsewhere in Kakori, an ambulance collided with a motorcycle, leaving the rider injured. He was rushed to a hospital where he died during treatment. He was identified as Santosh Kumar of Harauni in Banthra. Reports said Santosh was going to a place near the police station on a bike when

the tragedy struck. Police registered a case in this connection launched efforts to identify the errant ambulance driver.

In another incident, a washerman was killed after being hit by a car from behind, in PGI police station area. The deceased was identified as Guru Prasad Kanaujia of Mohanlalganj. His son Surendra said Guru Prasad had gone to deliver clothes to the house of an advocate and was returning home when the mishap occurred. He died on the spot.

Meanwhile, a 55-year-old man, identified as Mukesh Jaiswal of Kalyanpuri Nagariya in Thakurganj, was found hanging at his house on Monday. Police said he committed suicide. As per reports, Mukesh Jaiswal was found hanging by his wife Kiran. The police said they did not recover any suicide note from the scene. "We suspect Mukesh ended his life over family discord," the police said.



69,000 candidates staging dharna at the Directorate of Basic Education in Nishatganj demanding that the vacant posts be filled

CB-CID registers case against former SHO

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The CB-CID registered a case against former Para SHO Ranjeet Singh Bhadauriya for disobeying law while conducting a probe into the mysterious death of a man, Shyam Rawat of Para, and tampering with the evidence. Shyam Rawat of Bhatpattam in Para police station area had suffered injuries when he was allegedly climbing the roof of a house in the area and fell off in the process. He had later died at a private hospital.

The family of the deceased had alleged that Bhadauriya detained three accused — Vinit, Rahul and Parmeshwar (all of Para) — who were the associates of the deceased, but

later let them off. The family had alleged that the trio lured Shyam into going with them and later killed him on the night of April 30, 2019.

Shyam was climbing the roof of Parmeshwar's house and fell down, the police had claimed. Later, Rahul had informed the family of the deceased and also rushed Shyam to a hospital where he died. The family had petitioned the case to the CB-CID after the police let off the suspects. The CB-CID found the allegations levelled by the family as genuine. They also found the inspector of guilty of disobeying law while being a public servant and destroying & not collecting evidence from the crime scene.

Robber lands in police net

PNS ■ LUCKNOW



A joint team of crime branch and Madaon police nabbed a robber, who, along with his gang members, had targeted several people in the past. The accused was identified as Romi aka Ramshanker of Barabanki. The police recovered Rs 4.5 lakh in cash from his possession. He got his share of cash following an incident in which Harivashn Awasthi of Madaon was robbed on January 30. He identified his aides as brother duo Dharmu & Kannu and Manish of Bihar.

On the day of the incident, the gang was lurking around the house of Awasthi and struck him when he reached there. Two of them snatched his bag and fled the scene.

Romi owned up his crime and disclosed that his gang

looted Rs 1 lakh from a man in Saadatganj on January 13, Rs 4 lakh from a man in Gosainganj on January 19 and looted cash from a man in Talkatora on January 28. The police said Romi used to visit banks to keep eye on customers while his aides would wait for him outside and the trio would later strike their targets on deserted road stretches.

In another incident, a revenue inspector of Mohanlalganj teshil was caught accepting a bribe of Rs 15,000 from a resident for measurement of his

land. He was arrested by a trap team of Vigilance department, Lucknow sector. The police said that the Vigilance department was probing into a complaint given by a resident against the revenue inspector.

THEFT

Thieves made off with Rs 1 lakh in cash and ornaments from the house of an Education department employee in Thakurganj. At the time of theft, Waqar Fatima of Mishri Ki Bagia, along with her family, had gone to her native home in Ayodhya. The house owner said she left the house for Ayodhya on February 19 and returned on Monday. "We returned home around 10 pm and found the door lock broken. When we entered the house, we found cash and ornaments missing," she told police.

Stress on self-reliance in budget encouraging: CII UP chairman

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

It is encouraging to see that emphasis has been laid on making Uttar Pradesh self-reliant and most of the sectors have been covered, the CII UP chairman said regarding the state budget which was presented on Monday.

"The budget outlay of Rs 5,50,270 crore is encouraging considering that it is an increase over last year's despite the pandemic," he pointed out.

Chairman of CII Uttar Pradesh State Council Ankit Gupta said: "It is encouraging to see that emphasis has been laid on making the state 'atmanirbhar' and most of the sectors have been covered. I am glad to note that the budget has taken cognisance of many of our recommendations. Housing, rural and urban development along with road development have been allocated a major chunk. Development of various expressways and airports is a part of the budget and will help to improve intra-state connectivity," he said.

He further pointed out that the introduction of the farmers' pension is praiseworthy. Also, monthly assistance for financially stressed folk artists will go a long way in sustaining livelihoods during the challenging situation caused owing to the pandemic, he noted. "The state budget has

also recognised that education would be a major pillar in industrialisation of the state and the announcement of universities in each division will open up a number of opportunities for youths of the state. Development of Ayodhya, Chitrakoot and Varanasi will give a boost to tourism in the state as well," he added.

Meanwhile, head of Lucknow University's Economics department MK Agarwal said the highlight of the budget is the focus on capital expenditure.

Pointing out that it has not deviated from the previous budgets even though it is the last budget of this government, he said, "This budget is in continuity with the earlier budgets presented by the government. It cannot be termed an election budget, which may be the perception of people, simply because all the basic needs such as electricity connections, water, housing and Ujjawala schemes have saturated or are in the process of getting saturated by 2022. Besides, this budget is growth and development-oriented and infrastructure has been the basic hallmark of all the budgets presented by this government and the same goes for this one too, with stress on the civil aviation policy and creation of a tourism hub in the state among other things."

He said the state government is focusing on employment though it is not given in the budget and one has to read between the lines.

"This is through filling the vacant posts in education and police services. However, one thing which requires special attention is the investors summit that could not be properly translated into action because of the corona pandemic. It requires a further push," he added.

Talking about the focus on capital expenditure, he said it forms 30 per cent of the expenditure and would be good for the state in the long run. "It has been done because the state government wants to expedite the process of development and they have to spend for this in the beginning itself," he said.

President of Adarsh Vyapar Mandal Sanjay Gupta said the budget is disappointing. "The traders have been facing a lot of competition from e-commerce companies and we were hoping for some policy in this regard. We were also hopeful that there would be a decrease in the commercial house tax. There were hopes pegged on health insurance too but there was nothing in the budget," he said.

However, he added that the emphasis on metro rail projects in many districts, Rs 250 crore for ODOP, health sector and education was satisfactory.

Ayodhya airport to be named after Lord Ram

Lucknow: The under construction airport in Ayodhya will be named Maryada Purushottam Sriram Airport, Ayodhya after Lord Ram and a provision of Rs 101 crore has been made for it in the budget presented in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Monday.

Besides the provision for the Ayodhya airport which will subsequently be made an international airport, the budget also provides for Rs 2,000 crore for increasing the number of airstrips at Jewar Airport from 2 to 6. Cities like Aligarh, Moradabad, Meerut will also be linked through air service soon. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath told reporters after the presentation of the budget by Finance Minister Suresh Khanna.

Under the Special Area Programme, a budget of Rs 300 crore is proposed for special schemes of Purvanchal and a budget of Rs 210 crore has been proposed for special schemes of Bundelkhand region.

Stressing on industrial and infrastructure development, a budgetary provision of Rs 1,107 crore has been made for the Purvanchal Expressway Project, Rs 1,492 crore for Bundelkhand Expressway Project and Rs 860 crore for Gorakhpur Link Expressway Project. For the Ganga Expressway Project, which links Meerut to Allahabad, a provision of Rs 7,200 crore has been made for land acquisition and Rs 489 crore for construction work. A provision of Rs 12,441 crore has been made for the construction of roads and bridges under the Public Works Department and a budget of Rs 4,135 crore proposed for the maintenance of roads and bridges. A budget of Rs 695 crore has been proposed for connecting villages and habitations with pucca link roads.

It also provides for a budget of Rs 440 crore for construction of roads under World Bank Aided Uttar Pradesh Core Road Network Project and Rs 208 crore for construction of roads under the Asian Development Bank assisted UP Mukhya Zila Vikas Pariyojna. **PTI**

‘Nothing special for uplift of MSMEs’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Provisions have been made satisfactorily for agriculture, women, labourers and infrastructure facilities such as roads, airports, medical, city development, education and social activities, but not so much for MSMEs in the state budget, members of India Industries Association (IIA) said on Monday.

The decision to revive the assets of closed spinning mills and to set up industrial parks, locations, clusters in PPP mode is a provision of relief for MSMEs by allocating Rs 100 crore. Besides, Rs 250 crore for the ODOP scheme is also a commendable step, they said. IIA president Pankaj Kumar said that MSMEs have made the largest contribution to Uttar Pradesh's economy and employment generation after agriculture. "Emphasis was laid on encouraging MSMEs but in view of the Covid pandemic, the expectations were higher. Looking at the geographical area of UP, the facilities are not sufficient," he said. He added that there is a lack of infrastructure facilities in almost all industrial estates in UP.

"IIA was expecting that a budget provision would be made to improve these infrastructure facilities in industrial areas. Now, the condition is that entrepreneurs have to face many complexities to get map passed online. It is very important to establish the mechanism at the official level, otherwise the intention of ease of doing business will prove to be the opposite. It is also necessary to provide technical upgradation, quality, productivity and testing facilities to make MSMEs globally competitive and we also expected that some provisions would be made in the budget, but it did not happen," he said.

Gupta further pointed out that the goals of solar energy were mentioned in the budget, but in addition to domestic use, incentive money is needed for other consumers to set up rooftop solar power plants, which should have been provided to farmers. A provision of Rs 400 crore has been made to provide crop loan to farmers at concessional rates. A target of setting up 15 thousand solar pumps in the financial year 2021-22 has been fixed. As far as agriculture is concerned, a target has been fixed for food grain production of 644 lakh MT and oil seeds production of 13 lakh MT in the financial year 2021-2022. For the year 2020-2021, Kharif production target of 223 lakh MT, Rabi target of 417 lakh MT and oilseed target of 12 lakh MT is set.

The target of distribution of 62 lakh 50 thousand quintal seeds is proposed in 2021-2022. In the sector of cane development and sugar industry, distillation of 120 kilolitres per day capacity will be established in Pipraich sugar mill which will start in December 2021. There will be a facility to manufacture ethanol.

sioned in the budget.

"UP is an export hub in itself, but no provision has been included to promote export. At the same time, UP is a symbol of development of the defence corridor, but it was also not mentioned in the budget. There is immense potential for UP to move ahead in defence production and the government also needs to pay attention to this," he said.

National senior vice-president of IIA Manmohan Agrawal said there is no special provision for MSMEs. "There is no need to take NOC till 1,000 days prior for new units and this is a good step. But this provision should also be for existing units. There is nothing in this budget for developing new industrial areas and development of existing industrial areas. There was a need for budget provision for exports, which was not there. The emphasis on infrastructure on the lines of the Government of India is welcome, but the lack of provisions for the basic requirements of MSMEs is disappointing," he added.

IIA general secretary Ashwani Khandelwal said overall the budget is good. "It is also true that there is no special provision for MSME, but the government is constantly making efforts on the schemes for the development of MSMEs" he added.

Meanwhile, chairman of FICCI UP State Council Sharad Jaipuria said: "Education sector had been strengthened by providing tablets, hence assuring education during pandemic times. This budget has taken us closer towards achieving the one-trillion-dollar-economy goal. The budget has touched the main points of almost all the classes; the focus on skill development and employment generation along with infrastructure development will take UP to the next level. Medical and health during this pandemic times has also got a bigger pie. All these efforts are commendable. The focus on ODOP and exports promotion will be the key takeaways in employment generation."

UP budget gives boost to agri sector

Lucknow: With a target of making Uttar Pradesh 'atmanirbhar', the Yogi Adityanath government on Monday presented a Rs 5,50,270.78 crore budget for 2021-22 in the state Assembly with a focus on the agriculture sector. In view of doubling farmers' income by 2022, an outlay of Rs 100 crore has been proposed for Atma Nirbhar Krishak Samanvit Vikas Yojana in the year 2021-22. Outlay of Rs 600 crore has been proposed for the Mukhyamantri Krishak Durgatna Kalyan Yojana. A provision of Rs 700 crore has been made for free water

facility to farmers. A provision of Rs 400 crore has been made to provide crop loan to farmers at concessional rates.

A target of setting up 15 thousand solar pumps in the financial year 2021-22 has been fixed. As far as agriculture is concerned, a target has been fixed for food grain production of 644 lakh MT and oil seeds production of 13 lakh MT in the financial year 2021-2022.

For the year 2020-2021, Kharif production target of 223 lakh MT, Rabi target of 417 lakh MT and oilseed target of 12 lakh MT is set.

The target of distribution of

62 lakh 50 thousand quintal seeds is proposed in 2021-2022. In the sector of cane development and sugar industry, distillation of 120 kilolitres per day capacity will be established in Pipraich sugar mill which will start in December 2021. There will be a facility to manufacture ethanol. Pipraich sugar mill will be the first sugar mill in North India to manufacture ethanol directly from sugarcane juice.

The crushing capacity of Mohiuddinpur-Meerut sugar mill of the corporation area was increased to 3,500 TCD from 2,500 TCD. **PTI**

2 minors offered ‘ladoo’ laced with poison

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After Unnao, now two minor girl students were given 'ladoo' laced with poison in Sultanpur and are now battling for their lives in the KGMU Trauma Centre.

Reports said one Iqbal lives in Gosainkapurwa hamlet of Naugawaraitasi in Sultanpur. His 13-year-old daughter, Shabana Banu, and niece, Asifa Banu, of same age are students of class 8 in Ikra Kulsum Memorial High School in Naugawaraitasi. On Monday morning, both left to attend the college at 9am on a bicycle.

On the way, they were intercepted by some unknown persons who offered them 'ladoo'. They ate the 'ladoo' and somehow reached school where both fainted. The school administration rushed them

to the district hospital from where the doctors referred both to the KGMU Trauma Centre in Lucknow after finding their condition to be critical. The doctors suspect that the 'laddos' might be laced with poison. Principal of the college, Sabil Ahmed, informed the family about the incident after which a report was lodged. Station House Officer Shastraajeet claimed that he was probing the matter from all angles, including the disputes of the family members. The cops were waiting for the victims to regain their consciousness.

Meanwhile, in two more attacks, a 5-year-old girl was raped in Bareilly while another girl was critically injured after acid was thrown at her in Hapur. According to reports from a Hapur, a girl was

They were rushed to to the district hospital from where the doctors referred both to KGMU Trauma Centre in Lucknow

allegedly attacked with a chemical suspected to be acid on Sunday evening. Hours after the incident, the police nabbed the accused and registered a case of acid attack against him. The girl was immediately taken to a local hospital for treatment. She was later transferred to another hospital in Meerut.

"The incident took place at around 7:30 pm. A chemical,

suspected to be acid, was thrown at a girl. She was hospitalised immediately. Later she was referred to Meerut. She is out of danger now," Superintendent of Police Neeraj Jadaun told media persons.

The accused was identified as Rahil or Rohil Khan.

The police shared a video clip of the accused being taken into custody. During initial questioning, it was revealed that the accused attacked the girl after she stopped talking to him after an initial friendship.

In Bareilly, a 26-year-old man allegedly raped a 5-year-old girl. The minor later came home with blood stains on her clothes. The police arrested the accused, identified as Nazim. He runs a small shop near the victim's house. The girl regularly went to the shop to buy chocolates and other stuff. One

day when she had gone to buy chocolates, the owner told her he would give her candies and took her into a room where he raped her. It was reported that the family was confused when the girl returned home with blood stains on her clothes.

Later, they got to know that the girl was raped by the shop owner near their house. The family, without wasting any time, went to the police station and filed a complaint and a case was registered. The accused Nazim tried to flee but his attempt was foiled as the police soon caught him. A case was registered against Nazim name under Section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The girl was taken to the hospital for treatment and her condition was now better.

Modi: India on its way to export weapons to world

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stressing the need for self-reliance in defence manufacturing, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said here India is developing its capabilities to produce low cost and high quality weapon systems to emerge as one of the biggest exporters.

Making these remarks in a webinar organised by the defence ministry, he also invited the private sector to play a major role in defence production. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the ministry has kept aside nearly ₹70,000 crore of the total capital outlay this fiscal to procure weapon systems manufactured in India.

He also said the Government will soon issue a second negative list of items which can only be procured locally by the Services. Last year, for the first time, the Government introduced a separate allocation for domestic procurement within the defence budget and had reserved ₹52,000 crore for

2020-21.

“My Ministry has planned to invest, about 63% of the outlay for 2021-22 on domestic procurement, i.e. about ₹70,221 crore for domestic defence procurement during for 2021-22,” Rajnath said at a webinar organised by Depart of Defence Production and Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers. The total capital outlay is ₹1.35 lakh crores.

The total budget for the coming fiscal is ₹4.78 lakh crore.

Addressing the webinar on the effective implementation of the Union Budget's provisions in the defence sector, Modi listed a series of measures taken by his Government to boost self-reliance in the defence sector and rued the fact that the country is amongst the biggest defence importers in the world.

But now, the country is working hard to change the situation and also to enhance its capacities and capabilities at a fast pace, the prime minister asserted.

He said it is not that the people of India do not have the talent or capability and pointed out that the country did not make ventilators before the coronavirus pandemic, but now manufactures thousands of those.

Modi also cited the example of the indigenously-developed Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), Tejas. He said his government has relied on the capabilities of the country's engineers and scientists on developing Tejas and today, it is flying gracefully in the skies. A few weeks ago, an order worth ₹48,000 crore was placed for Tejas, he noted.

Both Modi and Rajnath stressed on simultaneously boosting defence exports while reducing imports. The defence minister said the initiatives resulted in 700% growth in defence exports in the last six years.

He also said India entered in the list of top 25 Exporters in the world as per data published by Swedish think tank SIPRI in 2020.

Mystery shrouds death of police constable

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Mystery shrouds the death of a police constable whose body was found lying in a pool of blood in Ghazipur district. The cops suspect that it could be a case of suicide but the family members of the deceased alleged it to be a cold blooded murder and demanded a high level probe.

The victim was the only son between five siblings and had come on 15 days' leave to attend the ring ceremony (engagement) of his sister. A case was registered and the body was sent for post-mortem. Senior police officers who visited the spot summoned a team of forensic experts to work out the “mystery”. Reports said that Ajay Yadav, a resident of Bhabnauli

hamlet of Ghazipur, was recruited as constable in 2018 and was presently posted as Gauriganj police station of Amethi. He had come to his native village to attend the ring ceremony of his sister and was present in it on Sunday night. On Monday morning, he left the house for some work and after some time he was found lying in a pool of blood. A country-made revolver and a licensed pistol were also found lying near the body.

The constable had no known dispute with anyone nor had he any reason to end his life. Circle Officer of Saidpur, Rajeev Dwivedi, said that they had sent the weapons for forensic examination. Ajay's father Rampratap Yadav, retired from Central Reserve Police Office (CRPF).

‘Kisan, vigyan can change direction of agriculture’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Kisan and vigyan together can change the state and direction of agriculture in India, BBAU Vice-Chancellor Sanjay Singh said while addressing farmers at the inaugural of a training programme for skill development of farmers on Monday.

He said BBAU will also conduct half-an-hour yoga classes in the morning for the participating farmers during the workshop. Efforts will be made to teach them yoga activities which they can also do during their agricultural work, he said.

“Through discussion on some topics, awareness will be spread on the side effects of chemical fertilisers, lack of soil fertility, new irrigation techniques that can lead to better cultivation in less water, soil testing for good production, storage of agricultural production and encouraging animal husbandry,” he added.

Prof Yash Pal Singh, who was a special guest, said that training is constantly needed in every field because there is a need of upgradation in every field. “Constant new innovations are being done. Training programmes are organised on how these inventions should be taken to the common man. New innovations are also happening in the field of agriculture, but our farmers are deprived of them. At the same time, there are many countries where farmers are getting better economic benefits by farming through new techniques. The agricultural science centres and other institutions of our country are making immense efforts, the results of which are now visible, such as the recent Strawberry Festival in Bundelkhand. We are all familiar with the agricultural problems of Bundelkhand, but the farmers and scientific techniques together have faced the challenges there. The results are in front of you all,” he added.

Addressing the farmers, Prof RP Singh said: “Our aim is to take research work to farmers. Prof Naveen Kumar Arora has made a great effort by bringing all the institutions related to agricultural research work on one platform. This will benefit the participating farmers from the expertise of all institutions.”

SCHOOLSCAN

ABACUS COMPETITION

Ashmit Anand, a class III student of City Montessori School, Rajajipuram Campus I, brought laurels to the institution by emerging the champion in an online international abacus competition. The competition was held under Brainbrain Fest-2021, organised by educational institute Brainbrain. Students from



abacus tricks to solve mathematical problems and was declared the champion.

various countries participated in this competition to showcase their analytical skills but Ashmit opted for various

Sending Central forces to poll-bound States a normal affair, explains EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Monday said that Central police forces are being sent to all poll-bound States and not specifically to West Bengal, stressing that it is a routine practice for several decades. In a statement, the poll panel said the CAPFs are routinely sent to all the States and UTs where Lok Sabha or Assembly elections are to take place, for advance area domination, especially in the critical and vulnerable sectors.

It said these sectors are identified by meticulous advance reviews and concrete feedback from various sources, including political parties and entities. This practice is going on since the late 1980s, it observed. “In the instant case also, the CPFs have been sent to all the four States namely Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and the UT of Puducherry where assembly elections are to take place,” the statement said.



It also said that the orders for CPF deployment were issued to the chief secretaries, the DGPs and the chief electoral officers of the four states and one UT on the same day — February 16.

At least 25,000 Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel have been earmarked to be deployed for the forthcoming

Assembly polls in four States and the Union Territory of Puducherry. The terms of their legislative assemblies are ending on separate dates in May and June and elections are likely to be held in April. The Commission was responding to certain reports claiming that central forces were being specifically sent to West Bengal.

Deputy EC to visit Bengal

New Delhi: Deputy Election Commissioner Sudip Jain, who is in-charge of West Bengal, will be visiting the State on Friday to oversee the preparedness for the upcoming Assembly elections. According to the Election Commission (EC), Jain will hold a meeting with divisional commissioners, zonal IGs, DGs, and SPs in Kolkata on February 25 to review preparedness ahead of the Assembly elections. During his visit, Jain is scheduled to hold meetings with district magistrates, and other senior officials of the State, they said. EC officials said that Jain may also meet officers transferred to the different departments, mainly in the administration and the police, during his visit to West Bengal.

U.P. POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED E-TENDER INVITING

NOTICE Tender is invited in two parts for the following work from experienced working organizations/firms which are registered with GST and possess Income Tax-payable certificate. Detailed information of tender is available on the website www.etenderup.nic.in and for any other amendment / extension of the tender, Please login www.etenderup.nic.in upto date of opening of tender. The authority to reject the tender without assigning any reason will be reserved with the Executive Engineer, Ecty, 400KV Sub-Station Division, Sultanpur. E-tender No. 11UESDS/2020-21 to be opened on dt. 23.03.2021. Tender cost Rs. 236.00. Earnest Money Rs. 2000.00 1. Work for routine electrical maintenance of L.T. lines, servicing main L.T. switchgear and drinking water tubewell of 400KV S/S Division colony under Ecty, 400KV Substation Division, Sultanpur. Executive Engineer Ecty, 400KV Substation Division Sultanpur No. 131 Date 22.02.2021 "Save Energy in National Interest."

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत

जानपद पारिषद मण्डल, कक्षा सं. 223 से 228, प्रथम तल, पारिषद भवन, यू.पी.एस.एल.डी.सी. परिसर, विभूति खण्ड, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ। अत्यकालीन निविदा सूचना संख्या 104/ECTC/2020-21

आह्वानाहकारका द्वारा निम्नालिखित कार्य हेतु पृथक-पृथक मुहरबंद निविदा दो भागों में, प्रथम भाग में घरोहर एवं अहंताये तथा द्वितीय भाग में संश्लिष्टि केन्दरो/ट्रेयल एजेंसी से कार्यालय में उपलब्ध निविदा पेटिका अथवा स्पेड-पोस्ट के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाती है, जिनकी बिकी तथा प्राप्ति दिनांक 10.03.2021 तक व सार्वजनिक रूप से खोले जाये की तिथि दिनांक 12.03.2021 को क्रमशः 1500 बजे 1530 बजे होगी। 1. उद्योगपार्श्वकालिओ के विभिन्न कार्यालयों में कार्यरत उच्च अधिकारियों के विभागों प्रयोगार्थ 05 अदद डीजल चलिह इनोवा क्रिस्टा अथवा समकक्ष टैक्सी वाहन, मय ड्राइवर किराये पर लिये जाने का कार्य। 2. उद्योगपार्श्वकालिओ के विभिन्न कार्यालयों में कार्यरत उच्च अधिकारियों के विभागों प्रयोगार्थ 13 अदद डीजल चलिह स्विफ्ट डिजायर अथवा समकक्ष टैक्सी वाहन, मय ड्राइवर किराये पर लिये जाने का कार्य। 3. प्रत्यक्ष निदेशक, उद्योगपार्श्वकालिओ के विभागों प्रयोगार्थ एक अदद डीजल चलिह होन्डा सिटी अथवा समकक्ष टैक्सी वाहन, मय ड्राइवर किराये पर लिये जाने का कार्य। 4. मुख्या अभियन्ता (जानपद) पारिषद-हृदिय, उद्योगपार्श्वकालिओ के विभागों प्रयोगार्थ एक अदद डीजल चलिह अटिंगा अथवा समकक्ष टैक्सी वाहन, मय ड्राइवर किराये पर लिये जाने का कार्य। उक्त निविदा की शर्तें, मात्रा बीजक एवं परिशिष्ट/शुद्धिकरण, निरस्तीकरण की सूचना मात्र निगम की वेबसाइट www.upptcl.org पर अपलोड की जायेगी, जिसका समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशन नहीं किया जायेगा **अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत जानपद पारिषद मण्डल, उद्योग पारिषद/डीसीसी परिसर, विभूति खण्ड गोमती नगर, लखनऊ** पत्रांक- 503 दिनांक - 22.02.2021 "राष्ट्रहित में बिजली बचाये"

Amid Covid odds, the milk of human kindness

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

When the entire nation went into the Covid-induced lockdown since March 2020 adversely impacting the economy, Telangana-based Mulukanoor Women's Cooperative Dairy (MWCD) walked an extra mile: it continued procuring milk from its not-so privileged women members in rural belt to ensure that they do not feel the pinch of the pandemic.

It was not an easy task, though. Not only the family members of the over 24,000 women members of MWCD were to be convinced to continue supplying milk to the cooperative at their collection centres, but also the reluctant transporters who refused to carry milk from procurement points to the processing plant, citing safety issues.

“We conducted an awareness programme along with doctors to convince the family members about Coronavirus and safety measures,” said MWCD president, Vijaya Gurralla (50). She added, “After discussion, we decided to sanitise all the vehicles bringing milk to the processing plant; and we organised awareness programmes amongst staff as well as members for ensuring smooth procurement and distribution of milk products.”

The efforts paid off. The MWCD, which has 182 women dairy cooperatives and boasts a band of 23,000 women milk producers, reported sound financial performance during FY 2019-20 with a turnover of Rs 115 crore.

“This year we will reach Rs 130-crore mark,” chipped in Bhaskar Reddy, General Manager of the Cooperative. He knows better. The milk and various dairy products (marketed under the brand name Swakrushi) are now well in demand. MWCD which was incept-



Mulukanoor Women Cooperative Dairy president Vijaya Gurralla and general manager Bhaskar Reddy being awarded by NDDB for their contribution in the dairy sector in 2014

ed in 2002 is currently procuring around 70,000 litres of milk per day (yearly average of 54,000 litres) from its members in the 30 km radius of its headquarters at Warangal urban district and has been registering a steady growth, transforming the life of the poor women of the region, pulling them out of poverty. Today, it processes 1 lakh litres of milk every day.

Presently, it caters to customers from Karimnagar, Warangal, Adilabad, Medak, Hyderabad, Jangaon and Siddipet, mostly from North Telangana region. Most of the members of MWCD are predominantly small holder dairy producers, from BPL category.

Over the years, the average income of the members with 2 milch animals has risen up to Rs. 6,000-10,000 per month, while those having around 20 cattle are taking home on an average around Rs 50,000 monthly. Money is transferred directly to their respective bank accounts, shared Reddy who is associated with MWCD since its inception.

The day-to-day affairs of the MWCD is run by its president (this role is same as a CEO in a company) and a 12-member Board

of Directors (BoD), who are elected by the members to represent them. This cooperative allows women dairy farmers to run everything themselves — from collecting and processing milk to marketing it and other dairy products.

Sundeeep Kumar Nayak, Managing Director of the National Cooperative Development Cooperation (NCDC), which provided financial support to the dairy in 2010, said, “The MWCD is a successful model of an all-women dairy cooperative, and actually meeting the objective of empowering women and providing them financial security, which in general is the ultimate vision of the NCDC.

“This also helps them improving household nutrition, investment in other activities like children's education,” he further said.

There's no stopping for the MWCD from planning big. It has imported blast chillers, incubators and chillers from Germany in 2018 and is planning to expand the capacity to one lakh litre milk plant besides producing value-added products such as flavoured milk, Mysorepak and some other by-products which has huge demand in the region.

Jeweller's son kills mother, robs ornaments worth ₹1 cr

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bizarre incident, the 24-year-old son of a jeweller allegedly murdered his mother and looted valuables worth over Rs 1 crore from her house in Saroj Nagar Colony of Aligarh. The accused, Yogesh, and his three associates, including two women, were arrested on Sunday and the stolen gold, diamond and silver jewellery were recovered from them.

According to the police, jeweller Kuldeep Verma's son Yogesh, a commerce graduate, was living separately in a rented accommodation for the past six months after he tied the knot with a married woman, Sonam, against his parents' wishes. He was also jobless. He had asked his mother, Kanchan, for money on several occasions but she had refused. Facing financial issues,

Yogesh chalked out a plan to loot his own house. His wife, Sonam, friend, Tanuj Chaudhary and Tanuj's girlfriend, Shehjal Chauhan, were part of the plot.

On Friday, Yogesh first dropped his pregnant wife at a doctor's clinic for a check-up and then went to his parents' house with Tanuj and Shehjal. While they dropped Shehjal a few metres away from the house to keep an eye outside, Yogesh and Tanuj went inside after Kanchan opened the door for her son.

During interrogation, Yogesh confessed that he told his mother that he had come to pick his clothes and then strangled her with her saree. They later dragged her body to the bathroom and cut a geyser pipe to make it look like an accident.

An unconscious Kanchan was found in the bathroom by

a neighbour, who called on her and found the main door open. She immediately informed the police who took her to hospital, where she was pronounced dead. Kanchan's husband, Kuldeep Verma, was in his shop at the time of the incident.

Circle officer Anil Samaniya told reporters that Yogesh had confessed to his crime and the looted jewellery worth Rs 1 crore along with Rs 1 lakh cash had been recovered from them. The CO said that the cutter used to cut a locker had also been recovered.

He added that they all were booked under Indian Penal Code sections 302 (murder), 394 (voluntarily causing hurt in committing robbery), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence), 411 (dishonestly receiving stolen property) and 120B (criminal conspiracy).

NHRC supports UP govt's action taken in scribe's killing in Unnao

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Monday accepted the action taken by the Uttar Pradesh government in response to its suo motu notice, that 16 accused were arrested for their involvement in the killing of a journalist, Shubham Tripathy, in Unnao district on June 19, 2020. The deceased was a correspondent with a Hindi daily and was reporting about the illegal sand mining in the district. He had apprehended threat to his life from the sand mafia.

The state government informed the NHRC that an FIR No.188/2020, dated: 19-06-2020, was registered under sections 147/148/149/302/34 of Indian Penal Code at Gangaghat police station of Unnao district and subsequent-

THE DECEASED WAS A CORRESPONDENT WITH A HINDI DAILY AND WAS REPORTING ABOUT THE ILLEGAL SAND MINING IN THE DISTRICT. HE HAD APPREHENDED THREAT TO HIS LIFE FROM THE SAND MAFIA

ly, the accused were arrested on different dates and sent to Jail.

The government also said that the CB-CID, during investigation, had collected the call detail records and forensic evidence and now the case was under trial in a court.

The NHRC had taken suo motu cognisance of the matter on the basis of a media report that a journalist was allegedly killed by a sand mafia in the Unnao district on June 19, 2020. Reportedly, his opponents had also lodged a complaint against him with the district magistrate.

The NHRC had issued a notice to the UP government through the state chief secretary and the DDP, and sought a detailed report on the matter.

The state government had also been directed to get an impartial inquiry done into the matter by an independent agency, preferably the state CB CID, and to ensure safety of the family of the victim and the witnesses. The call detail records and other forensic evidence gathered during the inquiry will be preserved as the NHRC might call them during consideration of the case.

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION

Department of Health & Family Welfare

Government of Madhya Pradesh

CORRIGENDUM

SN/NHM/HWC/MP/2020-21/3251 Bhopal Date-18/02/2021

The National Health Mission (NHM), Madhya Pradesh invited online applications for the 1680 vacant seats of 6 months Certificate in Community Health and 1890 post of Community Health Officers (CHOs) by Direct recruitment entrance examination vide its circular no. SN/NHM/HWC/MP/2020-21/1509 Bhopal, Date-29/01/2020.

The advertisement shall have following corrections,

- Advertisement issued for 1890 posts of CHO Direct Recruitment Entrance Examination is hereby cancelled with immediate effect.
- For the entrance examination for the certificate course in community health, the amended available seats as per the session and reservation roster are as follows. (Centre wise seats availability is displayed in SAMS website)

CCCH Batch	Total Seats	UR -27%	UR-EWS - 10%	ST - 20%	SC - 16%	OBC - 14%	PH - 6%								
		Open	Female	Open	Female	Open	Female	Open	Female	VH	HH	OH	MD		
Apr-21	585	105	53	39	19	78	39	63	31	55	27	0	0	35	0
Jul-21	1680	303	151	112	56	224	112	179	90	157	78	0	0	87	0
Oct-21	585	105	53	39	19	78	39	63	31	55	27	0	0	35	0
Total	2850	513	257	190	94	380	190	305	152	267	132	0	0	157	0

Note*: (1) The remaining 13% seats/posts shall be allotted after the decision of Hon. High Court. (2) 33% seats/posts shall be reserved for female candidates.

- Essential Eligibility Criteria: Successfully passed B.Sc. (Nursing) / Post Basic B.Sc. (Nursing) / GNM / BAMS degree candidates, as on 19th February 2021.
- Eligible candidates shall be mandatorily required to upload valid registration certificate or application (Nursing Registration Council/Ayurveda, Unani Medical System and Naturopathy Medical Board)
- Candidates pursuing Final Year's of B.Sc. (Nursing)/ Post Basic BSc (Nursing)/GNM and BAMS candidates whose internship is not completed as on 19th February 2021, shall not be eligible.
- Receipt of Online Applications has been extended till 11:59 pm on February 28, 2021.
- All the rules mentioned in the rule book related to CHO Direct Recruitment are hereby cancelled.
- Other conditions and rules will remain the same.

Mission Director, NHM, Madhya Pradesh

National Health Mission, Madhya Pradesh

Link Road No-03, In front of Patrakar Colony, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh 462016

Website: www.nhmmp.gov.in and www.sams.co.in

Helpline No.011 4081 9900; Email: mpcho@sams.co.in

G-19661/20

DM, SSP get vaccine doses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) and some other senior officers received COVID-19 vaccine doses at Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital here on Monday. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh and other senior Health department officers were also present on the occasion. Overall, thousands of frontline workers were vaccinated in 64 sessions at 25 centres of the district during the day. However, the expected enthusiasm has yet not been seen despite a reported spike in the number of COVID-19 cases in some parts of the country. Though the senior officers are themselves coming forward to get the vaccine shots in view to bring confidence among the health and frontline workers, the 100 per



DM KR Sharma receiving COVID-19 vaccine dose in Varanasi on Monday

cent vaccination turn-out of beneficiaries is still a far cry.

It was the 11th day of vaccination since it was started in the district on January 16 and when last time, it was held a few days ago, top divisional/zonal administrative and police officers came forward to get themselves vaccinated

but despite that the percentage of vaccination on that day was just around 57 per cent. The same trend was not only seen among the frontline workers but also in health workers as till date, even the vaccination percentage could not cross 70 per cent mark yet in any of the days, though almost all the top

Health department officers including IMS BHU director, principal of Government Ayurvedic College, CMO and other officers had already received their first doses.

TWO TEST POSITIVE: Two persons have tested positive for coronavirus infection in the district, taking the tally of confirmed cases to 21,984 on Monday evening. With no COVID-19 death being reported in the last 24 hours, the death toll remains at 377. One more COVID-19 patient has been cured in home isolation.

So far, 21,570 COVID-19 patients have recovered in the district—18,595 in home isolation and 2,975 in Covid hospitals.

As present 37 active cases are under treatment in the district. The recovery rate in the district is 98.11 per cent and the mortality rate 1.71 per cent.

BJP has always worked to spread hatred in country: Akhilesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Samajwadi Party national Spresident and former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav said that people belonging to all sections of society are troubled in the BJP government. BJP has always worked to spread hatred in the country.

The former Chief Minister reached the residence of former MP Salim Sherwani on Sarojini Naidu Marg on Monday and met many people here including former MP.

He further said that it is being lied to by the BJP government. The NDA government did nothing for farmers and youths. This government is working only for industrialists and capitalists. Today, the people of the state are remembering the SP's government and in the coming 2022 elections, the SP will emerge as the winner. The national president said that the final budget of the state government has been completed today. This was the fifth budget. Now they have nothing to do. However, ever since the BJP government was formed, nothing new has happened. Only the foundation stone of the work done in the SP government has been done.

Referring to the increased prices of diesel and petrol, he said that the Central government can reduce it, but it is



brushing its pan by saying that of the private company.

At the same time, by making three laws related to agriculture, it is preparing to hand it over to private hands. In such a case, the farmer will come on the road. Every person will have to buy wheat, rice at an expensive price. Talking about cleaning the Ganga, he said that

Ganga has not been cleaned, but the budget for this must have been cleared. He clearly said that after the formation of the SP government, welfare schemes will be started for every section. The schemes launched by the SP government, which were stopped by the BJP government, will be revived.

After this, he reached the residence of the former Union Minister, Late Rampujan in Teliarganj and paid tribute to him. He met his relatives and consoled them and said that the irreparable loss which occurred due to the sad demise of Rampujan Patel cannot be described by words, he lamented.

DM takes action against JE, contractor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Taking a strict action, District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma has instructed the executive officer (EO) of Ramnagar Nagar Palika Parishad to uproot the newly-laid sewer lines and restore the streets within three days as they were before the work. The work should be done by the concerned contractor at his own cost. 'If the work is not done by him, then the municipality should do the same at its own cost and recover the amount from the contractor,' he ordered.

After receiving the complaint of laying the sewer line above the surface of the roads, the DM had asked the ACM-V to look into the matter. In his report, the ACM-V suggested

investigating the same with the technical team. Then a technical team comprising AEs of PWD and Ganga Pollution Control Unit of Jal Nigam after making a probe into the site work had submitted its report and on the basis of the same, the DM has taken the action.

The DM further ordered that as the work showed a serious technical negligence, no payment should be given to the concerned contractor. Besides, he has also ordered the concerned department to issue a chargesheet to the concerned junior engineer (JE) who made the estimate and whatever payment has been made, 50 per cent of it should be recovered from the contractor and rest of the same from the JE within a week. Sharma also ordered that the contractor should be

black-listed for five years for doing any work in any municipal or local bodies in the district and DUDA apart from withholding all the payment of said contractor of any other work done in Ramnagar Nagar Palika Parishad. 'If the contractor and JE fail to follow the order then FIRs should be lodged against them under criminal charges within a week,' the DM ordered, adding that action should also be taken against all other contractors who failed to follow the technical guidelines in the construction works.

Earlier, the DM held a meeting for the rejuvenation of all primary schools, panchayat buildings, anganwadi centres, ANM centres and high schools /inter colleges in the district. He said that the funds

will be spent from the state finances for the repair work of all the government buildings of the gram panchayats. He directed the Chief Development Officer (CDO) to prepare the details from all the BDOs about those buildings of their respective areas to be repaired and sought the report within two days about such buildings after marking them in the list, along with details of the amount required to be spent there. The BDOs and village secretaries were also instructed to prepare a list of damaged culverts in all rural areas so that they can be repaired immediately. Sharma also instructed the officers to identify locations of water-logging and prepare proposals so that such drainage problems can also be resolved.

MDP in digital marketing inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A week-long Management Development Programme (MDP) in Information Technology, Digital Marketing and Office Management was inaugurated under the auspices of Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Varanasi Branch, in association with Atal Incubation Centre, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Monday. Dr Nandini Tandon, Co-founder, Tenacity Global Group Inc and Priya Tandon, Founder and Chair, INDUS Setu Global foundation were the guests. Assistant directors of local unit of MSME Om Prakash Patel and Virendra Rana were also present and explained about the programme and its importance in today's times. They also talked about various schemes and efforts being done by MSME to promote entrepre-

neurship and skill development in youth.

CEO of Atal Incubation Centre Paritosh Tripathi welcomed the guests and highlighted the theme while Prof-in-charge of the centre PV Rajeev informed about the details of sessions emphasising on the need of skilled executives in the current market. Executive Karan Pal Chauhan introduced the guests and manager Prashant Ranjan delivered a vote of thanks. Executives Menka Tiwari and Divya Dixit guided through the programme, which is focused towards the youth and other people interested to set up their own industrial/business/self-employment venture with more than 50% targeted beneficiaries being women and SC/ST/PH students and entrepreneurs.

CONFERENCE HELD: One-day IVth National

Hematology Conference was held by Department of Pathology, Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Sunday under the aegis of Varanasi hematology group and Indian College of Hematology (academic wing of ISHBT) in the digital conference hall of New Lecture Theatre Complex, IMS-BHU. In this conference, eminent speakers delivered very knowledgeable lectures. Prof Sukesh Nair had given knowledge about the normal hemostasis as well as their disturbances and diseases like hemophilia and Von Willbrand disease which are more common among marriages in blood relations.

Prof Ruchi Gupta from SGPGL, Lucknow spoke on the prevalence of these disorders in females. If they have a history of frequent abortions or heavy bleeding during menses they

should be investigated. The speakers also told that a simple and low-cost investigation i.e. peripheral blood smear can give a lot of information about platelet disorders.

The inaugural ceremony was presided by Prof BR Mittal, Director, IMS-BHU and Prof SK Singh, Dean, Faculty of Medicine also addressed the session. A book on 'Problem Based Learning in Hematology' was released. Prof B Dube (the father of Hematology) along with Somaru Ram was honored.

They worked together since 1965 and established the coagulation lab in the Department of Pathology, IMS-BHU. Dr Anju Bharti, organising secretary and Dr Deepa Rani, chief of the Scientific Committee were also present. The programme was conducted by Dr Paromita Paul and Dr Tanima Mandal.

AU prof's suspension revoked

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Authorities of Allahabad University (AU) have revoked the suspension of Prof Mohamad Shahid of the Department of Political Science. Prof Shahid was suspended by AU on April 21 last year as he was accused by the district police of hiding the information about his visit to Nizamuddin Markaz and later

arranging the stay of nine foreign nationals in the city who had attended Markaz with him.

However, during the period of suspension, Prof Shahid was paid subsistence allowance as applicable, given the rules of the University of Allahabad and financial rules set by the Government of India.

Now, almost 10 months later, an order revoking his suspension was signed by the var-

sity registrar, Prof NK Shukla on Thursday. The order, a copy of which mentions that in the matter pertaining to Prof Shahid, an inquiry committee was constituted by the Vice-Chancellor under the chairmanship of Prof Harsh Kumar, AU's proctor.

The meeting of the inquiry committee was held on January 20 this year and recommended that the suspension of Prof

Shahid is revoked with full pay and allowances.

'The committee also recommended that the remaining amount of suspension period be released only on the outcome of the aforesaid FIR by the court accordingly,' said the registrar. However, the committee has recommended that no administrative work should be given to Prof Shahid till the matter is subjudice.

Mystery shrouds death of peshkar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In a shocking incident, the peshkar of the Meja SDM died under mysterious circumstances in Meja area of Prayagraj. He did not return after leaving home on Sunday night. His body was found in the field behind the house on Monday morning. With no injury on the body, police believed that poisoning may be the cause of death. Investigation is underway, police said.

Rajesh Pandey (48) a resident of Chhibila village under the Meja police station, was appointed as the peshkar of

SDM Meja. On Sunday night, he left the house at 9 o'clock telling that he was going for an invitation. Then he did not return home. When his bike and helmet were found outside the house, family members assumed that he might have gone with someone else. The kin of the deceased kept searching him but failed to trace him.

In the morning, his son Saurabh reported a missing report in the Jevania police outpost. Meanwhile, Rajesh's body was found lying in the middle of the wheat crop in the field behind the house, when someone made a noise,

a crowd of the people gathered there. After receiving the news, police Meja police reached the spot and reviewed the situation. Then SDM Meja Renu Singh also reached on the receipt of information. The police closely inspected the spot.

The police did not see any apparent injuries on the body. A bottle of water was found near his body. SP Yamunapar Saurabh Dixit said that no injuries were seen. The forensic team gathered evidence on the spot and investigated. Police have noticed signs of poisoning on the body but this will be con-

firmed after a chemical examination of the viscera to be protected during the post-mortem. Rajesh was the eldest of two brothers. His father late Ramashankar Pandey was a Lekhpal. In 1995, his body was found on the railway track in the Manda area. Saurabh is the only son of Rajesh. He was married last year. Two of the three daughters are married. Mystery still shrouds Rajesh's death. SDM Meja said that he had not been on duty for three days. Police said that an investigation is being done under what circumstances and how the death of the SDM's peshkar happened.

Man gets 10 years RI for rape

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

APOCSO court in Pratapgarh has sentenced a man to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment for raping a teenage girl in 2016. Special Judge Pankaj Kumar Srivastava held the accused Prashant guilty and sentenced him to 10 years in jail, and also imposed a fine of ₹ 50,000.

According to the prosecution, a 14-year-old girl student had gone Kamla Nehru Balika Inter College in Lalganj on January 19, 2016. However, the college was closed due to rains on that day. At the college gate, Prashant (the convict) on the pretext of taking the girl

to her home, took her to Jaunpur, and raped her there.

Based on the complaint lodged by the family members of the girl, a case was registered against Prashant.

BODY OF BOY FOUND: Body of an 11-year-old boy, reported missing from Kanshiram Colony of neighbouring Pratapgarh district for the past three days, was found in a drain under the Kotwali police station on Sunday night.

Alleging negligence by the police, the bereaved kin staged a demonstration to seek quick action against the accused. They also staged a 'chakka jam' on the busy road and also indulged in stone-pelting to

prevent police from taking the body for a post-mortem examination. Only after the police used mild lathicharge, the situation could be brought under control. SP Pratapgarh Shiv Hari Meena said the situation was under control and the accused have been detained.

'Body of the victim has been sent for a postmortem examination, while the accused are being interrogated,' said the SP.

Circle Officer (City) Abhay Pandey said the victim, Deepak (11), son of Shyamu, left his home at Kanshiram Colony on Katra Road to play in the evening on February 17. When he did not return, his parents

approached the police on February 19. An FIR of kidnapping was registered at the Kotwali police station against three persons based on their complaint. Victim's mother Seema informed the police that on February 15, a seven-year-old kid of the same locality was throwing stones when one of the stones hit the window of her house. When Deepak's father complained about the incident, the boy was thrashed by his parents and he was given ₹ 200 as compensation for the damage.

She alleged that enraged over the incident, the three elder brothers of this boy kidnapped Deepak and killed him.

Flowers, fruits exhibition ends

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Two-day exhibition of flowers, fruits and vegetables concluded on Sunday with the distribution of prizes and shields to winners of various categories by the chief guest and State Minister Ravindra Jaiswal.

Addressing the gathering, the minister threw light on the significance of the flowers, fruits and vegetables in the life and discussed their commercial use. He also directed the Horticulture department to hold the exhibition next year at grand level. He distributed the prizes to the winners of various categories and also gave away



UP Minister Ravindra Jaiswal giving away shield to winner of flower show in Varanasi on Sunday

various shields to winners. Mainly, the Chal Baijyanti, King of the Show and Queen of the Show awards were given away to the winners.

The minister also observed the stalls installed in the exhibition. The District Horticulture Officer Sandeep Gupta informed the minister

that the farmers not only of the district but also of the division got inspiration from the exhibition to produce vegetables and fruits which could be exported.

The people in large numbers visited the exhibition and pledged to contribute in preserving the environment.

Apart from the government and non-government institutions the farmers also displayed their models. Jyoti Kumar Singh conducted the concluding function, while many were present on the occasion including B Gautam, Mamata Yadav, Rajesh Kumar Singh, Anurag Singh and Gorakhnath.

Traders stage demonstration

VARANASI (PNS): Annoyed with the complications in Goods & Services Tax (GST), the traders on Monday staged a demonstration at wholesale vegetable market in Visheshwarganj and demanded the government to make simple law keeping the small businessmen in view. The traders associated with UP Udyog Vyapar Pratinidhi Mandal (Kanchhal Group), Varanasi, assembled at above

mentioned market and staged a demonstration to raise their protest against GST by stating that there are more complications in it and thus the small traders find themselves unable to understand its provisions. Three years have passed after the GST was implemented but at the same time, more than one thousand changes have been made during the last three years in it, they said and added, the traders are unaware

of these changes and thus, they find difficulties in making trade with such frequent changes. Moreover, the traders did not get relief from the complications of this despite the changes; they said and added, in fact, the impractical provisions in GST such as e-bill has put the trade at stake. The government should make simple provisions so that the traders could get relief and do their business easily, they demanded.

Among those who joined the demonstration included Vijay Kapoor, Mukesh Jaiswal, Nandkumar, and Anil Keshari.

DEMAND: Agitated with the decision taken by administration of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) to run classes only of final year, scores of students on Monday staged a demonstration at main entrance gate demanding that the BHU should run all the classes.

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Musical rendering of dialogues with beats of Nakkara, music and dance in Nautanki 'Aala Afsar' enthralled the audience on the third day of the five-day theatre festival being organised here at NCZCC by Vinod Rastogi Smriti Sansthan in association with Ministry of Culture, Government of India. The nautanki is written by Mudra Rakshas and Atomjit Singh directed it for the artists of Vinod Rastogi Smriti

Sansthan.

Based on the famous English play Inspector General, the story of this nautanki starts from Chitpur Kasba, where the chairman and the officials are hand in glove to mint money through corrupt practices. The chairman comes to know that an officer is scheduled to visit Chitpur for inspection. Sheer by chance a cheat comes to the same Kasba and stays in a hotel. The chairman and the officials think that the

same person is the officer from Delhi, and offer all possible comfort and money to him. The cheat disappears after collecting a hefty amount. The chairman and officers then receive a message that the real officer will visit Kasba the next day. The singing and the acting talent of the artistes cast a magic spell and people enjoyed the satire. Ajay Mukherjee was the assistant director of this nautanki.

Artists who impressed the

most were Shubham Verma, Ashish Yadav, Abhilash Narain, Ajay Mukherjee, Gaueav Tripathi, Aman Pandey, Rohit Yadav, Anuj Kumar, Pratima Srivastava, Riya Jaiswal.

The impressive music partners were Phul Chand on Nakjara, Shashi Kant on harmonium, and Praveen Srivastava on dholak. Light design by Sujoy Ghoshal and make-up by Sanjay Chaudhary added beauty to this memorable production.



Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar, inspecting the Super Speciality Hospital construction work at GSVM Medical College on Monday

Pioneer

Medical college super speciality hospital to be ready by Oct: DC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar, inspected the construction site of the super speciality hospital coming up on the GSVM Medical College campus and reviewed the progress of the pending works on Monday.

He said the project was being implemented jointly by the Government of India and the Uttar Pradesh government under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY). He expressed happiness over the pace of the work and said the remaining 20 per cent work was to be completed in the next two months.

He said the super speciality hospital (SSH) will have 300 beds, including 60 ICU beds, and eight modular operation theatres along with 12 super speciality departments. He said the total cost of the project was around Rs 200 crore out of which Rs 105 crore was for construction works and Rs 95 crore for diagnostics and modern medical equipment.

The DC then informed press persons that the new SSH would have a roof top rainwater harvesting system and in this way it would save around 1.5 lakh litres of water every rainy season. He said the new SSH would also have a water recycling facility (WRF) which meant that around 60 per cent of water used in the hospital

would be recycled and again used for works like catering to the toilet needs and hospital cleaning.

Shekhar said three major issues were still pending - the multi-level parking, independent power supply (new power sub-station) and doctors, staff and management set-up. He said the proposal for the works were under consideration with the government level and Director General Medical Education (DGME) level. He asked the principal of the medical college to personally take up these issues with the DGME and Medical Education Department.

The DC said once a green signal was received, the power sub-station and multi-level

parking would be constructed in six months. He said the multi level parking would have space to park 350 to 400 vehicles and would be constructed at a cost of Rs 30 crore. He said the independent power sub-station would cost around Rs 13.62 crore. He said looking at the pace of work, the SSH would be ready by October this year.

The DC assured that he would follow up the pending issues on a monthly basis and would also write a letter to the government to expedite decisions on the pending issues.

He was accompanied by GSVM Medical College principal, SSH incharge, and officials of KESCO, PWD and construction work agency.

3 killed, 18 injured in accident

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Three children, including an 18-year-old girl, were killed while 19 others were seriously injured when a tractor-trolley overturned after being hit by a speeding DCM on GT Road near Lalpur level crossing under Bilhaur Kotwali police area on Monday afternoon.

Hearing the screams, local residents rushed to the spot and rescued those trapped under the trolley and rushed the injured to the community health centre and a private hospital. Three children were pronounced dead by the doctors.

According to reports, Lalu Nagar of Harnu village, along with family members and relatives, was going to Makanpur by tractor-trolley to perform the mundan of his four-year-old son, Saurya.

Near Lalpur level crossing, after being hit by a speeding DCM from behind, the trolley-trolley overturned and those on it were trapped and injured.

The deceased were identified as Raj (4) son of Dinesh Nagar, Anshu (7) son of Rajaram of Jaraila village and Shraddha (18) daughter of Mukesh of Harnu village. The injured included Deepak Kumar, Ashish Kumar, Nancy, Shivam, Chhavi daughter of Ram Chandra, Rani, Kajol daughter of Kaptan Singh, Somwati wife of Sulkhan Singh, Seema, Sapna, Maya, Mahesh Kumar, Muskan, Atul Kumar, Parvati, Raj, Bhagwati and Karishma.

Admn starts process to raze criminal's house

KANPUR (PNS): The process for razing the house of notorious drug smuggler Sushil Bachcha started on Monday.

The force from 10 police stations were present on the spot along with officials of Armapore Estate Administration. The house was illegally constructed by the drug smuggler on the land of defence organisation. It may be recalled that on charges of drug smuggling, Sushil Bachcha and his brother Raj Kumar were arrested by the police recently. After booking them under the Gangster Act and confiscating their property, police came across the unauthorised possession of residential quarters of the Labour Department and illegal construction of a house on the land of Armapore Estate. DIG Pritinder Singh, after informing the Labour Department and Armapore Estate, had started the process for lodging FIR against the criminals and evicting them from the government properties. Thereafter, the process for razing the houses of accused constructed unauthorisedly on the land of Armapore Estate in Ambedkar Nagar under Kakadeo police area was started on Monday.

When the entry of JCB Machine was not possible in the narrow lane, dozens of labourers were pressed into service to raze the houses. During the drive, officials of Armapore Estate Administration, City Magistrate Arun Srivastava and a heavy police force were present on the spot. About a three-storey house situated there, the police said it was under the use of accomplices of Sushil Bachcha involved in drug smuggling. In front of this house, the partly-built house of Sushil Bachcha's brother Raj Kumar would also be razed soon.

MEETING: Members of EPS-95 National Agitation Committee organised a meeting of Kanpur Division here. Pensioners from Jhansi, Etawah, Auraiya, Farrukhabad, Banda, Fatehpur, Unnao, Kanpur Dehat and the Kanpur Nagar were present. Addressing the gathering, national secretary and president of Kanpur Division Om Shanker Tewari said after a meeting with the prime minister by the committee's national leaders along with BJP MP Hema Malini, thousands of pensioners were hopeful of increase in pension amount in the Union budget but the absence of any announcement about increase in their pension had disappointed around 65,000 pensioners of the country.

75 kg ganja recovered; 2 held

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

The joint team of Halia police, SOG and SWAT team recovered 75 kg ganja worth ₹5.25 lakh, seized a car and arrested two smugglers on Sunday. Interacting with mediapersons, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP), City, Sanjay Kumar said that the police had inputs about the smuggling of ganja from Madhya Pradesh via Dramondganj. Acting on the inputs the police started checking vehicles on the state border. He said on seeing the heavy force car MP-17/BA-1829 tried to flee but was cordoned off and on searched it the police personnel found 75 kg of ganja in 15 bundles. On failure to produce proper documents the police seized the car and arrested the driver along with his companion. The driver was later identified as Satyendra, a resident of Newada village under



ASP (City) Sanjay Kumar giving details about the recovery of ganja

Blind murder case worked out

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

The City Kotwali police worked out a blind murder case and arrested the accused on Sunday. As per the police, Mattar Bind (32), a resident of Bisundarpur under City Kotwali, had died under mysterious circumstances on Thursday night. Radheshyam Bind, father of the deceased, had on Friday requested the authorities for conducting the post-mortem examination following which it came to light strangulation was the reason behind Mattar's death. On the basis of autopsy report the police registered a case of murder and started investigating the matter. During investigation it came to light that the deceased was liquor addict. He had frequent quarrels with his brother Dasharath over this habit of his. When the police interrogated Dasharath he confessed his crime. After completing the legal formalities the police sent the accused to jail.

ARRESTED: Halia police freed 20 head of cattle, arrested one accused and impound-

ed a vehicle recently. Reports said that Halia police had inputs about cattle smuggling via Mirzapur-Rewa road. Acting on them the police was busy in checking vehicles at Dramondganj at night when it was tipped off by an informer that a truck carrying cattle was to pass that way. Taking advantage of darkness the truck tried to flee from there but was caught by the police personnel. When the police searched the truck it found 19 head of cattle alive and one dead. However, its driver manage to escape from the spot. The police succeeded in nabbing his associate who was later identified as Suresh, a resident of Kaushambi district. After registering the case under relevant sections of law, the police arrested the accused, seized the truck and freed the cattle. On the other hand the police recovered the body of Vivek Sahani (32), a resident of village Nuanav from the railway track at Jamui village under Chunar police station on Sunday. Besides Rajan Sharma, a resident of Pachevra village, found

dead on the railway track in Shivshankari Dham village under Chunar police station. The police took their bodies for completing the legal formalities. Meanwhile a worker, Rajneesh Sharma (19), a resident of Garan village under Koraanv police station in Prayagraj, came in grip of a machine in Tuli village under Lalganj police station on Sunday as a result of which he sustained serious injuries. However, he succumbed to his injuries on way to a hospital. On getting information incharge Lahangpur police outpost Manoj Pandey reached the spot and took the body for completing legal formalities. In an earlier incident, 28-year-old Jitendra alias Baba, a resident of Teekapur Masari village under Dehat Kotwali police station committed suicide by hanging from the ceiling of his house at night recently. On getting information about the matter the personnel attached to the Gursandi outpost reached the spot and took the body into custody for completing the legal formalities.

Preparations for Chaita Mahotsav discussed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Chairman Nagar Palika Parishad (NPP) Manoj Jaiswal said that being the oldest estate of the world we adopted 'Varsh Pratipada' (the first day of Chaitra Navratra) as the beginning of the year so we celebrate the day to welcome the new year. These views were expressed by him at a meeting organised for discussing preparations for Chaita Mahotsav at the office of Nagar Palika recently. Throwing light on the event the chairman said that purpose behind it was to make people aware about our culture as well as tradition by offering the 'arghya' to the setting sun a day before Varsh Pratipada. He further said that to make the event



Nagar Palika Parishad chairman Manoj Jaiswal holding a meeting to discuss preparations for Chaita Mahotsav in Mirzapur

memorable the committee dedicated to art and culture had decided to celebrate it with a cultural programme based on rich heritage. In the meeting the organising committee was formed and Shankar Roy was declared as the convenor. In it different sub-committees were formed to hold the programme with

grandeur. The committee also decided to provide the stage not only the renowned artistes but budding artistes of the district too. Prominent among those who participated in the meeting were Nitin Awasthi, Rajkumar Pahwa, Ajita Srivastava, Shishir Agrawal, Keerti Mundara, Rajesh Srivastava and Balgovind Agrawal.

Chaupal organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ JAUNPUR

Secretary, Health Education, Uttar Pradesh/nodal officer GS Priyadarshi and District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma at a chaupal organised in Jamuhar village in Machilishahar block recently, took information about development works from villagers and asked their problems. On the occasion, CDO Anupam Shukla, BDO Rajan Rai, SDM Anjani Singh, Executive Engineer (EE) Ramanand Mishra, SDO Amar Singh Patel, Anil Singh and others were present.



Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Housing and Urban Planning Girish Chandra Yadav and chairperson, Nagar Palika Parishad (NPP) Maya Tandon, inaugurating Kanha Pashu Ashraya Sthal at Pyarepur in Jaunpur

Certificates given to 23 students

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Under NTPC Vindhyaachal's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in collaboration with Swashrayee Mahila Sewa Sangh Bharat (Sewa



Vocational Training Centre, Navjivan Vihar Sector-3. In order to distribute certificates of achievement among those trained girl students, a function was organised at Kshetriya Gyanarjan Sansthan, Vindhyanagar, in which General Manager (Operation & Maintenance) Subhash Chandra Nayak presented them to the trained girl students. In his address on the occasion he said NTPC Vindhyaachal is always ready for carrying out social works with full commitment and will in order to prepare beneficiaries of the surrounding villages for self-employment and with the aim of making them self-reliant continue to provide various types of training in future too. On the occasion Additional General Manager (Human Resources), Snehasish Bhattacharya, Deputy General Manager (Human Resources) Abhishek Mehra and secretary, Sewa Bharat, Shikha Joshi, were present

Productivity Week concludes

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

In Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Miniratna company of the Government of India, the closing ceremony of National Productivity Week was held recently. On the occasion NCL CMD PK Sinha through virtual medium joined as the chief guest. Sinha while describing coal production, productivity, safety and quality as complementary to each other expressed confidence that NCL will produce more than the target this time too. Sinha expressed happiness over organising a one-day seminar at the NCL headquarters on an important topic such as



'Proper utilisation of resources, innovation and enhancing productivity through use of state-of-the-art technology.' During the closing ceremony of Productivity Week Director (Finance) Ram Narayan Dubey, Director (Technical/Project & Planning) SS Sinha, Chief Vigilance Officer Amit Kumar Srivastava, CMOAI representative and others were present as distinguished guest. Besides, regional GM, departmental heads at headquarters, other guests, officers and employees were also present during the programme.

Govt giving 'swadeshi' push to sporting arena: Kreedha Bharti

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

General Secretary of Kreedha Bharti, Raj Chaudhary, during his visit to Kanpur said indigenous sports could be a tool for women's empowerment as these games could be of great benefit to them.

He said motivating women's participation in indigenous sports like kabaddi, wrestling and kho-kho would not only improve their physical activities, social skills, creativity and competitive spirit but also make them realise their potential and this would lead to women empowerment.

He said the Uttar Pradesh government had decided to give a 'swadeshi' push to the sporting arena. He said it had thus been decided to promote Saksham Mahila and Nirbhay Mahila plans in a big way.

He added that indigenous

sports had a huge potential to empower women and girls, especially from the rural background, to bring them into the mainstream and shape them as world class sportspersons.

He said sports could be a force to amplify women's voices and tear down gender barriers and discrimination. He pointed out that women in sport defy the misperception that they were weak or incapable. He said each time women cleared a hurdle demonstrating not only their physical strength but also leadership and strategic thinking they took a step towards gender equality.

He said there was adequate evidence that participation in sports could help break down gender stereotypes and develop leadership skills in girls.

He said the objective of the UP government was to

demonstrate that there was talent in rural girls also and if given the right motivation and training they could emerge world class sportspersons and bring laurels for the country.

He said in a bid to promote sports in rural areas and to identify sports talents from there, the UP government was making concerted efforts in the direction. He said a need had been felt to deepen the sports culture among the rural youth especially women. He said thus sports events, especially of indigenous, would be held on a large-scale so as to achieve excellence, especially in indigenous sports.

Chaudhary said studies had shown that the confidence of girls waned as they moved into puberty and became overly focused on looks, were less likely to speak up in class, became less sure of

themselves and experienced a drop in self-esteem. He said this confidence crisis in adolescence could also contribute to them dropping out of sports or other challenging activities.

He said playing kho-kho and kabaddi and participating in wrestling was actually a powerful way for girls to protect against the insecurity and strengthen their confidence. He said the lure of games, which brought in fame and money, had left the indigenous games behind. He said thus on the directive of the government, Kreedha Bharti had girded up its lions to motivate UP girls to take to kabaddi, wrestling and kho-kho in a big way.

Those present included Sanjiv Pathak, Sumit Mishra, Arun Dubey, Dr Vikas Agarwal, Sanjeev Saraogi and several others.

Minister advocates group farming

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Parliamentary Affairs and Rural Development Minister of the state, Anand Swarup Shukla, while addressing the farmers' training programme at CSA University of Agriculture and Technology, said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was committed to increasing farmers' profits and thus he had directed the departments concerned to promote group farming in a big way for a better foodgrain yield and to boost grain exports.

He said Uttar Pradesh even today had over 50 per cent of cultivable land and thus more focus needed to be laid to impart special training to farmers to adopt the latest technology.

He said group farming was a form of day-to-day agricultural production based on cooperation between several partners. He said by sharing land, labour, capital and farm management responsibilities, the farmers could boost their capacity to invest, innovate, negotiate, or liberate their family members from agricultural

work. Shukla said group farming reduced cost in the form of capital and land cost. He said use of groups in extension had become more common over the past decade, and indeed a number of new ideas had emerged about how groups may be used most effectively. He added that it had been observed that individual extension methods could be costly in both terms of time and scarce extension resources, and that they reached only a limited number of people.

He said thus the group method offered the possibility of greater extension coverage, and was therefore more cost-effective and by using the group method, the extension worker could reach more farmers and in this way make contact with many more farmers who had no previous contact with extension activities.

He said such groups offered a more reflective learning environment in which the farmer can listen, discuss and decide upon involvement in the extension activity. He said in this the group created a supportive atmosphere, and indi-

vidual farmers could gain greater self-confidence by joining others to discuss new ideas and try out new practices in farming.

Shukla said the group method brought together farmers with similar problems and often, these problems demanded concerted action and such action could be taken more effectively by a group rather than by an individual, who may be overwhelmed by the enormity of certain problems.

He said the farmers should be aware of two main purposes. First, they should try to develop the group, to encourage members to continue to meet and to establish the group on a permanent basis. He said in this way, the agent would be developing a base from which group members could continue their development efforts.

He said secondly, the farmers should use the group to transmit new ideas, information and knowledge that would assist the farmers in their agricultural activities.

SPL CAMPAIGN: Additional Director Health Dr GK Mishra said that in view of 37 districts being in the grip of

Japanese encephalitis (JE), a special campaign was on to vaccinate children between 0 to 2 years of age. He said the drive would continue till Feb 28. He appealed to the people to ensure they availed of the facility so as to reduce mortality rate. He said during the COVID-19 period, the vaccination drive could not be carried out and they missed both the first and the second dose.

He said the government had decided to identify children and ensure that they were vaccinated without fail.

He said Japanese encephalitis was a kind of brain fever and the cause was unhygienic conditions and dirty surroundings, especially the stagnant drains and sewers which were the breeding ground of the vectors.

Dr Mishra said JE, if not treated timely, could lead to death and once a child was affected it developed swelling in the brain with very high fever.

He said the potent reason for the spread of JE among children was due to malnutrition and physical weakness of the children due to poor nourishment.

381 birds found dead in Maha, samples sent for bird flu test

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra reported deaths of 381 birds on Sunday amid the avian influenza scare, a state government official said on Monday.

He said 380 of these were poultry birds, including 190 from Nandurbar and 115 from Amravati in Vidarbha.

Samples are being sent to National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Bhopal and Disease Investigation Section, Pune for bird flu testing, he added.

So far, 7,20,515 poultry birds, including 5,86,668 from Navapur in Nandurbar, have been culled, and 26,44,177 eggs as well as 73,004 kilograms of poultry feed destroyed in infected zones, and carcasses were being buried in lime lined pits to prevent the spread of infection, a state government release informed.

The state government has paid compensation of Rs 3.38 crore to affected poultry farmers in the infected zone, it added.

5 killed in Bihar in truck-auto collision

IAN S ■ KATI HAR (BIHAR)

Five people were killed and five were critically injured in a truck-auto collision near Pothia police station in Katihar district of Bihar.

All the deceased were identified as the members of a band.

The incident happened on NH-31 when a truck coming from Bhagalpur lost control near Khaira Mod and collided with an auto coming from the opposite direction, a police official said.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Afak Akhtar Hussain said that four people died on the spot while one died during the treatment.

Five people who sustained injuries were admitted to Katihar Sadar hospital after giving the first aid at a local hospital, he added.

The police is investigating the case and searching for the accused driver who fled from the spot, Hussain said.

Car-bus collision leaves 5 dead

Ahmednagar (Maharashtra): Five persons travelling in a car were killed in a head-on collision with a private travel bus near Devgad, early on Monday morning, police officials said.

According to an official of Nevasa police station, the accident occurred around 2 a.m. on the Ahmednagar-Aurangabad Highway.

“When the car was approaching the Devgad Phata, it was hit by a private tourist bus coming from the opposite direction. All the five occupants of the car were severely injured and are believed to have succumbed on the spot,” the official told IANS.

The local villagers managed to rush the victims to a rural hospital near Nevasa, where they were pronounced dead on admission.

As per initial reports, all were hailing from Jalna and were proceeding to Ahmednagar when the tragedy struck, he added.

Efforts are on to verify their identity and determine the cause of the accident.

The car sustained huge damage with the front portion crushed like an egg-shell though there were no casualties among the bus passengers, he added.

The police called for a crane to clear the road strewn with the car wreckage and the busy highway was cleared for normal traffic by dawn.

ELGAR PARISHAD-BHIMA KOREGAON CASE

Bombay HC grants Varavara Rao 6-month bail on medical grounds

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

More than two years after his arrest in the Elgar Parishad-Bhima Koregaon case, the Bombay High Court on Monday granted conditional bail to poet and writer Pendyala Varavara Rao for six months on medical grounds.

Releasing to the 82-year-old Left wing activist for a period of six months against a personal bond of Rs 50,000 and two solvent sureties for equal amounts, a HC division bench of Justices S S Shinde and Manish Pitale noted: “We are of the opinion that appropriate conditions need to be imposed on the under-trial even if he is to be released on bail on medical conditions.”

Rao is currently undergoing medical treatment at Nanavati Hospital in north-west Mumbai, where he was admitted by the Maharashtra government following court orders.

“Rao is directed to be discharged from the Nanavati Hospital depending on the health condition as on today and he be released on bail for the present, for a period of six months....” the Judges ruled.

“We feel that although the material on record does show that the health condition of the under-trial is precarious, sending the under-trial back to where he belongs, is fraught with the risk of his presence being used by those allegedly associated with him to seek to revive the aforesaid nefarious activities,” the Judges observed.

“This court cannot rule out such a contingency and, therefore, it would be appropriate to impose such conditions as would be necessary for ensuring that the under-trial on his own or those allegedly associated with him do not take undue advantage of the situation, which would ultimately adversely affect the trial,” the HC opined.

Among the conditions imposed on Rao include: he shall not leave the jurisdiction of the NIA Court at Mumbai on being released; he shall inform the NIA court about his place of residence and his contact number; he shall attend the court proceedings as and when summoned; he may

apply for exemption from personal appearances and he shall report to the nearest police station through WhatsApp Video Call every fortnight.

“The under-trial (Rao) shall not indulge in any activity similar to the activities on the basis of which the said FIR stood registered against him for offences under the IPC and UAPA,” the HC ruled.

The HC mandated that Rao “shall not try to establish communication with co-accused or any other person involved directly or indirectly in similar activities or make any international call to any person indulging in similar activities as alleged against him, through any mode of communication” and he “shall not undertake any action which is prejudicial to the proceedings before the NIA Court”.

When the Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh sought a three-weeks stay on the HC order, the Judges rejected the plea considering Varavara Rao’s advanced age and his medical conditions.

Rao’s lawyers Anand Grover and Indira Jaisingh argued that his medical conditions could turn critical if he was again sent back to Taloja Central Jail and would be violative of his fundamental right to health. Rao was arrested by the Pune police on January 31, 2019 and he was charged under offences under Sections 121, 121(A), 153(A), 505(1)(B), 117, 120(B), 124(A) read with Section 34 of the IPC and Sections 13, 16, 17, 18, 18(B), 20, 38, 39 and 40 of the UAPA.

The charge against Rao is that being is a senior member of a banned organization-Communist Party of India (Maoist), he has been allegedly actively involved in arranging funding and providing arms and ammunition to the cadre of his organization to wage war against the established Government, causing death of a number of security personnel and citizens.

Rao, who had been hospitalised on a couple during the course of incarceration, was admitted to the Nanavati Hospital on July 19,2020 following the intervention by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

Politicians who want early Assembly polls must help delimitation exercise: J&K LG

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Mainstream politicians clamouring for holding early Assembly polls in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir were on Monday given a sound piece of advice by Lt Governor Manoj Sinha to cooperate with the delimitation commission rather than making excuses.

Setting the record straight Sinha also clarified that the final decision to hold the Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir will be taken only by the election commission of India after the completion of the delimitation exercise.

The Delimitation Commission met in New Delhi last week to seek suggestions from the associate members on the process of delimitation of the Union Territory of Jammu and

Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by only two BJP Parliamentarians while three National Conference MP’s including Dr Farooq Abdullah skipped the meeting.

On Monday when Lt-Gov Manoj Sinha was asked to react to the recent statements made by the PDP and National Conference leaders over holding early Assembly polls he made it clear those who want early assembly elections in J&K are requested to help and cooperate with the delimitation commission, instead of making excuses”.

“There are constitutional institutions in India. The decision is taken by the Election Commission. Let the work related to delimitation get completed, the Commission will definitely conduct elections,” he said.

On some politicians “boycotting” the proceedings of the Delimitation Commission, the LG said they must understand that if they want early polls, the delimitation process has to be first completed .

The LG said that “the prime minister has assured the entire nation (on holding polls) and you have seen reports in newspapers that the Delimitation Commission has begun its work”.

Meanwhile, reacting to the current political developments, senior congress leader and former J&K Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad Monday suggested the participation of National Conference in the Delimitation Commission process would have given representation to people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Talking to a local news agency

Adzad said that the NC leaders should have participated in the delimitation meeting, however, they chose to boycott it, which is not a “good thing”.

He said that the National Conference has a majority as they have three parliament members and all of them were appointed as the members of the delimitation commission, which would have made “our case strong”, however, they choose to stay away.

Recently, PDP Chief Mehbooba Mufti had alleged that the delimitation exercise in the union territory was a part of Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) plan to divide communities and religions and pit them against each other.

Mufti raised apprehensions at the hurry in carrying out the delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Trains back on track in J&K after 11 months

PNS ■ JAMMU

After a gap of 11 long months the local trains in Jammu and Kashmir resumed their services from Monday.

These train services remained suspended during covid-19 pandemic.

In Kashmir valley, the train services between Banihal to Baramulla were resumed with only one pair of rail while in Jammu region DMU services were made operational between Pathankot and Udhampur. Majority of government employees and local businessmen availing the services heaved a sigh of relief as they boarded trains to reach their workplaces.

Chief Area Manager Northern Railways in Srinagar, Saqib Yousuf said initially only two trains will operate and the number of trains will be increased in the days to come.

Before the launch of the train services in Kashmir valley, a road opening party also detected an Improvised explo-



The local train between Banihal and Baramulla covers a distance of 137 km across 16 stations. Large number of people along the route rely on the services to commute in the absence of proper road connectivity.

Guidelines launched for integrating non-alcoholic fatty liver disease with NPCDCS for better mgmt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In view of increase in the Non-alcoholic fatty liver diseases in the country, the Union Health Ministry on Monday launched the operational guidelines for the integration of the non-communicable diseases with NPCDCS (National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke) for its better management.

Dr Harsh Vardhan said, “NAFLD, the abnormal accumulation of fat in the liver in the absence of secondary causes of fatty liver, such as harmful alcohol use, viral hepatitis, or medications is a serious health concern as it encompasses a spectrum of liver abnormalities, from a simple non-alcoholic fatty liver (NAFL, simple fatty liver disease) to more advanced ones like non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), cirrhosis and even liver cancer.

“Globally, NASH caused 40 lakh prevalent cases of compensated cirrhosis in 1990, which increased to 94 lakh cases in 2017”.

Underscoring the importance of tackling NAFLD as a step to tackling the country’s burden of non-communicable diseases, he noted.

“Epidemiological studies suggest the prevalence of NAFLD is around 9 per cent to 32 per cent of the general population in India with a higher prevalence in those with overweight or obesity and those with diabetes or prediabetes. Researchers have found NAFLD in 40 per cent to 80 per cent of people who have type 2 diabetes and in 30 per cent to 90 per cent of people who are obese,” Harsh Vardhan said.

“Studies also suggest that people with NAFLD have a greater chance of developing cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease is the most common cause of death in NAFLD. Once the disease develops, there is no specific cure available.

“Health promotion and prevention aspects targeting weight reduction, healthy lifestyle, and control of aforementioned risk factors are the mainstays to disease progression and prevent the mortality and morbidity due to NAFLD,” he added.

BMC to lodge FIRs for home quarantine violation

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Having established that asymptomatic patients and high-risk contacts are contributing to the spread of Covid-19 in Mumbai, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has among other things decided to lodge FIRs against these two categories of people and impose on them for breaking the home-quarantine norms.

In view of the multiplying Covid-19 cases in Mumbai and areas of Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) during the past few days, the BMC has drawn up a strategy to counter the increasing incidence of pandemic cases.

The authorities attribute the sudden increase in the number of Covid-19 cases to the resumption of suburban locals from February 1, a disturbing trend being witnessed among sizeable sections of citizens, who are not wearing masks and following the pandemic norms and the fact that asymptomatic patients and high-risk contacts are stepping out of their homes and going to public places flouting the health protocols.

Having found out that hundreds of asymptomatic patients and high-risk contacts have visited public places like shops, malls and garden areas exposing others to contract the Covid-19 virus, the BMC has decided to lodge FIR against those breaking home-quarantine norms and impose hefty fines on such violators.

“In the last two days there have been 1,500-odd cases who are asymptomatic. In these people, there are no symptoms at all. If these 1,500 people start roaming in the streets, in a fortnight’s time the number of cases would be 15,000,” Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal said.

Chahal said that recently a lady from Powai, who is a high-

Kerala woman who falsely alleged rape by health official to face police action

Kochi: The Kerala High Court on Monday Directed the police to register a case against a woman who had made a false complaint that she was raped by a junior health inspector while under quarantine.

After examining the inquiry report filed by police, the court observed that it has been revealed that “it is a false case” and the police decided to take legal action against her under IPC Section 182 (false information, with intent to cause public servant to use his lawful power to the injury of another person). “I don’t want to make any further observation in it because a case is going to be registered against the de facto complainant and the same is to be investigated by the investigating officer. The officer concerned will investigate the case, untrammelled by any observation in this order.”



Congress Legislature Party Leader in Telangana Assembly Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, interacting with farmers during his 14-day Raitalatho Mukhamukhi Yatra (March for direct Interaction with farmers) to express solidarity with them against the Centre’s three farm laws. The Yatra, which began on February 9 from Bheemsari in Adilabad, culminated at Konijarla in Khammam on Monday

Covid rebound: K’taka closes borders with Kerala again

Kasaragod (Ker): With the Karnataka government reinstating stricter control of transit passengers from Kerala in view of increasing COVID-19 positive cases, people bound to Mangaluru and other parts of Dakshina Kannada from here for various purposes, including medical needs and studies, are in a fix again.

Long queues of vehicles could be seen in the border areas since morning as Karnataka authorities sealed many roads, including national highways and restricted entry only for those with COVID-19 negative certificates.

The Dakshina Kannada authorities sealed all borders from Monda, except four to cross over, sources said.

According to Karnataka officials at the borders, those who wish to enter the state have to produce COVID-19 negative certificate through an RT-PCR test taken 72 hours prior to their cross over time.

Health and police personnel are on duty at the four borders, viz. Talapady in Mangalore taluk, Saradka in Bantwal,

Nettanige-Mudnuru in Puttur taluk and Jalsoor in Sullia, to verify and allow people’s entry into Karnataka.

Meanwhile, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the issue would be brought to the notice of the Centre.

“Karnataka’s move closing the border roads and blocking vehicles is against the central government’s guidelines that no state should impose any restriction on the inter-state travel,” he said. Speaking at the COVID-19 review meeting at Thiruvananthapuram, he also said state DGP Loknath Behera had already brought the matter to the notice of his counterpart in Karnataka, who assured that vehicles carrying essential commodities would be exempted from the restrictions. The state government would continue to be in touch with the Karnataka authorities to resolve the issue completely, he added. The residents in and around Kasaragod, the northernmost district of Kerala, have been thronging Mangaluru in Karnataka for decades for treatment at the specialty hospitals there.



Former Union Minister Alphons Kannanthanam and President Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Dr Vinay Sahasrabudhe unveiling a book titled ‘Runway to Skilled India’ authored by noted educationist Dr Darlie O Koshy on Sunday in the national Capital. Former Cabinet Secretary Ajit Seth, Chairman, Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA), Dr Subroto Bagchi, are among others who have dealt with multi-faceted dimension of the book thus bringing a rich mosaic of ideas and possibilities to realise the dream of ‘Skilled India’. Koshy has been heading as DG & CEO, ATDC & IAM under the aegis of AEPC while shaping a new skill scape of a ‘Skill Pyramid’.

FIR against NCLT’s member on sexual abuse charges

Kolkata: The Kolkata Police has registered an FIR against NCLT’s Technical Member HC Suri for sexual abuse charges on a complaint filed by a young lawyer who is associated with the tribunal as a research associate.

The case was registered at Hare Street Police station under IPC 354. The woman lawyer has accused Suri of repeatedly calling her to his chamber and hotels. In her detailed complaint and FIR available to the media, the young lawyer alleged that Suri was sexually harassing her. “As no official residence is allotted to him, he stays in five-star hotels and force me to come to these hotels apart from calling me to his chambers and slaking always,” said the lawyer who is working as a research associate on a contractual basis with the NCL. “The attitude of HC Suri was not proper towards me. He used to call me to his chamber when no one was around and stalked me whenever he got an opportunity,” said the woman lawyer accusing Suri of demanding sexual favours.

The woman lawyer has forwarded her complaint to Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Corporate Affairs and NCLT’s headquarters in Delhi. Kolkata Police is expected to summon Suri soon. Currently, FIR is charged under sections of IPC 354A and 354 D which are cognizable and non-bailable offences.

Andhra SEC satisfied with conduct of peaceful panchayat polls

Amaravati: Sharply contesting the claims made by Telugu Desam Party (TDP) supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu, Andhra Pradesh State Election Commissioner (SEC), Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar on Monday said the four-phase panchayat elections were held peacefully and expressed complete satisfaction over the polls.

“Police strictly participated in the election duty, including setting aside their Covid-19 vaccination, which did not lead to any untoward incident. The Election Commission expresses complete satisfaction,” Kumar added.

He also highlighted that the number of unanimous polls were also not abnormal.

“When we conducted the elections for 13,097 positions (panchayats), only 2,195 positions or 16 per cent of them had unanimous polls,” the SEC said.

However, contradicting Kumar, Chandrababu Naidu and TDP leaders have been making a barrage of allegations that the polls were not held in a free and fair manner.

According to Kumar, 10,890 ‘sarpanches’ have directly competed in the elections and won, including up to 50 per cent women and representatives from the weaker sections.

Kumar hoped that those winning the elections would provide good leadership.

He also heaped praise on employees of different government departments for their services in holding the polls peacefully across the state which continued for nearly a month.

In every phase of the polls, nearly more than 90,000 government employees from all departments have participated. More than 50,000 policemen also participated in every phase of the elections,” said Kumar, who retired as an Indian Administrative Service (IAS)

The holding of rural local body (panchayat) elections had emerged as a major flashpoint between the SEC and the YSR Congress Party government, which have been at loggerheads for more than a year

officer.

Indicating the high level of participation in the polls, Kumar added, more than 80 per cent voters exercised their franchise.

He appreciated the Director General of Police, Chief Secretary and the Health department for their cooperation and services.

The holding of rural local body (panchayat) elections had emerged as a major flashpoint between the SEC and the YSR Congress Party government, which have been at loggerheads for more than a year.

The panchayat elections were originally slated in 2018 when the tenure of the local bodies expired back then but Kumar chose not to hold them and waited until 2021.

However, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy proposed the idea of going to the polls in March 2020 but Kumar refused holding them citing the coronavirus pandemic, which had lead to a major row between the two.

Reddy accused Kumar of acting at the behest of opposition leader N. Chandrababu Naidu, during whose tenure he was appointed and even tried to replace him, which backfired as the SEC has constitutional protection equal to a Supreme Court judge.

With just one more month left as the SEC, Kumar has successfully conducted the polls which the state government could not stall with their deferment appeal being dismissed in the Supreme Court.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

COVID returns?

Contrary to expectations, active cases are on the rise, especially in Kerala and Maharashtra

The new year had brought relief to India from the pandemic and, as late as February 11, the country had been consistently following a declining slope of COVID-19 active cases with the load dropping to 1.41 lakh and 33 States and Union Territories reporting less than 5,000 active cases. This, combined with the world's largest vaccination drive in the country, had given people the hope that we would soon be seeing the end of the outbreak that had crippled our ailing economy and resulted in major salary cuts, job and business losses and long periods of isolation and mental distress for millions of Indians. However, last week seems to have dashed all hopes of recovery from the contagion as we are seeing a surge in Coronavirus cases again.



India has reported close to 87,000 infections in the last seven days, with the highest addition on Sunday when the country saw 14,264 fresh cases within a span of 24 hours. More worryingly, India now has all three Coronavirus variants that have caused a massive resurgence of cases globally, i.e. B.1.1.7 that was first discovered in the UK, B.1.351 which is dominant in South Africa and P.1 from Brazil. These have a unique collection of mutations, which make them spread more readily or cheat vaccine immunity. Even though there has been a spike in daily cases in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala and

Maharashtra are the major worrying factors as they are bearing the brunt of the new strains, with over 74 per cent of the nation's active cases in the two States.

While in the last month, the average weekly cases in Kerala have fluctuated between 34,800 and 42,000, weekly positivity in the State has ranged from 13.9 per cent to 8.9 per cent. In Maharashtra, too, in the last four weeks the cases have increased from 18,200 to 21,300 and weekly positivity has increased from 4.7 per cent to eight per cent. The areas of concern are mainly in suburban Mumbai where the weekly cases have risen by 19 per cent. In Nagpur, Amravati, Nashik, Akola and Yavatmal, the weekly cases have increased by 33 per cent, 47 per cent, 23 per cent, 55 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively. This has led to experts warning that the new strains could be highly transmissible and dangerous and could even cause re-infections in people who have developed antibodies to the virus. In fact, AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria has warned that herd immunity is a "myth" in the country because at least 80 per cent people need to have antibodies for the whole of the population to be protected. So what it effectively means for a poor country like ours, which is highly populated and where a large part of the populace does not have medical insurance, is that we cannot let our guard down till we have seen the last of this pandemic. Either we follow the rules or suffer yet another surge of the dreaded pandemic. The choice is ours.

PICTALK



A fisherman fishes through a hole in frozen Walden Pond in Massachusetts

AP

Harvesting votes

The BJP and the AAP, besides other satraps, are wooing Jat farmers in western UP

It's obvious for a party that has its origins in a mass movement to use a similar opportunity for expanding its base. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which rules the roost in Delhi, is now envisaging prop roots in the heartland of western Uttar Pradesh (UP), also called Jatland, riding on its support for the farmers' agitation. However, the road to power in the politically sensitive State is no cakewalk as, unlike in Delhi, here religion, regional, caste and traditional loyalties matter in elections. These factors play a decisive role at the hustings. Besides, if the anti-incumbency factor comes



into play in next year's Assembly elections, regional parties rather than the AAP are more likely to harvest it. Furthermore, any possible expansion of the party will be at the cost of satraps like the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), SP and BSP who count on their traditional vote banks. These regional players will never allow an "outsider" to dent their vote banks. Even if the AAP forges an alliance with these parties, they will most likely not offer it the "winnable" seats, certainly not at the expense of their vote bank.

Meanwhile, what leaves the BJP concerned after the Red Fort siege on Republic Day is that the agitation focus has shifted from Punjab's growers to

the Jat cultivators of western UP and Haryana. The BJP well understands that if the strong Jat community decides not to favour the party in the UP Assembly polls, its chances of retaining power would be next to impossible. It is for this reason that the BJP leaders, including Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan and many Ministers in the Yogi Adityanath Government, are wooing influential *khap* leaders. They will definitely leave no stone unturned to make the situation favourable for the party. On the other hand, AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal recently met farm leaders over lunch to discuss the ongoing protest against the Centre's farm laws. He will also address a Kisan *Mahapanchayat* in Meerut on February 28 to show solidarity with the farmers. The AAP has already revealed its ambition by announcing that in the next two years, it will contest elections in six States including UP and Uttarakhand. Well, there is no harm in trying one's luck but whether the party is able to leave any real imprint or would end up as an "also-ran", only time will tell. As of now, its prospects don't seem too promising, at least not in UP.

Questioning pullback from Afghanistan

Personal experience should guide Biden while deciding on US troop withdrawal commitments and imperatives in Afghanistan



BHOPIINDER SINGH

On January 3, 1973, 30-year-old Joe Biden got elected for the first time to the United States (US) Senate. On January 27, 1973, just 24 days later, a face-saving "Agreement on Ending the War and restoring Peace in Vietnam" was signed with full knowledge among the belligerent parties of what was inevitable. This sham "peace accord" enabled the battle-weary US troops to withdraw and the last troops were airlifted on April 30, 1975 — later that day, the US ally in southern Vietnam capitulated and its leader Thieu was left fuming: "The US did not keep its promise to help us fight for freedom. It was in the same fight that the US lost 50,000 of its young men." Then US President Gerald Ford argued about opening the doors to South Vietnamese who had fought on the US side. However, the young Biden insisted that the US had 'no obligation, moral or otherwise, to evacuate foreign nationals'. Biden's youthful bravado aside, the US troops' withdrawal from the unpopular war did not end as scripted in the purported "peace accord".

In 1995, the US troops escorted out the final remnant of the UN peacekeeping force from Somalia even as local militiamen were firing upon the withdrawing force. Banalities from the UN Secretary General, that efforts to bring peace and aid to Somalia would continue, flew in the face of the ground reality of advancing militias. Over 100 UN peacekeepers and 42 US troops had died before the final withdrawal. Importantly, the nemesis of the UN/US force i.e. ruthless warlord General Aidid was still alive, and gaining ground. Expectedly, General Aidid soon declared himself the President of Somalia and a full-fledged civil war broke out. By now, Biden was no longer a wet-behind-the-ears Senator and had already run for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination. Also, as a longtime member of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the immediate impact of troop withdrawal from Somalia would not have been lost on Biden.

Cut to 2011. By now the Vice-



President, Biden was personally entrusted the task of yet another troop pullout, this time from Iraq (Biden had earlier voted for authorising military force in 2002, then as the Chairman of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations). This withdrawal of 1,50,000 troops when the "enemy" was clearly not defeated, was to prove fatal. It created a sudden vacuum and the Al-Qaida metastasized into ISIS and, within a couple of months, the "caliphate" had emerged over most of the Syrian-Iraqi swathes. A new dimension of global terror, regional upheaval and religious extremism was born — all fingers pointed towards a premature withdrawal of US troops, among other factors. Importantly, Biden had then personally punted on one of the most controversial, sectarian and irresponsible locals, Nouri al-Maliki, to manage the show in the absence of US troops. The troops had to return to Iraq in 2014 to undo the damage of what was clearly a wrong decision to withdraw. Around the same time, Biden was pushing hard for a similar scale-down of the US troops in Afghanistan with a limited mandate of counterterrorism, like proposed in Iraq — however, President

BIDEN MUST BE GUIDED BY HIS MEMORY AND EXPERIENCES OF THE EARLIER WITHDRAWALS AND THE SUBSEQUENT COSTS TO THE US. ITS GLOBAL INTERVENTIONS HAVE RARELY SUCCEEDED, AND LEAVING MID-COURSE HAS WORSENED SITUATIONS

Barack Obama heeded the counsel of his Generals, who suggested otherwise.

In 2021, President Biden has inherited Donald Trump's decisions for complete withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and Somalia where, yet again, the "enemy" in the form of Taliban (and affiliates) and Al-Shabab, respectively, is waiting menacingly. Somalia withdrawal has already happened and the ravaged territory is again left precariously poised. Afghanistan as the hub of regional/global terror has an altogether different portent at stake. Clearly the deadline for complete withdrawal of the troops by May 1, 2021, is starting in the face for the force of about 2,500 troops (down from 1,00,000 in 2011) and the conflated "peace agreement" with the Taliban that underwrites such a withdrawal, remains routinely and supremely violated. The surge of marauding Taliban towards an embattled Kabul continues and herein to assume that 2,500 US troops would be able to withstand pressures that a one-time composition of 1,00,000 could not — let alone the situation when even this minuscule element departs as planned — is disastrous.

The practical logic of "counterterrorism level" pres-

ence does not hold good, as vetted by history. Blind adherence to commitments without assuming inevitabilities will deligitimise the cost in terms of lives lost, resources and rationales invested in the last 20 years, besides affording a terror-based sovereign. A recent bipartisan US Congress-appointed Afghan Study Group has concluded a damning assessment of the Taliban's own commitments towards conditionalities so far, and forewarned of impending bloody civil war, therefore suggesting the abandonment/extension of the May 1 timeline. Biden must be guided by his memory and experiences of the earlier US withdrawals and the subsequent costs to the US. Its global interventions have rarely succeeded, however, leaving mid-course has always made situations worse. Timing is everything and, as things stand in Afghanistan, currently it looks ominous. Biden must rethink withdrawal commitments and imperatives in Afghanistan — personal experience should advise him so.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INVOLVE PRIVATE PLAYERS IN VACCINATION

Sir—It is worrying that the number of COVID-19 infection cases is again on the rise and States like Maharashtra and Kerala are the worst affected. With new mutants of the deadly virus invading India, it seems that our vaccination programme will fall flat as against these new strains there are no vaccines developed yet and if it starts to rapidly spread, then we will be facing a crisis more devastating than the first wave of infection.

For rapid vaccination, the Government must involve private players, else the spread of infection will supersede the rate of vaccination and recoveries. The Government should ask the private companies to divert their funds under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for the cause. Rapid and mass vaccination is not possible without private participation.

Further, instead of developing different vaccines for different mutations, the scientists must try to develop a single vaccine which should work against all the present strains and also future possible mutants. Also, all States must cooperate in terms of logistics and resource sharing in fighting the pandemic. All the States who are failing to control the spread of the pandemic must be penalised heavily and, if required, the Centre should impose President's Rule citing extraordinary situation or health emergency. On the other hand, people must take all necessary precautions like wearing of masks, sanitising their hands, maintaining social distancing to keep the infection at bay. We cannot act carelessly at this juncture, it's a question of life and death.

M Raghuraman | Mumbai

SHAME ON CHINA AND THE PLA

Sir —This refers to the editorial 'Chinese checkers' (February 20). Finally, the Xi Jinping-led Chinese administration admitted the loss of four soldiers during the Galwan Valley faceoff with India in June last year. It is a matter of shame for China that it took the PLA eight months to recognise the demise of its soldiers and that must have sent an indication down to its

Govt has failed to control fuel prices



The sky-rocketing prices of petrol and diesel are also driving up the prices of essential commodities — as a consequential effect. The common man, already battered by the adverse effects of COVID-19 pandemic and stringent lockdown, has been put into unprecedented hardships by this price rise. The rising prices of commodities on the one hand and loss of income on the other, is a double whammy that

the common man is unable to cope with.

Even if we consider the previous Governments' failure to reduce the dependence on the import of crude oil, what's about the huge tax imposed by both Centre and State Governments at present? While the Centre claims the fuel prices are deregulated, but it is only in theory.

The oil price decontrol is a one-way street in India — when global prices go up, it is passed on to the consumer, who has to cough up more for every litre of fuel consumed. But when the reverse happens and prices go down, the Government — almost by default — slaps fresh taxes to ensure that it rakes in extra revenues, even as the consumer, who should have ideally benefited by way of lower pump prices, is short-changed and forced to either pay what he's already paying, or even more. The key beneficiary in this subversion of price decontrol is the Government. The consumer is a clear loser.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

ranks that the Chinese Army does not care for the martyrdom of its soldiers, unlike India which honours its martyrs.

These exchanges and clashes at the friction points are more of a perception battle rather than being a stage for "war", and it is more prudent to accept and lead swiftly with changing scenarios instead of hiding the facts, ignoring the truths and bearing the brunt later.

Such instances by the Army and administration might lower the morale of soldiers, which is evident on the Chinese side, but India is leading with high emotional quotient and the morale of our Army personnel is high as ever. It was also evident during the recent disengagement dialogue. The morale of our soldiers is much higher than that of their Chinese counterparts.

Nischai Vats | Sultanpur

ALL MUST WALK FOR HEALTH

Sir —It is not only for the elders to jog and walk but even youngsters and people of

middle age should walk. It helps in maintaining the cholesterol level and burning extra body fat. However, it is seen that many people even take doctors' advice for granted and do nothing to control their blood pressure and sugar levels except taking medicines.

Lifestyle diseases are very common these days and lakhs of people die because of it. The urban lifestyle and extreme work pressure has given us a convenient life but has taken a toll on our health.

The cause of concern is that lifestyle diseases are irreversible and if a person falls prey to these, s/he can lead a healthy life only by taking precaution and medicines. While COVID-19 has devastated our lives, it was witnessed that those having co-morbidities were more vulnerable. Lifestyle diseases coupled with COVID are dangerous.

N Soumik | Bhubaneswar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

We are correcting the faults of the previous regimes. If the policy is accurate, destiny would be perfect. Connectivity, health, education and infrastructure developments were ignored by the previous Governments.

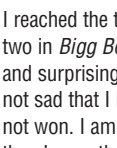


Prime Minister
— Narendra Modi



On February 26, 117,000 doses of Pfizer vaccines will arrive in the country and the vaccines will be administered to medical staff treating Coronavirus patients starting February 27.

South Korea PM
—Chung Sye-kyun



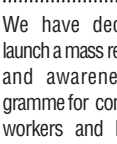
I reached the top two in *Bigg Boss* and surprisingly I am not sad that I have not won. I am more than happy that I have played the game gracefully.

Singer
—Rahul Vaidya



Life has always thrown challenges. Haryana has three spinners who have already played for India. I always knew that if I get an opportunity, I must make it count.

Cricketer
—Rahul Tewatia




We have decided to launch a mass registration and awareness programme for construction workers and labourers so that they can avail welfare schemes.

Delhi Deputy CM
—Manish Sisodia

FIRST COLUMN

MUST REDUCE MONEY POWER IN POLITICS


What is needed is political will and a consensus on reforms in the electoral system



KALYANI SHANKAR

Funding is vital for a political party and more so for one that is not in power. The Congress Party is going through a severe financial crunch and has sought help from its Chief Ministers and office-bearers. The forthcoming Assembly elections in Kerala, Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry have increased pressure on the party, which is in power only in Punjab, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry. The cash crunch in the 'Grand Old Party', which was in power for 56 years, is because of various reasons. It has been receiving fewer funds for the last six years because of a perception that the Congress is unlikely to resume its primacy. Second, the BJP has overtaken the Congress since 2014. Third, it is facing a leadership crisis and fourth, regional parties are also vying for donations. Fifth, any party's funding from private donors depends on public trust. Earlier the Congress had fund managers in each State, but this system has collapsed now due to central control.

The party is in need of funds to run State units, headquarters, pay salaries to the staff, for election campaigns, for building a new party office and so on. In 2018, it touched rock bottom and launched a 40-day booth committee fundraising programme in October appealing for funds. In fact, the Congress had to resort to crowdfunding.



Some of the most popular fundraising methods for political parties are individual and corporate funding. The BJP's phenomenal ability to capture a massive chunk of corporate donations is closely connected to the Congress' sharp deceleration and financial woes. The BJP has been occupying the pole position for long in tapping corporate contributions, even when the Congress was in power, with the saffron party allegedly cornering 90 per cent of the funding.

In recent years, the Modi Government has introduced three significant changes in political funding and parties can now receive foreign donations. Any company can give any amount of money to a political party and third, any individual, group of people or firm can donate money anonymously to a party through electoral bonds. These bonds have been available since January 2018 and the gap in corporate donations between the BJP and the Congress is growing wider. Whatever be the reason, such a major gap in political contributions between the ruling and the main Opposition party is not good for democracy.

The Congress received ₹139 crore as donations during 2019-2020, according to an Election Commission (EC) report. It is still the second most prosperous party but far behind the BJP. According to the Congress' constitution, the lawmakers and workers are supposed to pay one per cent of their income to the party but this does not happen. It needs to encourage its members to donate more and emulate Congress leader Kapil Sibal, who, in 2020 was the highest individual donor and had given ₹3 crore to the party fund. A political party may acquire funds through donations during rallies, relief funds, the sale of coupons and other miscellaneous allocations. However, if poll expenses are cut there is no need for a party to collect huge funds.

The EC has a long list of suggestions including reforms of political parties, auditing of accounts, checking black money and capping of anonymous donations to 20 per cent. Several panels have recommended poll reforms. This included the Goswami Committee (1990), the Vohra Committee (1993) and the Law Commission. One of the suggestions was State funding. The need of the hour is electoral reforms and it is time to push through these reforms to cleanse the electoral system so that money power becomes less. What is needed is political will and a consensus on reforms.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

Time for Govt to make a clear-cut choice

If the Centre allows gas producers to charge what they want, one shudders to even think of where the fertiliser and power subsidy bill will reach

The State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is forming a new wholly-owned subsidiary company with the objective of sourcing, marketing and trading natural gas. The company is already into exploration and production of gas (besides crude oil) which it sells to a variety of industries manufacturing fertilisers, power, chemicals, petrochemicals, CNG, gas for household consumption and so on.

So what has prompted it to set up a separate company solely for the purpose of trading and marketing of gas? It is not a simple case of business restructuring, but an attempt to circumvent control on the price of gas imposed by the Union Government. To understand how it seeks to do so, let us have a look at the extant pricing structure.

Under the pricing guidelines effective since November 2014, for all domestic supplies from fields given under the New Exploration and Licensing Policy (NELP), as also blocks given on nomination to ONGC and Oil India Limited (OIL) before the NELP, the price — call it normal price — is a weighted average of prices at four international locations in the US, the UK, Canada and Russia. It is revised every six months in a financial year and the current price, from October 1, 2020, is \$1.79 per million Btu (British thermal unit).

Also, under a special package for deep/ultra-deep, high-pressure/high-temperature (HP/HT) fields announced in March 2016, the supplies are allowed a market-based price, subject to a ceiling which is linked to the prices of alternate fuels, including fuel oil, naphtha and LNG. The current ceiling price is \$4.06 per million Btu, known as the "premium" price, the applicable price is arrived at based on competitive bidding — in which earlier, affiliates of gas producers were not allowed to participate. If the discovered price exceeds the ceiling, then the buyer pays only the ceiling price. From October 2020, the bar on participation of affiliates of the gas producing firm was removed. This means that the producer can buy its own gas (albeit through its affiliate) and sell it to third parties at a higher rate thereby circumventing the ceiling price. Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), which produces gas from the KG-D6 field in the Krishna Godavari basin, did precisely this. In an auction on February 5, offering 7.5 mmscmd (million standard cubic meter per day) of new gas from this field, its subsidiary Reliance O2C Limited bought 4.8 mmscmd at a price of \$4.06 per million Btu and sold it for \$6.7 per million Btu to GAIL India Limited (Ltd), Shell and others.

The ONGC wants to do a repeat of what Reliance has done by forming a wholly-owned subsidiary which will buy any new gas coming from the former's deep/ultra-deep fields such as KG-D5 also in the KG basin (projected at about 15 mmscmd) and in turn, sell it to firms such as Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) at a price much higher than \$4.06 per million Btu. Being a company whose majority is owned by the Centre, any decision by the ONGC Board could not have been taken without its prior approval. In other words, the Centre is amenable to the gas producer breaking the ceiling.



IF THE CENTRE FEELS THAT A HIGH PRICE TO GAS PRODUCERS IS THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE THEM DELIVER MORE SUPPLIES, THEN IT SHOULD REMOVE ALL CONTROLS ON FERTILISERS, POWER AND SO ON AND LET THEM ADJUST AS PER MARKET FORCES. IF IT CAN'T, IT SHOULD REGULATE GAS PRICES AND STRICTLY ADHERE TO THE NOVEMBER 2014 GUIDELINES

The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.



ing (set by none other than the Centre itself) and selling at a higher market discovered price. Put simply, the Government's initial decision to put a cap on the price gets nullified by its subsequent action of allowing an affiliate of the gas producer to bid.

The supplies from fields given under the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) (introduced in July 2017) are already eligible for market-based pricing. This also applies to unconventional hydrocarbons such as shale gas, coal bed methane (CBM) from the fields awarded under the NELP. Further, supplies from the so-called marginal fields (a total of 149) previously with the ONGC and OIL and recently auctioned to private entities, also qualify for complete freedom of pricing. Now, gas companies are building pressure on the Government to alter the mechanism of fixing even the normal price applicable to supplies from fields given under NELP and nomination blocks to the ONGC and OIL before the NELP. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas had agreed to look into this and even set up a committee. That was in October, 2020 when an idea was mooted to fix a floor price linked to the Japan-Korea Marker (JKM) — a benchmark index used to determine LNG tariff in North Asia — with a discount. This would have yielded a floor of \$4 million Btu.

Putting all the pieces together, one gets a sense that gas firms will

receive price on an escalating scale with a minimum of \$4 per million Btu and maximum, hitting any level depending on the demand-supply scenario. Is this what the Modi Government had planned for?

It may be worthwhile to go back to 2014 when it had undertaken a review of the gas pricing formula finalised by the then UPA Government (January 2014) which could not be implemented in view of impending general elections. Then Team Modi had categorically rejected market-based pricing, arguing that domestic supply of gas being far short of demand, this would result in high price, which users, particularly the fertiliser industry, power and city gas — they account for nearly three-fourth of total gas use — can't afford. In fertilisers, bulk of the gas is used for producing urea, whose maximum retail price (MRP) is controlled at a low level to make it affordable to farmers. The excess cost of supply is reimbursed as subsidy to manufacturers. If gas is priced high, with the MRP remaining unchanged, this will result in higher subsidy, which the Government wants to avoid.

Likewise, States want to pay less on power subsidy even as they order a big slice of it to be supplied at low tariff or even free to farmers and poor households, unrelated to cost.

These overarching considerations weighed heavily on the ruling dispensation when it decided

to stick to price regulation. For the same reason, it exercises control over the allocation of gas. Of the total supply, 31 per cent is given to power, 24 per cent to fertilisers and 22 per cent is allotted for city gas. Since then, nothing has changed as to warrant a move towards market-based pricing. Neither has the Government done away with control on urea's MRP nor do States have any plans to shed supply of free power to key constituents.

In this scenario, if the Government allows gas producers to charge what they want, one shudders to even think of where the fertiliser and power subsidy bill will reach (every one dollar per million Btu hike in gas price increases urea subsidy by about ₹4,000 crore annually). To accommodate the rising subsidy, it may have to further loosen the already relaxed fiscal deficit trajectory, outlined by the Finance Minister on February 1, for the next five years (6.8 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product in 2021-22 gliding down to 4.5 per cent in 2025-26).

The Government needs to make a clear-cut choice. If it feels that high price to gas producers is the only way to make them deliver more supplies, then it should remove all controls on fertilisers, power and so on and let them adjust as per market forces. If it can't, it should regulate gas prices and strictly adhere to the November 2014 guidelines — annulling all subsequent modifications.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I AM THE ONLY ONE WHO REFUSED TO DO ITEM NUMBERS AND BIG HERO FILMS WHICH MADE THE ENTIRE 'BULLYWOODIA' GANG TURN AGAINST ME. —ACTOR KANGANA RANAUT



LOVED YOUR DANCING IN THIS ITEM NUMBER IN THE FILM RAJJO. YOU ARE A GREAT PERFORMER AND A GREAT DANCER KANGANA. —ACTOR SWARA BHASKER




India must migrate to 'happy fuels' for a sustainable future

Energy independence needs to be a major focus area to shape the country as a DESH, i.e. having Development, Energy, Security and Harmony

Today, human societies have a wider array of options towards making lifestyle and economic choices. But it is becoming increasingly clear that all our choices need to remain within the 1.5° Celsius Paris Agreement goals, for shaping our pathways responsibly and leaving a cleaner environment as a legacy. All too often, investments in the environment are seen as costs but the reality is that spending on green initiatives now would be the biggest cost saving of all times. It is high time we realised that the economy is a subset of the environment and not vice versa and a green recovery will provide thriving economics and a safer planet for everyone.

World leaders have come together on the need to counter the challenges of climate change and the COP-26 International Climate Summit, scheduled to be held later this



ASHUTOSH KARNATAK

The writer is Member, Appellate Tribunal for Electricity. The views expressed are personal.

year, is going to be a pivotal moment for the world to agree on actionable steps to prevent the catastrophic warming of our planet. India, being the world's fourth-largest carbon emitter with a population of 1.3 billion people, requires significant strides in greening its energy ecosystem with more sustainable and benign technologies, including fast tracking the adoption of renewable resources for propelling socio-economic development.

Our country's transition to a fully sustainable energy system shall be enabled by the push for cleaner energy and decarbonisation of the energy sector, which accounts for a quarter of global emissions, will be vital for the same.

Fossil fuels make up 75 per cent of India's energy mix (with coal as the major contributor), while the spectrum of renewable power including hydro,

solar and wind energy with zero carbon emissions comprises just 10 per cent, the rest being biomass, urban and industrial waste power. A desired change in the energy mix will depend on innovative technologies, growing energy demand, strong wind and solar resources, policy support and growing investments to ensure smart, reliable, clean and affordable energy to over a billion people with an energy consumption rate growing faster than all major economies in the world.

One of the key success indicators of any country is positive balance of payments with exports in surplus to imports. Our economy is largely dependent upon the import of oil which is to the tune of ₹7.5 lakh crore annually (15 per cent of the total import bill). Reduction in this will go a long way in fostering India's energy



independence and a solid action plan is required to gradually migrate from the use of fossil fuels to renewable sources, including the usage of hydrogen in the energy sector. This will ultimately lead us to the basket of "Happy Fuels" i.e., a fuel bringing happiness to self, society and the nation by way of being economical, environment friendly, safer with more affordability and better reach.

To reduce petroleum use, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, air pollution, and con-

tribute to more diverse and efficient energy infrastructure, the Centre has focused on pioneering initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and new initiatives like 'One Sun, One World, One Grid', World Solar Bank and so on.

Technological progress is on the cusp of making decarbonisation economically viable. India's story on solar energy encapsulates the economic argument to switch to cleaner sources of power generation. The most recent auction for solar energy received bids of a record low of ₹2 per unit indicating that the transition to an economy with net-zero emissions can both be viable and sustainable. Green hydrogen as an energy resource is gaining momentum. Already major developed countries have forayed in this area, with Japan being the leader. Produced from renewable energy, green

hydrogen is a zero-emission multipurpose fuel used for long-term energy storage and helps decarbonise transport, heating and industrial processes such as steel and cement making. With huge renewable potential, India has a tremendous opportunity to explore the green hydrogen route to kick-off energy transition.

The Centre, in the recent Budget, announced the establishment of a Hydrogen Mission, which is a step in the right direction. Several initiatives to convert coal to gas are underway and migration to the hydrogen economy needs to be ramped up in the same way.

Significantly, businesses must maintain a balance to protect, sustain and enhance human and natural resources that will be needed in the future. Organisations are required to shift from wealth creation to value creation with

increased social responsibility. If we are to match the pace of energy development in the world, following a super-conscious approach and methods need to be adopted. We must develop a vision with a target to become energy independent by 2047; develop a hybrid model i.e., blending of conventional and renewable energy sources and formulate an action plan. There must be aggressive implementation for achieving scale and affordability, plus energy efficiency must be a Key Performance Area of organisations. Schools, colleges, civil society and organisations should partner and engage Generation Next in making a change for a better tomorrow.

Energy independence needs to be a major focus area to shape India as a DESH i.e., having Development, Energy, Security and Harmony.

Investors lose ₹3.7 L cr as markets tank



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investor wealth slumped by Rs 3.7 lakh crore on Monday, as the equity market recorded its biggest single-day fall in two months.

At the close of trade, the total market capitalisation of BSE listed companies eroded by Rs 3,71,883.82 crore to Rs 2,00,26,498.14 crore.

The total market capitalisation of BSE listed companies stood at Rs 2,03,98,381.96 crore on February 19.

Spiralling lower for the fifth straight session, the Sensex

plummeted 1,145 points or 2.25 per cent to close at 49,744.32. The broader NSE Nifty sank 306.05 points or 2.04 per cent to finish at 14,675.70.

“The market failed to show resilience to stay above the Nifty 50 Index level of 14,750. While it is subject to further price action evolution, the technical factors shifted today to support a further correction in the future,” said Ashish Biswas, Head of Technical Research at CapitalVia Global Research Limited.

Biswas further said any

Global shares mostly lower as investors wary over stimulus

AP ■ TOKYO

Global shares were mostly lower on Monday, with Japan's benchmark rising but most others slipping despite hopes for a recovery from the coronavirus pandemic with the global rollout of vaccines.

France's CAC 40 slipped 1.1 per cent in early trading to 5,708.39, while Germany's DAX dove 1.3 per cent to 13,816.87. Britain's FTSE 100 declined 1.1 per cent to 6,554.12. U.S. Shares were to open lower, with the future

contract for the Dow industrials sliding 0.7 per cent to 31,224. The S&P 500 future fell nearly 1 per cent to 3,865.12.

Benchmarks rose in Japan but fell in South Korea, Australia and China. Investors remain focused on the future of global economies badly hit by COVID-19 and when and whether there will be enough stimulus to fix it.

But the U.S. USD 1.9 trillion economic package proposed by President Joe Biden also heralds hope for export-

reliant regional economies.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 0.5 per cent to finish at 30,156.03.

South Korea's Kospi dipped 0.9 per cent to 3,079.75. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged 0.2 per cent lower to 6,780.90. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 1.1 per cent to 30,319.83, while the Shanghai Composite dropped 1.5 per cent to 3,642.44.

Japan began administering vaccines for COVID-19 last week.

Sector-wise, BSE energy, realty, IT, teck, auto and capital goods indices skidded up to 2.92 per cent, while metal and basic materials ended with gains.

Monthly collections in retail pools of NBFCs, HFCs touch pre-moratorium level: Icra

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic rating agency Icra on Monday said the monthly collections, including overdues in its rated retail loan pools originated largely by NBFCs and HFCs, have reached pre-moratorium levels as of December 2020.

However, for its rated microfinance players, collections are yet to reach the pre-moratorium levels.

In March last year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had announced moratorium on repayment of term loans in order to provide relief to borrowers impacted by the COVID-19 related disruptions. Initially, the moratorium was allowed till May 31 but was later extended till August 31.

The agency in a report

said the rebound in collections of retail loan pools originated largely by non-bank finance companies and housing finance players has been augmented by the focused recovery efforts, increased use of advanced digital platforms/payment gateways by borrowers.

The rebound in economic and business activities has also improved borrowers' repayment capability, it said.

The monthly collection efficiency in the agency's rated home loan (HL) and loan against property (LAP) pools demonstrated sturdy performance during the moratorium period.

Its rated CV and SME loan pools have also shown a steady recovery

in collections till December 2020 on account of deployment

of additional resources and staffs towards collections along with adoption of new digital/IT technologies by the originators and rebound in business activities.

Icra's Vice President and Head (structured finance ratings) Abhishek Dafria said despite the presence of prevalent challenges such as local political hindrances and natural calamities in the microfinance segment, the collections in ICRA-rated microfinance pools saw a healthy recovery after dipping to the lower single digits in April 2020.

However, the collections have yet not achieved the pre-moratorium level due to political interferences especially in North-Eastern states like Assam as well as recent floods in certain geographies.

CCI approves stake purchase by Panatone Finvest in Tata Comm

New Delhi: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Monday said it has approved acquisition of shares of Tata Communications Ltd (TCL) by Panatone Finvest Ltd.

The proposed deal envisages acquisition of shareholding not exceeding 26.12 per cent by Panatone Finvest Ltd in Tata Communications Ltd (erstwhile VSNL).

Panatone Finvest Ltd is a non-deposit taking core investment arm of Tata Sons.

The Government of India wants to divest its 26.12 per cent equity stake in TCL. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on 30 December 2020 approved sale of stake in TCL.

After the acquisition of shares, Panatone Finvest would

increase its shareholding from 48.87 per cent to such shareholding not exceeding 74.99 per cent. Commission approves acquisition of shares of Tata Communications Limited by Panatone Finvest (A Systematically Important Non-Deposit Taking Core Investment Company of Tata Sons), the fair trade regulator said in a tweet.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	14999.05	15010.16	14635.05	14675.70	-306.05	
JSWSTEEL	396.15	413.85	396.15	407.00	11.85	
ADANIPORTS	658.80	678.50	649.00	672.00	13.20	
HINDALCO	310.00	328.00	310.00	314.60	6.60	
TATASTEEL	672.90	697.90	670.85	680.00	9.30	
ONGC	105.90	108.55	105.30	106.15	1.05	
GRASIM	1221.50	1235.00	1215.00	1226.00	8.00	
BRITANNIA	3350.00	3373.75	3317.30	3338.00	6.80	
HDFCBANK	1545.05	1573.90	1539.45	1542.00	2.90	
KOTAKBANK	1938.75	1962.05	1931.60	1939.25	0.50	
HEROMOTOCO	3400.00	3423.95	3350.15	3375.10	-14.60	
HINDUNILVR	2205.00	2205.00	2161.60	2166.45	-14.65	
ULTRACEMICO	6215.00	6284.95	6168.65	6155.50	-53.50	
ASIANPAINT	2428.75	2448.00	2380.00	2387.30	-29.15	
DIVISLAB	3510.00	3563.00	3475.00	3479.25	-43.95	
BAJAJ-AUTO	4010.00	4040.00	3926.85	3946.50	-54.60	
TITAN	1425.00	1433.00	1396.00	1405.50	-20.05	
NESTLEIND	16411.05	16530.00	16024.60	16104.00	-272.40	
ITC	212.00	212.00	206.00	206.95	-4.00	
INFY	1295.00	1308.55	1260.00	1264.15	-27.15	
BHARTIARTL	582.00	584.90	568.00	569.00	-12.35	
GAIL	145.00	145.00	142.00	142.30	-1.10	
SHREECEM	2765.00	2779.00	2697.80	2697.60	-39.40	
COALINDIA	138.85	139.40	135.10	136.05	-3.85	
UPL	556.00	560.95	556.55	559.65	-13.15	
CIPLA	811.40	817.50	786.05	788.00	-19.35	
IOC	97.50	98.50	95.10	95.20	-2.35	
ICICIBANK	622.00	629.30	607.30	608.95	-15.10	
NTPC	104.30	106.30	101.40	101.60	-2.60	
BAJAJFINSV	10230.00	10249.20	9960.15	9984.80	-265.65	
BPCL	429.30	435.25	418.00	418.80	-11.20	
SUNPHARMA	608.00	610.85	590.00	591.50	-15.80	
BAJFINANCE	5480.00	5538.70	5334.75	5350.00	-147.95	
WIPRO	430.70	432.85	416.00	417.90	-12.05	
SBIN	400.60	401.00	385.65	387.95	-11.60	
HDFCLIFE	711.00	713.65	688.00	690.00	-20.65	
TATAMOTORS	312.35	313.90	302.15	302.60	-9.25	
HDFC	2741.30	2741.30	2638.15	2655.00	-86.30	
POWERGRID	232.50	233.90	223.60	224.50	-7.70	
HCLTECH	949.50	951.45	916.05	918.60	-31.55	
MARUTI	7323.00	7325.00	7056.00	7060.00	-263.00	
IT	1510.00	1511.95	1447.10	1453.70	-55.10	
INDUSINDBK	1064.95	1067.10	1018.00	1025.65	-40.25	
TCS	3906.00	3906.00	3843.15	3855.50	-116.35	
SBILIFE	880.00	885.00	845.10	847.95	-33.55	
AXISBANK	749.65	749.85	715.00	720.50	-29.15	
RELIANCE	2080.00	2089.90	1994.95	1999.10	-81.20	
DREDDY	4780.00	4726.95	4443.15	4478.95	-202.50	
M&M	800.00	882.50	833.10	838.20	-41.05	
TECHM	998.95	1011.00	941.90	947.40	-46.55	
EICHERMOT	2586.10	2590.00	2450.00	2450.75	-133.90	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	34938.25	35024.55	34192.15	34340.75	-566.15	
INDUSTOWER	263.00	270.65	242.60	246.40	-5.65	
ADANI GREEN	1103.00	1152.05	1103.00	1139.60	-21.90	
PGHIL	1298.00	1315.00	1280.25	1309.95	-17.25	
HINDZINC	302.45	311.90	302.40	304.50	4.00	
NDC	119.00	121.40	117.40	119.40	1.45	
MOTHERSUMI	214.00	221.00	212.90	214.95	1.45	
TATACONSUM	619.00	623.55	612.00	618.95	2.00	
PETRONET	258.00	258.00	250.40	251.95	-0.30	
BAJAJHLNG	3612.00	3625.55	3572.45	3605.00	-6.00	
ABBOTINDIA	14780.00	14789.65	14485.05	14665.05	-51.25	
ITL	3822.00	3854.95	3738.15	3785.15	-35.50	
COLPAL	1555.25	1579.90	1536.40	1540.00	-14.80	
SBICARD	1032.40	1043.55	1013.00	1016.00	-9.90	
M&M	877.00	882.00	832.95	836.90	-9.00	
MARICO	428.35	433.45	415.60	420.90	-4.35	
ADANITRANS	770.00	776.45	745.00	762.00	-8.15	
MUTHOOTFIN	1309.70	1324.60	1278.70	1280.00	-17.00	
HAVELLS	1141.00	1154.65	1117.10	1122.75	-16.25	
UBL	1207.85	1220.45	1192.65	1200.00	-17.40	
HINDPETRO	245.00	248.30	239.50	240.40	-3.60	
PIDILITIND	1778.00	1790.35	1730.00	1751.00	-30.35	
OFSS	367.40	373.20	359.05	369.20	-57.35	
BERGEPAINT	731.00	743.95	725.80	727.30	-13.95	
ICICI	1495.50	1498.00	1452.25	1465.05	-28.70	
BIOCON	405.00	406.90	395.25	396.05	-7.95	
SIEMENS	1836.00	1845.95	1797.75	1801.65	-37.05	
GODREJCP	713.00	718.45	694.00	695.00	-14.70	
BANKBARODA	91.40	93.75	88.80	89.25	-1.95	
MCDOWELL-N	559.15	559.95	543.00	544.10	-12.25	
ACC	1749.80	1754.90	1689.65	1704.00	-43.35	
PEL	1835.00	1839.90	1773.55	1792.60	-47.90	
HDFC AMC	2910.10	2957.55	2855.00	2879.20	-77.05	
PFC	124.55	126.65	120.00	121.00	-3.30	
TORNTPHARM	2501.00	2501.65	2428.00	2430.00	-67.00	
BANDHANBNK	336.80	339.15	321.95	327.95	-9.30	
DLF	300.00	304.50	291.20	292.05	-8.55	
PNB	42.55	42.85	40.20	40.85	-1.20	
DABUR	5147.75	5173.30	497.05	498.50	-14.95	
AMBAJUCEM	275.50	276.90	265.65	266.40	-8.90	
LUPIN	1027.00	1029.00	985.00	987.90	-33.80	
AIKEM	2868.50	2879.90	2725.00	2777.00	-98.50	
NAUKRI	5154.00	5164.00	4980.00	4983.55	-186.60	
INDIGO	1565.05	1565.80	1502.30	1508.10	-57.70	
DMAT	3093.55	3108.40	2950.00	2983.00	-118.65	
CONCOR	568.90	568.95	542.50	547.00	-21.95	
ICICIRULI	482.00	490.00	462.55	465.60	-19.85	
AUROPHARMA	886.00	890.70	849.00	850.60	-36.45	
CAALHC	450.00	451.00	431.25	433.85	-18.85	
BOSCHLTD	1509.85	1539.85	1481.00	1484.00	-74.45	
GICRE	208.30	224.00	184.55	184.55	20.50	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
TATAMOTORS	311.55	314.00	302.15	304.15
RELIANCE	2080.00	2089.70	1995.10	2007.40
IDEA	10.91	11.24	10.64	10.76
SBIN	401.00	401.00	385.60	389.55
INDUSINDBK	1061.35	1066.85	1015.30	1021.80
POWERGRID	234.00	234.00	223.50	224.90
TCS	3090.00	3090.00	2945.50	2958.75
TATASTEEL	672.15	697.10	671.00	683.60
BAJFINANCE	5476.10	5538.60	5335.00	5379.60
DFCIRSTBT	63.00	63.85	60.65	61.45
TATACHEM	627.30	643.10	615.65	636.70
INFY	1293.00	1308.00	1260.10	1264.70
VEDL	191.50	208.15	191.50	203.75
PNB	42.65	42.85	40.15	41.15
HINDALCO	308.10	328.00	308.10	315.85
ADANIIPORTS	656.55	678.40	651.00	673.55
MARUTI	7321.00	7321.00	7058.00	7087.15
AXISBANK	749.35	750.50	715.00	719.65
ADANIENIT	788.60	812.70	781.00	805.65
DREDDY	4740.00	4725.00	4380.00	4461.85
HDFCBANK	1541.00	1573.80	1539.10	1548.65
COALINDIA	139.00	139.30	135.05	136.15
ITC	211.60	212.25	206.00	207.10
M&MFIN	208.85	213.00	199.95	207.50
JINDALSTEL	321.00	322.25	318.95	320.90
HSCIL	46.20	49.30	42.00	43.50
AUROPHARMA	886.20	889.95	850.00	858.10
CROMPTON	398.80	399.20	377.30	386.85
TATAPOWER	91.00	92.50	89.00	90.00
HAVELLS	1135.20	1154.95	1119.00	1128.00
BANKBARODA	91.30	93.70	88.80	89.55
EICHERMOT	2585.00	2585.85	2451.00	2487.50
TECHSUMI	214.10	221.10	213.00	215.35
L&T&HF	100.10	100.80	95.00	95.95
MOTHERS	1002.90	1010.80	942.30	950.35
ICICIBANK	622.75	629.25	607.50	609.85
PVR	1449.40	1457.95	1360.10	1378.85
JUBLFOOD	2970.00	3127.25	2950.00	3113.55
HDFC	2735.45	2739.80	2693.50	2652.30
MANAPPURAM	172.15	174.20	164.50	167.30
ASIANPAINT	2425.00	2448.00	2380.00	2387.15

China asks US to halt support to separatist forces in Tibet, HK, Xinjiang

Beijing: China on Monday urged the US to stop “smearing” the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) and its one-party political system, lift sanctions on trade and halt Washington’s backing of “separatist forces” in Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

In his annual speech at the Lanting Forum, focussing on China-US ties, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the Biden administration should “adjust” the headline policy pursued by former President Donald Trump towards Beijing to check its growing influence. “We have no intention to challenge or replace the United States. We are ready to have peaceful coexistence and seek common development with the United States,” Wang said. “Likewise, we hope the United States will respect China’s core interests, national dignity, and rights to development. We urge the United States to stop smearing the CPC and China’s political sys-

tem, stop conniving at or even supporting the erroneous words and actions of separatist forces for ‘Taiwan independence’, and stop undermining China’s sovereignty and security on internal affairs concerning Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet,” he said.

“We hope that the US side will adjust its policies as soon as possible, among others, remove unreasonable tariffs on Chinese goods, lift its unilateral sanctions on Chinese companies and research and educational institutes, and abandon irrational suppression of China,” he said.

The relations between China and the US are at an all time low. The two countries are currently engaged in a bitter confrontation over various issues, including trade, the origins of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the communist giant’s aggressive military moves in the disputed South China Sea and human rights. US President Joe Biden

who spoke to his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping for over two hours in his first phone call on February 11 later said there would be “repercussions” for China’s human rights abuses and he made the message clear to his Chinese counterpart in his talks.

In a CNN town hall on February 17, Biden said he stressed to Xi during their long conversation that the US would continue to assert its role as a voice for human rights on the world stage, including at the United Nations and other international agencies.

“We must speak up for human rights. It’s who we are,” the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post quoted Biden as saying.

“There will be repercussions for China, and [Xi] knows that,” he said. China is trying very hard to become the world leader and to get that moniker, and to be able to do that, they have to gain the confidence of other countries. **PTI**

Mauritius, India share common ambition of working for safe, secure Indian Ocean: PM Jugnauth

PTI ■ PORT LOUIS

Mauritius and India have the common ambition of working for a safe, secure and prosperous Indian Ocean, Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth said on Monday after his meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during which they discussed a range of issues, including ensuring peace and respect for the rule of law in the strategically-vital Indo-Pacific region.

Jaishankar arrived here on Sunday from the Maldives on the last leg of his two-nation tour.

“This morning I had a very fruitful meeting with Jaishankar where we reviewed several aspects of our cooperation and relationship and how best to move forward,” Jugnauth while jointly addressing the media with Jaishankar.

Mauritius and India remain committed to working together bilaterally and as regional partners to enhance capacity for sustainable management of marine resources and to address challenges in the maritime domains, he said.

“We have the common ambition and responsibility of

preserving and working for a safe, secure and the prosperous Indian Ocean,” he said.

“Ensuring peace and respect for the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region was one of the issues which I discussed with Dr Jaishankar during our meeting today,” Jugnauth said, in a veiled reference to China.

India, the US and several other world powers have been talking about the need to ensure a free, open and thriving Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China’s rising military manoeuvring in the region.

The Chinese military is also actively eying the strategic Indian Ocean region to step up Beijing influence.

China claims nearly all of the disputed South China Sea, though Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam all claim parts of it. Beijing has built artificial islands and military installations in the South China Sea.

“I welcome the renewed commitment of the QUAD countries to upholding a rules-based international order under their respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, the rule of law, transparency, freedom of navigation in the international waters and peaceful res-

olution of disputes,” Jugnauth said.

“Adherence to these principles is crucial to the maintenance of peace and friendliness among nations based on the respect for the rule of law... I have no doubt that the visit of Dr Jaishankar will add a new impetus to the excellent relationship between Mauritius and India,” he said.

Quad ministerial is an informal grouping of four countries, namely, Australia, India, Japan and the United States.

In 2017, the four countries gave shape to the long-pending proposal of setting up the “Quad” or the Quadrilateral coalition to counter China’s aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region. “We have converging views on the need to work together to strengthen the rules-based international order, global governance and institutions including those of the United Nations system,” Jugnauth said.

“India is helping more than 50 countries, including Mauritius, to boost space technology. We continue to look to India as an indispensable partner in building up air capabilities to derive benefits from space technology,” he said.

Jaishankar meets Mauritius Foreign Minister, reviews ‘excellent’ bilateral relations

Port Louis: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday called on Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth and held talks with Foreign Minister M Alan Ganoo during which they reviewed the “excellent” bilateral relations and successful development partnership.

Jaishankar, who arrived here in India’s strategically key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean region on Sunday night from the Maldives on the last leg of his two-nation tour, also reiterated that India will be a ready partner in Mauritius’ economic recovery and revival efforts.

“Delighted to begin Mauritius visit with a meeting with FM Alan Ganoo. Reviewed our excellent bilateral relations & successful development partnership. Reiterated that India will be a ready partner in Mauritius’ economic recovery & revival efforts,” Jaishankar tweeted.

Later, Jaishankar called on Prime Minister Jugnauth, who is of Indian-origin, and handed him over 100,000 additional doses of commercially procured ‘Made in India’ COVID-19 vaccines.

“India’s helping hand - always over the horizon. Symbolically handed over 100,000 additional doses of commercially procured Made in India Covid vaccines,” he tweeted. He also conveyed warm greetings from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Prime Minister Jugnauth. “Commend management of the pandemic under his leadership,” Jaishankar tweeted.

“Comprehensive discussions on the status of implementation of various infrastructure projects. Appreciate the efficiency of the Mauritius side in taking them forward,” he said in another tweet. He will also call on President Prithvirajsing Roopun, who is also of Indian-origin.

During his visit, Jaishankar will review all aspects of bilateral relations, ongoing implementation of various infrastructure projects being carried out by India in Mauritius, and hold discussions on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest including India’s assistance to Mauritius. **PTI**

Italian ambassador among 3 killed in attack in Congo

Kinshasa (Congo): The Italian ambassador to Congo, an Italian carabinieri police officer and their Congolese driver were killed on Monday in an attack on a U.N. Convoy in an area that is home to myriad rebel groups, the Foreign Ministry and local people said.

The ambush occurred as the convoy was travelling from Goma, Congo’s eastern regional capital, to visit a World Food Program school feeding project in Rutshuru, the U.N. Agency said in a statement.

WFP said it was seeking information from local authorities, as the ambush occurred on a road that had previously been cleared for travel without security escorts.

Luca Attanasio, Italy’s ambassador to the country since 2017, carabinieri officer Vittorio Iacovacci and their driver were killed. Other members of the convoy were injured, WFP said.

The attack occurred in the territory of Nyiragongo, in North Kivu, the same area, known as the “three antennas,” where two Britons were kidnapped by unidentified armed men in 2018, said Mambo Kaway, president of a local civil society group.

“There were five people aboard the vehicle, including the Italian ambas-

sador,” Kaway said. “The driver died after being shot with several bullets, and others were wounded,” he said.

“The situation is very tense,” he added. The wounded were taken to a nearby UN Hospital. The North Kivu governor, Carly Nzanu Kasivita, said that the vehicles were taken hostage and escorted into the bush and that when local people saw them, they alerted the authorities.

The Congolese army and park guards for Virunga National Park came to the rescue, he said.

“There was an exchange of fire. The attackers fired at the bodyguard and the ambassador,” the governor said, adding that the ambassador later died from his wounds. Attanasio, a 43-year-old career diplomat, leaves a wife and three young children. The attack, a few kilometers north of the regional capital of Goma, was just next to the Virunga National Park. Last month gunmen shot and killed at least six rangers in the Rutshuru area of the park.

Marie Tumba Nzenza, Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent her condolences and promised the Italian government that the Congolese government would do all it could to investigate and find out who is behind the killings. **AP**

UN to rich nations: Don’t undermine COVAX vaccine program

Berlin: The head of the World Health Organization pleaded with rich countries on Monday to check before ordering additional Covid-19 vaccine shots for themselves whether that undermines efforts to get vaccine shots to poorer nations.

Wealthy nations have snapped up several billion vaccine doses while some countries in the developing world have little or none.

European nations have given financial support to the U.N.-backed COVAX effort to get vaccines to the world’s most vulnerable people and are considering sharing some of their own doses — though they haven’t specified when.

On Friday, leaders of the Group of Seven industrial powers said they would accelerate global vaccine development and deployment and support “affordable and equitable access to vaccines” and treatments for COVID-19. They cited a collective USD 7.5 billion from the G-7 to U.N.-backed efforts.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus thanked the G-7 countries for their “significant” pledges.

But he said after talks Monday with German President Frank-

Walter Steinmeier that “even if you have the money, if you cannot use the money to buy vaccines ... having the money doesn’t mean anything.”

He said some rich countries’ approaches to manufacturers to secure more vaccines are “affecting the deals with COVAX, and even the amount that was allocated for COVAX was reduced because of this.” He didn’t name those countries or give other details.

Tedros added that rich countries need to “cooperate in respecting the deals that COVAX did” and make sure before they seek more vaccines that their requests don’t undermine those deals.

“But I don’t think they’re asking that question,” he said.

Tedros, who has previously warned that the world faces a “catastrophic moral failure” if COVID-19 vaccines are not distributed fairly, said he understands the political pressures leaders in high-income countries face.

They should, he added, tell voters that “the best way to protect you is not only to vaccinate you, but vaccinate the rest of the world, share the vaccine with the rest of the world.” **AP**

Dubai’s Emirates seeks key role in global vaccine delivery

Dubai: The belly of the Emirates plane that touched down in Dubai early Sunday from Brussels was stuffed with precious cargo: tens of thousands of doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

The arrival was part of an effort by the Middle East’s biggest airline to pivot from shuttling people to shipping cargo — and grabbing a central role in the global vaccine delivery race.

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to clobber the aviation industry, the disaster has hit long-haul carriers like Emirates hardest. So the airline is ferrying around the very substance it hopes will get passengers back into its seats and revive the flagging travel sector.

Over the weekend, workers scurried around the tarmac at the Dubai International Airport, unloading several aluminum containers crammed with vaccine vials and dry ice into a vast fluorescent-lit cargo terminal.

The key transit hub, previously used for the global shipment of pharmaceuticals, is now at the center of a growing vaccine supply network based in the United Arab Emirates.

State-owned carrier Emirates already has delivered millions of doses to Latin America, South Africa and Egypt from major manufacturing hubs in India and elsewhere. **AP**

Dadra & Nagar Haveli MP found hanging in hotel

Suicide note found in Mumbai hotel

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a shocking development, seven-time Lok Sabha member from the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli Mohan S Delkar, 58, was found hanging in a hotel in the Marine Drive in South Mumbai on Monday.

Survived by wife, a son and a daughter, Delkar is suspected to have committed suicide and his body was found in his hotel room on Monday morning. The investigators have recovered a suicide note from the crime scene.

The leader of the Bharatiya Navshakti Party had checked into the Sea Green Hotel located along the Sea facing Marine



Police officials leave the hotel where P Mohanbhai Delkar was found dead in Mumbai on Monday

PTI

Drive in south Mumbai.

“A suicide note (written in Gujarati) was found at the spot. The body has been sent for post-mortem.” Deputy Commissioner of Police and Mumbai Police spokesperson Chaitanya S said.

Known popularly as Mohanbhai, Delkar was a member of the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and

Justice and a member of the Consultative Committee, Ministry of Home Affairs.

He represented the Dadra Nagar Haveli seat in the Lok Sabha for seven terms — the earlier being in 1989 as an Independent, 1991 and 1996 from the Congress, 1998 as a BJP candidate, 1999 as an Independent and in 2004 on Bharatiya Navshakti Party, a political outfit floated by him.

In 2009 and 2014, he lost the polls to BJP’s Nathubhai Patel but won the 2019 polls as an Independent. In 2020, he forged an alliance with the Janata Dal (United) for local body polls.

The body has been sent to the State-run Sir JJ Hospital for post-mortem. After the post-mortem, his mortal remains will be taken to his residence at Silvassa.

After learning about the discovery of Delkar’s body, top police officials including Joint Commissioner of Police (Law & Order) Vishwas Nangre Patil, Additional Commissioner of Police (South Region) Satyanarayan Chaudhary rushed to the hotel to supervise the investigations.

A champion of tribal rights, Delkar began his career as a trade union leader in Silvassa. Later, he started Adivasi Vikas Sangathan for the tribals in 1985.

Delkar’s father Sanjibhai Delkar was elected to Lok Sabha from Dadra and Nagar Haveli in 1967 as Congress candidate, joined Morarji Desai’s NCO faction when the party split in 1969 and lost 1971 Lok Sabha election as NCO candidate.

FROM PAGE 1

CBI QUIZZES ABHISHEK KIN...

Meanwhile, CPI(M) Politburo member Md Salim on Monday questioned the timing of heightened CBI and ED activities in scam cases particularly at a time when the Left is scheduled to hold its rally at the historic Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on February 28.

“Nothing will be done to anyone and no investigation will reach its logical conclusion because they are all hand-in-glove... it is only being done to divert attention from the Left rally and the foot-fall at Brigade ... the same thing was done ahead of the 2019 general elections when the Left had organised a huge rally. On the same day the CBI started raiding the house of then Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajib Kumar only to let him off later,” Salim said.

PUDUCHERRY GOVT FALLS ...

TNCC President K S Alagiri said people will teach a lesson to BJP in the coming elections in the union territory (UT) for its “anti-people” activities.

The Opposition, led by NR Congress chief and Leader of Opposition N Rangasamy, said it has no plans to stake claim to form Government as of now and that discussions would be held.

Soundararajan had last week summoned the Assembly’s one-day special session on Monday, mandating its agenda should be confined only to trust vote.

After a fresh bout of resignations in the Congress camp on Sunday, the party position in the Assembly stood as follows: Congress nine, including Speaker; DMK two; All-India NR Congress seven; AIADMK four; BJP three (all nominated with voting rights) and one independent who has supported the Government. There are seven vacancies.

Those who had resigned included former Ministers A Namassivayam (now in BJP) and Malladi Krishna Rao. On Monday, after mounting an attack on the Narendra Modi-led Centre and former Lt Governor Kiran Bedi with whom he had frequent run-ins on administrative matters, Narayanasamy led his colleagues out of the Assembly after a debate over the

rights of nominated members to vote during the floor test.

Although in power in Maharashtra in alliance with the Shiv Sena and NCP, and in Jharkhand with the JMM, the grand old party is at best a second fiddle in these two major States. Congress’ electoral decline has remained more or less consistent since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, with the party losing power in Madhya Pradesh last year after the exit of stalwart Jyotiraditya Scindia over to the BJP.

Internal factionalism cost the Congress dearly in MP with Scindia’s desertion resulting in the fall of the Kamal Nath-led Government there.

BUDGET ALL-INCLUSIVE, REPRESENTS ...

making villages digital,” he said.

Referring to the importance of financial disciplines due to shortfall in revenue collection during the Covid period, the chief minister said that the budget would expedite the efforts towards all-inclusive and integrated development of various sections while realising the concept of ‘Ease of Living’ and ‘Self-reliant Uttar Pradesh’ on the ground. He said the budget size of 2021-22 was 7.3 per cent more than the budget of 2020-21 fiscal. He said despite the shortfall in revenue collection due to the Covid pandemic, the fiscal deficit was estimated to be 4.1 per cent under FRBM (fiscal responsibility and budget management) Act. He said though the Centre had amended the FRBM Act and the state government had the fiscal space to increase the deficit up to 4.5 per cent of the GSDP, it was kept below that level.

Yogi lauded the provision for including farmers’ families and ‘bataidar’ (sharecropper) in the Kisan Accident Insurance Scheme. Similarly, he said, it provided social security to about one crore labourers in the unorganised sector. He said each worker of the unorganised sector would be registered and provided a social security cover of ₹ 2 lakh.

Yogi Adityanath said the *Mukhyamantri Saksham Suposhan Yojana* for anemic children, establishment of Sainik Schools and state universities in each division, constructing medical colleges under the P-P-P Model in unserved districts, setting up of law university in Prayagraj, extension of *Jal Jeevan Mission* to all the districts, development of road connectivity in rural areas, new

policies in the aviation sector, including international airports in Ayodhya and Kushinagar, development of destitute *‘gauvansh’* in collaboration with NGOs at panchayat level and proposal for establishment of tribal museum in Lucknow, were the most thoughtful schemes which promised to take the state to new heights.

The chief minister also referred to the enthusiasm of the youth and parents towards the newly-launched *Chief Minister Abhyudaya Yojana* for the youth appearing in competitive examinations like civil services, NEET, JEE.

He termed the proposal to provide tablets to youths under the scheme as very useful and said that a large number of youth would be benefited from it.

COVID UPSURGE AFTER NOV HINTS...

In Maharashtra, the worst-affected State, the seven-day moving average of new cases was 5,230 this morning — the highest since 5,576 on December 2. This morning 6,971 new cases were reported in 24 hours — the most since October 24, when 7,347 were detected.

In Kerala, the second worst-affected State, the seven-day moving average of new cases was 4,361 this morning and 4,070 new cases were reported in 24 hours.

As on February 22, the vaccination coverage was 1,11,16,854 through 2,32,317 sessions. These include 63,97,849 HCWs (1st dose), 9,67,852HCWs (2nd dose) and 37,51,153FLWs (1st dose).

The second dose of Covid-19 vaccination started on February 13 for those beneficiaries who have completed 28 days after receipt of the 1st dose. Vaccination of the frontline workers started on February 2. A study published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health titled ‘Exploratory Analysis of Demographic Factors and the Temporal Evolution of covid-19 in India - suggested that highly urbanised States including Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu are vulnerable during the current pandemic with incoming data from India further showing that hyper-urbanised cities like Mumbai and Delhi are hit hardest, requiring additional health infrastructure sustainability amid challenges in the social environment.

DOCYARD

DR ANIL RAHEJA

Orthopedic Expert

APOLLO SPECTRA

KAROL BAGH, NEW DELHI



Stand up for your back



Do you spend a lot of time working from home or using electronic gadgets? Do you have neck pain owing to the constant usage of electronic devices such as computers, laptops, or phones? Are you sleeping in the wrong position or lifting heavy objects? Then, you will be shocked to know that all these habits can aggravate your back and neck pain. This will further rob your peace of mind by giving you a tough time. Thus, you will have to adhere to some vital strategies that will allow you to get rid of your back and neck pain. Read on to know more about this and follow these essential tricks without delaying further.

There is a constant rise in the cases of back and neck pain and that unbearable pain can disrupt your life. You will be unable to do your daily chores owing to that notorious back and neck pain. One may encounter back pain due to the sedentary lifestyle (constant sitting), improper posture (leaning over your computer or hunching over the table), muscle sprain, or ligament strain. Likewise, poor sleeping habits, poor posture, and neck injury can invite neck pain. Though the unlock phase has begun, the pandemic is not over yet and many people are still working from home, and this has also led to the spurt in back and neck pain cases. In most cases, the back and neck pain will go away on its own by simple measures. But, if your condition is worsening then you will have to opt for proper treatment that will allow you to ease your back and neck pain.

Avoid hunching while working on the computer as it can raise the risk of neck and back pain. Try to adjust your monitor at eye level. Use appropriate chairs and don't bend your knees. Keep standing in between your work

computer as it can raise your risk of neck and back pain. Try to adjust your monitor at eye level. Use appropriate chairs and don't bend your knees. Keep standing in between your work. Avoid tucking your phone between your ears. You can use headphones instead or even a speakerphone and prevent back and neck pain.

Do not lift heavy objects: Do you constantly tend to pick up heavyweight objects? Then, you are doing it all wrong! Do not carry heavy bags with a laptop, suitcase, or even grocery bags over your shoulder. In case, you are lifting heavy bags then try to distribute the weight equally on both shoulders. You must also squat while lifting the heavy objects from the floor and try to hold those objects close to your body.

Take frequent short breaks: Do you have an erratic work from home schedule? Then try to stand up between your work routine. It is recommended to take a short break after every 30-40 minutes. This will help you deal with back and neck pain. Try to stretch in between the work. Sitting for long hours is a strict no no. Also, do not forget to exercise on a daily basis and maintain an optimum weight.

Sleep properly: Are you aware? Sleeping in the wrong position can have an adverse effect on your spine health. Yes, you have heard it right! Choose your pillow and mattress wisely as it will ensure good alignment of the head, neck, and spine. Avoid a sagging bed & throw out the worn out mattresses.

Exercise regularly: Strengthening the core of the body helps a lot in avoiding & treating back pain. Start with stretching exercises and gradually build up the spine, abdominals, hamstrings and quadriceps. Work on your shoulder & neck muscles if you use computers & phone for long hours.

WARMFOODS

MILLET: Millets boast of high fibre, protein and essential Vitamins. They are also rich in antioxidants which helps to protect your body from harmful oxidative stress.

They may also help in rapid wound healing, skin protection and also contain anti-inflammatory properties.

Millet contains soluble fiber, which produces a viscous substance in your gut. In turn, this helps reduce cholesterol levels. It

also helps lower blood sugar levels.

Moreover, millet is a gluten-free grain, making it a viable choice for people with celiac disease or those following a gluten-free diet.

This and much more makes millet a superfood and if added in diet it can bless you with excellent health benefits.

Certain studies have also found that millet can also help boost the body's metabolism.



IT'S A SORE ISSUE

Mouth ulcers are common. However, if the ulcers persist for several weeks even after treatment, one must not ignore the signs as it may indicate a cancerous growth, says DR RAMESH CHANDRA JOSHI

Mouth ulcers are quite common in all age groups and can make regular activities such as eating, drinking, and talking very uncomfortable. However, mouth ulcers can be cured with an antimicrobial or pain killing mouthwash, gel or spray.

But, if the ulcers persist for several weeks even after treatment, one must not ignore the signs as it may indicate a cancerous growth. There are many signs of mouth cancer but red sores that do not respond to treatment or heal is a telling sign. Lifestyle habits such as drinking alcohol or consuming tobacco — both smoked and smokeless — can cause cancer of mouth. Besides, human papillomavirus (HPV), known to cause sexually-transmitted infections (STI) and cervical cancer, can also cause cancer of mouth. The HPV-affected cancer of mouth is seen in the soft palate, tonsils, base of tongue, and pharyngeal wall areas.

Other symptoms of mouth cancer include:

- Persistent and unexplained lumps in the mouth or the neck
- Unexplained loose teeth or sockets
- Unexplained, persistent numbness on the tongue or lip

- White or red patches on the lining of the mouth or tongue
- Changes in speech, such as a lisp

The types of mouth cancer are categorised by the type of cell it starts to grow in. Medically, it is known as carcinoma. The most common type is squamous cell carcinoma that affects 9 out of 10 cases of mouth cancer. The less common types of mouth cancer are:

- Adenocarcinoma, in which cancer develop inside the salivary glands
- Sarcoma, in which cancer develops from the abnormalities in cartilage, bone, muscle or any other tissue
- Oral malignant melanoma, in which cancer starts in the cells that produce skin pigment (melanocytes). They often bleed and appear as dark, mottled swellings
- Lymphoma, in which the cancer grows from cells in lymph glands

Mouth cancer as well as treating it can cause complications and affect the appearance of the mouth. Besides, it can cause dysphagia (problems with speaking and swallowing). Dysphagia can be a serious complication — if a small piece of food enters the airways when you try to swallow and gets lodged in lungs, dysphagia may lead to aspiration pneumonia, a kind of chest infection.

Common to other cancers, chemotherapy, radiation therapy and surgery are the treatments available for mouth cancer too. If diagnosed early, mouth cancer can be completely cured in 9 out of 10 cases using surgery

Preventing and treating mouth cancer

Cancer of oral cavity (lips, tongue, buccal mucosa,

tonsils, palate) can give rise to various complications like difficulty in eating, speech, alteration in voice, inability to open mouth fully, pain in ear, bleeding etc, if not treated in time. Easy lifestyle changes and preventive measures, including, but not limited to the following can help in preventing mouth cancer in most of the people:

- Quit smoking or consuming smokeless tobacco as well as alcohol
- Get vaccinated against HPV
- Using a condom during oral sex to lower the chances of HPV infection
- Visiting a dentist regularly for screening
- Eating a balanced diet of fresh vegetables (especially tomatoes), citrus fruits, olive oil and fish with omega 3 fatty acid

Common to other cancers, chemotherapy, radiation therapy and surgery are the treatments available for mouth cancer too. If diagnosed early, mouth cancer can be completely cured in 9 out of 10 cases using surgery. For the emotional impact of the disease and treatment, therapeutic remedies for depression, such as antidepressants and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) may be prescribed.

The writer is Clinical Oncology, Columbia Asia Hospital, Palam Vihar, Gurgaon

HEALTH & HYGIENE

ABOVE ALL

In India, food-borne diseases lead to 1,20,000 deaths each year imposing a burden of over 8 million Disability Adjusted Life Years, says MANISH AGGARWAL



One of the most desirable consequences of Covid-19 has been the increased all-round consciousness for hygiene. And among several types of hygiene such as personal hygiene, environmental hygiene etc which impact our day-to-day lives, food hygiene has naturally emerged as a major issue for regulators, consumers and above all, food manufacturers and companies. The constant need to be watchful of what is ingested or goes inside of our bodies can never be exaggerated enough. The recent pandemic has only further highlighted the need for making food hygiene a priority for all.

There has been repeated reporting of how the open and unpackaged food sold in the streets fashionably called street food has in a way been responsible for unsafe and unhygienic food consumption in the country. Particularly in these times of Covid, if the food maker doesn't maintain personal hygiene wears masks and gloves and keeps sufficient physical distance from fellow workers, the food prepared is highly risky to consume. The unhygienic and unsafe food leads to a vicious cycle of disease and sickness particularly impacting the elderly, the sick and the children, adding to the already high burden of disease pervading in the country.

Yet, the rise in the outbreak of food-borne diseases and safety cases has continued to be reported periodically from different parts of the country. In fact, unsafe food and water have been cited to be the biggest cause of preventable infection in India. Not pursuing basic food safety practices such as wearing an apron, accessing and using tap water, using soap for cleaning utensils, and storing food in proper refrigerated facilities is an invitation to food-borne diseases. This also has an economic cost. It has been estimated that food-borne diseases cost the country a whopping \$15 billion.

In India, food-borne diseases (FBD) lead to 120,000 deaths each year imposing a burden of over 8 million Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs). In fact, children under five years are at 40% more risk with around 30,000 deaths each year. These are frightening figures which are only expected to rise further in the coming years.

These ongoing measures were given a new impetus when Covid-19 showed up resulting in a new set of guidelines. In addition to the existing food safety protocols, the food businesses were directed to ensure that food handlers and workers are made aware of the symptoms of the virus and the risks emanating from it.

Training programmes on risk factors, safe food handling, social distancing and other protective behaviours such as wearing of face mask, handwashing with soap or using alcohol-based sanitisers were made mandatory. In addition, food premises including areas of food establishment such as preparation, storage and packing areas, equipment and containers besides toilets and washrooms were to be periodically sanitised without fail. There should be limited food workers in a kitchen with each worker strictly maintaining personal/social distancing.

The writer is Director, Bikano

DadiKaKehna

Bug bites are irritating, especially because of the continuous itching. ROSHANI DEVI shares easy home remedies that can help beat the itch at the comfort of your home



Bug bites are annoying. Not because of the redness that they bring, but due to the constant itching. Here are a few remedies that can help.

Oatmeal. Oatmeal can relieve itching and swelling because it contains special compounds. Make a paste by mixing equal amounts of oatmeal and water in a bowl until you have a spackle-like substance. Put some paste onto a washcloth and hold it, paste-side down, on the irritated skin for about 10 minutes. Then wipe it off.

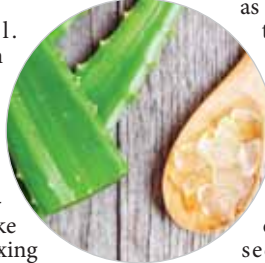
Crushed ice. Use a cold pack or a bag filled with

crushed ice to relieve the itching caused by a mosquito bite.

Don't leave the ice directly on your bite for more than five minutes as it can damage the skin.

Aloe vera. Apart from the multiple skin benefits, aloe vera also helps relieve bug bites. Cut open a small section of the plant. Scoop out the gel and apply it to the irritated area. Let it dry, and apply again as needed.

Honey. It has many antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. A small drop on an itchy bite can reduce the inflammation.



'Prevention & diagnosis are key'

Sedentary lifestyle is a cause for weight gain, blood pressure changes, high sugar levels and pulmonary embolism, says DR AMIT MALIK

The pandemic had left everyone cooped up in their homes. With work from home becoming the new normal, the long sitting hours without any physical activity has given rise to multiple health issues.

While not all must have been bad during the pandemic and work from home scenario, but the worst is the ill effects of a sedentary lifestyle.

Dr Amit Malik, Associate Director and Coordinator, Interventional Cardiology, Electrophysiology tells you that a sedentary lifestyle, especially during a pandemic can lead to pulmonary embolism and other serious diseases.

Sedentary lifestyle, he says, is a type of lifestyle that doesn't involve physical activity. A person involved in this is either always sitting around or lying down. Because of the pandemic, the shift of all day-to-day activities online and work from home, this has

been the lifestyle of most people. This has reduced the day-to-day mobility. Before the pandemic, even if people did not designate time to physical exercise, they still moved around. "Sedentary lifestyle is a cause for weight gain, blood pressure changes, high sugar, deep vein thrombosis and various other things which are risk factors for several diseases," Malik says.

The worst of all is Pulmonary embolism. It is a condition in which blood vessels in lungs are blocked by a blood clot. "Pulmonary embolism is a very fatal and catastrophic condition which can be difficult to diagnose. Some of its symptoms are sudden shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling and low oxygen saturation. If someone notices these symptoms, they should get themselves checked immediately," Malik says.

The clots form in the

legs of the person and then travel through blood to reach the right chamber of the heart and then into the pulmonary artery. Depending on the size of the clot, the smaller branches of pulmonary arteries or major artery can be blocked. Apart from pulmonary embolism, embolism can also occur in other important organs like brain and heart and cause fatal problems or death of the person.

"To prevent this people should avoid sitting in the same position for long hours, take a gap after every 45 to 60 minutes and stretch, jump, or walk around the house. Keep oneself hydrated and have a healthy diet. Prevention and prompt diagnosis are important. For treatment, blood thinner or clot dissolving agents are used depending on the clot burden to remove the clot and unblock the blood vessels," he tells you.

INBRIEF

Therapeutic food manufacturers have emphasised the need for making Community based programmes an integral part of the protocol for managing Severe Acute Malnutrition amongst children. In recent guidelines issued to the states/UTs, Ministry of Women & Child Development has asked for identification of children suffering from SAM and their referral to hospitals as a key priority.

In a communication to the Government, CMAM Association of India has welcomed the move for identification and management of SAM on priority in view of the rise in the incidence of SAM in the country in recent years.

"SAM is a critical health condition where a child is nine times more likely to die as compared to a healthy child. The recently published results of phase I of the National Family Health Survey-5 bring to the fore the urgency of the problem of SAM. 16 out of the 22 states and union territories that were surveyed, showed an increase in the incidence of SAM over the last 10 years. In about 8 States, SAM is higher in urban areas than in rural areas", CMAM Association has stated. Along with the initiatives proposed by the Government, CMAM Association has asked for management of SAM cases which are without complications at the community level itself precluding the need for admission in Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres which can't take the load of all the SAM cases.



The world today is vastly different from what it was a few decades ago. There are new types of jobs and skills required in the workforce, and as the world continues to progress, there will be newer and different competencies that will be required. We will live in, what educators define as, a VUCA world: A volatile, unpredictable, complex and ambiguous world. So, for the coming generations to be adequately prepared to enter the workforce, they need to be equipped with competencies that will be useful to them in the future.

Educational institutes are responsible for providing students with those competencies or core skills that will allow them to be satisfied and successful in the workplace. Along with the world, the skills being taught in schools must also be upgraded to suit students in the future. No longer can we rely on the educational tools of the past to equip our students for the unknown

PREPPING FOR THE FUTURE

ROHAN PARIKH shares some of the core competencies that schools should inculcate in students from a young age for them to be adequately prepared to enter the workforce

ful in the workplace. Along with the world, the skills being taught in schools must also be upgraded to suit students in the future. No longer can we rely on the educational tools of the past to equip our students for the unknown

future. So rather than teaching student's specific tasks or specialisations, it's more effective to teach them some basic competencies which will ensure they grow into good citizens. Here are some of the core competencies schools

should look to inculcate in students from a very young age:

CREATIVE THOUGHT: Students should be taught how to think outside the box and come up with unique solu-

tions to problems presented to them. There is no cookie-cutter solution to problems, and therefore, students, too, need to look at problems from various angles and present solutions that would best fit.

CRITICAL THINKING: One of the most important skills that need to be inculcated in students is the ability to think critically and independently. This means that they should possess the skill to be able to take in information, analyse it and understand it, rather than taking someone else's word for it. Especially in the current day where there is such ease of access to information, students need to be able to analyse for themselves what is correct and what is not.

COLLABORATION: Both of these competencies work hand in hand. The workforce today is a more collaborative space than it has been the past decades. Almost any job profile requires a person to work effectively and efficiently along with others. Therefore, students must be taught how to correctly pitch their ideas and receive feedback from others in a professional manner. They should be taught to read others and handle difficult situations that may arise in life, and later in the workforce.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: Using the right tone, language and right kind of communication can prove to be a key factor in helping students correctly navigate their way through life. They have to be taught how to correctly present their ideas to other students or adults and later on how to effectively communicate their ideas in the workplace. Good communication skills will also help them build self-confidence as they progress.

These core competencies should be brought into the classrooms and taught to students from a very young age. Together these will help them in achieving their goals and being confident in their abilities to reach their objectives. And as students become adults, they will be able to easily adapt, innovate, communicate and solve issues, making them overall changemakers in the workforce.

(The writer is the MD of The Green Acres Academy.)

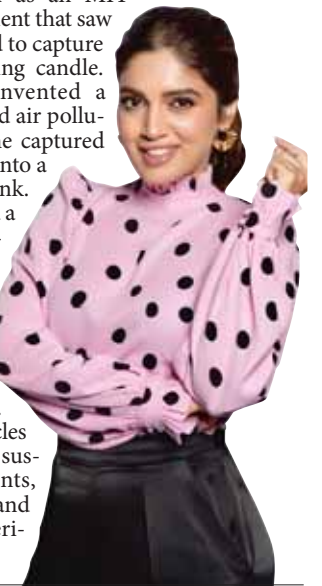
Rebel for life

Actor BHUMI PEDNEKAR collaborates with ANIRUDH SHARMA, a local climate warrior, who turns pollution into usable ink to reduce the carbon footprint

Actor Bhumi Pednekar has always been an environmentally conscious citizen who has taken up climate conservation as a cause to raise awareness among fellow Indians. Bhumi has launched an online and offline initiative called Climate Warrior through which she is mobilising citizens of India to contribute towards protecting the environment. Bhumi has now collaborated with Anirudh Sharma, a climate warrior, who is turning pollution into usable ink with an aim to reduce the carbon footprint of the country.

Anirudh Sharma is a climate warrior. He is the co-creator of Air-Ink (Graviky) and he is a very cool inventor, who actually invented a device that turns pollution into ink. It reduces your carbon footprint while you ride. His innovation has spread to various artist and scientist communities and he has some fantastic ideas with Air-Ink," says Bhumi.

Graviky began as an MIT Media Lab experiment that saw a tool being created to capture soot from a burning candle. Then, Anirudh invented a device that captured air pollution and turned the captured particulate matter into a safe, water-based ink. Now, he has created a dedicated team trying to change industrial production with forays into packaging, apparel printing, and advanced materials. Anirudh also upcycles air pollution into sustainable inks, paints, coatings, plastics, and construction materials.



A thin line

Filmmaker ANURAG BASU says that directors must understand the difference between using the freedom of creativity and misusing it

Anurag Basu says that filmmakers have always explored bold subjects irrespective of the medium it is presented on. However, the line that differentiates freedom of creativity and misusing that freedom needs to be kept in mind by filmmakers at all times.

"It's a very thin line between using the freedom of creativity and misusing it. I believe in OTT as well. Filmmakers should look at using freedom of speech in the best possible way to tell unique stories," Basu said.

His new film *Ludo*, an anthology drama, dropped on OTT platform a few months back and will make its television premiere soon.

"A lot of filmmakers have explored bigger and bolder subjects on the big screen as well. My film *Ludo* dealt with many bold subjects and was initially planned for the big screen," he added.

Basu, who made films such as *Barfi!* (2012), *Life In A Metro* (2007) and *Gangster* (2006), is confident now that theatres have reopened after lockdown, the audience will pour in like the good old days.

"Cinema is a community watching experience. I am certain that audiences will come back to theatres when they will be back in action completely. We just need one film that will create enough buzz for the audience to rush back to theatres. This has already started in the South, with the release of the Vijay-starrer *Master*, and soon will be seen in Bollywood too.



One big release and things will change," he said.

The filmmaker came back to direction with *Ludo* after a break of three years but he doesn't sense a gap.

"As a filmmaker, I didn't miss filmmaking and directing for the big screen. Thankfully, the TV reality show *Super Dancer* and the film *Ludo* happened at the same time. I had finished shooting for *Ludo* when we were shooting for *Super Dancer*. So, I never felt

I was away from the big-screen," he said.

So, what does he prefer? Directing films or judging shows on television? "Cooking!" he replied on a lighter note, and went on to add, "I absolutely love cooking. That's what my family and my wife say! They believe I am a great chef and then a great filmmaker. I love cooking almost every day for my family."

—IANS

TREND TOOL

Itchy feet get going

A survey finds out that an overwhelming 94 per cent of the respondents are looking at sustainable travel this year, and health and safety emerge as their priority



Approximately 66 per cent of the respondents across age groups said that they love taking pictures to share on social media groups.

A home in the hills or a cottage overlooking the beach? Travellers are seeking solace in nature.

The travellers are looking for exclusive and secluded holidays in the lap of

nature. While the vaccine continues to be an encouraging factor propelling growth for industries including travel and tourism, 50 per cent of would-be travellers find travelling around nature more meaningful. This perpetuates a trend towards slower, sustainable and more regenerative travel.

Around 24 per cent of travellers would also look to go to a place in the

hills. Destinations like Manali, Mussoorie, Nainital, Ooty, Munnar, Coorg, and Kashmir are highly sought-after by travellers.

Around 53 per cent of Gen Z and Gen X respondents want to travel to any place close to nature, followed by millennials at 44 per cent.

Health and safety emerge as top priority.

Around 59 per cent of the respondents overall considered this a key priority with the number understandably increasing for respondents that are 40 and above.

Reinstating trust will help travel play a larger role in the recovery of communities across India. Stringent compliance with local regulations and enhanced measures such as the Enhanced Cleaning Protocol for local hosts will all drive up confidence to travel.

Travel becoming increasingly sustainable.

Finally, people are growing conscious of enabling sustainable travel through socio-cultural experiences that are authentic and embedded in communities, and through making environment-friendly choices when they travel.

An overwhelming 94 per cent of the respondents are looking at sustainable travel this year. This comes out strongly amid the backdrop of the pandemic with Indians becoming aware of their impact on the environment and wanting to give back to local communities.

Sustainable travel choices that are closer to remote communities and nature not only provide a boost to these communities and their members, but are accessible, affordable and are a transformative choice contributing to unique and individual travel experiences.

TREND BLAZER



ANEK TO RELEASE ON SEPTEMBER 17

AYUSHMANN KHURRANA tweeted that his film *Anek* will release on September 17. The film marks his return with director Anubhav Sinha after the 2019 release, *Article 15*.

"Naam #ANEK, lekin release date ek! Milte hai aapse September 17, 2021 ko!" Ayushmann wrote.

The film is currently on the floors in Assam. Ayushmann's slit eyebrow in the first look of the film has grabbed eyeballs.



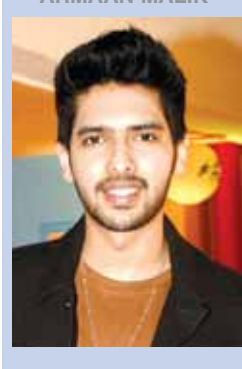
fairtalk



'My relationships will be ever evolving and not for a single day will I take my relationship for granted again. That's a promise I have made. I will move ahead with a clean slate. I am going to carry forward the ones that are good. The bad relationships, I have ended there (in *Bigg Boss 14*). The new story and new beginning will happen from here.'



dailytalk



'Strength to all those people struggling to make ends meet during this pandemic phase. I cannot even imagine what some of you must be going through. I was hoping for everything to get back normal, but it's just getting worse. I've been at home for a year now. It's just getting too much now. It's so tiring mentally and physically.'

LOUISE REGRETS NOT SAVING HER MARRIAGE

Singer LOUISE REDKNAPP feels she should have worked harder to save her 21-year marriage with her ex-husband, former Liverpool and England football star Jamie Redknapp.

"I should have paused for a minute and thought about other people, and had just a bit more time to work out why I felt I couldn't do it anymore. All I know is, I wish I'd tried," Louise said.



Looking at bigger picture rotation policy has merit: Anderson



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Veteran fast bowler James Anderson is pretty sure that the newly laid track at the Motera Stadium will be devoid of any grass for the upcoming Day/Night Test against India even though there is a nice green cover on it at the moment.

The third Test under lights will start from Wednesday and for England's premier fast bowler, he doesn't expect it to behave much differently from the second Test track at the Chepauk which India won by 317 runs. "The pitch, it has got grass on it but I am pretty sure it's not going to be there when we turn up on the match day," Anderson said with a wry smile during a virtual conference with British media on Sunday.

"So we have to wait and watch. As seam bowlers, we have to be prepared to bowl as best we can in any given condition. If it swings, it's great and if it does not, we still have a job to do," Anderson said. He felt that the pink SG Test ball that he bowled with during the net sessions, swung more than its red counterpart. "Look this is the second pink Test in India and first in February so we don't know how it would behave."

He urged critics of the much-debated rotation policy to look at the "bigger picture", considering the massive amount of cricket to be played by the England team in the coming days.

England did not play Jonny Bairstow and Mark Wood in the first two Tests but have brought them back for the final two games as part of a rotation policy while first-choice keeper Jos Buttler is back home after the opening Test. The idea is to help players cop up with life inside the bio-bubble.

"You have got to try and look at the bigger picture. The idea was if I missed that one, that would give me the best chance of being fit and firing for the pink-ball Test," Anderson said during virtual press conference.

Former players, especially Kevin Pietersen, have criticised ECB's thought process, saying the board must play its best players in a big series like this against India.

WTC win will be same as World Cup: Ishant



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

On the cusp of becoming only the second Indian pacer after the legendary Kapil Dev to play 100 Tests, Ishant Sharma on Monday attributed his remarkable longevity in the game to understanding what the "captain wants from him".

Ishant made his Test debut as a gangly 18-year-old in Bangladesh when Rahul Dravid was the captain and subsequently was led by Anil Kumble, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane during the last decade and half.

So which captain understood him the best in all these

years? "It is difficult to say who understood me the most as all of them understood me really well. But more than the captain understanding me, it was always important as to how I understood the captain," Ishant said during a virtual press conference ahead of the third Test against England, beginning here on Wednesday.

"That's very important. What does the captain want from me specifically. If those things are clear, communication becomes easier," said the man who has 302 wickets from 99 Tests so far.

Does he think that being dropped from white ball squads and also missing out on a cou-

HUNDRED IS JUST A NUMBER FOR ME. IT'S LIKE HOW I PLAYED MY 99TH MATCH, WITH THE SAME FEELING, SAME INTENSITY AND SAME AGGRESSIVENESS, I WILL GO INTO MY 100TH MATCH. I DON'T PLAY FOR NUMBERS, I PLAY TO WIN.

—ISHANT SHARMA
(ON HIS MOTIVATION AS HE GOES INTO HIS 100TH TEST)

ple of seasons of IPL helped him reach the milestone quicker than many others?

"I normally treat this as a blessing in disguise. It's not that I don't want to play white ball as that's what is the job of a sportsman but if he is not playing, what does he do? At best he can train."

For him, it was important that he forgets what's not there and be grateful for what he has. "I didn't want my Test cricket to get affected because of my non-selection in ODIs. I should be grateful that I am at least playing one format," he said.

"May be it helped me in completing 100 Tests. Having said that, I don't think had I

played three formats, I couldn't have played 100 Tests. May be it would have taken a bit longer. I am only 32 and not 42."

So does crossing Kapil Dev's 131 Tests cross his mind?

"(Crossing) 131 will take a long time. I only want to think about qualifying for the World Test Championship (WTC) final. This is my World Cup where if I win, I can have the same feeling that others had while winning the ODI world Cup."

Ask him about Jimmy Anderson playing at 38 and if he could continue till that age, he laughs. "I will go one game at a time. You never know what comes next. Yes, I am more professional about my recovery now. Earlier, I would train hard but didn't focus on my recovery. As you grow older, you need to recover well to bowl long spells, take care of your body."

On who will be the leader of the pack once he leaves the

scene, Ishant picked Jasprit Bumrah.

"I think I don't want to take one name. You are good and that's why you play for India. But I think, after me, it is Jasprit Bumrah, who will play most matches for India."

"I think he has to lead the way and also it will depend on how he speaks to youngsters, take them under his wings, grows them."

For fast bowlers to blossom, one needs to understand their skill sets and plan accordingly.

"(Navdeep) Saini has pace, (Mohammed) Siraj has control. You have to understand people's strength. Skill sets are different and if you tell Saini to bowl one area and Siraj to hit 140k, then you are not doing justice to their strengths," he explained.

As a parting shot, Ishant added: "As long as I can maintain the intensity in my game, I will play for India."

Fit again Umesh added to squad

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Pacer Umesh Yadav was on Monday added to India's squad for the last two Tests against England after he passed a fitness test, while Shardul Thakur was released to compete in the ongoing Vijay Hazare one-day Championship.

"Team India fast bowler Umesh Yadav appeared for a fitness test on Sunday, 21st February at Motera. He has

cleared his fitness test and has been added to the squad for the last two Tests of the ongoing Paytm India-England Test series," said the BCCI in a statement. "Shardul Thakur has been released from the squad to take part in the Vijay Hazare Trophy," it added.

Yadav had suffered was a calf muscle injury during the Melbourne Test against Australia in December, ruling him out for the rest of that series.

Stokes has ability to put bowlers on back foot: Thorpe

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England assistant coach Graham Thorpe on Monday said Ben Stokes should not forget that he has the ability to put bowlers on the back foot as he tried to play down the star all-rounder's apparent struggles against seasoned Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin.

Stokes was dismissed thrice by Ashwin in the first two Tests in Chennai. The power-hitter was, in fact, stifled quite remarkably by the local favourite in the second game.

When asked about Ashwin's command on Stokes, Thorpe said, "It is a challenge. Ben actually has at times different styles of playing. He can build into an innings as well."

"I think Ben also has that ability to put a bowler on the back foot as well, that is something which he certainly should not forget."



Thorpe also hinted that all players including Zak Crawley, who was ruled out of the first Two tests due to an injury, are available for selection.

"He (Crawley) is looking fit and I think we have probably got a full complement of players to pick from, so he (Crawley) will be certainly in the mix, and his injury seems to have healed for me, watching him in the nets," said Thorpe.

The assistant coach also said that the seamers could have more impact in the day-night Test despite the track being expected to favour slower bowlers.

"It is possible, I mean without looking into it, the crystal ball, but I would imagine that the ball generally does swing more under the lights," he reckoned.

"They (India) don't have a huge database of pink ball cricket in India, maybe the second one, so looking forward to it, it is a fantastic stadium. We have prepared as well as we can," he added.

'Game may change session wise in D/N Test'

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The game may change session wise in the third Test, reckoned Ishant Sharma on Monday, as India and England dive into an uncharted territory made up of pink balls, new stadium, newly laid strips and floodlights of different make.

India will take on England in a day-night Test at the Sardar Patel Stadium, the world's largest cricket venue with a seating capacity of 1,10,000, from Wednesday.

Asked whether the Indian bowlers would use the short-ball tactic during the twilight period, Ishant said, "That we get to know once we play at this ground, because it is renovated I can't really say anything now."



"We can't say what (will) trouble the batsmen and what will not, there will be a lot of things (that) we will have to see, we don't know how we will have to tackle all these things, there will be dew..."

Ishant, who is standing on the cusp of playing his 100 Tests, said each bowler will have to take responsibility session wise.

"How the wicket is here and how they (England) play, obviously under lights the ball swings, but you will have to see the dew factor, so there will be many things, and you cannot straightaway say that whether fast bowlers will remain in the game or the spinners."

"I feel the game will change session wise and each bowler will have to take responsibility

session wise, who knows the ball might turn in the beginning here."

"Who knows if the spinners come to play in first two sessions, but under lights, when there is dew, the ball does not swing, but skids and comes onto the bat."

"Then, spinners are not in the game and fast bowlers are, so it depends on the situation and how the ball and wicket is behaving at that time," he said.

The veteran pacer backed the team's batsmen to come good, saying they are capable of dealing with the conditions.

"I am sure our batsmen are really capable enough to tackle all those things, how they need to go and build their innings, to go on through the Test match," he added.

India-SA series likely from March 7

NEW DELHI: The planned eight-match series between India and South Africa women is likely to be held from March 7, which will mark the return of the home team to competitive cricket after almost 12 months.

The series, comprising five T20Is and three ODIs, is likely to be held in either Lucknow or Kanpur in a bio-bubble, a BCCI official said on Monday. A 22-member Indian team has been picked for the contest.

With the fixtures of the series yet to be announced, a Cricket South Africa (CSA) source confirmed that their team is set to travel to India this week. "The Covid tests have been done, the team is ready to leave anytime," the source said.

Both teams will have to undergo a six-day quarantine which means they will get a week of training before the series opener.

South Africa played recently but India have not played since the T20 World Cup in March last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. **PTI**

Deadly Devon

Conway's third nineties score in as many innings helps Black Caps beat Australia by 53 runs

AFF ■ CHRISTCHURCH

A Devon Conway batting masterclass inspired New Zealand to a 53-run win over Australia in the opening T20 International in Christchurch on Monday.

Conway smashed an unbeaten 99 off 59 balls as the Black Caps overcame a shaky start to finish on 184/5 after losing the toss and being put in to bat.

In reply, the tourists were all out for 131 after 17.3 overs, with Black Caps spinner Ish Sodhi taking 4/28 to give the hosts an early edge in the five-match series.

Johnson, fresh from signing a multi-million dollar Indian Premier League contract, was the pick of the Australian bowlers, taking 2/31.

But the tourists could not dislodge Conway, whose 59-ball knock included 10 fours and three sixes, helping the Black Caps bounce back.

Conway said he was "pretty chuffed" with his career-best effort, even though he was stranded just short of a century after failing to take two runs off the final ball.

The frustrated Australians then suffered a horror show early in their innings, as seamers Tim Southee and Trent Boult tore through the top order.

Luckless debutant Josh Philippe departed for two after sending a top-edge skyward.

But old campaigners such as skipper Aaron Finch and Glenn Maxwell also failed to deal with the swinging ball and the tourists were soon 19/4.

Mitch Marsh top-scored with 45 and Ashton Agar contributed 23 a string of batting failures gave New Zealand a comfortable win.

was the pick of the Australian bowlers, taking 2/31.

But the tourists could not dislodge Conway, whose 59-ball knock included 10 fours and three sixes, helping the Black Caps bounce back.

Conway said he was "pretty chuffed" with his career-best effort, even though he was stranded just short of a century after failing to take two runs off the final ball.

The frustrated Australians then suffered a horror show early in their innings, as seamers Tim Southee and Trent Boult tore through the top order.

Luckless debutant Josh Philippe departed for two after sending a top-edge skyward.

But old campaigners such as skipper Aaron Finch and Glenn Maxwell also failed to deal with the swinging ball and the tourists were soon 19/4.

Mitch Marsh top-scored with 45 and Ashton Agar contributed 23 a string of batting failures gave New Zealand a comfortable win.

was the pick of the Australian bowlers, taking 2/31.

But the tourists could not dislodge Conway, whose 59-ball knock included 10 fours and three sixes, helping the Black Caps bounce back.

Conway said he was "pretty chuffed" with his career-best effort, even though he was stranded just short of a century after failing to take two runs off the final ball.

The frustrated Australians then suffered a horror show early in their innings, as seamers Tim Southee and Trent Boult tore through the top order.

Luckless debutant Josh Philippe departed for two after sending a top-edge skyward.

But old campaigners such as skipper Aaron Finch and Glenn Maxwell also failed to deal with the swinging ball and the tourists were soon 19/4.

Sreesanth's fifer keeps Kerala perfect



PTI ■ BENGALURU

On a comeback trail after the end of his spot-fixing ban, pacer S Sreesanth on Monday picked up his first five-wicket haul in List A cricket in almost 15 years to help Kerala pull-off a three-wicket win over Uttar Pradesh in the Vijay Hazare Trophy here.

The 37-year-old, who was not short-listed in IPL 2021 auction's final list, returned figures of five for 65 in his first List A game in more than eight years.

Sreesanth, who had returned to competitive cricket last month after his life ban was overturned, opened his account by dismissing opener Abhishek Sharma.

He then returned in the death overs to dismiss UP under 300 with wickets of skipper Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohsin Khan, Akshdeep Nath, and Shivam Sharma en route to his only the second five-for of his List-A career.

On his List-A return, the former India pacer, who has played 27 Tests, 53 ODIs

and 10 T20Is, picked up two for 41 against Odisha on Saturday.

In reply, Kerala sealed the chase in 48.5 overs. Robin Uthappa (81 from 55 balls; 8x4, 4x6) and Sachin Baby (76 from 83 balls; 6x4, 1x6) gave the start before Jalaj Saxena (31) and MD Nidheesh (13 not out from six balls; 1x4, 1x6) sealed the chase with seven balls to spare.

This was Kerala's second successive win in Group C but they remained second in table behind Railways who thrashed Odisha by eight wickets at the M Chinnaswamy to be ahead by net run-rate.

Defending champions Karnataka bounced back with a bang after their first-match loss with a 267-run rout of Bihar.

Skipper R Samarth led the charge with an unbeaten 158 from 144 balls (15x4, 1x6), while fellow opener Devdutt Padikkal smashed a 98-ball 97 (8x4, 2x6) in a com-

manding 153-run opening partnership after Bihar opted to bowl at the Just Cricket Academy.

The only blip was youngster Padikkal missing a century by just three runs after being castled by Rahul Kumar as he once again failed to convert his fifty.

After Padikkal's departure, Samarth took charge with Krishnamurthy Siddharth who chipped in with a quickfire 76 (55 balls; 5x4, 4x6) to propel them to a huge 354/3.

In reply, Karnataka dismantled Bihar for 87 runs in just 27.2 overs with opener Sakibul Gani being their top-scorer (37), while eight batsmen failed to reach double digits.

Prasidh Krishna was Karnataka's wrecker-in-chief (4/17) and had fine support from Abhimanyu Mithun and Shreyas Gopal who claimed two each.

Two in two for Gujarat

PTI ■ SURAT

Hosts Gujarat recorded their second successive win after they beat Goa by eight wickets in an Elite Group A game here.

Gujarat had started their campaign with a three-wicket win over Chhattisgarh.

Opting to bat at the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium, Goa were bundled out for 159 in 45.4 overs, with Gujarat's slow-left arm spinner Hardik Patel (3/34) doing the bulk of the damage.

Gujarat then chased the target in 27.4 overs with half centuries from Priyank Panchal (57 not out off) and Bhargav Merai (57 off 55 balls).

In the other two league games, Baroda rode on skipper Krunal Pandya's unbeaten 127 to beat Tripura by six wickets, while Hyderabad defeated Chhattisgarh by seven wickets.

HEBBAR'S TON UPSET TN

Indore: Ashwin Hebbar slammed an unbeaten 101 and powered Andhra to a

seven-wicket win over Tamil Nadu in Group B match at the Holkar stadium.

Andhra captain G Hanuma Vihari won the toss and sent Tamil Nadu in to bat and the bowlers did very well to dismiss the opponent for 176 in 41.3 overs.

Left-arm medium-pacer C Stephen (3/46), off-spinner Shoaib Mohammed Khan (3/24) and right-arm medium-pacer Girinath Reddy (2/33) struck at regular intervals to restrict a strong Tamil Nadu batting line-up, led by Dinesh Karthik.

In reply, Hebbar was in cracking form and toyed with the opposition to attack to fashion a comfortable win. He found an able partner in Ricky Bhui (52 not out, 41 balls, 6 fours, 2 sixes) and the duo added 114 runs for the fourth wicket to power Andhra.

In other matches, Jharkhand beat Punjab by 2 runs in a nail-biting encounter, while Madhya Pradesh lose second consecutive game in span on 48 hours after Vidarbha beat them by 4 wickets.

Solskjaer not giving up hope of catching Man City

MANCHESTER: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is not giving up hope that Manchester United can challenge Manchester City for the Premier League title, despite the scintillating form of the league leaders.

City have soared 10 points clear of their local rivals thanks to an 18-game winning streak in all competitions.

United's own inconsistent form has helped open up the gap, but the Red Devils beat Newcastle 3-1 on Sunday to win for just the second time in six league games.

"We've got to be there just in case," said Ole. "Every time we get three points we've done our job and that's what we've got to do and see what other teams do."

Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford were again on target on a night United needed their star men to paper over the cracks of another unconvincing performance.

"We had to find a way to win it in the second-half. The first-half wasn't up to the standard that we wanted," added Ole. "Maybe because of Newcastle, maybe because of what we did in the week. We asked them to go again after a high-intensity game and it took us to half time to get our legs and energy."

A run of two wins in 14 games has left Newcastle just three points clear of the drop zone, but Steve Bruce remains confident his side will survive.

"Fulham have had a good week and won a couple of games, which at the bottom end of the table is big, but there are a few of us: Brighton, Burnley and maybe Crystal Palace looking over their shoulders," said Bruce. **AFP**

Vaas resigns 3 days after being appointed SL bowling coach

PTI ■ COLOMBO

In a dramatic turn of events, Sri Lankan pace great Chaminda Vaas on Monday resigned as the national team's fast bowling coach due to a pay dispute with his board, barely three days after being appointed to the post.

Vaas resigned just before the team's departure for a tour of the West Indies.

"We could not agree to his terms so he resigned," a senior

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) official said.

"It is particularly disheartening to note that in an economic climate such as the one facing the entire globe right now, Mr Vaas has made this sudden and irresponsible move on the eve of the team's departure, based on personal monetary gain," SLC said in a statement.

It was only last week that Vaas was appointed to replace

Australian David Sakar following the team's poor show against South Africa and England in the recent times.

Vaas incidentally was to leave for the West Indies with the team on Monday night to play three matches each of the two shorter formats and two Tests.

One of the country's finest pacers, Vaas has also resigned from his position as the SLC Academy coach, a board official added.