

OPINION 8
A FLIGHT AND TRAVEL
AFTER ONE YEAR**WORLD 11**
HUNDREDS OF NIGERIAN SCHOOLGIRLS
TAKEN IN MASS ABDUCTION**SPORT 14**
K'TAKA BEAT KERALA
IN VIJAY HAZARE

LUCKNOW, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 27, 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3



the pioneer

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KRITI JUGGLES
BETWEEN
SHOOTS
12 VIVACITY

Battle for 5 States from Mar 27, results on May 2

8-phase polls in Bengal; Assam 3 phases; TN, Kerala, Puducherry on April 6

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With political temperature running high ahead of the Assembly polls, the Election Commission (EC) on Friday announced that voting for five Assembly polls will begin on March 27 with West Bengal going for an eight-phase elections till April 9 and Assam for a three-phase exercise till April 6. The Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry will be held in a single phase on April 6.

The counting will be held for all five States on May 2. With the announcement of poll schedules, the model code of conduct came into effect from Friday evening. Terms of the Legislative Assemblies in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu are coming to an end in May and June.

Announcing the election schedule, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said that nearly 18.68 crore electors will vote at 2.7 lakh polling stations for 824 seats in these Assembly elections and polling stations will be at the ground floor without any negotiation.

"There shall be maximum 1,000 electors instead of 1,500 electors at a polling station and voting will be allowed for an extra hour, adding that arrangements would be made for candidates to file nominations online," he said.

In Assam, elections will be held for 126 seats in three



Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora, with Election Commissioners Sushil Chandra and Rajiv Kumar, arrives for a Press conference in New Delhi on Friday

phases on March 26 (47 seats), April 1 (39 seats), April 6 (40 seats). The last date of nomination is March 9.

Announcing the schedules for West Bengal, Arora said, "For 294 seats in West Bengal, the first phase of the election has been scheduled on March 27 and it will cover 30 constituencies. The second phase of West Bengal's Assembly elections has been scheduled for April 1 and will cover 30 constituencies, followed by the third phase on April 6 for 31 seats, the fourth on April 10 for 44 constituencies, the fifth on April 17 for 45 seats, sixth for 43 seats on April 22, seventh phase on April 26 for 36 seats and last and eighth phase on April 29 for 35 seats."

Last time, the Assembly

elections were conducted in seven phases in Bengal. A total of 68 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and 16 for the Scheduled Tribes. Term of the current West Bengal Assembly is scheduled to come to an end on May 30.

The election for the 140 seats in Kerala, 234 seats in Tamil Nadu and 30 seats Puducherry will be held in a single phase on April 6.

Taking note of the threat of intimidation and violence during the poll campaign, the EC has directed that the election security plan of poll-going States will be jointly decided by a committee comprising the chief electoral officer, State police nodal officer and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) coordinator. According to offi-

Assembly Poll Schedule 2021	
ASSAM Total seats: 126 Three phase poll Phase I (47 seats): Mar 27 Phase II (39 seats): Apr 1 Phase III (40 seats): Apr 6	WEST BENGAL Total seats: 294 Eight phase poll Phase I (30 seats): Mar 27 Phase II (30 seats): Apr 1 Phase III (31 seats): Apr 6 Phase IV (44 seats): Apr 10 Phase V (45 seats): Apr 17 Phase VI (43 seats): Apr 22 Phase VII (36 seats): Apr 26 Phase VIII (35 seats): Apr 29
KERALA Total seats: 140 Single phase poll: Apr 6	PUDUCHERRY Total seats: 30 Single phase poll: Apr 6
TAMIL NADU Total seats: 234 Single phase poll: Apr 6	Counting for all states: May 2, 2021 KBK Infographics

cial, over 6,600 polling stations in West Bengal have been identified as "vulnerable" and 715 critical ahead of the Assembly elections while over 2,654 polling stations has been identified as "critical" and 338 vulnerable in Assam.

Recounting the Covid-19 guideline issued by the commission in August 2020, the CEC said polling time has been extended by an hour and door-to-door campaigning has been restricted to five people. He added that States can modify the guidelines according to their local Covid-19 situation. The CEC also said that adequate Central paramilitary

forces will be deployed during the elections. All sensitive, critical and vulnerable polling stations have been identified and an adequate number of CAPFs will be deployed there.

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Everyone on poll duty to get jab before polls: EC

New Delhi: Everyone on election duty for the upcoming polls for five Assemblies will be vaccinated against Covid-19 before polling day, the Election Commission said on Friday.

Complete pullback must for lasting peace: India to China

India, China agree to establish hotline contact for real-time exchange of views

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After India and China pulled back troops from the Pangong Tso (lake) stand-off site in Ladakh, New Delhi has stressed the need for disengagement from all the other friction points for lasting peace and tranquillity at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Making this assertion during his 75-minute-long telephonic talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar said disengagement was necessary to contemplate any de-escalation of troops. The two sides agreed to establish a hotline contact for timely exchange of views.

During the talks on Thursday, the two Ministers also reviewed the current situation at the LAC, the process of smooth withdrawal of troops of



both the Armies from the Pangong, and general ties between the two countries, External Affairs Ministry said here on Friday.

The high-level political contact took place after the disengagement from the southern and northern banks of the Pangong lake was completed last week. The process had started on February 10 and the two Corps Commanders met on Saturday last to take stock of the situation. They also discussed the road map for early disengagement of troops from face-off sites in Hot Spring, Gogra and Depsang valley.

During his talks with his

Chinese counterpart, Jaishankar said peace and tranquillity on the border is essential for development of bilateral relations.

Giving details of the talks, the Ministry said India told China bilateral relations have been impacted severely over last year. "EAM said boundary question may take time to resolve but disturbance of peace and tranquillity, including by violence, will inevitably have a damaging impact on the relationship," the Ministry said. The two Ministers agreed to remain in touch and establish a hotline, it added.

According to a late-night Press release issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing, Wang said China and India should firmly follow the right path of mutual trust and cooperation between neighbouring countries, and not go astray with suspicion and distrust nor fall back on a road of "negative retrogression".

Wang noted that the two countries need to properly handle the border issue so as to prevent the bilateral ties from trapping into a "vicious cycle" because of it.

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Farm, services, construction revive GDP to grow at 0.4%

After contracting for two quarters in a row, it enters positive territory

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After contracting for two quarters in a row, the Indian economy entered the positive territory with a growth of 0.4 per cent in the October-December quarter, mainly due to good performance by the farm, services and construction sectors, official data showed on Friday.

Ahead of the release of the GDP data, Sensex slumped by nearly 2,000 points on the fear that long-term growth projection may not be sustainable. The 0.4 per cent growth is at the lower end of the forecast made by most of economists and others.

Trade and hotel industry registered a contraction of 7.7 per cent during the third quarter this fiscal, as the sectors continued to suffer on account



of coronavirus pandemic.

According to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the farm sector recorded a growth of 3.9 per cent, and the manufacturing sector output grew by 1.6 per cent in the quarter under review.

The construction sector advanced by 6.2 per cent, while electricity, gas, water supply, and other utility services clocked a 7.3 per cent growth.

The NSO said, "GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in Q3 of 2020-21 is estimated at ₹36.22 lakh crore, as against

₹36.08 lakh crore in Q3 of 2019-20, showing a growth of 0.4 per cent".

The gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded by 3.3 per cent in the corresponding period of 2019-20. In its second advance estimates of national accounts, the NSO has projected 8 per cent contraction in 2020-21, showing the pandemic impact. In its first advance estimates released in January, it had projected a contraction of 7.7 per cent for the current fiscal as against a growth of four per cent in 2019-20.

The economy had shrunk by an unprecedented 24.4 per cent in the first quarter this fiscal following the coronavirus pandemic and the resultant lockdown. In the second quarter, the GDP declined 7.3 per cent amid a perk up in economic activities after the easing of the lockdown.

The first and second-quarter GDP growth figures are revised from (-) 24.9 per cent and (-) 7.5 per cent provisional estimates, respectively, released in November 2020.

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Corona rears its head in Delhi again; experts warn of another wave

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Just as the Delhi Government had asserted that the coronavirus pandemic had been "defeated" in the national Capital, cases are on the rise again dramatically, as doctors on Friday warned the numbers could go up in the coming months and urged people to continue to wear masks and follow Covid-19 safety norms.

Many doctors at leading healthcare facilities here cautioned that the rise was "alarming" with an "upsurge" in the number of patients going there in the last couple of days, after the cases had shown a downward spiral for nearly six weeks.

Delhi had recorded 94 fresh Covid-19 cases on February 16, the lowest in over nine months then. However, after a week on February 24, it more than doubled to 200 and increased further to 220 on Thursday and 256 on Friday.

Health experts and doctors on Friday attributed this "sud-

den rise" to complacency in people and not following Covid appropriate behaviour and "assuming all is well now".

Dr Suranjit Chatterjee, Senior Consultant, Internal Medicine at Apollo Hospital, said he "wasn't surprised" to see the rise in daily cases as so many people have thrown caution to the wind, attending parties and big social gatherings, with many of them not even wearing masks, let alone maintaining social distancing.

"The coronavirus behaviour pattern seen in the West and elsewhere tends to get seen in India, a month later, as it happened in reporting of the first case in Kerala and so on and so forth. So, if the US and UK are seeing a surge again, we should have become more watchful and not complacent. The next two months will be even more critical and I would not be surprised if the cases show a much higher upward trend," he told PTI.

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CAPSULE

HITTER YUSUF PATHAN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT
New Delhi: Out-of-favour India all-rounder Yusuf Pathan, who made a name for himself as a power-hitter, on Friday announced retirement from all forms of cricket.

SUV FOUND NEAR ANTILA HAD BEEN STOLEN: COPS
Mumbai: The vehicle with explosives found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence in south Mumbai had been stolen last week, and a letter found inside said it was only a "glimpse" of things to come, police said on Friday.

ISIS BRIDE NOT ALLOWED TO RETURN TO UK
London: The UK Government on Friday won a major legal battle as the Supreme Court ruled against allowing a London-born 21-year-old woman of Bangladeshi descent, who ran away to Syria as a teenager to join the Islamic State (ISIS) terror group, to return and fight her citizenship case.

Labour activist Naudeep Kaur granted bail

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Around six weeks after her arrest in a criminal case filed under several charges including attempt to murder, labour rights activist Naudeep Kaur was on Friday granted bail by the Punjab & Haryana High Court.

Kaur was arrested in Haryana's Sonapat for gheraoing an industrial unit and demanding money from a company on January 12. Police had claimed that a team of cops was attacked with sticks, resulting in injuries to 7 cops.

A case under the IPC section 307 (attempt to murder), 384 (punishment for extortion), 148 (rioting), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) and 379 B (snatching and use of force) was registered.

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Biden pushes for immigration reform

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden believes that it is important and long overdue to modernise the immigration system, and this includes taking steps to help ensure highly skilled workers can stay in the country, the White House has said.

Biden has revoked a policy issued by his predecessor during the Covid-19 pandemic that blocked many Green Card applicants from entering the US, a move that will benefit many Indians working in America on the H-1B visa. A Green Card, known officially as a Permanent Resident Card, is a document issued to immigrants to the US as evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently. "The President believes



President Joe Biden walks out of the White House on Friday

that it's important and long overdue to modernise our immigration system, and that includes taking steps to help ensure that high skilled workers can stay in the country and can go through the proper processes to stay in the country," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at her daily news conference on Thursday.

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18 States under NCDC lens over new Covid strains



Health workers arrive to screen passengers at the CSMT railway station, owing to surge in Covid-19 cases in Mumbai on Friday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the UK, South Africa and Brazil Covid-19 strains rose to touch to 194-mark on Friday, at least 18 States, including Maharashtra, Kerala and Telangana have come under the scanner of the National Centre for Disease Control Disease

(NCDC), a Central agency for disease surveillance and prevention.

These regions have added almost all the cases of Covid-19 strain from the UK, South Africa and Brazilian variants of SARS-CoV-2. Also, these States are reporting a surge in the Covid-19 cases, though the

Union Health Ministry has denied that the increase is due to the new variants.

The NCDC has asked States to keep tabs on cases with variants arriving here from other countries as the tally of people infected from such strains has reached 194 in the country, according to the latest figures shared by the Union Health Ministry.

These include 187 cases of the UK variant, six from the South African variant while one has been found infected by the Brazilian one.

"The States have been told to increase monitor international arrivals and ensure strict isolation of positive cases, as per protocol as well as increase genome sequencing in the states," an official from NCDC.

He also said the presence of the foreign variants has been also found in large States such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Sujeet Kumar Singh, the director of the NCDC confirmed that monitoring has increased after samples from these regions revealed the presence of mutated versions of the virus. "They have been further advised to send at least 5 per cent daily samples for genome sequencing as per the norm," he added.

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RT-PCR test for returning expats in Kerala now

Thiruvananthapuram: In view of rise in fresh Covid-19 cases, the Kerala Government will conduct RT-PCR tests free of cost for expatriates returning to the State, the Government said on Friday as 3,671 more people tested positive, taking the infection count to 10,52 lakh.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM SUKHVINDER SINGH TO SUKHVINDER SINGH RAYAT. S/O INDERJEET SINGH RAYAT R/O 14 HIG, DOUBLE STORY, BARRA-2, KANPUR NAGAR.

NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM INDERJEET SINGH TO INDERJEET SINGH RAYAT. INDERJEET SINGH RAYAT S/O LATE SURJEET SINGH RAYAT R/O 14 HIG, DOUBLE STORY, BARRA-2, KANPUR NAGAR.

NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM SHIVANGI SHARMA TO SHIVANGI KAU R RAYAT. SHIVANGI KAU RAYAT W/O SUKHVINDER SINGH RAYAT R/O 14 HIG, DOUBLE STORY, BARRA-2, KANPUR NAGAR.

NOTICE

I No-15432831 M Rank NK/DVR Harish Kumar Ojha, my wife's name in my service record was wrongly mentioned as NAMRATA OJHA. Her correct name is NAMRATA MISHRA as per affidavit No-3027/18.02.2021

NOTICE

I Suman Verma w/o Raj Kishore R/o 3A/11, Forest Colony, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow. That I have changed my daughter's name from Tanishka Bharti to Tanishka Verma. In future she will be known as Tanishka Verma.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Nabiullah to Mohd. Ahmad. In future I shall be known as Mohd. Ahmad. Both names Nabiullah & Mohd. Ahmad to one & the same person. Mohd. Ahmad S/o Late Shah Mohammad, Vill. Kuramunidan, Tahsil Sirathu, Distt. Kaushambi.

NOTICE

That my name earlier was rajiv singh. That I have changed my name as rajeev kumar singh. At present all the records have my new name rajeev kumar singh s/o Harishankar singh Residence: 636/129 jaynagar takrohi, Indira nagar lucknow district:lucknow.

सूचना

मेरी ICICI पालिसी नं० 17517769 में Neelima Kaushal Dob 01-01-1967 अंकित है जो की गलत है वास्तव में मेरे आधारकार्ड व पैनकार्ड में Neelima Gupta Dob 03-04-1967 है भविष्य में मुझे इसी नाम एवं जन्मतिथि से जाना व पहचाना जाये। वास्तो Neelima Gupta W/o Late उपेन्द्र कुमार गुप्ता 341/7 शास्त्रीनगर कानपुर

NOTICE

I Pramila devi w/o sub uma shankar unit 4 (J) ABSC C/O 56APO submit army record name Parmila devi and date of birth 01/07/1976 which is incorrect. Whereas in civil document my name Pramila devi and date of birth 25/02/1980 mentioned which is true and correct. Pramila devi w/o uma shankar Village. Raimala tehsil, zamania district. Ghazipur

NOTICE

I lost bag containing KDA allotment letters numbered 2880 & 2849 both dt.18.2.89. alongwith Possession Letters of house nos.MI-303-304, Barra-2, Kanpur in the names of Indra Pal Kanjolia and Jitendra Kumar Tiwari respectively. ITS USE WILL BE ILLEGAL. Bharat Bhushan Juneja S/o Late Raghunath Juneja R/O MI-303, Barra-2, Kanpur 7905473049

Centre sanctions Rs 250 crore for Ayodhya airport

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To give a new identity to Ram Nagri Ayodhya on a global scale, the Central government has sanctioned Rs 250 crore for the construction of the Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram International Airport so that aircraft like ATR 72 can be operated from there.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the assistance. "I am sharing my heartfelt gratitude to PM Modi and Union Minister Hardeep Puri for sanctioning funds," he said.

Yogi Adityanath said that the state and Central governments had opened the coffers for Ayodhya's development projects. "A lot of plans are being put forward to develop international tourism in Ayodhya," he said.

The chief minister said, "Indians spread across the world have a wish to visit Ram Nagri. Therefore, the UP government sent a proposal to the Government of India to develop the airstrip at Ayodhya as an international airport." Yogi Adityanath said that over Rs 1,000 crore had been allocated to the Ayodhya district administration for the project out of which the Central government had disbursed Rs 250 crore.

So far, more than 377 acres of land has been purchased for the airport.

Yogi lauds RSS for its service to mankind

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday thanked the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh functionaries for their relentless service to mankind over a period of last 96 years and said if anybody wanted to know about RSS, he or she should look at the work the organisation had done to serve society.

He said the kind of service the RSS had extended during the most trying times of Covid, signified the philosophy and outlook of the organisation.

Addressing a function on the occasion of the release of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Swarnim Bharat ke Dishasootra, a book written by



senior RSS functionary Sunil Ambekar, Yogi said that this book would present a guiding direction to the country as the vision of India and the vision of RSS had always been the

same. "Four years from now, the RSS will be celebrating its centenary, an achievement for any organisation which has helped humanity without taking any government help and that too without seeking any limelight," he said.

He said that it would be hard to imagine the overpowering feeling of nationality among the RSS which went down south to build Vivekananda Memorial and up in the north to set up service camps for devotees of Amarnath.

The chief minister recalled that during his days as Member of Parliament from Gorakhpur, youth used to come to him asking for recommendation letters for free coach-

ings to aspiring students in Delhi and Mumbai. Similarly, I came to know that this organisation used to run facilities for the attendants of the patients at Tata Cancer Hospital in Mumbai or SGPPI, Lucknow. I used to tell everyone that no recommendation letter was required because the spirit to serve the needy had always been the way with this organisation.

Similarly, he said, the medical facilities which had been extended by them during Kumbh were praiseworthy by any yardstick.

He said that "another remarkable feature of RSS was that it never tried to impose its ideology on others. "It does not rejoice when admired and does not sulk when criticised," he said.

Sanskrit schools to provide free meals to underprivileged

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the aim to popularise Sanskrit, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has issued directives to provide free meals and accommodation to underprivileged students in Sanskrit schools similar to the Gurukul system.

"This step will serve as a solution to all the problems faced by the school administration in providing food to so many children," a senior official said here on Friday.

He said for opening up the digital landscape

of an advanced learning forum for students, the government had also decided to install computers in over 200 Sanskrit schools where computers are not installed.

Last year, computers were installed by the UP Sanskrit Sansthan in Sanskrit schools in 72 districts. The remaining schools in the state will be computerised by the Sanskrit Sansthan this year.

"Educational institutions that have a higher enrollment will be upgraded on priority and the Sanskrit Education Council has started to draft the list of such schools," the official said.

Acharya Dr Vachaspati Mishra, president of Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Sansthan, Lucknow, said that all educational institutions under the flagship of UP Sanskrit Sansthan had experienced a digital upgrade. He appreciated the decision of the state government of issuing press releases in Sanskrit in order to make the language popular among larger and diverse groups.

"The formation of Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Education Directorate will give a new dimension to the Sanskrit language in the state," Acharya Mishra said.

Akhilesh Yadav hits out at Yogi

PNS ■ MIRZAPUR

Hitting out at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Samajwadi Party national President Akhilesh Yadav said that the language used by the chief minister against opposition leaders was against the spirit of democracy.

"The language of the chief minister is unlike the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. The words he used like "patak kar maroonga" or "thok doonga" shows the mentality of the chief minister. Such statements are against the spirit of democracy," Yadav told reporters in Mirzapur on Friday.

He said that Yogi Adityanath always tried to intimidate his political rivals. "The BJP has cheated people in the last four years. It has failed to implement the manifesto. The budget which the government presented recently in the assembly is against the poor but it is pro-industrialists," he said.

Yadav said that the people were facing the brunt of the mis-governance of the BJP government and the prices of petrol and diesel had gone up.

"Look at the farmers who are staging protests against the government's three farm laws. The farmers do not want new laws but the government is forcibly implementing them," he said and added that



“THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHIEF MINISTER IS UNLIKE THE CHIEF MINISTER OF UTTAR PRADESH. THE WORDS HE USED LIKE “PATAK KAR MAROONGA” OR “THOK DOONGA” SHOWS THE MENTALITY OF THE CHIEF MINISTER. SUCH STATEMENTS ARE AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY”

people would teach the BJP a lesson in the coming election.

The former chief minister had come to the district to attend the three-day training camp of the party workers. "The Samajwadi Party will form the government after next elections. Last time when we

formed the government we had organised a training camp here and with the blessing of Ma Vindhyavasini the SP formed the government," he said and added that this time too the party would form government as the campaign had started from here.

Two detained for trying to deposit fake currency

Lucknow (PNS): A farmer and his son were detained by the police in Sant Kabir Nagar after currency notes in the denomination of Rs 500 having a face value of Rs 80,000 that they came to deposit in a bank were found to be counterfeit by the officials.

The incident took place on Thursday and the local police later summoned the sleuths of the Anti-Terrorists Squad to help them in the probe and to find out the source from where the fake currency was supplied.

The cops were grilling the detained farmer and his son and further action against them is awaited.

The cops claimed that they were trying to confirm whether the accused

were aware that the currency was fake or they were duped by some gang involved in pumping fake currency in the country. It may be mentioned that a few years back also, a huge amount of fake currency kept in the chest of a nationalised bank situated on the Indo-Nepal border was recovered by the police.

Reports said Abdul Hakim, a farmer hailing from Baghnagar in Dudhara area of Sant Kabir Nagar, reached the State Bank of India (SBI) branch in Dishes police station area on Thursday to deposit Rs 80,000 in his account. His son, Wazihuddin, was accompanying him.

The cashier reportedly became

suspicious after he found a few notes to be fake. He checked the cash in the machine and found that all the 160 notes of Rs 500 denomination were fake. He informed the branch manager who called the police and also sent the cash to SBI's main branch in Basti which confirmed that the notes were counterfeit.

During interrogation, Hakim said that he was a farmer and the marriage of his daughter was fixed in Ganeshpur and the cash was brought by his son.

Wazihuddin later disclosed that a youth gave tuition in Ganeshpur from whom he took the cash for his sister's marriage and also to start some work for his livelihood.

Village ponds to be named after meritorious girls

Lucknow (PNS): The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh is all set to celebrate this year's International Women's Day in the most distinctive way to glorify the women of the state by naming village ponds after talented girl students for one year.

The government will also dedicate a plantation drive in every district to celebrate the noteworthy role of talented women of the state in UP's development and to encourage campaigns like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.

"To glorify the achievements of the meritorious daughters of classes 10 and 12, a pond will be renamed after them for a span of an entire year in every gram sabha," an official said here on Friday.

The beautification of the ponds having boards with the name of meritorious daughters will be done under MGNREGA. The Yogi government, with its commitment to uplifting the weaker and deprived women of the state, will also set up women help desks at village, block, tehsil and district levels to not only address the grievances of women from various sections but also to fulfill their hopes by finding appropriate solutions for them.

"Information related to women rights in the revenue laws and other online facilities for women will be provided by the Revenue Department," the official said. The women help desk will also allot land pattas approved in the financial year 2020-21 to the eligible and needy women coming from rural backgrounds on March 8 - the International Women's Day.

Missing boy found murdered

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 9-year-old boy missing since February 14 from Maharajganj Tarai locality of Balrampur district was found murdered. His body was recovered from a gunny bag lying near a village pond on Thursday evening.

The police later swung into action and claimed to have arrested two local youths Vijay Kumar and Mubaraq aka Armaan on Friday, adding that both had confessed that they killed the boy after sodomy.

According to Station House Officer PN Tewari, the family of the victim informed them that the boy went to see a fair on February 14 and was missing since then. His father had lodged a report of missing. The cops launched a search for the boy and on Thursday they found his body. As the boy was seen with the both accused on the fateful day, the cops picked them up and on being grilled they confessed of taking the boy in the cane fields and strangulated him to death after having unnatural sex.

Both the accused were sent to jail.

Meanwhile in Agra, a minor girl was kidnapped from a hospital in a movie style. The accused involved in the alleged kidnapping had gone to jail once on similar charge. This time he used a different modus operandi to take away the girl.

The girl, who came to the hospital to take medicine with her aunt, wore a burqa and slipped with the accused very comfortably. The aunt kept waiting in the hospital and after learning about the incident, she lodged a report with the local police.

In the CCTV footage, the girl was seen going with the accused, identified as Mehtab Rana from Meerut, without any stress. Since she is a minor, her acceptance does not matter.

According to the family, the man who abducted her is Mehtab, a resident of Meerut. The family told police that the girl was 17-year-old. Soon after learning of the crime, the cops conducted raids in search of the victim and the accused.

On Thursday, she came from her home in Taraganj area to the Dayalbagh hospital to take medicines with her aunt when the incident took place. The accused even

Home department joint secy suspended

Lucknow (PNS): Joint secretary in the Home Department, Dharendra Kumar Upadhyay, was suspended by the state government on Thursday night. According to an official communiqué released on Thursday night, Additional Chief Secretary (Secretariat Administration) Hemant Rai issued the suspension order of Upadhyay on the directions of Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi.

During a preliminary inquiry, it was found that Upadhyay, during his posting in the Home department, indulged in irregularities and issued letters to district administrations without taking the necessary consent of his seniors.

During his suspension period, Upadhyay will be attached with the Section-1 of the Secretariat Administration.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No. 44/2021
IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR RAIL PASSENGERS
It is notified for the information of general public that Express trains was reduced frequency until 28.02.2021 due to fog vide notification No. 150/2020 dated 10.12.2020 and 22/2021 dated 29.01.2021. Now these trains will restore from 30.03.2020 as per following :-
Reduction in Frequency :

S. No.	Train No.	From Station to Station	Days of Cancellation	Days of Restoration
1	02571	Gorakhpur-Anand Vihar	Wednesday, Sunday	03.03.2021
2	02572	Anand Vihar-Gorakhpur	Monday, Thursday	04.03.2021

Please Note: (1) These trains will run with full reserved accommodation. (2) It is mandatory for the passengers to follow the guidelines issued for prevention and safety from Covid-19.
CPRO-T-129 Chief Passenger Transportation Manager/Gorakhpur
About any passenger amenity confirm SMS on Mobile No. 09794849555
"Never travel on roof and foot boards"

Rajasthan Skill & Livelihoods Development Corporation
EMI Campus, J-8-A, Jhalana Institutional Area, Jaipur- 302004 (Rajasthan)
Ph: +91-0141-2705817, 5103248, Fax: +91-0141-5103246, www.rajablisskillandlivelihoods.org

NOTICE INVITING BID -NIB

Notice Inviting Bid/Bid for Selection of a Competent and Qualified Bidder providing self-defence training to girls/women. The Bid/Bid shall only be submitted through online Bidding system on www.eproc.rajablisskillandlivelihoods.org. The schedule of dates is follows: The schedule of dates is mentioned below:

Nature of Project	Procurement of Services for providing Self-Defence Training to girls/Women Through Training Partner for RSLDC
Cost of Bid/Bid Document (Nonrefundable)	Rs. 5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand Only)
Bid Processing Fees (Nonrefundable)	Rs. 1000/- (Rupees One Thousand Only)
Estimated Project Cost	Rs. 23.00 Lakh (including all Expenditures & Statutory Liabilities except GST). GST will be paid if required as per rule.
Bid Security	2% of Project value. But, Finance Department latest circular, in lieu of Bid Security Bid Declaration has to be taken in format attached with this Bid Document. As per FD (G&FR Division Dept.) Circular Dated. 23.12.2020 on Rs. 50 Stamp Paper.
Publishing Date and Time for Bid Document	25/02/2021
Document Download Start Date and Time	26/02/2021 from 11:00 am
Bid Submission Start Date and Time	26/02/2021 from 11:00 am
Pre-Bid Meeting Date, Time & Venue	2nd March, 2021 up to 11.00AM
Document Download End Date/Time	8th March, 2021 up to 3.00 PM
Bid Submission End Date & Time	8th March, 2021 up to 3.00 PM
Last date of Submission of Banker's Cheque/Demand Draft for Bid Fee, BID SECURITY, and Processing Fee"	8th March, 2021 up to 3.00 PM
Technical Bid Opening Date, Time and Venue	8th March, 2021 Board Room(RSLDC) at 05.00pm
Financial bids Opening Date & Time	Will be intimated later to the Technically qualified Bidders
Websites for downloading Bid Document, Corrigendum's Addendums etc.	www.livelihoods.rajablisskillandlivelihoods.org/ www.sppp.rajablisskillandlivelihoods.org/ http://eproc.rajablisskillandlivelihoods.org/
Validity of bids	90 days from the last date of Bid Submission
Period Of Contract	3 Months

*This procurement is doing according to provision of RTTP Act 2012 and rules 2013 and other applicable rules, so all provisions of these are applicable for this procurement.
Raj.Samwad/C20/10316 Managing Director, RSLDC

Covid vaccination: Registration of people aged 45-60 yrs soon



Vaccine drive underway in Lucknow on Friday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Registration for vaccination of people aged above 60 years is likely to begin in the state in two to three days. State immunisation officer Dr Ajay Ghai said it will also include people aged 45 to 60 years with co-morbidities.

People can opt for pre-registration or 'on the spot' registration. They can also get vaccinated in sessions where the Health department makes arrangements for people living in a certain area by calling them to get themselves vaccinated. Dr Ghai said that the pre-registration can be done on the mobile app which will be launched by the Central gov-

ernment shortly.

"The sites of registration will be mentioned in the CoWIN app and people who want to register can choose the site, date and time of vaccination. The slots will be there and they will be able to choose the sites closest to them," he said. The official said that they had a meeting with the Central government officials who gave them instructions in this regard and they will hold a meeting at the state level to make further plans for the state.

"We will likely have a soft launch for these vaccinations somewhere in the first week of March since the sessions are already going on for health workers," he said.

CM Yogi stresses on focus testing

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has stressed on focus testing of COVID-19 and has said that testing work has an important role in breaking the coronavirus infection chain. He said keeping this in mind more and more Covid tests should be done. He also said that it should be ensured that not less than 1.25 lakh tests were conducted per day in the state.

The chief minister made these observations while reviewing the unlock at a high-level meeting at his official residence here on Friday. He said that extra vigilance should be taken in the state in view of the increase in cor-

onavirus positive cases in some states. He said in Uttar Pradesh, arrangements should be made to ensure contact tracing and quarantine of people coming from outside states.

The chief minister also said that an effective system should be maintained in relation to the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. He said integrated command and control centres established in the districts should be actively operated and people should be constantly made aware about preventive measures to keep coronavirus at bay. He also issued instructions that people should be made aware through public address systems and other media in this regard.

The immunisation officer said that there will be some changes in the CoWIN portal which will now be called CoWIN-2 portal. "We will have to incorporate these changes also and from the second week of March we will go full fledged. The planning for the vaccinations may take the next two days," he said.

Meanwhile, 89 per cent of the beneficiaries received their second dose in the vaccination drive in Lucknow on Friday. District immunisation officer Dr MK Singh said 6,941 out of a total of 7,811 beneficiaries got vaccinated. As many as 777 people also got their first dose. Dr Singh said they had vaccinated over 58 per cent of the second dosers by 2 pm. The sessions were carried out at 102 booths. He said that the focused surveillance and contact tracing were on in the same manner at the airport,

bus & railway stations. "We are also testing people who have come from outside of the district and staying in city hotels. We have all the details of such people. We have a list of 40 such people and they will be tested," he said.

Meanwhile, Principal Secretary Amit Mohan Prasad said that in view of the fresh spike of Covid cases in Maharashtra and Kerala, visitors from these two states should be quarantined and kept under surveillance upon their arrival in UP. He said that these passengers should be tested at the airport or railway stations. Prasad said that local monitoring committees should keep an eye on people coming from these two states. The principal secretary also said that there should be proper monitoring of patients with acute respiratory problems.

Thieves strike at jewellery showroom in Aminabad, decamp with valuables

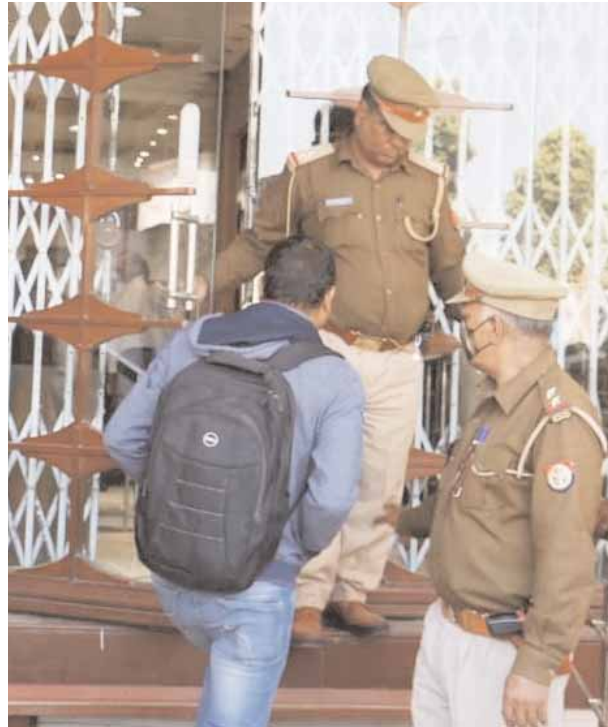
PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Thieves struck at a prominent jewellery showroom in Aminabad and made off with ornaments worth crores on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday.

Police claimed the number of culprits involved in the theft was more than two. Commission of Police DK Thakur inspected the showroom (Lala Jugal Kishore Jewellers) situated near Hanuman Mandir in Aminabad to take the stock of the investigation. He claimed that the case would be worked out soon.

Reports said that the valuables were kept in the strong room on Wednesday night, with Thursday being the weekly closure of market.

The thieves managed to gain access to the strong room by scaling the rear wall. The wall of the strong room was also damaged. The police said that the thieves must have kept



Police personnel carrying out investigation at the jewellery showroom

Pioneer

the ornaments in bags before decamping with the booty.

There were reports that the police would seek help of the STF to work out the case, however, spokesman JK Singh did not confirm the same. Interestingly, thieves had struck at the Mahanagar branch of Lala Jugal Kishore Jewellers last year and the theft was committed in a similar manner.

Sources said the same gang might have been involved in both the incidents.

Meanwhile, a junior commissioned officer died after he and his colleague allegedly indulged in a fight on Friday. The two clashed with each other inside the premises of Central Command on Friday morning. Pambha Sherpa (44) of Darjeeling succumbed to injuries at the Central Command Hospital while Ramesh Rai (45) of Nepal was undergoing treatment.

11-yr-old girl raped

Lucknow (PNS): An 11-year-old girl was raped allegedly by an acquaintance on Thursday evening. The accused, identified as Shailendra Srivastava of Hussainganj was arrested by police. Police said the girl was cycling her way to a playground on Thursday evening when she met Shailendra. The accused offered to take to a nearby eatery. However, he took her to an isolated place near railway tracks and raped her before fleeing the place.

In the meantime, her parents started searching for the girl even as she did not return home. Later, the girl reached home and fell unconscious. Her parents rushed her to a private clinic where she regained consciousness around midnight and narrated her ordeal to her parents, who lodged a police complaint. The girl, who is a class V student, told her moth-

er that she was sexually assaulted by Shailendra, who is aged around 23 years and a business management student. The accused was rounded up for interrogation on Friday.

Meanwhile, a 23-year-old woman, identified as Reema, hanged herself at her parents' house in Hasiamau under Sushant Golf City police station. Her father Bhagwan Deen alleged that his daughter committed suicide due to atrocities by her husband Sai Lal over dowry demands. Reema got married in 2013. Bhagwan Deen told the police that she used to run away from her house when she was unable to withstand the torture. However, she would go back on the advice of elders. She came to her parents' house on February 23. She was found hanging from the ceiling on Friday morning.

India Post
भारतीय डाक

Office Of The Chief Postmaster General, UP Circle, Lucknow-226001 Dak Adalat

A Dak Adalat is being organized in the office of the Chief Postmaster General, UP Circle Lucknow in the chamber of Chief PMG at 12.00 Hrs. on 07.04.2021 to settle the complaints of the customers.

The complaints of the speed post, Parcel Registered letters, Value Payables, Money Orders, Saving Bank and Postal Life Insurance etc. will be heard and efforts will be made to settle them on the spot.

Grievances in respect of above services may be sent to the Assistant Director (PG), Office of the Chief Postmaster General, UP, Circle Lucknow 226001 up to 26.03.2021. The complaint received after this date will not be considered in the aforesaid Dak Adalat.

Only those complaints should be submitted in which no response has been received from the concerned Postmaster General / Sr. Supdt. Of Post Offices / Supdt. Of Post Offices of the Circle. A proof of preferring such complaints before the Dak Adalat to concerned PMGs/Divisional Heads be sent alongwith the complaints being made for consideration in the above Dak Adalat.

Word "FOR DAK ADALAT" should be scribed on the top of envelop and complaints.

Assistant Director (PG) O/O CPMG Office, UP Circle, Lucknow-226001

मिशन शक्ति
नारी सुरक्षा
नारी सम्मान
नारी स्वावलंबन

‘मिशन शक्ति’ विशेष अभियान
26 फरवरी, 2021 से 8 मार्च, 2021
के अंतर्गत
नारी सुरक्षा, सम्मान, स्वावलंबन एवं सशक्तिकरण के लिए जनपद स्तर पर अन्य विभागों से समन्वय करते हुए राजस्व विभाग द्वारा संचालित योजनाओं/कार्यक्रमों, राजस्व विधियों में महिला अधिकारों से संबंधित प्रावधानों के अंतर्गत आय, जाति, निवास व हेसियत प्रमाण पत्र प्रदान करने हेतु ऑनलाइन सुविधाओं पर

संगोष्ठी एवं जागरूकता कार्यक्रम
ग्राम स्तर पर : 26 से 28 फरवरी, 2021
ब्लॉक स्तर पर : 1 से 3 मार्च, 2021
तहसील स्तर पर : 4 एवं 5 मार्च, 2021
जनपद स्तर पर : 6 एवं 7 मार्च, 2021

अंतर्राष्ट्रीय महिला दिवस (8 मार्च, 2021) पर मुख्य आयोजन

- महिला हेल्प डेस्क पर पात्र महिलाओं को आवासीय पट्टा-अभिलेखों का वितरण
- तहसील स्तर पर विशिष्ट उपलब्धि हासिल करने वाली पाँच महिलाओं का सम्मान
- महिलाओं द्वारा बालिकाओं के नाम से पौधरोपण
- ग्रामसभा में हाईस्कूल/इंटरमीडिएट में सर्वोच्च अंक प्राप्त करने वाली छात्रा के नाम पर एक तालाब का नामकरण
- वरासत अभियान के दौरान दर्ज महिला खातेदारों, महिला सह-खातेदारों को खातौनी की नकल का निःशुल्क वितरण
- उत्कृष्ट कार्य हेतु महिला राजस्व कर्मियों व महिला लेखपालों का सम्मान

राजस्व विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

Furthering Sustainable Business Environment For Enterprises

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme
An Aatmanirbhar Bharat Initiative

₹ 2.40 LAKH CRORE
MSMEs / BUSINESS ENTERPRISES SANCTIONED

Scheme Amended For Maximising Coverage
Turnover limit removed
Borrowers with loan outstanding above ₹50 crore & up to ₹500 crore, in select sectors, with up to 30 Days Past Due, made eligible under the scheme, both fund based and non-fund based allowed
Validity date extended up to 31st March, 2021

MSMEs/Business Enterprises and MUDRA/Individual beneficiaries can seek help by visiting their Banks/NBFCs or log in to www.ncgtc.in

Department of Financial Services
Government of India

Digital census: Data Centre inaugurated

Lucknow (PNS): A state-of-the-art Data Centre was inaugurated by Census Commissioner Vivek Joshi at the Census office in Aliganj on Friday. A senior official from the Census department said it is one of the three centres set up in the country. “With the census being carried out digitally this year, this centre will also serve as a back-up for any problems in the system since the digital interaction will be carried out on a bigger scale this time for collecting information related to census,” he said.

The state government employees, under the directions of respective district



magistrates, will be collecting data through a mobile app. “We carried out normal tabulations and processing with the kind of facility which was already available, this kind of data centre becomes

necessary for a digital census,” he said, adding that preparations are on for the next census.

The exercise, which was supposed to start in 2020, was called off because of the coronavirus pandemic and resultant lockdown. The inauguration of the data centre also witnessed the presence of Census Director (UP) Narendra Shankar Pandey. He said that the census gives statistical information about the Indian populace. For the first digital census which is going to be held in the country, the data centre has been set up to provide back-up for the one in Delhi.

Office of the Superintending Engineer,
Jhansi Circle P.W.D., Jhansi

No- 1328 / 44C-Jhs Circle/20-21

Dt: 17.02.21

E-Tenders Notice

1- On behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP PWD, in class A, B and C for the work in column no-3. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

2- SI. No. District Name of Work Cost (Rs. in Lac) Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs) Address of Executive Engineer executing the work Cost of tender inclusive all taxes with stationery (in Rs.) Period of Completion work in inclusive rainy season

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Jalaun	Renewal work of Jalaun-Bhind road (SH-70) in Km. 1,2,3,4,5	128.90	8.45	C.D.-I P.W.D. Orai	Rs. 2500.00	12 Months
2	Jalaun	Renewal work of Aurakhi-Amkheda Sarawan-Marora-Hadruk road in Km. 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,19(250)	60.80	5.04	C.D.-I P.W.D. Orai	Rs. 2500.00	06 Months

3- Bidding Documents will be available on date 01-03-2021 to 16-03-2021 online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Bids must be submitted online on or before 12:00 noon on date 16-03-2021 & the technical bids be opened online on date 17-03-2021 at 03:00 Noon

4- Detailed informations of above tender will be available online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in>.

5- Detailed informations of above Tender will be available online on Website <http://etender.up.nic.in>, <http://wms.upwd.gov.in>/Prahari Registered contractor are advised to upload detail of tender on Prahari App and there after on NIC website.

(Er. Avadhesh Kumar)

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
JHANSI / JHANSI CIRCLE, PWD,
JHANSI

UP- 161132 Dt 24.2.21

विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.upgov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

COUNCIL OF ARCHITECTURE

(A statutory Authority of Government of India under Architects Act, 1972)

India Habitat Centre, Core 6A, 1st Floor,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003

EXAMINATION NOTICE: NATA 2021

File No./CA/NATA/2021/01

Dated: 26.02.2021

Attention : Students, Parents, Architectural Institutions and all concerned

Subject:- Announcement of dates for First & Second Tests of NATA 2021.

The Council of Architecture is pleased to announce that the First Test and Second Test of National Aptitude Test in Architecture (NATA) 2021 examination, shall be held on April 10, 2021 and June 12, 2021, respectively.

The NATA 2021 Brochure with important dates for both the tests shall be uploaded shortly on the websites www.nata.in and www.coa.gov.in. The NATA portal shall also be operational in due course to facilitate students to apply for registration of First & Second Tests.

The candidates desirous to appear for NATA 2021 are advised to refer to the said websites for latest updates.

New Delhi

Registrar

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
LUCKNOW CIRCLE, PWD, LUCKNOW

E-Tender Notice

No. 1223/401C-LKO.CIR/2020-21

Dated 20/02/2021

The S.E. Lucknow Circle, U.P.P.W.D. on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP PWD, For Road Work class 'A' 'B' and 'C' Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

Sl. No.	District	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs in Lakhs)	Bid Security (Rs in Lakhs)	Tender + Stationary Charges + G.S.T.	Category	Time of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer of the Executing work	Address of Superintending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Maharajganj-Shivgarh (ODR) Km. 10 to Ganesh khara via mohanganj Link Road	162.50	10.13	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	PD,PWD RaeBareilly	Lucknow Circle P.W.D. Lucknow.	C.E. Central Zone P.W.D. Lucknow.
2	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Maharajganj-Shivgarh Road (ODR) Km. 8 to Kuti Link Road	71.50	5.58	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	---	---	---
3	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Bacchrawan-Maharajganj Road (ODR) Km 10 to Baraawa to Benipur Link Road Km. 2 to Pure Sadai Khan Link Road.	73.00	5.65	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	---	---	---
4	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Lucknow-Prayagraj Road (NH-30) Km 43 to Churuwa Sengo Bankarganj Link Km. 9 to Sengo Purangawan sariya Link Road km. 2 to Rai khara Link Road.	66.50	5.33	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	---	---	---
5	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Maharajganj-Chandapur Semrauta Road (ODR) Km. 8 to Jai Dautra Road Km 4 to Sitaram purwa Link Road.	102.50	7.13	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	---	---	---
6	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Maharajganj-Inhuna Road (ODR) km. 4 to Kusmaura to Durgapur Link Road.	98.50	6.93	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	---	---	---
7	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Bacchrawan -maurawan Road (ODR) Km 8 to koyal khara Link Road.	88.00	6.40	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	---	---	---
8	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Bahraich Banda Road (NH-13) Km. 165 to Guda Chandapur Link Road Km1 to Pure Jarwar Khara Link Road Km. 1 to Pure Payam Khara Link Road.	72.50	5.63	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	---	---	---
9	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Tilienda-Halor (ODR) Km. 4 to Bhanwari Khara via Dumakhara Link Road.	111.50	7.58	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	---	---	---
10	Rae Bareilly	New Construction of Maharajganj-Dusant-Nigoha Road (ODR) Km 14 to Babpur Talukha Amawa Link Road.	55.00	4.75	2000.00+ 3 00.00+ 60.00 Total 2360.00	A, B, C	06 Month	---	---	---

>The Rate adopted in the B.O.Q. are excluding GST Taxes.

Bids can be downloaded online from date 01.03.2021 at 9:00 AM to 09.03.2021 at 12:00 Noon and bid can be submitted online on or before 09.03.2021 at 12:00 Noon. The technical bids will be opened online on date 10.03.2021 at 12:30 PM. According to the provisions of Government Order no. 1/2018/3070/78-2-2018/42 IT/2017 (22) Date 03-01-2018 after opening of the technical and financial bids, the bidder has to submit original documents personally in department office. In the event of non submission of original documents by the bidder, the appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the provisions of G.O.

Technical evaluation of tenders is to be done by Prahari Software, the details of which are available in NIT enclosed with Bid Document.

All terms & conditions can be seen on website <http://etender.up.nic.in>

(Dinesh Kumar Kureel)

Executive Engineer
P.W.D. Lucknow

(J.K. Banga)

Superintending Engineer
Lucknow Circle
PWD, Lucknow

For on behalf of Governor of UP

UP 161116 Date 24.02.2021 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.upgov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Having established that SUV that lay Abandoned near Industrialist Mukesh Ambani's skyscraper mansion "Antilia" in south Mumbai on Thursday evening was a stolen car and the gelatin sticks found in it were manufactured in a Nagpur facility, the crime branch sleuths of the Mumbai police on Friday launched a manhunt for two unidentified culprits behind the sensational plot.

A day after the 20 gelatin sticks and a letter were recovered from a Scorpio that was found abandoned in the vicinity of Mukesh Ambani's 27-storey residence "Antilia" on Carmichael Road in south Mumbai, the Gamdevi police registered an FIR in the case, while the Mumbai Crime Branch sleuths landed "strong leads" in their investigations in the case.The two early leads that the investigations found in the case were: the SUV – a Scorpio - used in the crime had been stolen from Vikhroli in north-east Mumbai and e the gelatin sticks found in the car were manufactured at Nagpur-based firm M/s Solar Explosives Ltd.

Informed sources in the Mumbai police said that the Scorpio used in the crime had been stolen from a service road near the Vikhroli Airoli junction. The owner of the car has told the police that his car broke down near Vikhroli Airoli junction while he was on his way from Thane to Mumbai. The owner parked the car on the wayside of the road. On the following afternoon, when he returned to take the car for repairs, he found the vehicle was missing. He lodged a complaint with the Vikhroli police.

After the theft of the SUV, the miscreants damaged the chassis plate and tried to make the number illegible. However, the police retrieved the chassis number and identified the owner.

In one of the multiple CCTV footages from the area around the crime spot showed the suspect who parked the car at the site, but he has not been identified as yet, but he sported a mask on his face and had covered his head with a hoodie that he wore.

The seized car has meanwhile been sent for a forensic analysis

The purported threat letter -- written in broken English and Hindi -- that was recovered from the seized SUV was addressed to “Nita Bhabhi aur Mukesh

bhyya aur femil”. The culprits said that what they were witnessing was a mere “trailer”. “Be alert. We have made all arrangements to blow up the entire Ambani family”, the letter read.

“An FIR has been registered and investigations were in progress,” deputy commissioner of police (operations) and Mumbai Police spokesperson S Chaitanya said.Chaitanya, however, declined to comment on the contents of the letter, saying: he said: “I cannot comment on the letter. It is part of the investigations. We have got some leads, we are working on it”.

Having confirmed that the gelatine sticks found in the car were manufactured at a Nagpur-based firm, the investigators have sought the details of sale of the seized gelatin sticks “Since only packets and not the individual sticks are bar-coded, it will take us some time to confirm who bought it or whether these were also stolen,” a senior police officer said.

Meanwhile, an RIL spokesperson said on Friday: “We are thankful to Mumbai Police for their quick and immediate action. We are confident that they will complete their thorough investigation quickly”.

The investigations have revealed that the abandoned vehicle was discovered only at around 14.00 hrs on Thursday, nearly 12 hours after it had been parked there. Incidentally, the seized SUV – which has been seized by police - bears a registration number similar to a vehicle which is part of the Ambani family's security detail.

“In addition, we have found four other fake number plates inside the SUV. One of the number plates matches with the number of an official foreign consulate vehicle. We are investigating the fake number plates separately,” a police officer said. Given the importance of the case, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh and senior police and intelligence officers are monitoring the probe.

The Gamdevi police have registered an FIR under sections / 286, 465, 473, 120(b), 506(2) of IPC pertaining to explosives, forgery, criminal conspiracy and criminal intimidation. They have also invoked section 4 of Explosives Substance Act for attempt to cause explosion, or for making or keeping it with intent to endanger life or property.

UP’s transformation in last 4 years exemplary: Mahana

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The transformation of Uttar Pradesh in the past four years has been exemplary, but there is still a long way to go, Industries Minister Satish Mahana said while addressing industry representatives at CII's Annual Day and a session on ‘Building Uttar Pradesh for New India’ in Lucknow.

Speaking on the effects the pandemic has had on businesses, he said that in 2020, the focus was on helping industries survive, but 2021 will be about revival and progress. He also pointed out that now that the state has accorded industry status to the logistics and warehousing sector, land for logistic and warehousing development is being given on industrial rates.

Mahana invited the industry for partnership with the government and urged participation in the private industrial parks. He further requested the CII leadership for suggestions and policy interventions to improve the business environment in the state.

Additional Chief Secretary, Infrastructure & Industrial Development, Arvind Kumar said that the Centre's budget has been encouraging on various fronts. He said that the Ganga Expressway timelines have been set and work is scheduled to begin by June.

While stating that the conversion ratio of the MoUs signed during the Investors Summit has been around 43%,

Kumar also noted that the Film City, YEIDA, GIDA are fast turning into industrial hubs with great potential. Also, the proposed Toy Park in the state will give an impetus to bulk toy manufacturing which the country largely imports, he said. He also stressed on Mission Shakti of the government which focuses on women empowerment, inclusion and safety. He urged CII to conduct interactions focusing on women entrepreneurs who can serve as role models for the fraternity.

Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture, Dvesh Chaturvedi spoke on the provisions of the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund. He pointed out that UP has received an allocation of around Rs 12,000 crore of the announced fund of Rs one lakh crore, which will be utilised to support 3% interest subsidy for loans on investments as well as sanctioning of

loans pertaining to creation of Agricultural infrastructure in the state.

Citing the example of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh which have privatised the sector to a large extent, he said that the private sector has to assume the role of key driver in agri-infra investments since the FPOs and co-operatives are still in the nascent stage of development in Uttar Pradesh. He also proposed that CII can partner with the government to prepare a district-wise shelf of projects which can be taken up by entrepreneurs, young graduates or private players.

Chairman of CII Uttar Pradesh State Council and director of Dayal Group Ankit Gupta said that the government has been forthcoming in addressing the challenges of the industrialists during the pandemic and has come up with industry-driven policies.

UP doing well in policy framework: Maira

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh seems to be doing well in terms of policy framework and supporting infrastructure. There is one crucial area of development which is to increase income of the people, to promote enterprise and ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ and ‘Vocal for Local’ which is a step in right direction.

This was stated by former member of the Planning Commission of India Arun Maira at the 15th Interdependence, Integration and Co-creation (IIC-2021), which was inaugurated at

Jaipuria Institute of Management. The theme of the two-day conference is ‘The resurgent and emerging state of Uttar Pradesh’. Various speakers, born and brought up in the state and doing very well in their chosen areas in India and abroad, have been selected for the conference.

Maira started his talk from his birth in Lahore and movement of his family to Meerut. Citing examples of Singapore and Japan, he said the state can learn a lot from Singapore and focus on technology, people and productivity of enterprise. Focusing on role small enterprises, he said that cluster

approach can be very helpful in fueling growth for the state.

Chairman of JIM Sharad Jaipuria highlighted the role of Investors Summit in fueling industrial growth in the country and talked about the recent achievements of Uttar Pradesh in various areas like education, industrial development, focus on small micro and medium enterprises, etc. He said that all the initiatives have helped UP in becoming the No. 2 state in terms of GDP only after Maharashtra, and contribution of One district one product (ODOP) scheme in boosting the exports from the state.

‘Explosive-laden SUV found near Ambani’s house was stolen’

‘UDF has an edge, LDF chances dim’

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

As kick-off began for the April 6 Assembly polls in Kerala on Friday, poll observers in the State are of the view that the Congress-led United Democratic Front has a slight edge over the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front. Veteran scribe and author P Rajan, who led Mathrubhumi daily's editorial team for four decades and continues writing and commenting on political and social issues, is of the view that events in the last one week witnessed by the State have cast

an uncertainty over the poll prospects of the LDF. “CM Pinarayi Vijayan himself had to announce the cancellation of the MoU signed with the US based EMCC, a dubious company and the Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation for deep sea fishing. Similarly, the ongoing agitation by rank holders of the Kerala Public Service Commission for appointment in Government service and the goofing up of the way the administration treated the job seekers too will play a significant role in coming days,” said Rajan.

He said he does not expect a sweep by the UDF which was witnessed during the Lok Sabha election. The UDF had won all but one seat in the 20 Lok Sabha constituencies from the State. “The situation has changed because the minorities which voted en masse for the Congress hoping that the party would regain the power which it lost in 2014 have understood that the Grand Old Party is no more the same entity. The CPI(M) has said that it made a mistake in handling the Sabarimala temple issue, dear to all Hindus in the State,” said Rajan.

DELHI JAL BOARD : GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI

OFFICE OF THE EX. ENGINEER (E&M)BP

100 MGD BHAGIRATHI WATER TREATMENT PLANT GOKALPURI : DELHI-110094

STOP CORONA: MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE, WEAR MASK, KEEP HANDS HYGINIC

-PREES Short Tender Notice - N .J .T. No. 06 (2020-21)/Re-invite

S. No.	Description of work	Date of Uploading on E-Procurement solution/Tender ID	Estimated cost/Earnest Money & Tender Fee	Date of Opening of Tender
1.	Shifting of part of Jal Vihar main 1200 mm dia into G.K. main 1200mm dia at Vikas Marg under Bhagirathi plant.	26-02-2021/ 2021_DJB_200598_1	Job work/ Rs. 51800/- & Rs. 500/-	04-03-2021 at 03.15 PM

For further details in this regard can be seen at <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)

Adv. No. J.S.V. 447 (2020-21)

SD/- EE (E&M) BP

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF

RURAL WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION

BHUBANESWAR

Jal O Parimal Bhawan,
Unit – V, Bhubaneswar-751001,
Tel: 0674-2396734,
Fax No.0674-2394946
Email: cerwssodisha@gmail.com,
janmeg60@yahoo.com

NOTICE INVITING BID

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

No. 1581_Dated 22.02.2021

The Engineer-in-Chief, RWS&S, Odisha, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites proposals for Consultancy Services for engagement of Authority's Engineer (AE) for supervision of Mega Piped Water Supply projects on the basis of National Competitive Bidding for the works detailed in the table given below. The firm is advised to examine carefully all instructions in the RFP Document.

S No	Name of the Rural Water Supply Project	Bid ID No.	Assignment Period (months)	Availability of Bid Documents for Online Bidding
				From To
1	RFP for Consultancy Services for Authority Engineer (AE) Services for 02 Nos Individual Rural Piped Water Supply Project pertaining to Danagadi Block and Dharmasala & Rasulpur Blocks of Jajpur district.	EIC, RWSS-34/20-21	24 months (Twenty Four Months)	17.00 hours of 01.03.2021 17.00 hours of 01.04.2021
2	RFP for Consultancy Services for Authority Engineer (AE) Services for 02 Nos Individual Rural Piped Water Supply Project pertaining to Baliguda & Tikabali blocks of Kandhamal district.	EIC, RWSS-35/20-21	24 months (Twenty Four Months)	17.00 hours of 01.03.2021 17.00 hours of 01.04.2021
3	RFP for Consultancy Services for Authority Engineer (AE) Services for Rural Piped Water Supply Project pertaining to Ranipada cluster of Banpur Block of Khordha district.	EIC, RWSS-36/20-21	24 months (Twenty Four Months)	17.00 hours of 01.03.2021 17.00 hours of 01.04.2021

Name & Address of officer inviting RFP:

ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF, RWS&S
JAL O PARIMAL BHAWAN, UNIT-V,
BHUBANESWAR-751001, ODISHA,
Tel: 0674-2395734, FAX: 0674-2394946
E-mail: cerwssodisha@gmail.com

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

SD/-22.02.2021

Engineer-in-Chief, RWS&S(O)

OIPR-25040/11/0016/2021

LPG prices to come down as winter ends: Pradhan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Petroleum & Natural Gas and Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that the increase in prices of domestic gas is due to cold and as the winter ends, the same will also come down. He came here on his two days visit and after landing at Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur, he also told the reporters that the price-hike in petroleum and gas products is an international matter. Later, the union minister reached Kashi Vishwanath temple where he offered prayer.

During his staying there he also saw the ongoing construction work and he was apprised of the entire Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project by the Divisional Commissioner (DC) Deepak Agrawal. Pradhan will also attend the Sant Ravidas Jayanti celebrations at Seer Govardhan on Saturday, along with regional BJP chief Mahesh Chandra Srivastava, district president Hansraj Vishwakarma and city president Vidya Sagar Rai. He stayed at BLW Guest House during the night.

During his stay, he will also attend some other programmes and hold meetings with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers and officials of various oil and gas companies. He will inaugurate some new facilities of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) at Circuit House on Saturday in which Director (Marketing) Gurmeet Singh, Executive Director and Head UP Dr Uttiya Bhattacharya and many other



Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan offering prayer at Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi on Friday

senior officers will take part.

IOCL LAUNCHES WOMEN CUSTOMER ATTENDANT PETROL PUMP: In order to its commitment of 'Women empowerment', the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) Limited on Thursday launched the first 'Women Customer Attendant petrol pump' of this eastern part of UP in Varanasi.

The Indian Oil, the largest retailer of petroleum products in the country, has opened its

first 'All-Women' customer attendant petrol pump of eastern UP at Ajay Automobiles, on Babatpur Road and the Director (Marketing), IOC Gurmeet Singh, formally inaugurated in a brief function in the presence of Dr Uttiya Bhattacharyya, Executive Director and State Head, Uttar Pradesh State Office-1. Singh also launched a 'Sanitary Napkin Vending Machine' for Women Customers, a unique initiative undertaken by Indian

Oil in the state.

Inaugurating the petrol pump and vending machine, Gurmeet Singh said, 'Indian Oil lives by its motto of 'Customer First' and is committed towards the cause of 'Women-Empowerment'. Launching an 'All-Women' Customer Attendant Petrol Pump, where all facilities and services will be extended to customers by women, he hoped that we will be able to provide special and better service.

Singh said, 'In this competitive era one has to be customer centric. Our endeavour is to ensure that women travelling long distances should feel comfortable. This automated Sanitary Napkin Vending Machine is a proven solution for making quality sanitary napkins available 24X7 with ease and convenience'. He also honoured the women employees working at the pump.

Singh also launched the 'Spin n Win' sales campaign, which is currently applicable at 18 Indian Oil Petrol pumps under Varanasi DO. Under this campaign, customers will get an opportunity to win interesting gifts on the spot by purchasing petrol worth Rs 1000 for their four-wheelers or Rs 300 or more for their two-wheelers. This scheme will be valid till March 31. Subrat Kar, Chief General Manager (Retail Sales), Amit Chaudhary, General Manager (Retail Sales), Deepak Kumar Sinha, CDRSM, Varanasi DO, Subodh Kumar and Senior Manager (Retail Sales), Varanasi DO were also present on occasion.

Seer Govardhan wears festive colours

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Seer Govardhan, the birth-place of a famous medieval period saint, wore festive colours on the eve of Sant Ravidas Jayanti when thousands of his disciples, majority of them from Punjab, witnessing farmers' agitation these days, gathered here. It would be a rare occasion when there would not be any big political activity on this occasion, falling on Maaghi Purnima, as the parties are mainly engaged these days in West Bengal. However, it is expected that next year it would be a centre of huge political activities when UP assembly elections would be round the corner. During the last few years, the festival was attended by both Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on many occasions when parliamentary and assembly polls were round the corner. Similarly, on eve of Punjab assembly poll, Delhi CM Arvind Kejariwal visited here. The festival was also attended by former CM Mayawati on many occasions



Sant Niranjn Das at Sant Ravidas temple, Seer Govardhan on eve of Jayanti in Varanasi on Friday

and last year, Priyanka Gandhi also offered prayer to Sant Ravidas.

Besides, the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic were also seen this time as hundreds of followers of Sant Ravidas from various countries could not come here. In all the previous years, Sant Niranjn Das of Sachkhand Ballan Dera (Jalandhar) and chief of Sant Shiromani Janamsthan Mandir, visited here along with his thousands of followers by a spe-

cial train but this time, he came here on Thursday evening along with his two dozen followers by a plane and when he landed at Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur, he was welcomed by his followers. Later, after reaching Seer Govardhan in a motorcade, he first offered prayer at Garbgrih.

On Saturday, the function will begin when Sant Niranjn Das will garland the statue of Sant Ravidas at a park named

after the medieval period poet at Nagwa and then various religious and cultural programmes will be organised at Seer Govardhan. On the eve of the festival, senior district and police officers visited there to study the security and other arrangements.

To watch the activities of the people, CCTV cameras have been installed at 41 places. Besides, the administration has also made all the preparations completed for the traditional Shobha Yatra to be taken out from Maidagin to Seer Govardhan on Saturday evening. Apart from this, NDRF personnel have been deployed on all the major ghats to keep watch during bathing hours in the morning.

There are two temples of Sant Ravidas in the city located in northern and southern parts of river Ganga but the famous one is at southern part at Seer Govardhan whereas Congress leaders mainly prefer other temple which was set up by former union minister Babu Jagjeevan Ram and almost every year it is visited by ex-Lok Sabha speaker Meira Kumar.

Health workers get COVID-19 vaccine doses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

For the continuous second day, a good number of doctors and health workers received vaccine doses in the 40 sessions of 29 centres in the district on Friday which was the 13th day of vaccination since it was started on January 16 last. In view of spike in coron-

avirus cases in parts of the country and continuous appeals of the district and Health department officers, the drive had received an enthusiastic response on Thursday, when it was recorded 133 per cent as against the target of 3,030 health and frontline workers, 4,033 turned out and they included 2,428

health workers and 1,605 frontline workers.

Meanwhile, the preparations have been intensified for the forthcoming vaccination of old aged people with comorbidities from March 1.

To make it easy to reach the vaccination centres, efforts are being made to provide the same facilities at various

schools/ colleges apart from PHCs/ CHCs and other hospitals.

The collection of records of such persons is a big challenge as it is expected that the same would be in lakhs and after collecting their records, the names of the beneficiaries would be loaded on Co-Win portal.

BHU students call off agitation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The police on Friday detained five students and evacuated the main entrance gate of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) from agitated students when they denied ending their protest in favour of the demand of opening the university for all the students. The police had to release them when the students in large numbers put up a strong protest against the detention of their colleagues. The students called off their agitation but reiterated that their protest will continue until the varsity administration meets their demand. It gave a relief to the district administration and varsity administration as well as the entrance gate was opened

for one and all as usual.

It is mentioned that the varsity administration had decided to open the university for the students only of final year on February 22 last following the guidelines of COVID-19. When the university was opened for the final year students, the scores of students of first and second year staged a protest demanding the opening of the university for all the students. They sat on dharna by closing the main entrance gate of the university at Lanka. It caused severe inconvenience to the passers-by and patients coming to Sir Sunderlal Hospital (BHU) for the treatment.

The varsity administration held talks several times with the agitated students to

end the agitation but they remained adamant and continued their stir. On Thursday last, a student Ashutosh Kumar announced to sit in on fast on-to-death. Thereafter, the district administration swung into action and the ADM, City Gulab Chand held a talk with agitated students and asked them to end the stir otherwise the administration will have no option except to use the force. Meanwhile, the varsity administration also held talks with the students in an attempt to pacify them to end the protest but in vain.

On Friday early morning, the police reached the dharna site and took Ashutosh and four other students in their custody and took them to Lanka police station. The

police also evacuated the dharna place and opened the gate for the passers-by by using mild force.

When this news reached to other students and hostel inmates they reached the police station and put up a strong protest against the detention. It led to a tension for some time and succumbing to the pressure mounted by the students in large number, the police released the detained students.

Thereafter, the students ended their five-day long agitation but decided to continue their protest till their demand is not met.

]The district and varsity administration also heaved a sigh of relief with the end of dharna.

HC refuses to grant anticipatory bail to Arparna Purohit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Giving a big jolt to the India Ahead of Amazon Prime Aparna Purohit, the Allahabad High Court refused to grant anticipatory bail on Tandav web series controversy.

The court in its order said that those who care least for the basic rights of the majority community cannot pray for their fundamental right of expression. The court turned down the plea of the Amazon Seller Services Private Limited and refused the grant anticipatory bail to its India head Aparna Purohit.

Freedom of expression does not mean that the religious faith and freedom of religion of the majority com-

munity is compromised.

Justice Siddharth of the Allahabad High Court was hearing the anticipatory bail application of Aparna Purohit in connection with the webcast of Tandav web series on the OTT platform by Amazon Prime. The court said that the first and foremost condition for a bail is extending help in investigation and interrogation, but the applicant is not extending cooperation in investigation of the case by Hazratganj Kotwali of Lucknow after getting relief from the court. It is clear by her behaviour that she does not believe in honouring the law. Those who do not honour the rights of the majority community should not plead for their own

rights, the court commented.

The court considered Tandav web series as an attack on the religious feelings of the majority community, and refused to grant interim bail to the India head of Amazon Prime. Quoting Supreme Court judgments Justice Siddharth said that the film makers and the publishers are not supposed to hurt religious feelings of any community. No film maker produces film on Jesus or Mohammad Saheb, but the Hindu Gods are targeted.

The court observed that the applicant was a student of Jamia Miliya Islamia and has been associated with the film word for 15 years. She had also done media course, but she included in her film the objec-

tionable slogans raised by the students of JNU, portraying India as intolerant country where it is difficult to live and survive.

Ten FIRs and four criminal cases have been filed in this connection. The director of the web series Ali Abbas is the co-accused in this web cast, and cases against them have been registered in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Greater Noida Rabupura police station, and to avoid arrest this anticipatory application had been moved.

Complaints have been received against this web series Tandav with Saif Ali Khan in the lead role, that it had deliberately attacked the Hindu Gods to hurt religious feelings of the majority community.

Poor response to Bharat Bandh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Response of Bharat Bandh call as a protest against the hike in the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG, and demanding amendments in GST rules was quite poor in Prayagraj.

All the markets were open as usual and the Bandh call could not cast any effect on the

normal functioning in the city. Reports from Transport Nagar say that the transporters kept their vehicles off the road, still trucks were plying on the roads, especially on highways.

The bandh call was given by the Confederation of All India Traders and some political parties, but the traders preferred to turn a deaf ear towards the call. However, they

demand some amendments in the GST rules for their convenience.

LAWYERS BOYCOTT WORK: Lawyers on the third consecutive day boycotted judicial work at the Allahabad High Court and took out a protest foot march from the High Court to Subhash crossing in Civil Lines.

The lawyers are opposing

the constitution of an Education Tribunal at Lucknow. They are of the view that this law was passed in an unconstitutional manner, so it should be taken back.

The lawyers boycotted court proceedings and took out a march to give an edge to their protest. Now they will meet again on Monday to decide future course of action.

Doctors given 2nd dose of Covid vaccine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Besides para-medical staff the second dose of Covid vaccine was given to the Chief Medical Superintendent TB Sapru Hospital Dr Kiran Mallick, Medical Superintendent Dr MK Akhauri, Pediatrician Dr Shailendra, Dr Prashant

Pandey, Orthopedic surgeon Dr AP Singh, Ophthalmologist Dr SM Abbas and many other doctors at TB Sapru Hospital, popularly known as Beli Hospital here in Prayagraj on Friday.

Under Covid protocol all the above doctors and paramedical staff had been kept under observation for half-

an-hour at the hospital, and then was allowed to go home when no side effect was seen.

People in Prayagraj have hailed the decision of the Government of arranging for free shots of vaccine in Government hospitals, and paid vaccination at private hospitals for those who can afford the price, but have requested

that vaccination fee at private hospitals should be announced, and the government should keep a watch on the supply of vaccine so that fake vaccine is now not supplied.

Though Covid situation in Prayagraj is not alarming but the officials are keeping close watch on the increasing number of cases, though negligible.

Lallu visits trans-Yamuna area to lure Nishad community

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

After the visit of Priyanka Gandhi the state chief of the Congress Ajay Kumar Lallu visited trans-Yamuna area of Prayagraj on Friday to lure the Nishad community further. He said that the Congress will fight for the rightful demands of the Nishad community in connection with sand mining.

He visited Banswar village of Ghoorpur in the trans-Yamuna area and gave away a

cheque of ₹ 10 lakh to the Nishad community. He also informed that under the leadership of Priyanka Gandhi an Adhikar Yatra will be taken out from Prayagraj to Varanasi on March 1 to put pressure on the Government for allowing the community for sand mining.

It may be mentioned here that last month Government had initiated action against illegal sand mining and had captured a number of boats

engaged in this illegal trade.

The Congress party handed over this cheque of Rs 10 lakh among 18 farmers whose boats had been seized during drive against illegal sand mining. The Nishads will be able to arrange for new boats with this financial aid, he said and added that during her Prayagraj visit Priyanka Didi had made a commitment that she would extend help to the needy boatmen.

Nishad community has its

right on the river, soil, and sand, and for this the Congress will fight on the streets and in the Parliament as well. Priyanks had assured the Nishad community that they would be given sand mining lease if the Congress came to power.

The Congress is making all out effort to make the boatmen and fishermen its vote bank and both—Priyanka and Rahul are out to allure these communities.

AU to get Chancellor soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The process of appointing a Chancellor for Allahabad University has begun once again, and if all goes well this age old university will get a Chancellor soon.

The Executive Council meeting of the university on Friday is scheduled to forward five names for this coveted post. The names will be sent to the ministry in a sealed envelope, and the President of India will then appoint the Chancellor on the recommendation of the ministry.

Records still show the name of the great educationist Prof Govardhan Mehta as the Chancellor of Allahabad University, though his term had expired on June 12, 2017, and he had tendered his resignation before the expiration of his term highlighting several points as to why he did not visit this university.

The ministry had taken an initiative in the direction of appointing a Chancellor for Allahabad University in 2019, and had asked the university to send five names of the noted experts of their respective

fields.

The university had sent the names of Prof KB Pandey, Amitabh Bachchan, Prof Hari Gautam. Dr Ravindra Shukla, Justice Sakharan Yadav, and Prof Kasturirangan the ministry rejected all these names, and then once again in 2020 the ministry asked the university to suggest five names for Chancellorship.

The Friday meeting of the university executive council is scheduled to suggest five names to the ministry.

ATTACKED: Honey bees attacked a shooting unit in

Bhiti village, under the Ghoorpur police station in the trans-Yamuna area. The camera man and four others were serious and rushed to a hospital immediately.

After the success of the TV serial Pratigya, the unit decided after some years to make another serial 'Man ki Aawaz Pratigya' and for shooting purpose the unit visited Sujawandeo temple in Bhiti village where the shoot was in progress when thousands of bees came out of the hive from a nearby mango tree and attacked the unit members.

NCR GM inspects Alwar-Mathura section

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Vinay Kumar Tripathi, General Manager North Central and North Eastern Railway inspected the Alwar-Mathura Section of Agra Division under annual inspection programme on Friday. This inspection started in morning and continued till late in the evening. During the inspection, the track of the section was inspected from the rear window of the inspection car.

Starting from Alwar in the morning, Tripathi with his team of Principal head of departments inspected Major Curves, Level Crossings, Gang, stations (Ramgarh, Brij Nagar, and Govindgarh) Yards, Points along with conducting Speed Trial during the programme.

After starting inspection from Alwar in the morning, the General Manager inspected Minor Bridge No. 1510/2 and level crossing number 108 between Gazika and Utwad. He further inspected curve no. 28 in Utwad-Ramgarh section.

The GM inaugurated the Children Park and planted saplings at railway colony in Ramgarh. He also inaugurated Fire Alarm System at the Brij Nagar station, where he also inspected relay room and Point no. 299B. During the inspection, a speed trial in Ramgarh-Brij Nagar section to adjudge the riding aspect of track and other safety aspects was also conducted. During the inspection General Manager observed the track maintenance, points

and signal system of the Mathura-Alwar section. Level crossing gate no. 22 between Bahej and Govindgarh was also inspected. General Manager while inspecting the Govindgarh station saw the points, LWR and SEJs etc. Major Bridge No. Between Govindgarh-Radhakund 1417/6 was also inspected. Tripathi inspected the running room and lobby at Mathura Jn. and inaugurated the 3D hologram. He also saw the model of tank wagon maintenance at Baad depot.

During this inspection, General Manager Vinay Kumar Tripathi while talking to the press representatives in Mathura said that the Railway Administration is firmly com-

mitted to the development works and passenger amenities are being continuously enhanced. He also informed about the future plans and various projects going on in the area. The General Manager and his team of Principal Heads of Departments from Headquarters had a thorough overview of various aspects related to passenger amenities, operational arrangements, staff facilities, various aspects related to safety, various units of track maintenance and awarded the staff for good work during their inspection. Instructions were given to the Divisional Railway Manager and other concerned officers by the General Manager as per the requirements at various places.

Dy CM dedicates 101 roads in Maharajpur



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, while dedicating 101 roads constructed at a cost of Rs 36 crore in Maharajpur on Friday, said development works to the tune of Rs 142.77 crore were in progress in the assembly constituency.

Speaking at Paritosh Inter College, Maurya said in addition to this three new projects costing Rs 138 crore were also in the pipeline and would be carried out and Chakeri airport

road, Narval Sarsaul link road, Chhatmara, Tilsahri, Tons road would be constructed.

He said the UP government was making every effort that all the roads in Kanpur were in perfect shape before the end of 2022.

He later praised all the developmental works carried out in the constituency through MLA Satish Mahana. He said Mahana had done the utmost for his constituency and the all-round development of the state.

Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Maurya said in

the past five years all the development works carried out were before everyone to see and all that Modi had done for the country was known all over the country.

He said Ram temple construction, Mandir, repeal of Article 370 giving special status to the then state of Jammu and Kashmir were possible because of Modi.

He said despite the COVID-19 pandemic the entire nation was standing with Modi for the development of the country.

He said the truth was that today the nation was rapidly improving and UP had contributed majorly in the GDP of the country and stood on second position. Later Satish Mahana recounted all the development works carried out in UP under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The DM, SSP, DIG, Kanpur municipal commissioner, city magistrate, BDO, MLA Surendra Maithani, Mayor Pramila Pandey and several others were present.

Prof Gupta steers CSJMU to excellence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU) Kanpur has made several achievements during the past three years under the able stewardship of its Vice Chancellor Prof Neelima Gupta. Some of the courses launched by her are available nowhere in the state. These include the setting up of Yoga Centre, Happiness Centre and a course on Garbh Sanskar.

Addressing mediapersons, Prof Gupta said the university had adopted six villages under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and one of them was likely to be developed as a role model soon. She said under the Prime Minister's Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign, the CSJMU had taken initiatives to become a role model among other educational institutions in India.

The vice chancellor said to make its students self-reliant, the university had collaborated with the MSME to start training programmes in hosiery and food processing. She said setting up of the Entrepreneurship Cell and Incubation Centre was also a step in this direction.

Prof Gupta said despite a



CSJM University Vice Chancellor Prof Neelima Gupta addressing mediapersons

slight set-back in achievements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the university was adjudged the Centre of Excellence by the UP Governor Anandiben Patel and selected as a nodal centre for implementation of the recently launched state government's Abhyudaya Scheme. She said the university had also entered into MoUs with 18 organisations/universities to promote research, development and innovation.

"Development being a continuous process, challenges

should be taken as opportunity," she said adding that work should continue with broad vision and the university should not be confined up to delivering degrees only.

Prof Gupta aims at generating employment avenues to make students self-reliant. "We have to bring this into practice to bring about a change in society," she quipped.

The CSJMU is equally concerned about increasing its income resources and has started providing experts' services/consultancy, use of its

instruments/equipment and implementation of various schemes of the government and the Ministry of Education. Around 25 per cent proposed hike in examination fee will also add to its exchequer. Besides, the use of its Funstroke Swimming Pool and the proposed construction of an air-conditioned gym would also earn for the university.

The first experience as CSJMU vice chancellor brought Prof Gupta a spectrum of success in almost all the fields of education and research. She feels fortunate to bring in multi-dimensional progress in the university by implementing the New Education Policy (NEP) in true sense. She said the university would set up a Centre of Excellence in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence to provide opportunities to students for innovation and research. The proposal has already been sent to the Higher Education Department for approval.

The university is preparing a list of meritorious students to award them gold, silver and bronze medals in the convocation scheduled to be held on March 22, she said.

Tax expert throws light on clubbing of income

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Noted tax expert and orator Tanushree Dwivedi, while addressing a session on 'Clubbing of Income' organised by the Study Circle of Kanpur Income Tax Bar Association on Friday, said drastic changes had been introduced in the new Union budget.

She said that in general an assessee was taxed in respect of one's own income but often in some exceptional circumstances this basic principle was deviated and the assessee may be taxed in respect of income which legally belonged to somebody else.

She said earlier the taxpayers made an attempt to reduce their tax liability by transferring their assets in favour of their family members or by arranging their sources of income in such a way that tax incidence fell on others, whereas benefits of income were derived by them. She said to counteract such practices of tax avoidance, necessary provisions had been incorporated in sections 60 to 64 of the Income Tax Act.

Discussing the circum-

stances when income of some other person was included in the income of assessee, she said they included transfer of income without transfer of asset (Section. 60), clubbing of income for revocable transfer of assets (Section 61), clubbing of income of spouse (Section 64(1)), clubbing of income from assets transferred to son's wife and several others.

Dwivedi said if the taxpayer owned an asset, ownership of the asset was not transferred by him or the income from the asset was transferred to any person under a settlement, or agreement, the income from the asset would be taxable in the hands of the transferor.

Discussing revocable transfer, she said it meant the transferor of assets assumed a right to re-acquire the asset or income from such an asset, either whole or in parts, at any time in future, during the lifetime of the transferee. She said it also included a transfer which gave a right to re-assume power of the income from asset or asset during the lifetime of the transferee.

She said if the spouse of an

individual got any salary, commission, fees from a concern the individual had a substantial interest in such a concern. She said in such cases the salary, commission, fees, etc. shall be considered as income of the individual and not of the spouse.

Dwivedi said sometimes an individual was taxed in respect of others income. She said in such a case, the income legally belonged to somebody else but it was clubbed with the income of some other person in some special circumstances. She said these provisions were contained in sections 60 to 64.

She said sections 60 and 61 contained provisions when income from an asset was transferred without transferring the asset or an asset was transferred but the transfer was revocable. She said in both the situations income from such assets was treated as income of the transferor.

The programme was conducted by SK Gupta.

MM PRINCIPAL DONATES FOR RAM TEMPLE: Mahila Mahavidyalaya Principal Dr BR Agarwal, while speaking during the Shri Ram

Mandir Nidhi Samarpan Abhiyan, appreciated the innovative ideas put forth by students for making articles from waste materials.

She assured the students that in future talks on career opportunities would be organised from time to time in the college as they equipped students with new skills to face the challenges of life. Addressing the gathering, Director of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Centre, CSJM University Kanpur, Dr Ram Babu Gupta said Lord Ram was the symbol of faith and as Indians one need to donate generously and contribute willingly for the construction of a grand temple at Ayodhya. Dr Agarwal later contributed Rs 1,01,111 for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya. The faculty members also contributed generously while the non-teaching staff contributed Rs 7,501 as well. Later the Career Counselling Cell and BED department organised a career talk. It also displayed all the material prepared by the students to promote Atmanirbhar Bharat. Dr Mohini Agarwal introduced the career talk.

Smart control room to make Kanpur a 'Safe City'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar, while addressing a meeting at his camp office here, said the government had girded up its loins for the safety of women and girls. He said this objective would be accomplished with the cooperation of Women and Child Development and Home departments.

He said the Safe City scheme of the Central government would be run in 13 districts of the state, including Kanpur Nagar and Lucknow.

He said the purpose of Safe City was to ensure that all public places were safe for women and girls. He said it also aimed at enabling women and girls to boldly stand up to all occasions beyond the threat of gender based violence and harassment.

He said for this purpose, police, municipal, Transport, Urban Local Bodies and Women Welfare departments would work jointly.

Shekhar said an integrated Smart Control Room would be set up at district level by the police and it would be connected to services like Dial 112 and 1090. He said CCTV cameras and drones would monitor various locations of the city. He said a pink booth and pink police post would be set up for women and patrolling would be carried out by police women driving pink SUVs and pink two-wheelers. He said a help desk would also be established in each police station.

He said apart from this, pink toilets would be set up by Kanpur Nagar Nigam and such sites would be selected where movement of women was more. He said if there was no road light or poor illumination, proper arrangements would be made for lighting up such dark spots.

He said CCTV cameras and panic buttons would be installed in public buses. He added that buses and SUVs would also be run for the movement of women personnel and Asha Jyoti Centres and women's shelter homes would be made more effective and equipped with all facilities.

Kanpur Development Authority deputy chairman, municipal commissioner, additional district magistrate, police superintendent (West), deputy director women welfare and district probation officer took part in the meeting.

'Make SC, ST members aware of govt schemes'

KANPUR (PNS): Member of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes Commission, Chhavilal Sudershan, while addressing a meeting at the Circuit House here, directed the officials of the departments concerned to ensure that people at the grass-roots level were informed about the schemes run by the UP government.

He said all the details of the schemes need to be apprised to the beneficiaries without fail.

He said in the revenue villages, the safai karmacharis appointed earlier should be asked to do the work and no contract or ad hoc worker should be deployed for any work related to cleanliness. He also directed the officials concerned to ensure that complaints in this regard were taken up on priority and efforts be made that it did not happen in coming times.

He said the Scheduled Castes and Tribes Commission had come to know that there was large-scale financial bungling and irregularities in the construction of toilets due to which people at the rural level were facing several problems. He directed the officials to ensure that the work of toilet construction was carried out on a war footing and without any compromise on quality.

He then directed the social welfare officer to ensure that the pending issues related to SC scholarships, pension and marriage benefits were settled on top priority. He said all the beneficiaries should be given the benefits without fail.

LTT-Gkp spl to run from Mar 3

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of passengers will run the 01081 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT)-Gorakhpur (GKP) weekly special train from March 3 every Wednesday and the 01082 Gorakhpur-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus weekly special train from March 5 every Friday until further order. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. The 01081 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Gorakhpur weekly special train from March 3 every Wednesday will leave Lokmanya Tilak Terminus at 16.40 hrs, from Kalyan at 17.15 hrs, from Nashik Road at 20.45 hrs, on the second day from Bhusaval at 00.30 hrs, from

Khandwa at 02.40 hrs, from Pipariya at 06.10 hrs, from Narsinghpur at 07.15 hrs, from Jabalpur at 08.40 hrs, from Katni at 10.10 hrs, from Maihar at 10.50 hrs, from Satna at 12.20 hrs, from Manikpur at 14.07 hrs, from Prayagraj Chheoki at 15.42 hrs, from Mirzapur at 17.10 hrs, from Varanasi at 21.25 hrs, from Aunrihar at 22.07 hrs, from Mau at 23.05 hrs, from Bhatni on the third day at 00.20 hrs, from Deoria Sadar at 00.41 hrs and will reach Gorakhpur at 02.00 hrs. During the return journey the 01082 Gorakhpur-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus weekly special train will from March 5 every Friday depart from Gorakhpur at 16.05 hrs, from Deoria Sadar at 17.03 hrs, from Bhatni at 17.25 hrs, from Mau Jn at 18.50 hrs, from Aunrihar at 19.57 hrs, Varanasi at 21.15 hrs, Mirzapur at 22.40 hrs, Prayagraj Chheoki at 00.27 hrs, Manikpur at 02.30 hrs, Satna at 03.40 hrs, Maihar at 04.10 hrs, Katni at 05.00 hrs, Jabalpur at 06.30 hrs,

from Narsinghpur at 07.50 hrs, from Pipariya at 09.00 hrs, from Khandwa at 14.00 hrs, from Bhusaval at 15.55 hrs, from Nashik Road at 19.20 hrs, Kalyan at 22.40 hrs and will reach LTT at 23.45 hrs. A total of 22 LHB coaches, including 12 of sleeper class, four of air-conditioned third class, one of air-conditioned second class, three of general second class and two of generator-cum-luggage van.

GKP-ANVT SPL TO RUN REGULARLY

The railway administration due to fog had earlier reduced the frequency of the 02571/02572 Gorakhpur (GKP)-Anand Vihar Terminus (ANVT)-Gorakhpur special train till February 28. This train will be run again regularly from Gorakhpur from March 3 and from Anand Vihar Terminus from March 4, CPRO said.

Trains to be diverted, short terminated

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Due to the block on March 3 for building limited height subway (LHS) on level crossing No 239 between Maskanwa-Lakhpat Nagar stations of Lucknow division by the railway administration the following trains will be diverted/short terminated/ short originated/controlled, CPRO PK Singh said. The 02592 Yesvantpur-Gorakhpur special train to run from Yesvantpur on March 1 will be diverted via Gonda-Barhni-Gorakhpur. The 04231 Prayagraj Sangam-Basti special train to run from Prayagraj Sangam on March 3 will be short terminated at Mankapur. Besides the 04232 Basti-Prayagraj Sangam Special train to run from Basti on March 3 will be run from Mankapur. Besides the 02563 Saharsa-New Delhi special train running from Saharsa

on March 3 will be run on Lucknow division by being controlled by 17 minutes. The 02542 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Gorakhpur special train running from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus on March 2 will be run on Lucknow division by being controlled by 135 minutes. The 02569 Darbhanga-New Delhi special train to run from Darbhanga on March 3 will be run on Lucknow division by being controlled by 60 minutes.

FREQUENCY OF TRAINS TO BE REDUCED

Due to operational difficulties the railway administration will reduce the frequency of the following trains, CRPO PK Singh said. Reports said that the 01803 Jhansi-Lucknow Jn special train to run from Jhansi on March 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28 (every Saturday and Sunday) will remain cancelled. Likewise the 01804 Lucknow Jn-Jhansi special train to run from Lucknow Junction on March 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28 (every Saturday and Sunday) will remain cancelled. The 02179 Lucknow Junction-Agra Fort special train to run from Lucknow Junction on March 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28 (every Saturday and Sunday) will remain canceled. On the other hand, the 02180 Agra Fort - Lucknow Jn to run from Agra Fort on March 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28 (every Saturday and Sunday) will remain canceled. The 02561 Jaynagar-New Delhi special train (every Thursday) to run from Jaynagar on March 4, 11, 18 and 25 will remain cancelled. Likewise, the 02562 New Delhi-Jaynagar special train to run from New Delhi on March 5, 12, 19 and 26 (every Friday) will remain cancelled.

DM reviews schemes

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A meeting of District Health Committee was organised under the presidency of District Magistrate Praveen Kumar Laxkar in the meeting hall of Collectorate on Thursday. Reviewing the schemes run by the Health department the DM expressed his discontent over the tardy progress in City, Rajgarh, Chhanbey and Halia blocks. For showing less interest in work he directed the CMO to transfer and write a letter to the government against a medical officer incharge. For unsatisfactory progress of distribution of golden cards to the beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat scheme the DM took its incharge to task and him directed to organise camps.

He added that priority should be accorded to that village in which the progress of distribution was the worst.

On the issue of ambulance services the DM said that he had a complaint that its drivers compelled the patients to admit them in some private hospitals which was not tolerable at all. He directed the ambulance manager to check such practice and added that if such complaint was received again then an FIR should be lodged against the driver concerned.

On the zero progress under 'Andhata Nivaran Karyakram' (blindness prevention programme) the DM directed the



District Magistrate Praveen Kumar Laxkar holding the meeting of District Health Committee at Collectorate on Thursday

official concerned to initiate the tender process and start distribution of glasses among the needy as per the guidelines without delay.

On the less progress in family planning, especially in the blocks City, Kon, urban area, Chhanbey and Halia the ACMO was asked to organise camps and give impetus to the progress. While reviewing all the schemes, including Matri Vandana Yojna, Janani Suraksha Yojna etc, the DM directed the authorities concerned to ensure proper progress next month. Besides, he directed the medical officers concerned to check the figures in the booklet. The DM directed the officials that the Covid help desks should be kept active and necessary precautions in the hospitals should be taken strictly. Meanwhile another report said that the DM inspected the ongoing repair work at

Shastri Bridge on Thursday. In the presence of Executive Engineer (EE) of Public Works Department (PWD) Kanhaiya Jha the DM became aware with the progress in work and directed the working agency to complete it within the month of March and make it ready for heavy load in view of the new academic session in schools. On the occasion he directed the EE of PWD to remained updated with the progress and inform daily.

ARRESTED: Madihan police have arrested a rape accused on Thursday. As per the reports received here, a case had been lodged at the police station on February 22 in which it was claimed that the accused that raped a minor girl on the false promise of marriage. The police had registered a case in this connection and ultimately arrested the accused from the culvert located in Baghaura village.

Seminar organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

IG police of Vindhyachal Range Piyush Srivastava said that good deeds always yield good results. While addressing a seminar organised on the 10th death anniversary of renowned Hindi litterateur and critic Dr Bhavdev Pandey on Thursday as the chief guest he said it was evident from history that for a short time we saw good days of wrongdoers but ultimate result was bad. He said that since long the intellectuals had steered the society so it was his fortune that he was sitting amongst them. Speaking on the topic of the seminar 'Dharm Evam Vigyan Ke Saannidhya Ke Aayam' (Dimensions of proximity in religion and science) keynote

speaker Dr KN Tripathi quipped that how contradictory it was that in the name of religion we were doing things against its principles. Renowned litterateur Ganesh Gambhir and Dr Brajdeo Pandey also spoke on the occasion. The seminar was conducted by Dr Rama Shankar Shukla and chaired by Additional Divisional Commissioner Ramesh Chandra while the vote of thanks was proposed by its convenor Salil Pandey. Prominent among those present were Dr Nandji Chaubey, Anita Srivastava, Dr Asha Rai, Dr Dhruvji Pandey, Rakesh Dwivedi, Rahati Ojha, Nitin Awasthi, Dr Baijnath Pandey, Santosh Srivastava, Dr Ganesh Prasad Awasthi, Dr Neeraj Tripathi and Shresh Srivastava.

'Rozgar Mela' to be held today

CORRESPONDENT ■ JAUNPUR

On the instructions of District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma under the 'Mission Rozgar Karyakram' run by Uttar Pradesh Government, the District Employment Office and Skill Development Mission will organise a 'Rozgar Mela' on Saturday at 10:00 am at Rajkiya ITI, Siddiquipur here. Fifteen private sector companies will participate in it. District Employment Officer Rajiv Kumar Singh said that any information related to the Mela could be obtained from the District Employment Office and on online portal - www.sewajodan.up.nic.in. He said the candidates can participate in it with photocopies of all their certificates, two photographs and ID proof.

16K Covid cases for 2nd day in a row



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fresh Covid-19 cases are showing a worrying upward trend over the past one week with India recording its single-day increase of above 16,000 for the second consecutive day on Friday. The infection tally rose to 1,10,63,491, while the recoveries have surged to 1,07,50,680.

According to data from the Union Health Ministry on Friday, a total 16,577 infections were reported in a day, while the death toll increased to 1,56,825 with 120 new fatalities. As per the data, the Union Territory of Lakshadweep has reported its first death. The 120 new fatalities include 56 from Maharashtra, 14 from Kerala, 13 from Punjab.

The number of active cases increased to 1,55,986, which accounts for 1.41 per cent of the total infections, the data stated. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,07,50,680 which translates into a national recovery rate of 97.17 per cent. The case fatality rate stood at 1.42 per cent.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7; 30 lakh on August 23; 40 lakh on September 5; and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28; 70 lakh on October 11; 80 lakh on October 29; 90 lakh on November 20; and the one crore mark on December 19.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 21,46,61,465 samples have been tested up to February 25, of which 8,31,807

samples were tested on Thursday.

A total of 1,56,825 deaths have been reported in the country so far, including 51,993 from Maharashtra, 12,483 from Tamil Nadu, 12,316 from Karnataka, 10,905 from Delhi, 10,260 from West Bengal, 8,723 from Uttar Pradesh, and 7,168 from Andhra Pradesh.

Meanwhile, the country has so far since January 26, 2021, vaccinated 1,34,72,643 healthcare and frontline workers. However, no vaccination will take place on Saturday and Sunday as the Centre will enable transition of CoWIN app from version 1.0 to 2.0 ahead of the commencement of vaccination from March 1 for people above 60 years of age and those above 45 years with comorbidities, said the Ministry.

The vaccination will take place at around 10,000 government facilities which will be free of cost. However, at private hospitals, beneficiaries will have to pay for vaccination.

CSIR bats for Pfizer, says it will convince Centre to bring it back for vaccination

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), India's apex scientific research organisation, head Shekhar Mande on Friday batted for US based Pfizer and BioNtech's Covid-19 vaccine saying that he will try to "convince" the Government to initiate talks with the pharma giant and find out ways to bring it back for vaccination of people in India.

Not only Pfizer, he said, the government should also consider inviting Johnson & Johnson, Sputnik and Moderna to India and asserted that India will need at least 4 other vaccines to help finish immunisation drive faster.

Pfizer had applied for an emergency-use nod for its Covid vaccine in India, but withdrew its application earlier this month.

Mande's comment comes in the backdrop of a study that said that a single dose of Pfizer and BioNtech's Covid-19 vaccine cuts the number of asymptomatic infections and could significantly reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. In fact, Pfizer had also announced earlier this week that its Covid-19 vaccine can



be stored at warmer temperatures.

Earlier, the vaccine required storage temperatures between -80°C and -60°C, which made the vaccine less viable for India.

Also, the requirement of multiple options of vaccine candidates in India will soon go up as India Wednesday said private hospitals could start vaccination now.

"I am not aware of the issues due to which Pfizer had withdrawn the application but now the regulator and company should try to find a middle way. Pfizer is performing very well in other countries," he told a news agency.

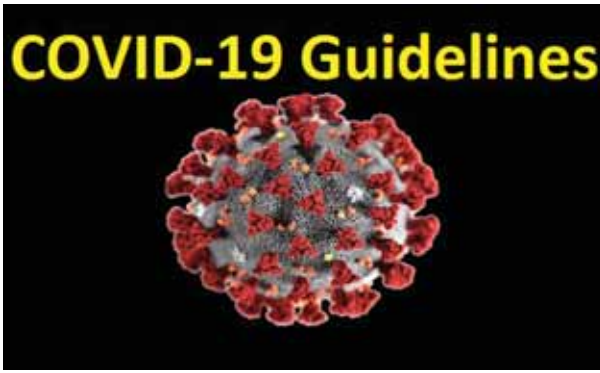
Pfizer was the first pharmaceutical firm to apply for emergency-use authorisation for its Covid vaccine in India.

MHA extends existing Covid-19 guidelines till March 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Home Ministry on Friday said the existing Covid-19 guidelines will remain in force till March 31.

In a statement, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said while there has been a substantial decline in the active and new Covid-19 cases, there is need to maintain surveillance, containment and caution so as to



fully overcome the pandemic.

The States and Union Territories have also been advised to speed up the vaccination of the target population so as to break the chain of transmission and overcome the pandemic.

Accordingly, containment zones will continue to be demarcated carefully and prescribed containment measures will be strictly followed.

Air travel sans baggage to be cheaper soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Flying within the country without any check-in baggage could soon get cheaper. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has issued a circular, allowing airlines to give concessions in ticket prices to passengers who carry no baggage or only cabin baggage. The new rules will provide tickets for cheap for those passengers travelling with no baggage or just cabin baggage.

However, the cabin baggage has to be within the permissible weight limit. The services that will now be chargeable on the opt-in basis include preferential seating, meal or snacks or drinking charges, sports equipment charges, musical instrument carriage, fee for special declaration of valuable baggage (allow for higher unit on carrier liability), charge for using airline lounges. Currently, a passenger can carry up to 7 kilograms of cabin baggage and 15 kilograms of check-in baggage.

In a circular, the DGCA said the government has decided to unbundle certain services and make them chargeable on an opt-in basis



based on feedback received from passengers. The DGCA said that "as part of airline baggage policy, scheduled airlines will be allowed to offer free baggage allowance as well as "zero baggage/no check-in baggage fares".

This will be subject to the condition that the passenger booking ticket under such fare scheme is made aware of the charges that shall be applicable if the passenger turns up with the baggage for check-in at the airline counter. These applicable charges shall be reasonable; prominently displayed to the passenger at the time of booking of ticket and also to be printed on the ticket," DGCA said in a circular.

The move comes as an effort to make flying more affordable and accessible to passengers. It is noted that domestic airlines have seen 10-12 per cent drop in bookings as state governments have tightened measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the last two weeks.

Under the new rule, if a passenger declares s/he will be travelling with no check-in baggage or only with cabin baggage within the permissible weight limit, airlines can offer tickets at lesser prices. This declaration will have to be made at the time of the booking of the ticket. "As part of airline baggage policy, scheduled airlines will be allowed to offer

free baggage allowance as well as "zero baggage/no check in baggage fares," the DGCA said in its circular.

Passengers will be charged if they choose "no check-in baggage" fare and turn up at the airport with check-in luggage. "These applicable charges shall be reasonable; prominently displayed to the passenger at the time of booking of ticket and also to be printed on the ticket," the DGCA said. It also allowed unbundling of other services like preferential seating and said passengers should be charged if they opt them.

"On the basis of various feedback received, it is felt that many times these services provided by the airlines may not be required by the passengers while travelling. Considering the fact that unbundling of services and charges thereto has the potential to make basic fare more affordable and provide consumer an option of paying for the services which he/she wishes to avail, it has been decided by the government to allow these services to be unbundled and charged separately on opt-in basis," the DGCA added.

Judicial probe sought into alleged suicide of Dadra and Nagar Haveli MP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday demanded a judicial enquiry into the alleged suicide of Dadra and Nagar Haveli MP Mohan Delkar in Mumbai earlier this week and asked why the Centre had not acted when he repeatedly raised the issue of "harassment" by the Union Territory's administrator.

The Opposition party claimed the seven-time MP, who was found dead in a hotel room, had named the administrator, Praful Khoda Patel, and other officials of the union territory in his purported suicide note. According to Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera, Delkar had in the past written letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and other senior leaders, flagging the "harassment" he was facing at the hands of the administrator and other officials of Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

"He (Delkar) had enumerated the manner in which he was being humiliated and harassed

Chargesheet against 11 Qaeda/AQIS operatives



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA on Friday filed a chargesheet before Special NIA Court here against 11 members of Al Qaeda/AQIS from West Bengal and Kerala under various IPC Sections and provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

Those chargesheeted are Murshid Hasan alias Sofiq, Mosaraf Hosen, Mainul Mandal, Lea Yeon Ahmed alias Leon, Najmus Sakib, Iyakub Biswas, Samim Ansari, Abu Sufian, Atiur Rahman, Al Mamun Kamal and Abdul Momin Mandal. They have been charged for criminal conspiracy, waging war against the nation, collecting arms with intention to wage war against the Government of India besides provisions of UA (P) A and Arms Act.

The instant case was registered following inputs about an Al Qaeda inspired module sprouting and operating in West Bengal and Kerala under the leadership of Murshid Hasan alias Sofiq and that the members of this module were in an advanced stage of conspiracy to execute terrorist attacks in different parts of the country.

In synchronised raids conducted on September 19, 2020 across West Bengal and Kerala, nine alleged terrorists were arrested. Subsequently, two more terror operatives were arrested from West Bengal on August 26, 2020 and November 1, 2020.

"Investigation has revealed that Murshid Hasan alias Sofiq was in touch with Al Qaeda handlers based in Pakistan and Bangladesh and had received instructions along with radical propaganda material through encrypted social media platforms from them. Murshid

NIA chargesheets 1 in UP espionage case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has filed a supplementary chargesheet against accused Rajakbhai Kumbhar of Mundra, Gujarat in an espionage case of Uttar Pradesh relating to passing on defence secrets to ISI operatives.

Kumbhar has been charged for Indian Penal Code Sections relating to criminal conspiracy and waging war against Government of India besides provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 01/2020 dated January 19, 2020 at Police Station-ATS, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow in which accused Md. Rashid of Mughal Sarai, Chandoli, UP was arrested on January 19, 2020 for supplying sensitive information, photos and videos of vital installations of strategic importance to ISI operatives based in Pakistan. The NIA had re-regis-

tered this case as RC-03/2020/NIA/LKW on April 6, 2020 and took up the investigation.

Earlier, a chargesheet was filed against Rashid on July 16 last year for his role in supplying sensitive, tactical and strategically important information about vital installations and movement of Indian security forces to his ISI handlers based in Pakistan.

"The chargesheeted accused Rajakbhai Kumbhar was arrested on September 30 last year. Further investigation had revealed that he had visited Pakistan twice on legal documents. During his return in the course of second visit, Kumbhar had come in contact with Pakistani ISI operatives Hamid alias Asim and he had joined the conspiracy with the co-accused. He transferred funds to accused Md. Rashid for the information he had provided to the ISI operatives in Pakistan," the NIA said in a statement.

Hasan along with his other associates conspired to radicalise and recruit more individuals into the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda," the NIA said in a statement.

The accused persons allegedly disseminated radical material through social media and encrypted chat platforms with an intention to radicalise and recruit others for establishing an Islamic State by waging violent jihad in India, it said.

Investigation has also revealed that the group members planned to attack individuals whom they consider Kafirs.

The group members had conducted a series of conspiratorial meetings for raising funds for the purchase of arms

and ammunition/explosive materials, radicalising and recruiting more members and charting out the future course of action including establishing a Markaz (a training centre for providing religious and weapons training to new recruits). The accused persons were also in active communication with an arms dealer through their foreign based handlers and were planning to receive a consignment of sophisticated arms and ammunition in the national capital.

"However, their nefarious plans were obviated by their timely arrest by NIA. The accused persons were planning to attack among others, an India based Bangladeshi blogger for his views expressed on social media," it added.

CBI, ED raid multiple locations across Bengal in coal pilferage scam



PTI ■ KOLKATA

ED sources said the agency has started searches at Durgapur and Asansol and also in the city

Investigation agencies CBI and Enforcement Directorate on Friday conducted joint raids at various places in West Bengal in connection with the multi-crore coal pilferage scam, sources in them said.

CBI sources said its sleuths raided the official and residential premises of businessman Randhir Kumar Barnwal in Kolkata.

ED sources said the agency has started searches at Durgapur and Asansol and also in the city.

Both the agencies are concurrently probing the scam.

While CBI is looking after the criminal aspect of it, ED is delving into the money laun-

dering angle of the scam.

CBI has already examined Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee's wife Rujira for her alleged involvement in the coal scam. Banerjee is the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

It has also issued a look out notice against alleged kingpin Anup Majhi, alias Lala, who has been absconding.

Can't allow sexual harassment cases to be swept under carpet: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Friday said it cannot allow sexual harassment cases to be "swept under the carpet" and asked a retired District Judge of Madhya Pradesh to face "in-house departmental inquiry" instituted by the high court on the allegations levelled against him by a junior woman judicial officer.

"We cannot allow sexual harassment cases to be swept under the carpet like this," a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said.

The Bench, also comprising justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, rejected vehement submissions of senior lawyer R Balasubramaniam, appearing



for the former judge, that the woman judicial officer had withdrawn her earlier complaint and had categorically stated that she wanted "conciliation".

In the proceedings conducted through video conferencing, the bench made clear that it is not going to interfere with the Madhya Pradesh High Court order of an inquiry and said that as on date the former judge stood "convicted" and there may be a chance of his acquittal if he

chooses to face the inquiry.

"You are walking on a very thin ice you can fall any time. You may have a chance in the inquiry they conduct you may acquit," the bench said, asking him to join the inquiry.

The counsel for the former judge then withdrew the appeal against the high court's order.

Earlier, the top court had observed that "to flirt with a junior official is not acceptable conduct for a judge".

It, however, had taken note of submission of Balasubramaniam that sexual harassment allegations were levelled against the former judge only when he was in the zone consideration for elevation as a high court judge.

EC orders 3-member panel for poll security plan

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With the possibility of large-scale violence, the Election Commission (EC) has directed that the election security plan of poll-going States be jointly decided by a committee comprising the chief electoral officer, State police nodal officer and state Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) coordinator. According to officials, over 6,600 polling stations in West Bengal have been identified as 'vulnerable' and 715 critical ahead of the Assembly elections while over 2,654 polling stations have been identified as 'critical' and 338 vulnerable in Assam.

According to EC, the first such formal arrangement that will apply to all future polls, will ensure randomisation of the state police and CAPF personnel, besides their optimum and effective utilisation in the interest of free and fair and fair elec-

tions. EC, in a communication sent to chief electoral officers of all all states and UTs on February 8, directed that the committee comprising state CEO, state police nodal officer and CAPF coordinator, shall periodically/ frequently meet during the polls to monitor deployment and ensure effective and optimum utilisation of police and security forces. The committee will also oversee the arrangements made for the security forces within the poll-bound state.

According to the Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora, all critical and vulnerable areas have been identified and advance teams have been already deployed across all four states and one union territory Puducherry going to the polls. "Also, webcasting arrangements will be in place at polling stations in critical and vulnerable areas, while

adequate CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces) deployment will be ensured for the assembly polls, he said.

The CEC Arora said that the CAPFs/SAP shall also be deployed in the Expenditure Sensitive Constituencies and other vulnerable areas and critical polling stations as per the assessment of ground realities by the CEOs of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, in consultation with the various stakeholders. "All critical events will be video-graphed. District Election Officers will arrange sufficient number of video and digital cameras and camera teams for the purpose," he said.

Vulnerable polling stations have been identified on the basis of several parameters which include a polling booth that has recorded more than 90% polling is classified under vulnerable category.

SC nixes plea challenging Centre's order making FASTag mandatory



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea challenging the Centre's decision to make FASTag mandatory for all the vehicles.

The Government has made FASTag mandatory from February 15 midnight and any vehicle not fitted with it will be charged double the toll at elec-

tronic toll plazas across the country, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has said.

A three-judge Bench of Chief Justice SA Bobde, Justice Bopanna and Justice V Ramasubramanian asked the petitioner to approach the Delhi High Court and granted the petitioner liberty to withdraw the plea.



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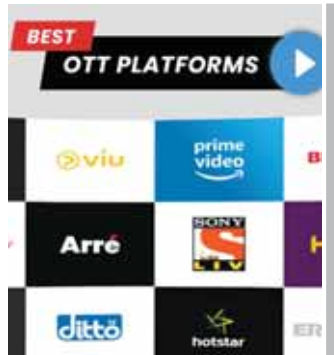
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Censorship?

The Government's guidelines regulating OTT platforms and social media raise a few questions

The first-phase lockdown of last year's pandemic outbreak spawned newfound attention and increased popularity for a number of web series as cinema halls had been ordered shut and people were forced to remain closeted inside their residences. Several big-budget and multi-starrer movies, which had been slated for theatrical release in the last week of March 2020 and beyond, fell to the Government's social distancing order and, to make up for the imminent financial losses in light of the prevailing uncertain conditions, chose the new fad of releasing the films online. As days gave way to weeks and months wore on, the average Indian family — already reeling under fear psychosis and bored to death by now — rediscovered the panacea of entertainment in various web



series streaming on Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms. So far, so good. *Mirzapur* aired, made a splash, but there was no hue and cry. Along came Saif Ali Khan-starrer *Tandav*, focusing on how politics affects collegial environment, and all hell broke loose. Everybody seems to have conveniently forgotten *Haasil* (released in 2003, starring Jimmy Sheirgill, Irrfan Khan and Ashutosh Rana, directed by Tigmanshu Dhulia) which was a gripping narrative based on the same subject. As avid watchers of the series among the OTT viewers point out, the ostensible objection — "hurting religious sentiments" by taking umbrage to the Shiva scene in the first episode — was just a ruse to express

anger against the way the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, and the National Register of Citizens issues had been projected in the series.

The "religious sentiments" angle, coupled with allegations of the earlier series brimming with sexually explicit scenes and foul language, brought the spotlight back on *Mirzapur*, too, though there had been no protests during its run earlier. The tepid response of Twitter officials to the Centre's recent earnest entreaty to suspend the handles of certain "rumour-mongering members" during the ongoing farmers' agitation, especially in the wake of the January 26 violence at Red Fort, seems to have added fuel to the authorities' displeasure and, therefore, today we find both the OTT platforms and social media facing a barrage of directives. The question now arises: Are the Government guidelines regulating the two media correct, or could it lead to pressure or censorship on them? Experts opine that the 29 pages of rules raise concerns over several factors, including the privacy of users and censorship of digital news media, which will ultimately affect citizens' rights. It seems the Government just does not like us to have fun and make personal choices. It had better heed common sense and allow its adult population, those who are eligible to vote and can take learned decisions in all other spheres of life, to decide for itself whether it wants to watch a particular show or series. Of course, cracking down on the creators and propagators of fake news is a different ball game altogether.

PICTALK



Sam Bennet celebrates after winning the sixth stage of the UAE tour cycling race in Dubai on Friday

AP

Dark secrets

Who is giving patronage to Mukhtar Ansari?
Who is gunning for him, and why?

Arguing in the Supreme Court, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi termed him "a small fry". However, anyone who knows even a little about don-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari and his deadly gang war in the badlands of Uttar Pradesh (UP), is aware that the name is enough to send a chill down the spine of many politicians, bureaucrats, police officers and, especially, businessmen. Ansari, an MLA from UP's Mau Sadar, is currently lodged in the Ropar Jail of Punjab in connection with an extortion case. The Punjab and UP Governments are at loggerheads for his custody, with the former trying every trick up its sleeve to keep him from the UP Police's hands on health grounds. A natural question to ask would be as to what makes a dreaded criminal so important that UP's BJP-led Government and Punjab's Congress Government are fighting over his custody in the Supreme Court. Well, there is nothing new in Ansari's name being associated with heinous crimes like murder, extortion and kidnapping, but what actually has pitted him against the saffron party is the chilling murder of then BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai in 2005, who and six associates were gunned down by assailants armed with AK-47 rifles. The murder was more than sensational as 400 rounds were fired. Ansari, the main accused, was acquitted by the CBI court in 2019.

Recently, the BJP's Mohammadabad MLA Alka Rai, the slain MLA's widow, wrote to Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra accusing the party Governments in Punjab and Rajasthan of shielding Ansari. However, the story is not as simple as it appears. The UP Police has of late become "trigger-happy" and several criminals have been gunned down in encounters that the Opposition terms "extra-judicial killings". Last year, wanted criminal Vikas Dubey was shot by the State police after the vehicle carrying him "overturned" on a highway and Dubey "tried to escape after snatching a gun" from a policeman. There is no denying that Ansari must be fearful of meeting the same fate if Punjab jail authorities hand him over to the UP Police. But there is another side to the story: The criminal-politician-bureaucrat-police nexus is nothing new and Ansari must have been part of many such connections at the interstate and intrastate level, and it is only in the interest of such corrupt elements to exterminate the voices that can reveal their dark secrets. Now, who is giving patronage to Ansari and who is out to get him, and why, is the moot question.

A flight and travel after one year

As an air trip to Goa for an event after a year-long hiatus revealed, being constantly stressed about the virus is clearly not the way to be

It is not good form to write columns in the first person but since this column talks of a personal experience, I will be writing it as such. The experience in question was catching a flight for the first time in 350 days. Part of my work involves evaluating and reviewing motor vehicles and that invariably involves a lot of travel, although the COVID-19 pandemic ensured that the few drives we did in 2020 all occurred in the Delhi-NCR and were fairly well-managed. Car companies don't do events in places like Goa because of the sun and sand or because folks like me enjoy flying, there are hundreds of decent hotel properties in Goa and the State is connected by flight to almost every major city in India. So, to do a media drive in Goa makes immense sense; in fact it is probably cheaper than organising individual drives in different cities and is definitely logistically easier.

I had promised myself that I would not fly in 2020, even after flights resumed and a few isolated automotive events took place. But as the new year rolled around and the first events began to be planned, one could not put off travel much longer. After all, working in a newspaper, I had been reading firsthand how the Government has more or less brought the pandemic in check. Of course, by the time I did eventually fly that had actually changed a bit with the new strain emerging in Maharashtra. However, my tickets were booked and I was taking a flight after 350 days.

A drive that once seemed like a weekly commute to Terminal 3 from my house appeared strange, not least because this was my first time in a taxi after almost a year. Traffic to and from the airport seemed normal and the few jams were more to do with the construction of the new flyover taxiways. Since my flight was in the afternoon, there was less chaos at the drop-off area. Airlines are running at a restricted domestic schedule at about three-quarters capacity and with very few international flights, India's largest airport terminal did not feel crowded.

We have all heard the term, the "new normal", things like people commuting and the need for hygiene. But other than everyone wearing face masks and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) staff wearing shields and attaching a handle to their metal detector "wands", flying in 2021 was not very different from flying in 2019 and before. Though I did sanitise my hands after going through security which I feel is the biggest congregation point of the entire flying process, it felt the same as before. I must state, at no point did I feel unsafe and while I would not go as far as to claim that there was a *laissez faire* attitude, you really would not have guessed that there was a pandemic going on.

Now part of this can be explained by India's caseload, something that was well explained by oncologist and award-winning medical writer Siddhartha Mukherjee in *The New Yorker* recently. It elucidated on the concept that because we live in India and have been exposed to so many pathogens before, maybe we had been exposed to a "relative" of the COVID-19 virus and that gave our bodies the B-cells and the T-cells needed



THAT SAID, WE SHOULD STILL BE CAREFUL, PARTICULARLY SINCE THERE IS IN ALL LIKELIHOOD A MORE VIRULENT STRAIN DOING THE ROUNDS. IT MAY (OR MAY NOT) BE MORE DEADLY, BUT IT WOULD BE STUPID TO FIND THAT OUT THE HARD WAY

to deal with the virus. What else could explain the low death toll in India, many parts of sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia? One could argue that the "true" death toll has been suppressed but there is no way to hide hundreds of thousands of deaths; people would be talking about it, and that clearly isn't the case.

That said, we should still be careful, particularly since there is in all likelihood a more virulent strain doing the rounds. It may (or may not) be more deadly, but it would be stupid to find that out the hard way. I was flying on Vistara and while mask compliance was followed, the flight was packed with families travelling to Goa to get away from the boredom, one presumes. Some passengers stuck in the middle seats were covered in their woven-fibre protective suits and most people kept their face-shields on during the flight.

But it was not so much the flying experience, but what I saw in Goa which was scary. My hosts had organised dinner at a popular nightspot and it was crowded. There were few precautions being taken and while the bouncers were taking temperatures using an infra-red scanner, it was quite evident that the public at large

had travelled to the party State to leave their Coronavirus worries behind. 'Thalassa' on Vagator beach was packed to the rafters and nobody appeared to care.

With the Goa airport seeing flights from every corner of the country even if some States ask for the returnees to be tested, the crowds at restaurants and bars were back to pre-COVID levels, just that they were almost completely Indian with very few foreigners. That said, there were some expats around; those who had business and diplomatic visas and they were praising the Government and Indians for taking such a "Zen" attitude to the pandemic.

It was really incredible. Either people were not worried or they had reverted to their usual *"dekha jayega"* (we will see) attitude. Or maybe this was another example of Goan *"susegad"*, the chilled-out laid-back attitude. I still don't know whether it is the attitude to adopt, but being constantly stressed about the virus is clearly not the way to be. But the "new normal" doesn't really seem very different from the "old normal".

(The author is Managing Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUND BITE

One after the other steps have been taken to pull the country out of the non-transparent credit culture. Now NPAs cannot be swept under the carpet; even an NPA for one day needs to be reported.



Prime Minister
— Narendra Modi



Russia is confronted with a highly aggressive policy aimed at disrupting its development and creating problems along our perimeter.

Russian President
— Vladimir Putin

An actor can only choose what is offered to him. There is nothing by intent but I am just fortunate that I get parts which most actors will be envious of.



Actor
— Avinash Tiwari



I officially announce retirement from all forms of the game. I thank my family, friends, fans, teams, coaches and the whole country wholeheartedly for all the support and love.

Cricketer
— Yusuf Pathan



Today in 2019, the Indian Air Force (IAF) had responded to the Pulwama terror attack and reiterated the country's policy against terrorism in "New India".

Union Home Minister
— Amit Shah

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Nothing wrong with renaming stadium



An unnecessary controversy is being created for having the Motera stadium named after Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Those making the hue and cry must understand that Modi isn't the first living person to have a stadium named after him. Many stadiums in India have been named after leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and so on. Even airports and railway stations have been named after great leaders and personalities. Narendra Modi,

during his tenure as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, had developed the State quite a lot. After all, it was Modi's dream to create a stadium meeting the global standards with state-of-the-art facilities and he played an instrumental role in the redevelopment of the sports facility.

We must understand that renaming the stadium after Modi in no way belittles or insults other leaders. In the past, Mumbai's Brabourne and Wankhede stadiums were named after individuals who were then alive. Similar is the case with Navi Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium, Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium and Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium. Mohali's PCA Stadium was renamed after former BCCI and Punjab Cricket Association president IS Bindra. However, this outcry reeks of dirty politics and a section of people who have developed a sort of phobia against the name of the Prime Minister. However, we should not lend our ears to such people who criticise him for the sake of criticism only.

M Pradyu | Kannur

not receive a fair trial in India. With this, Nirav lost his nearly two-year-long legal battle against extradition on all grounds.

The 49-year-old fugitive businessman has been repeatedly denied bail due to the seriousness of the allegations against him and remains behind bars in a London prison since his arrest in March 2019. It will also set an example for other criminals who flee the country after committing financial and other crimes and think they can get away with it. Such criminals and fugitives can afford big lawyers, but they must remember that law is above all and it's not easy to hide or escape its long hands. All fugitives should be extradited and punished as per the law of India.

CK Ramani | Chennai

SHAMEFUL ACT BY POLICE OFFICER

Sir — It is really shocking that Rajesh Das, the Special Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, has turned out to be a black sheep as he is accused of misbehaving with a female IPS officer on duty and sex-

ually harassing her. This is what happens when officers are promoted to senior positions, particularly in the police department, without taking into account their past records but rather on various other considerations. It is also unwarranted that posts such as Special DGP are created with the intention of accommodating blue-eyed officers.

Suspension would not be sufficient in his case and he should be summarily dismissed from service as the female IPS officer has come forward to lodge a complaint against him.

It is expected that the panel to probe the harassment charge would do a fair job and submit its final report in record time. If women police officers are not safe and are vulnerable to such crimes at the hands of their own colleagues, the plight of common women is not hard to understand.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

Send your feedback to:
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FIRST COLUMN

ADULT EDUCATION SET TO TURN A PAGE

Free access to adult learning through online mode backed by extensive usage of ICT has been emphasised



VIPIN KUMAR

American industrialist Henry Ford famously said: “Anyone who stops learning is old - whether this happens at 20 or at 80. Anyone who keeps on learning not only remains young but becomes constantly more valuable - regardless of physical capacity.” This is true even today, particularly for illiterate adults. Adult Education (AE) extends schooling options to those who are 15 years of age or above and have missed the opportunity of formal tutoring earlier but now want to pursue education. Though the literacy rate in India has increased from 12 per cent in 1947 to 73 per cent in 2011, however, adult illiteracy is still a challenge for the Government because the absolute number of illiterates in India was 25.76 crore, the largest in the world, as per the 2011 census. Successive Central governments took major initiatives to improve the adult literacy rate in the country. For instance, under the National Education Policy (NEP), 1986, the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) was founded to impart functional literacy to non-literates in the age group of 15-35 years in a time-bound manner. Subsequently, the Saakshar Bharat Programme continued till March 2018.



A major paradigm shift in the programme could help in imparting functional literacy to 7.63 crore non-literates, including 5.38 crore women, with four broader objectives namely: Basic literacy and numeracy, basic education, vocational education and continuing education. In this programme, the Government introduced new components of literacy and under the financial literacy component, one crore bank accounts of adult illiterates or neo-literates were opened under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. With regard to legal literacy, a new curriculum was designed and developed for neo-literates to create awareness of their rights and duties. These components have been included in the critical life section of AE and the lifelong learning chapter of the NEP 2020. The new curriculum will be developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and includes five components: Foundational literacy and numeracy; critical life skills (including financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, healthcare and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare); vocational skills development; basic education and continuing education (including holistic adult education courses in arts, science, technology, culture, sports, recreation and more advanced material on critical life skills).

The NEP-2020 recommends a strong and innovative Government initiative for AE to facilitate community involvement and the smooth and beneficial integration of technology to expedite the aim of achieving 100 per cent literacy. These resources are a must to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.6 of the United Nations. Giving impetus to adult literacy, the Union Budget 2021-22, states that “to enable increased access of resources, online modules covering the entire gamut of adult education will be introduced.” Hence, for the improvement of the AE programme, free access to adult learning in States and Union Territories (UTs) through online mode backed by extensive usage of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has been emphasised. An online teaching and learning system will be developed in which a learner may register with essential information like name, date of birth, gender, Aadhaar number (not mandatory), mobile number and so on and attend the class through online mode by using a mobile or any Common Service Centre (CSC) or digital booth or cybercafé. At the national level the NCERT, NIOS, National Informatics Centre and the DAE will facilitate ICT support in designing and developing central modules, portal, apps, while States and UTs may explore partnerships with stakeholders for a vibrant adult education programme. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Mass illiteracy is India’s sin and shame and must be liquidated.”

(The writer is Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education. The views expressed are personal.)

Time for an eco-friendly development model

The people living in hilly regions and the country at large demand that the Govt adopt a pro-people and pro-nature development model instead of a pro-corporate one



GURINDER KAUR

ARJUN KUMAR



EVEN IF THE GOVERNMENT CUTS GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT, ONE-THIRD OF THE GLACIERS OF THE HIMALAYAN AND HINDU KUSH MOUNTAIN RANGES WILL MELT BY THE END OF THE 21ST CENTURY. HENCE, URGENT ACTION NEEDS TO BE TAKEN SOONER AS NATURAL DISASTERS ARE LIKELY TO INCREASE WITH TEMPERATURE RISE

Kaur is professor, Department of Geography, Punjab University, Patiala, and Visiting Professor, IMPRI, while Kumar is Director, IMPRI. The views expressed are personal.



of experts. Magsaysay Award winner Chandi Prasad said that he had written a letter to the then Environment Minister in 2010 warning about the adverse effects of hydropower project on Rishi Ganga. His worst fears were realised in 2021. He claimed that if his warning had been heeded in 2010, the catastrophe would have been prevented. Rising temperatures are melting the glaciers rapidly and, according to a report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), this melting doubled between 1980-2005. Even if the Government cuts greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in accordance with the Paris Climate Agreement, one-third of the glaciers of the Himalayan and Hindu Kush mountain ranges will melt by the end of the 21st century. Hence, urgent action needs to be taken sooner as natural disasters are likely to increase with temperature rise.

An increase in natural disasters in India is a result of climate change, but an increase in their impact is due to overexploitation of natural resources. The Centre and State Governments have been pursuing pro-corporate development by ignoring environmental norms.

Uttarakhand is inviting climatic tragedies and destroying its beauty by regularly flouting the Environmental Impact Assessment Laws to build a 900-km-long stretch of the Char Dham route. Shockingly,

these roads pass through an environmentally-sensitive zone. The construction of this 900 km stretch was done by dividing it into 53 small sections.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Department’s permission has to be sought to construct more than 100 km of a road that is passing through environmentally sensitive areas. This road’s width is being kept at 12 metres, for which land with a width of 24 metres would be required. Significantly, most European countries have kept the width of their roads in the mountains to eight metres.

In the aftermath of the February 7 catastrophe, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that the country stands by Uttarakhand. He also announced financial assistance to the families of the victims. But such promises and financial aid are of no use for Uttarakhandis as continuous negligence of environmental regulations by successive governments has led to repeated natural disasters. A few lakhs in assistance from the Centre and State won’t help people rebuild their houses or bring back their loved ones. To prevent such emotional and financial losses to the people, the Government should mend its pro-corporate economic development methods.

The massive loss of life and property resulting from natural disasters should serve as a warning signal to the Central Government and make it realise that it must strictly

abide by environmental norms. However, the Government seems to be in no mood to hear the alarm bells as the Central Government is planning to relax environmental standards for Mopa Airport in Goa, sand mining in Uttar Pradesh, Sterlite Copper in Tamil Nadu and construction activities in and around Delhi, which have been blocked by the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal. Meanwhile, the NITI Aayog — the Government’s apex think tank — has commissioned a study that seeks to examine the “unintended economic consequences” of judicial decisions that have hindered and stalled big projects on environmental pretexts.

If mountainous areas of the country, including Uttarakhand and their people, are to be saved, then it is incumbent upon the Central Government not to carry out development work in these areas without seeking the opinions of geologists and the locals.

The Government should immediately ban unsustainable development projects in the hilly regions, be it the Char Dham route or hydropower projects. If this does not happen, the people of these areas will be forced to endure frequent natural disasters in the future. The people living in the hilly regions and the country at large demand that the Central Government adopt a pro-people and pro-nature development model instead of a pro-corporate economic development one.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

NICE OF THE ENGLAND BOYS TO GET THIS TEST MATCH FINISHED JUST BEFORE ENGLAND WOMEN PLAY TONIGHT. —ENGLAND CRICKETER ALEX HARTLEY



VERY DISAPPOINTING ATTITUDE CONSIDERING ALL THE BOYS DO TO SUPPORT THE WOMEN’S GAME. —ENGLAND CRICKETER RORY BURNS

A bleak future without sustainable water resources

India has an extremely low rainwater harvesting percentage, varying from three-six per cent of the annual rainfall. Hence, watershed management is imperative

The farmers’ protest reflects their approach towards securing their future, and soon there would be a solution to that. But there still looms a larger crisis for India and its people, including the farmers. One of the most fertile lands on Earth today stands as the most water challenged nations in the world. India has the highest number of people in the world without access to safe water. Over 80 million people — a majority from impoverished communities — living on less than \$4 a day, are forced to collect dirty water from open ponds and rivers or spend most of what they earn buying water from tankers.

A report by the NITI Aayog in 2018 revealed that 75 per cent of households do not have drinking water on the premises; 84 per cent of rural households do not have piped water access; 70 per cent of the



SASHIDHAR VEMPALA

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water is contaminated and wastewater treatment remains stuck at the national average of over 33 per cent, leading to the high burden of waterborne diseases.

More than 600 million people in India face high to extreme water stress and 21 cities, including New Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai, will run out of groundwater soon, affecting 100 million people. Critical groundwater resources, which account for 40 per cent of our water supply, are being exploited at unsustainable rates. India is already plagued with groundwater contaminated with iron, nitrate, chlorine, along with the predominant arsenic and fluoride, both posing human health risks.

A study published by Duke University in 2018 found uranium contamination in aquifer-drawn groundwater in 16 Indian States. Water Index

scores vary widely, but most States have achieved a score below 50 per cent and could significantly improve their water resource management practices.

Because of this, food security is at a risk as the low performers on the Water Index are home to over 50 per cent of the country’s population and its agricultural baskets. The low performers, worryingly, comprise the populous northern States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana and others, and are home to over 600 million people. Given the combination of rapidly declining groundwater levels and limited policy action this is also likely to be a significant food security risk for the country going forward.

Critical groundwater resources, which account for 40 per cent of our water supply, are being depleted at unsustainable



rates. Droughts are becoming more frequent, creating severe problems for India’s rain-dependent farmers (over 53 per cent of agriculture is rainfed). When water is available, it is likely to be contaminated, resulting in nearly 2,00,000 deaths each year. Interstate disagreements are on the rise, with seven major disputes currently raging, pointing to the fact that limited frameworks

and institutions are in place for national water governance.

By 2030, the country’s water demand is projected to be twice than the available supply, implying severe water scarcity for hundreds of millions of people and an eventual over six per cent loss in the country’s GDP. As per the report of the National Commission for Integrated Water Resource Development of MoWR, water requirement by 2050 in a high use scenario is likely to be a milder 1,180 BCM, whereas the present-day availability is 695 BCM.

The total availability of water possible in country is still lower than this projected demand, at 1,137 BCM. Thus, there is an imminent need to deepen our understanding of water resources and usage and put in place interventions that make water use efficient and sustainable. Israel is the world

leader in water governance. And India has partnered with them to share methods and technology. There is a need for more such partnerships, knowledge transfer but more than that, it is awareness that is needed by common users about the impending water crisis.

With nearly 70 per cent of the water being contaminated, India ranks 120 out of 122 countries on the water quality index. Policymakers face a difficult situation because there is not enough data available on how households and industries use and manage water.

There is an urgent need to deepen understanding of our water resources and usage and put in place interventions that make water use efficient and sustainable. Consumers and industries need to look at the 4Rs with renewed rigour. “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,

Recharge.” India has an extremely low rainwater harvesting percentage, varying from three-six per cent of annual rainfall. Large-scale watershed management is imperative for holistic management of ecosystems. Coupled with stronger implementation policies and regulations, an ecosystem management approach will bring in adoption of newer conservation technologies.

The agriculture sector will evolve further to improve irrigation and water use efficiency. All this is not possible without investment in education and awareness. Community governance and partnerships, water pricing a strong wastewater recycling ecosystem and increasing rainwater, stormwater harvesting will make people realise the importance of every drop of water and promote sustainable use.

PM asks banks to
come out with
innovative products
for startups, fintech

India Inc on Friday said the recouping of the country's economy to a positive trajectory in the third quarter is a promising sign as it portends the end of the pandemic-induced recessionary phase seen in the first-half of the fiscal year.

Industry bodies expressed confidence that the GDP will improve further in the coming months on the back of positive growth stimuli emanating from the Union Budget and initiatives like the Production Linked Incentive scheme unveiled by the government.

After contracting for two quarters in a row, the Indian economy grew by 0.4 per cent in the October-December quarter amid coronavirus pandemic, official data showed on Friday.

The gross domestic prod-

uct (GDP) had expanded by 3.3 per cent in the corresponding period of 2019-20, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, said that "recouping of GDP to the positive territory by posting a growth of 0.4 per cent in the third quarter is a promising sign as it portends the end of the pandemic-induced recessionary phase seen in the first-half of the year".

He observed that one of the highlights of the data is the positive momentum seen in investment demand as it grew by 2.6 per cent in the third quarter after being in doldrums for several quarters now.

“This bears testimony to the unrelenting efforts of the government

to go all-out to revive investments under the ambit of

The BSE Sensex crashed about 1,940 points to post its biggest single-day fall in nearly 10 months and the NSE Nifty plunged over 568 points to crack below the psychological 15,000-mark on Friday, tracking global selloffs triggered by a panic in bond markets overseas.

Investors also turned cautious ahead of the third quarter GDP data release, besides keeping an eye on simmering geopolitical tensions between

the various measures which formed a part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package," Banerjee said.

the US and Syria.

At the day's close, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 1,939.32 points or 3.80 per cent lower at 49,099.99 – its worst one-day fall since May 4 last year.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty plunged 568.20 points or 3.76 per cent to close the session at 14,529.15 – the biggest single-day drop since March 23 last year.

On the Sensex chart, all 30 constituents ended in the red, with eight scrips logging over 5 per cent drop.

“Going forward, we are confident that the growth stimuli available from the Union Budget and the additional mea-

Mumbai: The Indian rupee on Friday posted its biggest single-day fall in nearly 19 months, tumbling 104 paise to close at 73.47 against the US dollar as a rout in global bond markets weighed on investor sentiments. Besides, rising geopolitical tensions between the US and Syria also led to weaker appetite among investors in domestic forex markets, analysts said.

ures including the PLI will lead to a sturdy growth path over the recovery horizon," he added.

IT industry body Nasscom on Friday said the new rules for social media, OTT and digital media players aim to address concerns like grievance redressal, fake news and online safety, but will require the right implementation to ensure that they do not become onerous for the platforms.

There are, however, sections of the industry, including tech firm Mozilla, which felt that certain provisions could “harm” freedom of expression.

Nasscom noted that technology is becoming all pervasive and it is important that there is responsible use and building of technology for all stakeholders government,

industry, start-ups and citizens.

Nasscom also highlighted it is imperative that there is a balance between regulation and innovation as the world is in a phase of accelerated technology shifts.

“...Code aims to address many of the concern areas of grievance redressal, fake news, online safety and parity with existing laws.

“From a user perspective... The option of voluntary self-verification of user accounts and the right to receive an explanatory notification on removal or disablement of access and to seek remedy against the action being taken by the intermediaries should be helpful,” Nasscom said.

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday stressed on increasing credit to businesses to meet the needs of a fast refloating economy and said financial products will have to be tailor-made for fintech and startups. He said that although the government's endeavour is to promote the private sector, the public sector still needs to have their presence in banking and insurance to support the poor.

Speaking at a webinar on Budget announcements on Financial Services, Modi said to help medium and small businesses during the COVID pandemic, 90 lakh Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) were given credit worth Rs 2.4 trillion.

“Supporting MSME and startups and expanding credit flow to them is necessary. The government has undertaken reforms and opened up sectors like farm, coal and space. Now it’s the responsibility of the financial sector to understand the aspirations of rural and smaller cities and make them the strength of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. “As our economy is growing, and growing fast, credit flow has also become equally important. You have to see how credit reaches new sectors, new entrepreneurs. Now you will have to focus on creation of new and better financial products for Startups and Fintech”, Modi said.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The day-long 'Bharat Vyapar Bandh' called by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) evoked a lukewarm response with most shops and commercial establishments open through the day.

The traders' body, howev-

er, claimed that shopkeepers supported its nationwide business shutdown call to protest against issues related to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and “unethical business practices of foreign e-commerce companies”.

Various markets in the national capital were open on

Friday during the Bandh. However, CAIT in a statement said the shutdown was a "grand success" as more than 8 crore small businesses belonging to about 40,000 trade associations across the country kept their shutters down and no trading activity took place in any commercial market.

New Delhi: The Global Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (GAPIO), a non-profit organization, and leading association for the Indian medical diaspora announced the organizing of its annual Global Indian Physicians Congress on February 27th -28th 2021. The Congress has become an important event in the medical calendar where the exchange of knowledge from subject specialists from across the world takes place.

This year's virtual conference will provide an international forum to delegates to share their knowledge and exchange ideas on clinical skill development, solutions to contemporary health issues and modernizing the approach to delivering healthcare. Dr Harsh Vardhan, the Hon'ble Health Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will be the Chief Guest.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The central government's fiscal deficit soared to ₹12.34 lakh crore or 66.8 per cent of the revised budget estimates at the end of January of the current fiscal.

The fiscal deficit at the end of January in the previous financial year was 128.5 per cent of the Revised Estimates (RE). In the current fiscal ending March 31, the fiscal deficit is likely to touch Rs 18.48 lakh crore or 9.5 per cent of the GDP. In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit stood at ₹12.34,004 crore at the end of January 2021, as per the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

IN 1305.35

85.40

2430.00

87.00

516.90

15.90

1060.00

397.90

297.10

2660.00

139.90

24.70

790.00

1321.45

85.40

2628.00

92.05

522.85

20.40

1097.80

401.85

301.00

2705.50

142.35

25.47

795.85

1271.00

82.10

2420.00

85.10

500.45

18.80

1033.90

388.80

286.40

2608.00

126.35

23.61

761.75

1299.25

83.60

2542.10

88.90

518.95

19.24

1079.10

390.00

289.80

2652.85

137.20

24.10

767.70

NSE Nifty

49,099.99

14,529.15

568.20

TOP LOSERS

Axis Bank -5.9%

Kotak Mahi -5.9%

Bajaj Finserv 5.9%

TOP GAINERS

ONGC -6.4%

Power Grid -6.4%

JSW Steel -6.3%

Hero Moto -6.3%

DISHTV

11.50

11.52

INDIANB

138.20

141.65

ASHOKA

106.15

114.50

NAM-INDIA

338.00

343.55

BANKINDIA

82.00

84.90

CROMPTON

384.90

389.30

LAUSHLABS

356.00

356.90

BOSCHLTD

15088.00

15088.00

AMBER

3122.05

3310.45

HFCI

29.30

30.25

BLISSGVS

175.70

176.00

BATAINDIA

1486.00

1486.00

TVMOTOR

585.15

597.60

INOXELISUR

307.55

315.05

SYMPHONY

1045.00

1169.20

UJJIVAN

246.10

252.00

TORTNPHARM

2440.00

2486.65

CEATLTD

1660.00

1660.60

INDIAMART

8680.45

8680.45

GODREJCP

696.05

703.75

ZENSARTECH

292.30

308.55

RAYMOND

276.32

381.90

TRIDENT

13.90

13.99

COFORGE

2480.00

2587.30

HINDZINC

304.95

309.75

DALBHARAT

1420.95

1570.00

VIPIND

386.00

414.00

RVNL

31.90

32.75

GENESHIP

304.90

334.50

FINLOXIND

641.00

641.00

GUJGAS

488.00

503.25

POWERINDIA

1590.00

1656.00

WELCORP

129.75

133.95

PNCINFRA

258.85

273.50

FSL

100.00

100.95

JKTYRE

124.50

125.95

CREDITACC

682.70

700.70

KSB

70.09

787.00

TATACOMM

940.00

1105.00

CHAMBLFERT

242.50

249.50

NOCIL

170.00

172.05

DBL

661.85

697.00

PTC

76.75

77.00

GICRE

194.80

197.55

PFIZER

4510.00

4565.00

SIBLIFE

865.00

878.00

GMDCLTD

62.15

63.70

POLYCAB

1325.00

1360.45

IPCALAB

1874.95

1874.95

PHILIPCARB

199.00

202.20

ADANIPOWER

56.00

56.20

NCC

90.30

91.20

MPHASIS

1620.00

1664.40

WABAG

275.00

292.30

11.17

11.32

135.55

136.15

106.15

112.80

326.55

329.80

82.00

82.45

377.45

385.30

347.15

50.30

3122.05

323.65

28.85

29.25

173.70

174.60

1435.00

1437.95

585.15

595.05

298.30

307.30

1045.00

1121.70

241.85

244.40

2458.55

2429.55

1608.50

1594.20

8500.00

8596.95

681.00

685.80

290.00

294.55

368.10

371.50

13.75

13.82

2449.70

2587.30

296.00

297.25

1419.65

1434.75

383.25

401.10

31.20

31.80

298.45

312.05

608.70

613.15

485.25

494.40

1419.05

1439.45

125.50

130.30

242.55

269.60

97.95

99.15

120.70

124.50

673.95

682.20

680.00

724.70

940.00

1082.15

236.75

243.95

165.25

166.25

646.20

679.80

72.80

73.75

188.00

189.15

4481.60

4550.70

858.05

867.10

60.50

61.95

1315.95

1336.65

1820.05

1849.30

196.00

196.80

55.00

55.25

88.00

89.05

1610.05

1647.05

273.95

285.80

OBEROIRLTY

542.80

567.75

WHIRLPOOL

2400.00

2425.40

IT

126.90

133.00

WESTLIFE

484.85

506.75

UFLEX

367.00

368.35

ASTRAL

2112.00

2153.50

ABBOTINDIA

14525.00

14525.00

EDELWEISS

70.00

70.30

ATUL

6521.00

6600.00

JKLAKSHMI

367.50

380.45

LINDEINDIA

1452.00

1575.00

MIDHANI

191.70

195.15

BALRAMCHIN

173.10

183.20

GODREJAGRO

481.55

492.80

FINCABLES

402.00

408.35

NLCINDIA

52.90

54.00

JSWENERGY

73.25

73.85

LAXMIMACH

6500.00

6623.10

CHENNPETRO

99.35

103.65

GODREJINDO

431.40

427.95

DCBBANK

116.05

119.00

HEIDELBERG

234.00

234.20

TAKE

58.20

58.65

APFLE

5123.65

5250.00

BIRLACORPN

869.90

880.70

MOIL

153.50

153.50

SUNTECK

349.95

361.35

NHPC

24.20

24.80

RITES

242.20

247.50

VINATORGA

1403.00

1450.00

COCHINSHIP

375.00

382.50

GODFREYPHLP

915.00

916.65

RELAXO

884.85

884.85

JAGRAN

54.10

60.30

EMAMILTD

469.00

469.00

MINDAIND

551.70

574.00

SJVN

25.45

26.10

PGLH

6788.00

6792.45

PERSISTENT

163.70

1687.25

TV18BRDCST

29.50

29.65

KPITTECH

140.20

147.20

VRLOG*

258.00

263.65

AARTIND

1228.75

1239.70

TEAMLEASE

3428.30

3502.30

KAJARIACER

939.10

951.10

APLAPOLLO

1050.00

1087.00

KEI

50.90

50.90

IRCON

94.90

96.05

ALKYLAMINE

5131.80

5131.80

AVANTI

47.00

48.20

NH

439.90

466.65

PHOENIXLTD

775.00

822.60

AGSISLOG

306.00

314.10

GPPL

98.30

101.50

541.00

545.80

2380.00

124.50

473.60

361.85

2085.50

14250.00

67.50

6465.00

367.50

1452.00

190.20

173.10

481.55

388.00

52.25

71.10

6309.00

97.75

431.00

112.55

228.20

56.60

5060.00

843.00

148.50

344.45

24.00

242.40

1394.20

370.00

896.00

841.60

53.75

46.55

550.00

25.30

6511.00

1597.00

28.90

140.20

254.00

324.00

1325.00

90.05

1020.65

493.65

90.00

5030.15

4058.75

42.30

425.15

770.40

296.20

30.40

5030.15

5078.75

108.00

112.00

71.85

214.65

98.95

220.55

96.85

67.85

98.25

106.05

68.80

107.05

113.05

211.80

KALPATPOWR

392.95

392.95

TASTYBIT

15090.00

15561.80

VTL

1136.85

1208.50

NAVNETEDUL

88.80

90.25

BBTC

1196.70

1196.70

TIINDIA

1034.95

1097.00

FORCEMOT

1330.00

1330.00

ORIENTCEM

94.20

94.70

IRB

106.85

109.35

HIMATSEIDE

158.00

159.25

SCHAEFFLER

5124.10

5220.95

CCL

238.00

240.95

TVSSRICAK

1944.95

1944.95

IDPPARRY

315.10

325.70

INOSTAR

319.00

345.00

FINEORG

2334.00

2340.00

INDOCO

291.00

299.15

CARBORUNIV

505.35

514.00

NESCO

600.00

602.55

SFL

2050.00

2050.00

SKFINDIA

2225.00

2245.50

BLUEDART

4667.00

4769.40

GEPIL

277.00

278.50

392.95

392.95

15090.00

124.50

473.60

90.25

1196.70

1034.95

1330.00

94.20

106.85

158.00

5124.10

238.00

1944.95

315.10

319.00

2334.00

291.00

505.35

600.00

2050.00

2225.00

4667.00

277.00

377.85

381.90

15090.00

1102.20

85.70

1150.25

1034.95

1297.00

91.25

105.15

153.00

5059.75

227.50

1884.80

314.80

319.00

2300.05

287.40

494.45

590.00

1999.25

2197.60

2409.00

272.00

377.85

381.90

15090.00

1102.20

85.70

1150.25

1034.95

1297.00

91.25

105.15

153.00

5059.75

227.50

1884.80

314.80

319.00

2300.05

287.40

494.45

590.00

1999.25

2197.60

2409.00

272.00

RUPEE vs Dollar

73.47

72.49 (+16p)

72.46 (+3p)

72.43 (-8p)

72.35 (+11p)

72.65 (+9p)

72.30 (-1.04p)

\$

18

22

23

24

25

26

Provisional

PTI GRAPHICS

Inverted Scale

FEB

	3916.40	3935.25	3778.00	3800.70	IIFL	272.90	288.10	264.80	278.00	MAHINDROP	177.00	184.00	176.50	180.85	HATHWAY	29.40	30.15	28.95	29.75
	710.35	719.50	675.00	690.70	JJBCEPHARM	1138.95	1205.00	1106.60	1178.00	BAYERCROPI	5107.00	5175.50	5070.05	5143.30	ASTERDM	145.10	147.45	141.80	143.10
	430.35	430.70	5.53	5.81	SWANENERGY	145.00	148.40	141.15	144.60	RAJESHKALO	503.65	514.35	493.30	507.55	JSISHAR	126.55	126.55	121.20	124.30
	573.70	547.40	430.00	434.75	SCHNEIDER	107.00	118.75	107.00	114.35	GUJALHEXP	322.10	322.10	398.10	313.35	LAOPALA	220.10	224.00	218.00	219.05
	90.90	92.75	87.40	89.25	KTKBANK	68.20	69.15	67.35	67.75	ADVENVZYMES	357.15	367.35	351.30	357.60	GLAXO	1473.95	1474.00	1451.10	1460.70
	46.10	51.50	45.95	49.90	BAJAJELEC	981.00	991.95	945.00	957.70	SWOLVAR	234.90	234.90	225.50	227.35	SIS	431.50	434.90	425.70	429.20
	1908.90	1944.20	1837.45	1850.15	UBL	1192.50	1194.20	1153.15	1158.00	ESABINDIA	1815.90	1875.00	1783.60	1824.05	LUXIND	1746.35	1769.90	1723.50	1735.20
	1465.30	1479.40	1382.00	1419.50	HONAUT	46110.75	47241.90	44994.20	44994.85	KNRCOR	205.00	209.90	205.00	206.80	SOMANCYCERA	45.00	47.60	45.70	435.20
	507.00	510.90	491.00	493.40	NATOPHARM	81.50	82.00	79.10	82.60	MOTILALOFS	603.00	614.50	598.00	602.15	WABCOINDIA	5906.55	6025.55	5823.60	5901.15
	206.50	207.85	201.00	202.50	VGUARD	228.50	230.90	221.30	212.40	OFFS	3004.90	3055.55	2985.00	3045.45	NILKAMAL	1834.95	1859.75	1806.00	1816.00
	165.50	171.65	161.00	162.80	BAJAJCON	246.00	251.05	241.40	242.55	ORIENTELEC	272.90	272.90	266.70	270.40	MAHLOG	475.75	489.60	475.75	481.10
	1505.55	1556.40	1492.85	1538.90	MJECH	79.00	82.35	78.90	81.50	HAWKINCOOK	5500.00	5695.00	5431.15	5587.20	TKTPRESTIG	7301.35	7356.65	7190.15	7265.10
	370.00	372.80	354.00	370.80	OIL	125.95	127.85	124.20	126.30	AJANTPHARM	1731.40	1757.05	1725.00	1747.50	CHOLAHLDNG	59.00	60.00	58.65	60.55
	40.95	40.95	38.60	40.60	PNBHOUSING	45.00	45.15	43.60	45.95	EIHOTEL	97.15	98.25	95.50	96.65	MASFIN	894.95	889.00	825.05	871.60
	486.90	492.60	475.85	481.85	ALKEM	2752.00	2825.00	2708.30	2718.60	PRSMOJHNSN	105.75	111.35	101.85	103.80	HIIFWAM	1168.30	1225.05	1147.50	1207.25
	510.00	513.60	501.20	503.35	JAJCORPLTD	93.90	93.90	90.10	90.50	INTELLECT	438.00	442.05	431.00	434.00	CSBBANK	226.80	228.40	223.80	225.05
	5400.05	5540.00	5315.00	5443.70	BLUESTARCO	842.40	874.85	832.60	869.45	EPL	222.00	224.05	214.00	215.00	ALLCARCO	129.30	131.75	128.55	128.80
	2925.00	2982.95	2901.05	2937.65	ABSTRACTA	3480.00	3485.20	3410.00	3438.15	JUBLPHARMA	763.00	778.00	727.00	768.35	JTEKTINDIA	88.00	90.85	87.50	87.85
	67.65	76.25	67.65	72.65	ITDC	314.00	342.90	311.85	323.25	BASF	1981.05	2018.95	1912.00	1925.45	GILLETTE	5595.00	5600.70	5520.00	5535.00
	178.45	179.45	172.95	176.20	RADICO	550.60	576.00	549.50	575.00	JMFINANCIL	90.95	92.55	89.70	91.00	MHRIL	225.45	233.20	221.85	227.75
	1117.20	1203.05	1117.20	1158.20	MINDACORP	98.30	106.80	98.30	103.10	KRBL	198.00	203.65	195.70	196.00	REDINGTON	192.90	192.90	182.00	183.05
	55.35	56.70	53.00	55.15	FARBIBES	2602.20	2750.00	2493.85	2590.70	ENDURANCE	1445.00	1449.85	1386.45	1440.00	DCMSHRIRAM	457.00	470.50	452.10	454.85
	494.35	519.30	484.00	512.05	KJAPAPER	145.00	147.50	142.00	145.45	VAISHAGVBL	3370.00	3600.00	3365.55	3523.75	TNPB	131.65	131.65	129.00	130.00
	156.50	159.35	155.60	158.90	JINDALSAW	80.70	81.95	78.50	79.55	KANSAINER	572.95	572.95	551.55	558.45	SOBHA	448.50	448.50	439.00	439.55
	365.85	365.85	357.00	359.75	BALMLAWRIE	120.00	126.50	119.60	123.00	DBCORP	97.90	104.70	94.80	101.15	RATNAMANI	1921.85	1926.95	1855.00	1902.75
	125.10	132.50	124.70	129.00	BSOFT	230.00	231.65	225.25	227.00	AAVAS	221.20	2273.15	2167.95	2251.35	AKZOINDIA	2179.00	2198.10	2138.10	2157.65
	1598.00	1624.00	1550.95	1599.35	DCAL	119.00	124.80	116.65	117.90	GSPL	249.25	255.30	247.25	249.60	MAHSCOOTER	3615.05	3761.50	3615.05	3679.00
	38.20	42.10	38.10	40.25	CYIENT	634.65	665.00	634.35	655.00	GRSE	198.95	201.30	195.55	197.70	GET&D	128.70	131.05	126.30	127.85
	1455.00	1482.20	1442.00	1445.80	THERMAX	1262.95	1435.00	1262.95	1358.70	JOYTHYLAB	148.10	149.95	144.20	148.80	CERA	3944.00	3953.95	3700.00	3791.40
	2739.95	2769.70	2622.45	2650.65	UCOBANK	14.00	14.25	13.90	13.94	VENKYS	1620.80	1620.80	1582.00	1588.30	VMART	2650.00	2731.00	2608.75	2642.65
	72.90	76.10	72.40	74.90	SUPREMEIND	2018.70	2063.80	1942.52	2026.75	HERITGFOOD	319.40	323.10	312.65	313.70	PGHH	12882.00	13055.20	12856.35	12903.70
	3720.00	3784.80	3538.40	363.15	MXC	1517.00	1522.45	1492.00	1512.75	VARROC	398.00	414.75	398.00	403.00	IFBND	1222.05	1243.80	1209.95	1217.35
	177.90	185.00	176.80	183.75	CUB	163.90	170.00	162.70	165.25	TIMETECHNO	58.40	58.40	56.00	56.30	THYROCAST	905.00	913.75	902.75	907.60
	30.00	30.80	29.30	29.80	VBL	1030.00	1059.60	1018.45	1039.40	BDL	356.30	356.30	349.00	350.80	SHOPERSTOCK	208.90	209.10	203.65	207.20
	477.90	477.90	457.80	461.30	NIACL	158.00	160.70	152.10	153.55	MAHLIFE	507.80	528.45	501.70	513.65	ALIAENG	1780.05	1823.00	1750.05	1819.05
	760.00	778.55	760.00	771.40	JKCEMENT	2590.50	2705.00	2580.30	2686.25	ZYDUSWELL	1891.60	1956.45	1890.40	1950.95	SHRIRAMCMT	1630.00	1630.00	1585.00	1564.40
	90.00	92.55	88.50	91.10	LITS	2629.95	2629.95	2538.75	2566.60	KEC	429.00	437.50	425.10	430.40	GDL	171.15	180.65	174.00	176.15
	74.90	76.40	73.50	74.05	FORTIS	159.00	160.50	157.00	158.45	SUDARSCHERM	531.10	533.60	521.00	523.10	GALAXYSURF	2166.60	2221.00	2152.60	2208.40
	487.85	496.15	477.05	481.35	JAMNAAUTO	67.30	70.40	65.75	69.35	ARVINDFASN	159.80	162.95	156.70	157.55	TIMKEN	1295.00	1307.10	1264.45	1270.60
	1653.00	1653.95	1608.00	1623.15	JK&BANK	29.40	29.40	28.65	29.95	SUPRAJIT	292.45	293.00	281.00	286.00	GULFOILLUB	729.00	736.70	721.75	729.25
	88.30	91.30	83.55	85.55	LALPATHAB	2315.00	2354.35	2242.00	2301.75	TATAINVEST	1120.00	1120.00	1095.40	1106.05	ERIS	586.60	604.45	580.00	586.50
	490.00	490.00	472.35	478.90	SYNGENE	535.50	562.00	533.55	558.85	SHANKARA	453.10	463.75	440.00	445.55	CRISIL	1014.00	2014.00	1927.55	1947.55
	470.00	477.60	463.00	467.00	FOCUSMUSER	7.86	8.35	7.82	8.01	LEMONTREE	41.00	41.40	40.05	40.85	MAHSEAWELL	283.00	285.95	279.35	281.00
	85.00	928.00	882.40	919.15	PRESTIGE	301.00	303.75	290.30	298.40	KPRMILL	900.05	937.30	860.00	899.00	GRANDWALL	860.00	890.00	850.15	863.55
	83.00	84.80	82.50	82.70	CANFINHOME	488.25	488.85	475.00	478.70	REPCOHAND	346.30	346.30	331.85	343.05	VTIND	3488.90	3488.90	3417.25	3433.80
	380.00	392.00	374.25	381.60	CASFINOLINE	127.90	129.95	126.85	129.50	TCNSBRANDS	486.05	511.00	482.90	494.80	DHANUKA	727.30	739.95	737.25	725.75
	4087.00	4194.20	4062.00	4106.50	SLITCHE	21.00	21.40	20.60	20.80	ISL	72.80	73.20	70.60	71.20	TCIEXP	923.45	940.00	919.00	926.95
	1094.70	1114.10	1071.50	1087.40	CARERATING	477.00	487.00	461.90	465.45	SHK	117.60	121.15	117.50	117.90	SOLARINDS	1324.00	1324.00	1298.50	1303.10
	99.45	103.90	98.10	99.95	FRETAIL	69.75	70.00	69.05	69.70	FDC	281.90	283.50	276.30	277.95	FLUOROCHEM	575.00	589.15	571.25	580.45
	1164.70	1164.70	1090.00	1127.00	SPARC	167.00	170.00	163.25	163.75	ECLERX	912.00	948.70	912.00	928.85	TVTODAY	269.90	272.00	265.00	267.10
	407.95	407.95	400.80	406.80	RALLIS	260.90	261.00	255.00	255.60	JCHAC	2533.00	2623.00	2533.00	2579.80	ORIENTREF	232.30	237.85	231.40	233.25
	118.05	124.00	117.50	122.85	SUNDRMFAST	660.00	724.00	660.00	714.00	METROPOLIS	1941.00	1999.25	1941.00	1957.90	OMAXE	71.00	71.70	69.90	70.70

Nations should follow India's Covid example: WHO chief lauds Govt

Geneva: WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment for supporting vaccine equity and sharing Covid-19 vaccines with over 60 countries across the world, hoping that other nations will follow his example.

In a tweet, Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organisation, said that India's support in supplying its vaccines is helping over 60 countries to begin the vaccination process.

"Thanks India & Prime Minister @narendramodi for supporting #VaccineEquity. Your commitment to #COVAX and sharing #COVID19 vaccine doses is helping 60+ countries start vaccinating their #healthworkers and other priority groups. I hope other countries will follow your example," he said in the tweet on Thursday.

India on Wednesday dispatched the first batch of six lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses to the African country of Ghana under the COVAX facility in collaboration with UNICEF, which aims to cover 92 countries under the initiative.

The doses are a part of the first batch of Covid-19 vaccine the country is acquiring

through the Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX), which Ghana among nearly 92 countries have signed into.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on February 12 said that India has provided over 229 lakh doses of coronavirus vaccines to various countries out of which 64 lakh doses have been supplied as grant assistance and 165 lakh on commercial basis.

MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said India will continue to take forward the global vaccine supply initiative and cover more countries in a phased manner.

Consignments of coronavirus vaccine doses were supplied as gifts to Bangladesh (20 lakh), Myanmar (17 lakh), Nepal (10 lakh), Bhutan (1.5 lakh), the Maldives (1 lakh), Mauritius (1 lakh), Seychelles (50,000), Sri Lanka (5 lakh), Bahrain (1 lakh), Oman (1 lakh), Afghanistan (5 Lakhs), Barbados (1 Lakh) and Dominica (70,000), he said.

Srivastava said countries which received vaccines on commercial basis are Brazil (20 lakh), Morocco (60 lakh), Bangladesh (50 lakh), Myanmar (20 lakh), Egypt (50,000), Algeria (50,000), South Africa (10 lakh), Kuwait (2 lakh) and UAE (2 lakh). **PTI**

China plays down reports of India beating it in vaccine diplomacy

Beijing: China on Friday welcomed India supplying more Covid-19 vaccines to a number of countries, playing down reports that New Delhi has beaten Beijing in its vaccine diplomacy around the world.

Responding to a question on a report that India has beaten China in its own game of vaccine diplomacy, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin during a media briefing said, "We welcome that and hope to see more countries taking actions to provide vaccines to the world, especially developing countries, to help with the global response."

"China has been overcoming domestic difficulties to provide vaccines to other countries in concrete measure," he said, flagging China's own vaccine requirement to inoculate its 1.4 billion population. He reiterated that China has been providing vaccines to 53 countries and exporting vaccines to 27 countries, amid reports that many of those countries are yet to receive Chinese vaccines or the promised quantities.

For its part, China has promised 10 million vaccines to the United Nations-backed COVAX initiative COVAX, but the first supplies of COVAX vaccines went from the Serum Institute of India to Ghana.

India on Wednesday dispatched the first batch of six lakh COVID-19 vaccine doses to Ghana under the COVAX facility, an international cooperative programme formed to make sure low- and middle-income countries have fair access to COVID-19 vaccines. **PTI**

ISIS bride not allowed to return to UK to fight for citizenship, SC rules

London: The UK Government on Friday won a major legal battle as the Supreme Court ruled against allowing a London-born 21-year-old woman of Bangladeshi descent, who ran away to Syria as a teenager to join the Islamic State (ISIS) terror group, to return and fight her citizenship case.

The unanimous decision – with all five top court justices in agreement – comes six years after the then 15-year-old schoolgirl, Shamima Begum, ran away with two other friends to join the Islamic State (ISIS) group in February 2015.

Begum had her British citizenship revoked on national security grounds shortly after she was found in a Syrian refugee camp in February 2019.

"The Supreme Court unanimously allows all of the Home Secretary's appeals and dismisses Ms Begum's cross-appeal," said Lord Robert Reed, the President of the Supreme Court.

"The right to a fair hearing does not trump all other considerations, such as the safety of the public," he said.

Begum was born in the UK to parents of Bangladeshi heritage.

Begum, dubbed an ISIS bride in reference to her marriage to Dutch ISIS fighter Yago Riedijk, was one of three schoolgirls from Bethnal Green in east London who travelled via Turkey to ISIS headquarters in Raqqa.

When discovered in a refugee camp two years ago, she had already lost two children and was heavily pregnant with her third who died shortly after being born.

Begum had challenged the UK Home Office's decision to remove her British citizenship and wanted to be allowed to return to the UK to pursue that appeal. **PTI**

Hundreds of Nigerian schoolgirls taken in mass abduction

Lagos: Hundreds of girls are missing after a large group of gunmen raided a school in northern Nigeria early Friday morning, residents say.

The Government Secondary Jangebe School in Zamfara state was the scene of the latest mass abduction of school children in northern Nigeria.

Nasiru Abdullahi told The Associated Press that school records show 300 girls are missing. His daughters, aged 10 and 13, are among them.

Resident Musa Mustapha said the gunmen also attacked a nearby military camp and checkpoint, preventing soldiers from interfering while the gunmen spent several hours at the school. It was not immediately clear if there were any casualties.

Several large groups of armed men operate in Zamfara state, described by the government as bandits, and are known to kidnap for money and for the release of their members from jail.

"We are angered and saddened by yet another brutal attack on schoolchildren in Nigeria," said Peter Hawkins,

UNICEF representative in the country. "This is a gross violation of children's rights and a horrific experience for children to go through." He called for their immediate release.

The West African nation has seen several such attacks and kidnappings over the years, notably the mass abduction in April 2014 by jihadist group Boko Haram of 276 girls from the secondary school in Chibok in Borno state. More than a hundred of the girls are still missing.

Friday's attack came less than two weeks after gunmen abducted 42 people, including 27 students, from the Government Science College Kagara in Niger State. The students, teachers and family members are still being held.

In December, 344 students were abducted from the Government Science Secondary School Kankara in Katsina State. They were eventually released.

Anietie Ewang, Nigeria researcher at Human Rights Watch, noted the recent abductions and tweeted that "Strong action is required from the authorities to turn the tide & keep schools safe." **AP**

Militia official: US strike in Syria kills 1, wounds several

Baghdad: A US airstrike in Syria targeted facilities belonging to a powerful Iranian-backed Iraqi armed group, killing one of their militiamen and wounding a number of others, an Iraqi militia official said on Friday.

The Pentagon said the strikes were retaliation for a rocket attack in Iraq earlier this month that killed one civilian contractor and wounded a US service member and other coalition troops.

The Iraqi militia official told The Associated Press that the strikes against the Kataeb Hezbollah, or Hezbollah Brigades, hit an area along the border between the Syrian site of Boukamal facing Qaim on the Iraqi side.

He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak of the attack. Syria war monitoring groups said the strikes hit trucks moving weapons to a base for Iranian-backed militias in Boukamal. **AP**

Myanmar protesters injured as police escalate use of force

Yangon: Myanmar security forces cracked down on anti-coup protesters in the country's second-largest city on Friday, injuring at least three people, two of whom were shot in the chest by rubber bullets and another who suffered a wound on his leg.

Protesters had gathered on a wide road outside a park in Mandalay in the early afternoon when security forces arrived and began firing what sounded like gunshots and using flash bang grenades to disperse the crowd.

Bullets, shell casings, and other projectiles were later found by local residents on one of the main streets and shown to journalists.

The victims were all taken to a private clinic for treatment. One of the men who was shot in the chest with a rubber bullet also had a white bandage wrapped around his head. The man with an injured leg was later photographed in a cast that stretched from his foot to his knee.

The confrontations underscore the rising tensions between a growing popular revolt and the generals who toppled the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in a February 1 takeover that shocked the international community and reversed years of slow progress toward democracy.

Also Friday, a Japanese journalist covering a separate protest in Yangon, the country's largest city, was detained by police and



later released, according to Japan's Kyodo news agency. Yuki Kitazumi could be seen in a video circulating among media as police seized him, with one of the officers briefly putting a truncheon around the journalist's neck.

Earlier in the day, security forces in Yangon fired warning shots and beat truncheons against their shields while moving to disperse more than 1,000 anti-coup protesters.

The demonstrators had gathered in front of a popular shopping mall, holding placards and chanting slogans denouncing the Feb. 1 coup even as the security presence increased and a water-cannon truck was brought to the area.

When around 50 riot police moved against the protesters, warning shots could be heard, and at least one demonstrator was held by officers. Security forces chased the protesters off the main road and continued to pursue them in the nearby lanes, as some ducked into houses to hide. **AP**

Min: No possibility of Pakistan being blacklisted by FATF

Islamabad: There was no possibility of Pakistan being blacklisted by the FATF as it has made "significant progress", a senior minister claimed on Friday, a day after the global anti-money laundering watchdog retained the country on its "Grey List", citing "serious deficiencies" on its part in checking terror-financing.

Addressing the media after the Financial Action Task Force, the Paris-based global body against money-laundering and terror-financing, announced to keep Pakistan on its Grey List until June, Minister for Industries Hammad Azhar said that Islamabad achieved the targets despite the challenging timeline given to it. "There was no possibility of Pakistan being blacklisted by the FATF," Azhar, who led Pakistani delegation at the plenary as the chairman of the FATF Coordination Committee, said.

"At the previous plenary, FATF countries and the FATF secretariat said that blacklisting was not an option because the country has achieved significant progress," he said.

Azhar claimed that the world was "appreciative" of Pakistan's effort to complete the 27-point action plan of the FATF. "As you have seen, today the FATF itself is saying that we are 90 per cent close to achieving this goal," he said.

Covid vaccine didn't hurt at all and helps others, says Britain's Queen

London: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II has said that receiving her vaccine to protect against Covid-19 "didn't hurt at all" and encouraged those hesitant about getting jabbed to think about how it would help others in preventing the spread of the deadly virus.

In a rare reference to private health matters, the 94-year-old monarch backed the National Health Service (NHS) led vaccination programme in the UK during a video call earlier this week with health officials coordinating the rollout across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

She and husband, 99-year-old Prince Philip, received their first of two doses last month.

"Once you've had the vaccine you have a feeling of, you know, you're protected, which is I think very important," said the Queen, in reference to her jab.

"As far as I could make out it was quite harmless. It was very quick, and I've had lots of letters from people who have been very surprised by how easy it was to get the vaccine. And the jab – it didn't hurt at all," she said. Addressing some concerns about the uptake of vaccines and reluctance among certain groups, the monarch added: "I think the other thing is, that it is obviously difficult for people if they've never had a vaccine... But they ought to think about other people rather than themselves."

The video interaction, posted on the Royal Family's social media pages, came as UK Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi said figures suggest 11-15 per cent of people were vaccine-hesitant, with some ethnic minority communities among that category. **PTI**

Sri Lanka ends forced cremations of Covid victims

Colombo: Amidst mounting international criticism, Sri Lanka has revised a controversial mandatory order to cremate the bodies of Covid-19 victims, which denied minority communities, including Muslims, their religious rights.

The government on Thursday revised a gazette notification issued in April last year. The new notification has allowed both burials and cremations.

For 10 months, Muslim and Christian minorities in the country and international rights groups have been lobbying the government to end the policy of forced cremations.

The government was resisting calls to allow burials citing health concerns. It cited the opinion of some experts who claimed that the burial of COVID-19 victims would contaminate the water table thereby spreading the pandemic further.

The country had earlier come under intense criticism from rights groups, including the UNHRC, over the cremation order.

They said it failed to respect the religious feelings of the victims and their family members, especially of the Muslims, Catholics and some Buddhists.

The cremation of bodies is forbidden in Islam.

The decision to end forced cremations followed the visit of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan. **PTI**

FROM PAGE 1

BATTLE FOR 5 STATES FROM MAR 27

The 2021 West Bengal Assembly election gains significance as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee faces a stiff challenge from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has increased its footprints in the State considerably over the past five years. The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) has been in power in West Bengal for the past 10 years, following her historic victory over the Left Front Government that had ruled Bengal for 34 years at a stretch. In the 2021 Assembly elections in West Bengal, the TMC and the BJP are being seen as the main competitors. The Congress and the Left Front have announced to contest the election as alliance partners.

Kerala is poised for a possible triangular electoral battle for the first time in the upcoming assembly election. The LDF led by the CPI-M is hoping under Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to buck the trend of a ruling coalition being voted out in Kerala Assembly election. However, the Congress is banking on the very trend that Kerala votes out the incumbent coalition in every election. The BJP has invested much of its political energy in Kerala and has roped in several veterans, particularly from the Congress in the run up to the Assembly election.

In Puducherry, the fight has been between the Congress and All Indian NR Congress led by former Chief Minister N Rangasamy. Puducherry is the last Congress bastion in the South that it recently lost due to a series of resignations.

The BJP has big stakes in Assam where it is facing backlash from indigenous communities due to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu are also under much spotlight as it is the first Assembly election to be held without late Chief Ministers J Jayalalithaa and M Karunanidhi. The EC will appoint two special observers for West Bengal and a third can also be sent if required, Arora said in response to queries on whether enough arrangements are in place for the polls in the State, where many have been raising questions about political violence.

COMPLETE PULLBACK MUST FOR LASTING PEACE: INDIA TO CHINA

Jaishankar referred to their meeting in September 2020 in Moscow where the Indian side had expressed its concern on

provocative behaviour and unilateral attempts of the Chinese side to alter the status quo, according to the Ministry statement.

The Minister said during their meeting in Moscow last year they had agreed that the situation in the border areas was not in the interest of either side and decided that the border troops of both sides should continue their dialogue, quickly disengage and ease tensions.

Jaishankar said the two sides had maintained continuous communication since then through both diplomatic and military channels. This had led to progress as both sides had successfully disengaged in the Pangong lake area earlier this month.

At the 10th round of the senior commanders' meeting last week, India insisted on a faster disengagement process in Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang to defuse tension in the region.

Jaishankar told Wang that once disengagement is completed at all friction points, then the two sides could also look at broader de-escalation of troops in the area and work towards restoration of peace and tranquility.

Wang, on his part, expressed satisfaction at the progress made so far and said it was an important step forward for restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas, according to the ministry statement.

Wang also spoke about the need to improve management and control in the border areas, while Jaishankar highlighted that both sides had always agreed that maintenance of peace in the border areas was essential basis for development of bilateral relations.

"A prolongation of the existing situation was not in the interest of either side. It was, therefore, necessary that the two sides should work towards early resolution of remaining issues. It was necessary to disengage at all friction points in order to contemplate de-escalation of forces in this sector. That alone will lead to the restoration of peace and tranquility and provide conditions for progress of our bilateral relationship," it said.

Wang also noted that the Indian side had proposed "three mutuals" -- mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests -- as the approach to the relationship. He also agreed on the importance of taking the long view of ties between the two neighbours.

According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry release, Wang also said border

disputes are an "objective reality" and need to be attached adequate attention and taken seriously. However, the border issue is not the whole story of China-India relations, and should be placed in a proper position in their relationship, he said.

"Wang said the rights and wrongs of last year's situation in China-India border areas are very clear, and profound lessons should be drawn from the past," according to the Chinese foreign ministry statement.

18 STATES UNDER NCDC LENS OVER NEW COVID STRAINS

Scientists and researchers believe that the mutations in the foreign variants have enhanced the transmissibility of the virus as well as its virulence (the capability to bring more severity to the disease) and could be behind the surge in daily infections India has been recording for over a week.

Amid this, the Centre has confirmed detection of two new strains of the novel coronavirus--N440K and E484Q -- other than the Brazilian, the UK and South African in the country. These variants have been found circulating in a few districts of Maharashtra, Kerala and Telangana.

States such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh have again reported a surge in Covid cases. However, the Ministry has denied that the rise is due to the new variant.

FARM, SERVICES, CONSTRUCTION REVIVE GDP TO GROW AT 0.4%

The per capita income in real terms (at 2011-12 prices) during 2020-21 is estimated to attain a level of Rs 85,929 as compared to Rs 94,566 in 2019-20 -- showing a contraction of 9.1 per cent in 2019-20 as against 2.5 per cent growth in the previous fiscal, it stated.

Meanwhile, the BSE Sensex crashed about 1,940 points to post its biggest single-day fall in nearly 10 months and the NSE Nifty plunged over 568 points to crack below the psychological 15,000-mark on Friday, tracking global selloffs triggered by a panic in bond markets overseas.

At the day's close, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 1,939.32 points or 3.80 per cent lower at 49,099.99 - its worst one-day fall since May 4 last year.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty plunged 568.20 points or 3.76 per cent to close the session at 14,529.15 - the biggest single-day drop since March 23 last year.

On the Sensex chart, all 30 constituents ended in the red, with eight scrips logging over 5 per cent drop.

Sectorally, the banking index suffered the maximum loss with over 4.8 per cent drop. Financial and telecom indices too fell sharply by 4.9 per cent and 3.85 per cent, respectively.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses closed with heavy losses due to a rout in global bond markets.

LABOUR ACTIVIST NAUDEEP KAUR GRANTED BAIL

While accepting Kaur's bail plea on Friday, Justice Avneesh Jhingan said the issue with regard to invoking of Section 307, 332, 353 and 379-B IPC would be a "debatable issue" to be considered at a later stage during the trial.

In his order, the judge said, "...It will suffice that the petitioner shall maintain a restraint while being on bail to ensure that no law and order issue arises due to her actions."

The single judge bench cited that the Supreme Court in case of Anita Thakur and others versus Govt. Of J&K and others, 2016, held that holding of peaceful demonstration is a right which can be traced to the fundamental right but this right is subject to reasonable restriction.

"It would be appropriate to say that the right to peaceful protest is circumscribed by a thin line. The crossing of line may change the colour of protest. It would be subject matter of trial as to whether the line for peaceful protest was crossed in the alleged incident or not," as per order.

"Considering the material placed on record before this Court, the issue with regard to invoking of Section 307, 332, 353 and 379-B IPC would be a debatable issue and to be considered during the trial," according to the order.

The Court observed, "The petitioner is in custody since 12.1.2021. Albeit the matter is under investigation but that itself would not be sufficient ground to deny personal liberty to the petitioner."

"The court accepted the bail application of Naudeep Kaur. She has been granted bail by the high court," her counsel Arshdeep Singh Cheema said here earlier.

Meanwhile, according to a medical examination report which was placed before the high court on Friday, Kaur had "purplish bruises of around 10x7 cm present over LT (left) thigh, lateral aspect, bruises of around 5x6 cm over RT (right) buttock."

The court on February 24 had directed the State of Haryana to place on record the medical report of Kaur.

The medical examination of Kaur was conducted at Sonipat civil hospital on January 25 on the orders of a Sonipat court.

In her bail plea, the 23-year-old activist had claimed to have been severely beaten up at a police station after she was arrested by the Sonipat police on January 12.

CORONA REARS ITS HEAD IN DELHI AGAIN

Chatterjee, himself a COVID-19 survivor, lamented that people are attending birthday parties, marriages and house warming functions, with very few people wearing masks or not wearing them properly and not adhering to safety norms needed to check the spread of the virus that has a "mutant tendency" as seen in the UK.


Dr Richa Sareen, pulmonology and critical care consultant at Fortis Hospital, Vasant Kunj, echoed Chatterjee's apprehensions.

"The surge in the last three days is alarming. From 94 cases earlier this month, it has gone up to 220 reported yesterday. At our hospital, the number of patients showing up with Covid-like symptoms or making calls to enquire after exhibiting the symptoms, has gone up. These patients had a travel history, or had just attended a marriage function or other social gathering," she said.

The senior doctor warned that cases will spiral up faster if people continue to show complacency in their behaviour and stop taking precautions.


"Travel restrictions are not there, malls and markets are open, and public transport is operational since the successive unlocks, and vaccination started in January, so many people are assuming that now all is well. And several family members and friends are meeting in a group without following COVID-appropriate behaviour. So, cases are rising," Sareen said.

The Fortis hospital doctor underlined that the "second major wave" of the pandemic is being seen in the US and UK, and




RANVEER SINGH

Rohit sir (Shetty) and I were delighted to return to shooting full on high-octane action. Rohit was joking with me that he had been itching to get back to shooting an elaborate action sequence with cars blowing up and guns firing since a long time, and I totally shared his sentiment.




AVINASH TIWARY

An actor can only choose what is offered to him. So, it seems like the films that have come to me reflect the kind of work that I have always wanted to do. It is not a conscious choice of doing something. There is nothing by intent here but I am just fortunate that I get to do the roles which most actors will be envious of.




PRIYA BANERJEE

The second season of the forthcoming series *Bekaaboo 2*, is full of twists and turns. My character Kashti is very close to my heart. It made me push my boundaries and discover more within myself. It made me grow professionally as well as personally. I cannot wait to see what the show is going to look like.



ALY GONI

During *Bigg Boss 14* my intention to play for my friends was good. I'm that way in the outside world, too. For me, relationships matter a lot. It never crossed my mind that playing for my friends will make my game strong. I was just being true to myself. I never looked at it from the game point of view.



KELLY MARIE TRAN

It is so exciting to be the first Southeast Asian Disney Princess. It is a big deal. It feels like a really big honour and a big responsibility at the same time, and I want to do justice to it. I'm really grateful.

ENCOUNTER 45 MINUTES

CELEB TALK 15 MINUTES

ON THE EDGE OF *JUNGLE BOOK*

Experiencing the wild can have a surprisingly calming effect, realises SAIMI SATTAR

This was damaged by a tusker which had taken affront to a tiger having dared to cross his path,” said Bhagwati Prasad Dhyani, gesturing to the remains of a magnificent column at the Vatanvasa Gate which marks the entry into the 301. 17 sq km of the Kalaghar Tiger Reserve lies in the Lansdowne division of the Pauri district of Uttarakhand. It is a part of the 1,286 Corbett National Park where Dhyani has been working as a *Van Daroga* with the Uttarakhand Forest Department since 2003. While the big cat got away, the gate which proclaimed the existence of the feline species — with a photograph — within the Kalaghar Tiger Reserve was not as lucky. He gestured to the building next to the gate and said, “I was standing on the roof top and crouching. It was a sight, both scary and magnificent at the same time, which surpassed much of what I’ve seen.” Incidentally, Dhyani, while walking home one day, encountered a tiger less than three feet away. He just stood and waited. “The truth is just like any other animal which is a prey for the carnivores, humans too can’t react or even say a word when we are face to face with any of the big cats. We are stunned into silence,” he said. The tiger walked away and Dhyani lived to recount the tale. As he continued to regale us with incidents of his close encounters with the wild kind, we spotted a fox quickly making its way into the depths of the forest.

This unexpected meeting with Dhyani set the tone for our entire trip especially since the time we crossed Kotdwar. Even before we reached Vatanvasa gate which demarcates the starting point of the jungle safari, we’d lost count of the number of times wild fowls had crossed our path, screeching and scrambling as the car came careening down the road. On the way there were also scattered hutments enclosed by electric wires to ensure that the wild animals did not gatecrash as uninvited guests at a family dinner.



HIT THE ROAD

The four of us had started much before dusk from Delhi but, since we were more focussed on having a good time rather than reaching the destination at any fixed time, we finally arrived at the resort in the late afternoon. But if you are the kind of traveller who doesn’t care much to stop at scenic spots to soak in the views during a journey, it can take about seven and a half hours. It was fascinating to watch the sunlight make patches on the surface as it streamed in through the tree cover as the car ploughed its way through the wooded road. It was akin to chasing clouds in the sky, which has been one of my favourite past times since childhood. It smelled green due to the dense trees, which was a sensorial delight and an immediate mood lifter for a city-slicker.

WHAT LIES INSIDE

The part through which we were travelling is in the Pauri Garhwal region which encompasses 70 per cent of the Corbett Tiger Reserve while the remaining 30 per cent in Kumaon, where Jim Corbett — the legendary tiger conservationist — lived. With a mix of elevation



and plains, varied temperatures and several water bodies as well as sparse human settlements, this side holds out promises of frequent sightings and keeps them — sometimes making people fearful.

LANDING GROUND

At Vanvasa Resort in Juee village, home for the next three nights, I met another visitor, Sudheer Rawat, who recalled that while driving, early in the morning, he was practically sandwiched in between two elephants. “In those five seconds, a thousand thoughts raced through my mind. Whether I should wake my three friends and run while leaving the vehicle behind or park quietly in one corner or speed off and more,” he said. He chose to step on the horn and the gas to make a quick getaway as he knew that elephants, when angry, could be extremely dangerous.

Vanvasa, which means abode in the forest, actually lives up to the idea that went in naming it. It is an existence that is unhurried, almost a step back in time. Mobile connectivity is low and there are no TVs in the rooms to ensure that the real world does not encroach upon the cocoon that you are lulled into — how-

ever temporary. The chirping of birds rather than incessant honking of horns makes for a pleasant distraction. The faint rustling of trees creates an ambience which is so relaxed that it makes you sink deeper into its comfort even though it is faintly unfamiliar or buried deep into a nostalgic past of a city slicker in her 40s.

One evening I decided to catch up with the hotelier, Satender Rawat, who much like me had spent much of his adult life in the capital, before deciding to step back and connect with the land of his ancestor. This property spread over 30 acre, powered by his vision, foregoes commercial gains in favour of ensuring that each of the cottages and one villa has unobstructed view of the mountains. “Three more rooms are coming up and eventually I plan to have 40,” said Rawat for whom it is clearly a passion project. A clear indication of the same are the more than 1,000 variety of trees carted from Meerut, Kolkata and even Bengaluru. Rawat showed me around pointing out each of the trees by its common and botanical names. When I asked him about the number of gardeners, he answered with an impish smile, “Just one. He’s standing in front of you. The rest

water the plants. Transplanting full-grown trees takes a minimum of six months but it adds to the experience of the visitors.”

On the last day of our stay, we accompanied a steward, Soori — who looks older than his 45-years, thanks to his grey hair, but is surprisingly agile on his feet — to see a huge water tank being constructed to supplement the existing water resource. A tiger pugmark near the tank, which is about three km away from the resort, was the real attraction. An amazing raconteur, Soori told us about the goings-on in the surrounding villages, pointed out herbs and imparted local wisdom.

On our way back, we competed to test our physical fitness at the outdoor adventure sports area. It was here that Rawat, who by that time had come to check upon our well-being, told us that he calls Soori his ‘local reporter’ — clearly for a reason — and promised us that the journalist fraternity had more up its sleeves. He was hinting at Soori’s talent which is not limited to story-telling. At night, on a day when the resort which is usually full-up was deserted as it was the mid-week after a long weekend, Soori entertained us by singing Garhwali and Nepali songs which was accompanied by energetic dancing in the gazebo attached to the dining area. Equipped with a keyboard, a TT table and more, it doubles up as an activity area where, in the evening, there is a magic-tricks show for children and a musical one for adults. It was in the gazebo that Rahul Mukherjee and Frank, the in-house singers, entertained us with a mix of slow, romantic and fast-paced songs every evening.

The fourth morning, after a leisurely breakfast of *Bichchu buti ka saag*, a local delicacy, and potato spring onion gravy cooked in Garhwali style, we hit the road on our way to the capital. And while I carried the fond memories of the place and the people, I also left a part of me behind. Till we take abode in the forest...again.

Photo Courtesy: Pankaj Kumar



Kriti juggles between shoots

After wrapping her shooting schedule for Farhad Samji’s *Bachchan Pandey*, Kriti has already started the shoot of her next horror-comedy, *Bhediya*’s Mumbai schedule. Directed by Amar Kaushik, the film will also star Varun Dhawan.

With shooting back to back for her films, it looks like the actress has no time to spare. Confirming the same, a source revealed, “Kriti has been keeping extremely busy with her hectic schedule and is working hard to balance all her forthcoming projects. In between *Bhediya*, she will also shoot for a song for her film, *Mimi*. To be all prepared and ready, the actress is rehearsing every night post her shoot.”

Recently, the actress created quite a stir on the internet with her sexy biker look for her film *Ganapath* directed by Vikas Behl where she will be seen opposite Tiger Shroff. Having a packed slate for the year, the actress is all set to surprise her fans and audiences on screen.

STUDIO CHAT 30 MINUTES

Ticking many boxes

On the sixth anniversary of the film *Dum Laga Ke Haisha*, producer-director MANEESH SHARMA and SHARAT KATARIYA remember their disbelief and joy when the film bagged a prestigious award and connected well with the audience. By TEAM VIVA

DLKH was your first film as a producer at YRF. What made you take the plunge as a producer?

Maneesh: Some take the plunge, others are tripped into the pool. I am definitely the latter. Producing films was nowhere in my scheme of things but I had not anticipated the plans of Aditya Chopra. *Shuddh Desi Romance* had just released and I was prepping for another film. One fine day, a conversation initiated by Adi led to me becoming a producer pretty much overnight. C’est la vie! (such is life)

Did you expect this reaction to the film while you were writing it?

Sharat: No, one is not thinking any kind of (such thing), one is always unsure and is trying to write with the best possible ideas. There was no expectations. Yes, I was overwhelmed by the reaction but never expected it like that.

As a producer, what are the kind of stories that you want to tell?

Maneesh: Irrespective of which role I am engaged in a film with — producer, director or story writer — I rely a lot on my instinct. It’s a lot to do with what feels right at that stage of life and you click with a narrative or a character or a genre and you back your instinct and commit to investing your time and energy to the process. So far, that’s mostly worked for me, I guess.

What do you think is the USP of the film that it became a hit?

Sharat: Honestly, I don’t know. I saw the film a year after it was released, again,



at a film festival with the audience. I still don’t know what worked with the audience, but I am assuming that may be the comedy or the characters. I really don’t know what was new in it because when I hear the word ‘fresh’, I can’t figure out exactly what was fresh in it? I can’t break it down for myself. If I could, I would do that again.

When you and Sharat were teaming up for the film, what were your expectations?

Maneesh: All we really hoped was for the audience to connect with the grounded and nostalgic quality of the narrative. The love and warmth the film has received overtime, does validate our conviction. Each film has its own mea-

sure of ambition. This one did tick many of the boxes.

The film gave a new pairing (Ayushmann-Bhumi) to people who have now had a hatrick of hits. Why do you think people have loved them ever since?

Sharat: It’s just their talent nothing else. It’s their talent of getting into the skin of the character and becoming the characters they’ve asked for, for any film that they do. And I’m sure that is why their films and performances work.

What was the first thing you and Sharat said to each other when you won the National Award for the film?

Maneesh: *Kya baat kar raha hai!* (What are you saying?)

What was your reaction when you won the National Award for the film?

Sharat: I have very fond memories. I’ll tell you bit by bit what happened. My first reaction was like Oh God! I won’t be able to work the whole day now. First, it wasn’t sinking in but it sank when there were multiple phone calls, post which I remember calling Maneesh. I told him that the film has won a National Award, not just for the film but also for the best singer (Monali) and Varun (Grover) for the best lyrics as well. So, he was also equally surprised. And then phone calls started coming in non-stop. This has never happened to me in my life. It was really an overwhelming experience.

Broaden your horizons

Working in the teleplay *Gidh* made actor SANA JAFRI push her creative boundaries

Director and producer Kanwal Khoosa’s teleplay *Gidh* revolves around two women protagonists bound together by their shared miseries of life in a patriarchal society. The teleplay starring Sana Jafri, Rasti Farooq, and Adeel Afzal delves into the life of Saleema and an unexpected visitor Salma who claims to be her sister-in-law.

As the plot unfolds, both the women share the trials of their respective lives which they had to undergo because of the same man — Junaid, Salma’s brother, and Saleema’s husband. Together, they decide to do put an end to their suffering. What in fact transpires changes one of their lives forever, but not in a predictable way.

Sana says, “Working with Kanwal has been definitely the best experience of my life because she brought out the creative aspects in me that I didn’t even know could translate onto the screen. Each line that Kanwal wrote had two or more meanings and it was tough to express them all without actually saying what the character was going through.”

The teleplay format, she says, was tricky because she is a trained theatre actor but Kanwal blended the two genres and translated them harmoniously for the small screen.

Kanwal also helped her to push her creative boundaries.



Sana adds, “We rehearsed the teleplay just like we do in theatre and that process was very helpful. Also, the fact that we were a team of five women helped. Whenever we got stuck creatively, our art director, Kanwal, myself, Rasti, and our assistant shared our real-life experiences which helped us move forward. This ensemble of five amazing women who had so much to share with each other really helped me as an actor.”

(The teleplay will stream on Airtel Spotlight on February 28 at 2 pm and 6 pm.)

JUKEBOX 45 MINUTES



Picture this: Six teams, representing different regions of India, battling it out against each other in a musical championship. Each of these teams are supported by leading Bollywood and sports celebrities like Bobby Deol, Rajkumar Rao, Shraddha Kapoor along with Shakti Kapoor and Siddhanth Kapoor, Riteish and Genelia Deshmukh, Govinda along with Sunita and Tina Ahuja and Suresh Raina. Also, the teams have two top playback singers as their captains along with one reality show star and one fresh voice. Doesn't this resemble the concept of IPL (The Indian Premier League), a professional Twenty20 cricket match contested by different teams representing various states of India?

While we've seen many sports leagues over the past few decades, Zee TV's latest show — *Indian Pro Music League* — is the first ever music league reality show which infuses the competitive energy of sports into music with super matches, league matches and so on. While Shilpa Rao is the captain of Mumbai Warriors, Shaan and Aakriti Karar head Bengal Tigers, Asees Kaur leads Punjab Lions and Sajid Khan commands Delhi Jammers. All the captains came together to speak about the show.

Since people have always enjoyed and embraced this format in sports, can we expect the same response for music? Aakriti feels that people are going to take

A MUSICAL BOUT

While we've seen many sports leagues over the past few decades, *Indian Pro Music League* is the first ever reality show which infuses the competitive energy of sports into music with super matches, league matches and so on.

By AYUSHI SHARMA

some time to understand the concept. "Even we took a while. But it's going to be a lot of fun. Shaan and I will make sure that we just don't keep singing our own songs because that will become mundane. Our goal is to give a different spin to each song. There are different themes to almost every episode. There are various categories and genres given to us. Singers Mika Singh, Kailash Kher, Sajid Khan, Shaan, Ankit Tiwari, Javed Ali, Asees Kaur, Bhoomi Trivedi, Payal Dev, Neha Bhasin, Shilpa Rao will don the hat of captains of the six zonal teams. I am sure it's going to be a huge hit," she says.

Sajid adds, "*Wahan bat aur ball chalta hai, yeha pe sur aur taal, drum and guitar chalega*. Even though cricket is like a religion in India, I feel people can still live without it, but music — I don't think so."

Aakriti always loves to be challenged. She says, "There's a bit of a challenge because I am a



judge on *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa* on Zee Bangla. There I am judging the contestants and here, I am the one who is going to be judged. It's like practicing what you preach, so it shouldn't come across as a hollow claim. And actually that's where the fun is."

Shilpa shares, "Music is one thing that you like... be it in any form. It has that universal connect with people. The whole point of this format is to get 18 artistes of the same stature and six new talents on one stage, which is the biggest task for any of us."

Ask her if Shilpa finds it challenging, she instantly says, "What? To be yourself? No! That is the least challenging thing for me. The only test is to be a better performer on a daily basis and be a better version of yourself. When you are competing with yourself, that's the real challenge to be in."

Asees hopes that just like IPL is a big success in our country, this show carries the same magic!

Usually in a music reality show there are different teams fighting to win. Here, there is an involvement of various states and their representation. Has this made the show more personal for the audience as well as for the singers? Well, Aakriti tells us that initially when she was approached for the show, she had the option of choosing two-three teams because she's a Delhi girl, who is a Punjabi, born and brought up in Mumbai. She especially chose Bengal because "the kind of love I've received from the state is just unbelievable. My connection with Bengal has been very strong since the beginning."

Shaan explains that representing states is a very superficial part of the show. "For instance, MS Dhoni represents Chennai but it's not like he was born in Chennai or he has any connection with the state. It's a voting-based show so it's become very difficult if you just leave it at 'everyone votes for everyone'. It also becomes even more subjective then. I am a Bengali, so I have been given a team titled Bengal Tigers. Mikaji (Singh) is Punjabi so he has been given Punjab Lions. But if we talk about Kailashji (Kher), he has got Mumbai Warriors but he is not from Mumbai. So we were just given these choices just for the sake of representation and to give a superficial colour," shares Shaan.

Sajid and Shilpa tell us that the show depicts different cultures and a variety of music from various states. "The show's mantra is *Musical Uncha Rahe Hamara*. So at the end, it all comes down to one thing i.e. music. It doesn't matter who took the trophy. It's a win for music," they say.

(The show airs on Zee TV every Saturday and Sunday at 8 pm.)



Return to real experience

Actor GULSHAN GROVER says that films in theatres will bring back the festivity

Veteran actor Gulshan Grover says he has respect for OTT platforms but theatres define the festive experience of watching films, and it is something that has been missing over the past year.

"For almost a year now, we have been watching films and series on OTT in our homes. We have been watching content from across the world. The OTT has its own advantages but we also want to get out there and want to have a real experience of watching a film," said Grover at the trailer launch of the forthcoming film *Mumbai Saga* in Mumbai.

About filmmakers who have gone ahead and released films amid COVID protocol, he added, "It's a gutsy and courageous move from producers and entertainers that we care for the audience. Accepting the idea of 50 per cent capacity in theatres is a big step for financiers, producers and actors because the numbers are going to be counted."

The Sanjay Gupta directorial *Mumbai Saga* is set in the eighties and the nineties. It chronicles the changing landscape of Mumbai when mills were being replaced by malls and highrise buildings.

"We have respect for OTT platforms. They are here to stay and they will be an integral part of our lives, but when you release a film on OTT there is no festivity, no celebration, no noise. There is no getting together of people, no one calls you and expresses his enthusiasm of watching the film," Grover said.

"The festivity was missing, the publicity was missing, the excitement was missing. So, it all comes back. As for competition among producers, there is no competition at the moment. They all want to get to a theatre somehow or the other. (Industry) People will make way for others and will celebrate success of other producers," he added.

Mumbai Saga features John Abraham, Emraan Hashmi, Suniel Shetty, Kajal Aggarwal, Rohit Roy, Anjana Sukhani, Mahesh Manjrekar, Prateik Babbar, Amole Gupte, Samir Soni, Shaad Randhawa and Gulshan Grover. The film is set for a theatrical release on March 19.

—IANS

DRAMA 30 MINUTES

Romance and revenge

Director AARAMBHH M SINGH says that *Jamai 2.0* features thrill, drama, suspense and mystery. By AYUSHI SHARMA



Approximately seven years ago, *Jamai Raja* aired on television and since then, the show carved its name in the memory of the viewers. It ended following an effective three-year run. Now, its second installment *Jamai 2.0* is back on the digital platform Zee5 with a bigger plot twist. Excerpts:

□How did you conceptualise the show? How is it different from the first installment?

Since it is a second season, the story line has been carried forward. The producers of the show, Viniyard Films came up with the story line for this season based on the research

done by the OTT platform post first season. I was shared the brief of what audience was expecting from season two and I worked around it. I feel season one was more action oriented while season two kept the emotional quotient and love at the forefront. We have focussed on Ravi (Dubey) and Nia's (Sharma) chemistry, while ensuring that Achint Kaur's character doesn't lose its shine since it has been the encashing point from day one. Her character brings the required edge to the show.

□An insight into the storyline...

It's a story of two lovers torn between romance and revenge...

Sidharth (played by Ravi) is looking for Roshni's (played by Nia) brother who had killed his sister 10 years ago... Roshni discovers it and chooses to side with her brother, who she believes is innocent. Thus, they find themselves at loggerheads. It's a fight where there is no winning. It's either love or family. Sid has always shown that he is in love with Roshni but we wonder if his feelings are real or simply a part of his plan. What will Sid and Roshni choose is the suspense of the season.

□The story of revenge is not a novel theme, what made you sure that the audience would not skip the



second season of the show?

There are limited genres and only seven types of stories form archetypes that have engaged human attention for centuries. It's the characters which make the story different from one another and pull the audience to watch it. *Jamai 2.0* already has its success formula. The audience has loved Ravi, Nia and Achint since the TV show days and that's the reason when the OTT platform decided to experiment with TV crossover web show. Their obvious choice was *Jamai* being the most successful show on television.

□At a time when the OTT space is

booming with content driven projects, how do think a show like this will work?

Well, because this is content driven show too. It is high on emotional quotient and has been written in sync with today's time.

□Your experience of working with Nia, Ravi and Achint...

It has been really great. Working with Achint has been a dream come true since I have grown up watching her. Ravi's energy and dedication towards his work is rare in today's actors and Nia surprises me with her spontaneity. I can promise that this season will make audience laugh and cry at the same time.

□We don't see much of masala content these days, instead there's a surge in the realistic genre like biopics, real-life events. What type of content, according to you, will prevail in the post-COVID era?

One thing which has changed during COVID times is viewership of the audience. People have started consuming more and more OTT content. They want to be safe and secure, and watch shows from the comfort of their homes, rather than heading out often. That has brought surge of demand for new shows for sure. But there can't be one particular set of genre that will prevail because the audience differs. They love to be spoilt with various choices. Also, I do agree that we are moving towards more realistic content these days. Its demand has been increasing rapidly. I feel people need encouragement and want to watch inspiring stories, thus, biopics have a huge scope of going forward.

□What are your forthcoming projects?

While *Jamai 2.0* has been released yesterday, I am finishing my edit for another webshow, a psychological thriller, which will be go on air in March on ALTBalaji.



'My mood dictates my fashion'

Actor Sharad Malhotra, who recently achieved two million followers on Instagram, has often floored fans with his fashion choices. His jackets, particularly, are a huge hit with his admirers.

"I love jackets. I'm particular about what I wear and my mood sort of dictates my choice of clothes. Keeping it simple yet fashionable is what I prefer. My choice is governed by comfort. Having a fashion designer wife is a plus (laughs softly). Ripci (his wife) is my go-to person every time I need any help," says Sharad.

Recently seen in the show *Naagin 5*, the actor is right now planning his next career move.

"I am reading scripts and discussing projects. I have liked two to three things but have not signed up on anything as of now. Talks are on, let's see what falls into place," he claims, adding that he is open to TV, films and web shows. He has been

approached for music videos, too.

"An artiste just needs a platform and an audience. I don't want to restrict myself into just one medium but explore everything that is challenging and exciting that comes my way. I enjoy performing different characters having different shades. If the story and my part are good enough, I can even perform on the streets and entertain my audience. I value the art more than everything else," he says.

He recently went to Dubai with his wife to rejuvenate. Talking about his holiday, he says: "Holidays gets the best out of me. This time around things were different. We all were stuck at home, not sure when we could go for a vacation. So this holiday was special. I love visiting Dubai not just because of how beautiful and welcoming it is but also for my fans in the city."

—IANS

It's all about confidence, Axar on Test outings

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

It was a long wait for Axar Patel and it didn't help that everyone around him had just one question for the past three years — “Why aren't you in the Indian team?”

But Patel was unfazed as he knew, his time would come.

“I think it's all about confidence,” said the 27-year-old from Anand in Gujarat who wanted to be a mechanical engineer growing up but was prodded into trying his hand at cricket by a school friend.

With his record 11 wickets in the Day-Night third Test against England, the left-arm spinner finally found his big moment in International cricket, seven years after he made his India debut in an ODI against Bangladesh.

Since that day, he has been in and out of the team with the spin all-rounder's spot firmly with Ravindra Jadeja.

In this series too, he made it because Jadeja was out injured. He hadn't been in the national team since 2018 and made his Test debut in the second game against England last week in Chennai.

“I have been out of the team for three years and at that time, I used to think about the areas of my game which need to be worked upon. So, I was working on my bowling and batting,” he told Hardik Pandya in a *bcci.Tv* interview, thoroughly enjoying his good time.

“When you are out of the



team, many people, friends keep asking you ‘why aren't you in the team despite doing well?’ These things keep coming in the mind,” said the bowler who has 152 wickets in 41 first-class game at an impressive average of 25.25.

“So, I told myself ‘just wait for the right time and whenever

continue in the same manner in front of his home crowd in the fourth and final Test against England, starting here on March 4.

“(The Day-Night Test) was my second Test and first in Motera. It's a special feeling to play and perform before the home crowd. My efforts would be to do the same,” Patel said.

Towards the end of the light-hearted interview, India skipper Virat Kohli also made an appearance and appreciated Patel's performance in Gujarati.

“*Ae Bapu taari bowling kamaal chhel* (Bapu, your bowling is wonderful!),” Kohli said.

EXPECTED WICKET TO HOLD UP LITTLE LONGER

England head coach Chris Silverwood on Friday played down talks of lodging any formal complaint to the ICC regarding the Motera pitch but said he had expected the surface to hold up a little longer after his team lost the third Test against India inside two days.

“First and foremost, just to follow up from what Joe (Root) said yesterday, he got five for 8, but at the same time whatever the pitch did or didn't do, India ultimately played better than us on that surface, probably pushed us to the extremes of which our players haven't experienced before,” he said during a virtual press conference.

“We did expect the wicket to hold up a little longer than it did,” he added.



I became a cricketer accidentally: Ashwin

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

I am actually a cricket lover who went on to become a cricketer. I am living my dream here, I never imagined that I will wear the Indian jersey one day and I will play

Called a modern day legend by his captain Virat Kohli, ace Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin says he is actually an accidental cricketer, who is living a dream with over 400 Test wickets under his belt.

Ashwin reached the milestone in the Day-Night third Test against England, which ended here on Thursday with India winning by 10 wickets inside two days. Ashwin picked up seven in the match to take his overall tally to 401.

“I accidentally became a cricketer. I am actually a cricket lover who went on to become a cricketer. I am living my dream here, I never imagined that I will wear the Indian jersey one day and I will play,” Ashwin told *bcci.Tv* in an interview but did not elaborate on the remark. According to Ashwin, being in the Covid-19 lockdown made him realise just how lucky he was to play for India.

“And every time I finish playing a game and if I give that winning result for the team, I just feel I am being given a blessing, but the Covid times made me feel how lucky I am to actually play for India.

“Even when I came back after the IPL, I never thought I will play in Australia, so that is what I said, everything has been a gift, for the love with which I play the game, the game is giving me back enough and more laurels,” he added.

Ashwin, who also became the second fastest bowler to reach the 400 Test wicket-mark after Sri Lankan spin legend Muttiah Muralitharan, said that he watched a lot of old videos of great individ-

ual performances in the lock-down helped improve his understanding of the game.

“I used to watch a lot of footage even before, but the understanding of the game has gone one notch higher...During the lockdown, I was watching a lot of cricket from the past, especially Sachin's hundred in Chepauk, all sort of stuff on Youtube,” recalled the 34-year-old Chennai-born player.

Jofra Archer became Ashwin's 400th wicket during the second day of the third Test here, which India won by 10 wickets and he said it was only when the batsman had opted for DRS, he realised that he had reached the landmark.

“Initial feeling is quite empty to be honest, because we were under immense pressure...For me I was actually in the moment, only after he (Archer) had taken the DRS, I realised the 400th that happened,” he said.

“...After they flashed 400 Test wickets on the board, the entire stadium was up, everybody was clapping, I don't know, I cannot put a finger and say how I feel about it, the last three months have been a complete fairy-tale,” he added.

Eng guilty of thinking too far ahead: Bell

PTI ■ LONDON

Former batsman Ian Bell has slammed England's much-debated rotation policy, saying they were guilty of thinking too far ahead and have gone wrong with the constant chopping and changing in a “big” Test series like India.

England fell to an embarrassing 10-wicket defeat in the third Test to go down 1-2 in the four-match series against India, while also getting knocked out of contention from the ICC World Test Championship



(WTC) final in June. “I think England have been guilty of thinking too far ahead

of having a squad for the Ashes when actually this is bigger than the Ashes, this is probably as big as the Ashes,” Bell told *ESPNcricinfo*.

“Why are we rotating in the biggest Test series you are playing in? For me that's where England have gone a bit wrong,” he added.

The 38-year-old, who featured in 118 Tests for England, feels for the English players for whom the tours to India and Australia can make or break careers.

“These tours, certainly for

Englishmen coming to India or going to Australia are the pinnacle. They make your careers, you look back and if you win in those conditions they are remembered for a long long time,” Bell said.

“For me, India are going to come to England in the summer. If they are 2-0 or 1-0 up will they rotate? I know for a fact that when India come in the summer they won't be rotating their best bowlers or their best players or leave somebody out. They want to win.”

Padikkal scores another ton in Karnataka's win



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Young opener Devdutt Padikkal continued his sensational form, smashing a second successive century to lead defending champions Karnataka to a nine-wicket win over Kerala in the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Friday.

Chasing Kerala's 278, Karnataka cantered home with 27 balls to spare with the Royal Challengers Bangalore opener hitting 13 fours and two sixes in an unbeaten knock of 126 from 138 balls.

He got a fine support from Krishnamurthy Siddharth (84-ball 86 not out; 5x4, 3x6) as they toyed with the Kerala

Delhi to host Vijay Hazare knockout

Mumbai: The knockout matches of the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy will be held in Delhi from March 7.

The matches will be organised at the Arun Jaitley Stadium and the Palam Ground. “...Kindly note that the

knock-out stage of the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2020-21 will be played at New Delhi from March 7,” stated a mail sent from the BCCI secretary's office to all the affiliated state units on February 25.

As per the BCCI website, the pre-quarter final

(Eliminator) will be played on March 7, while the quarter-finals will be played on March 8 and March 9.

The two semi-finals will be staged on March 11 while the summit clash will be played on March 14.

attack in their match-winning 180-run undefeated stand. Fresh from his 152 against Odisha, Padikkal carried on from where he left and put on a 99-run opening stand with skipper Ravikumar Samarth (62).

The 20-year-old, who also has two half-centuries, now leads the Vijay Hazare run chart with 427 runs from four matches at an astounding average of 142.33.

The big win took Karnataka to the top of the Group E table ahead of Uttar Pradesh, who beat Railways by 70 runs in Alur and Kerala on net run-rate.

FOUR FOR BARODA

In Group A game in Surat, skipper Krunal Pandya's unbeaten 133 formed the cornerstone of Baroda's 13-run win over Chhattisgarh in an Elite Group A game, even as Atit Sheth blazed away to a 16-ball 51.

Opting to bat, Baroda rode on Pandya's

hundred and Sheth's big-hitting to post 332/6 after a top-order failure, and then restricted the opposition to 319/9 to record their fourth win on the trot. The left-hander smashed 20 fours and three sixes in his whirlwind 100-ball knock while forging a 139-run stand for the fifth wicket with Vishnu Solanki (78 off 99 balls, 8x4).

JHARKHAND LOSE

In Group B matches in Indore, Tamil Nadu ended Jharkhand's three-match winning streak with a convincing 67-run win.

At Holkar Stadium, Prabhsimran Singh hammered 167 (140 balls, 13 fours, 9 sixes) to power Punjab to a four-wicket win over Vidarbha. While Madhya Pradesh handed Andhra a 98-run defeat.

Jharkhand is on top of the standings with 12 points, followed by Punjab, Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh with eight points. Vidarbha lies in last place with 4 points.

BCCI considers 4-5 IPL venues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI is looking at four to five venues for conducting the next edition of the Indian Premier League with Mumbai as a single host not looking feasible anymore following a surge in Covid-19 cases in and around the city.

Earlier, there were discussions that Mumbai, with four stadiums — Wankhede, Brabourne, DY Patil and Reliance Stadium, will be a good option to create a single bio-secure bubble and hold the eight-week long tournament.

However, the Covid-19 situation in Maharashtra worsened with a spike in cases.

“There is still a month left for the IPL to start but obviously some decisions need to be



taken. It will be risky to have a single city IPL in Mumbai if there is steady rise in cases that's happening right now,” a senior BCCI official said.

“So cities like Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Kolkata will be ready to host matches. Ahmedabad, in all likelihood, will host the play-off and final match of the IPL,” he said.

The IPL is scheduled to start in the second week of April.

Arsenal, Man Utd, Rangers in last 16

Leicester, Napoli, Germans exit Europa League after shock defeats in R32

AFF ■ BERLIN

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored twice including a late winner as Arsenal qualified for the last 16 of the Europa League on Thursday with a 3-2 victory over Benfica in Greece, while Manchester United and Rangers cruised through to the next round.

The Gabon striker put Arsenal ahead at the Karaiskakis stadium in Piraeus in their home leg of a tie relocated due to Covid-19 travel restrictions.

Diogo Goncalves levelled the contest with a magnificent free-kick and Rafa Silva gave Benfica a 2-1 lead on the night when he took advantage of an error from Dani Ceballos on the hour.

Kieran Tierney rifled in an equaliser and Aubameyang headed in the decisive goal from Bukayo Saka's cross on 87 minutes, earning the Gunners a 4-3 aggregate victory and saving them from an unusual away goals exit following a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Rome.

“Everyone is happy tonight. This is what gives me power every day, take errors from the past and transform to strength,” Aubameyang told *BT Sport*.

“The team showed a lot of character and we deserved the win. It was a hard game. What we showed tonight will be an example for the future.”

United cemented their place in Friday's draw with a 0-0 draw at home to Real Sociedad, having effectively clinched the tie last week with an emphatic 4-0 win on neutral ground in Italy.

Mikel Oyarzabal's awful penalty miss represented the best chance at Old Trafford for La Real, while Bruno Fernandes rattled the crossbar and Axel Tuanzebe's header was disallowed for a foul.

Leicester City, who are behind second-placed United in the Premier League only on



goal difference, were knocked out after sliding to a 2-0 loss at home to Czech champions Slavia Prague.

Lukas Provod fired Slavia in front just after half-time following a goalless draw in the first leg, and Senegalese teenager Abdallah Sima ensured the visitors extended their run in the competition.

‘OUTSTANDING’ RANGERS

Steven Gerrard's Rangers progressed following their 5-2 win over Belgian side Antwerp at Ibrox, with five different players on target for the Scottish league leaders.

After a dramatic 4-3 win in the first leg last week, goals from Alfredo Morelos, Nathan Patterson and Ryan Kent put Rangers in control before late penalties from Borna Barisic and Cedric Itten wrapped up the tie 9-5 on aggregate.

“I'm very satisfied, the performance was outstanding in a lot of areas,” said Gerrard.

AC Milan squeezed past Red Star Belgrade on away goals after a 1-1 draw in a clash of former European champions at the San Siro.

Franck Kessie's early penalty was enough to book Milan's place in the last 16 despite El Fardou Ben Nabouhane equalising as the tie finished 3-3 over the two legs.

Napoli's dismal run contin-

ued as they were knocked out 3-2 on aggregate by Granada despite winning 2-1 in the return fixture in Italy.

Ajax eliminated French Ligue 1 leaders Lille with a 2-1 victory in Amsterdam to complete a 4-2 overall win,

Red Devils face AC Milan in last 16

AFF ■ NYON

Manchester United and AC Milan will face off in the last 16 of the Europa League after being paired together in Friday's draw in Nyon.

United, who beat Real Sociedad 4-0 in the previous round, will face the seven-time European champions in a two-legged encounter after they squeezed past Red Star Belgrade on away goals.

The tie will pit Zlatan Ibrahimovic against his former club in United, where he won the 2017 edition of the Europa League.

United will be considered favourites for the tie however as they sit second in the Premier League having lost just once in the English top flight since the start of November. Milan meanwhile have

surrendered top spot in Serie A to neighbours Inter Milan after a run of three defeats in five league matches.

Ajax will fancy their chances against Switzerland's Young Boys after the four-time European champions eliminated Ligue 1 leaders Lille on Thursday.

Granada were rewarded for making the last 16 in their first ever European campaign with a tie against Norway's Molde, while Roma coach Paulo Fonseca will be reunited with his old team Shakhtar Donetsk.

United's fellow Premier League teams Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal will face Dinamo Zagreb and Olympiakos respectively. Rangers take on Slavia Prague after dumping out Royal Antwerp 9-5 on aggregate.

SINGLES

WOMEN'S CRICKET SEASON FROM MARCH 11

NEW DELHI: The women's domestic cricket season will begin with a 50-over tourney from March 11, the BCCI has informed its affiliated units. The tourney will be held across six venues — Surat, Rajkot, Jaipur, Indore, Chennai and Bengaluru. The teams will have to assemble by March 4 and will need to have three Covid-19 negative before entering the respective bio-bubbles. Each of the five elite groups will have six teams each, while the plate group has seven. The quarter-finals will be held on March 29, and semi-finals on April 1. The final will be played on April 4.

CAS REDUCE UMAR AKMAL BAN TO 12 MONTHS

KARACHI: Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal will be able to resume his cricket career after the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) reduced his suspension to 12 months and imposed a fine of 42.50 lakh Pakistani Rupees on him for breaching the Anti-Corruption Code. The CAS announced its decision in a consolidated order on the appeals filed by Umar and the PCB. Umar was initially suspended from all cricket activities on February 20 last year for not reporting approaches made to him for spot-fixing in the PSL. On Friday, the PCB said that Umar will now be eligible to reintegrate into competitive cricket subject to deposits of fine, which adds up to ₹19.62 lakh in Indian currency, and undergoing the program of rehabilitation under the PCB Anti-Corruption Code.

YUSUF PATHAN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

NEW DELHI: Out-of-favour India all-rounder Yusuf Pathan, who made a name for himself as a power-hitter, on Friday announced retirement from all forms of cricket, saying time has come “to put a full stop to this innings of my life.” The 38-year-old Pathan was part of the inaugural T20 World Cup-winning Indian team in 2007 and also the one that triumphed in the 2011 ODI World Cup at home.

PIETERSEN TO CAPTAIN ENGLAND LEGENDS

MUMBAI: Former England batsman Kevin Pietersen will lead the England Legends while Khaled Mahmud will captain the Bangladesh Legends in the Unacademy Road Safety World Series, starting in Raipur from March 5. Former cricketers Matthew Hoggard, Owais Shah, Monty Panesar, Nick Crompton are some of the other key members in the England side. The Bangladesh Legends squad comprises players like Nafees Iqbal, Abdur Razaq and Mohammed Rafique.

HENDERSON SIDELINED AFTER SURGERY

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson faces a long spell on the sidelines after undergoing an operation on the groin injury he sustained in last weekend's Merseyside derby loss against Everton. Liverpool has not put a timescale on the midfielder's recovery but said he will be out until at least April in another blow to its fading Premier League title defense.

SWIATEK VS BENCIC IN ADELAIDE FINAL

ADELAIDE: Second seed Belinda Bencic battled for almost three hours before seeing off 16-year-old Coco Gauff in three sets on Friday to reach the final of the Adelaide International. Bencic set up a final showdown against French Open champion Iga Swiatek with her 7-6 (7/2), 6-7 (4/7), 6-2 win. Swiatek had a much easier passage to the final, beating Jill Teichmann 6-3, 6-2.

DISCOVERY BECOMES HOME OF GIRO D'ITALIA

NEW DELHI: Discovery has secured the exclusive global rights to show the Giro d'Italia until at least 2025. The long-term deal means Discovery retains its status as the Giro's multi-platform rights holder, providing Live and uninterrupted coverage of every stage from the year's first Grand Tour. For the Indian audience, Giro d'Italia can be viewed on Eurosport as well as on discovery+ app from 8th — 30th May 2021. AGENCIES