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WANT TO ACT & GET BETTER: KUNAAL
10 VIVACITY

Govt offers to suspend farm laws for 18 months

Centre promises to form joint body to look into demands; unwilling to accept proposal, farmer leaders to revert after internal consultation; next talks on Jan 22

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a major climb down, the Centre has proposed that the three controversial farm laws will be kept in abeyance for a minimum of 18 months and it will form a joint committee to look into other pending demands of the agitating farmers, including repeal and legal guarantee to minimum support price (MSP).

The Government proposed these initiatives in the 10th meeting between the Government and agitating farmers. But farmer leaders did not immediately accept the proposal and said they will revert after their internal consultation on Thursday.

The farmers wanted a complete withdrawal of the laws as a mere suspension of the laws for some period of time will not bring about any change, farmer leaders said on Wednesday after the 10th round of talks concluded. The next round of meetings will be held on January 22.

After the meeting which lasted for five hours, including two breaks, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the Government has proposed to suspend the implementation of the three laws for 1.5 years, during which period a joint committee of representatives from the Government and farmers' sides can discuss all issues related to the farmers' agitation so that an appropriate solution can be arrived at and those protesting on Delhi borders in extremely cold weather return to their homes. During the talks the farmers' unions said they will discuss the Government's proposal in detail and will come for dialogue on January 22. The Minister said the talks were held in a cordial atmosphere despite some "naram-garam" moments (softening and hardening of the stand) and farmers remained adamant on their demand for the repeal of the laws. "I feel that talks are progressing in the right direction and there is a possibility of finding a resolution on January 22," Tomar said. After the meeting, Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ugrahan) president Joginder Singh Ugrahan said, "The Government proposed to suspend the farm laws for one and a half years. We rejected the proposal but since it has come from the Government, we will meet tomorrow and deliberate over it."

Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar, along with Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and Minister of State Som Prakash, addresses the media after the 10th round of meeting with farmer leaders on new farm laws at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

SC irked at bias charge against panel members

Court seeks Govt's response on demand for panel reconstitution

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday expressed strong displeasure over the aspersions cast by some farmers' unions on members of the court-appointed committee to resolve the impasse over new farm laws, saying no adjudicating authority has been given to the panel of experts who are "brilliant minds in the field of agriculture".

The top court said that it has serious reservations that committee members were called names and branded, which has "become a cultural thing now".

A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde said, "You malign people according to public opinion. I am very disappointed and sorry to see the kind opinion which has been appearing in this press" and questioned, "How can you malign them just because they have expressed some views in the past?"

The bench also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian issued notice and sought response from Centre in two weeks on a separate plea of "Kisan Mahapanchayat", a farmers' body from Rajasthan, seeking removal of three remaining members of the apex-court appointed panel and the replacement of Bhupinder Singh Mann, who had recused himself from the panel.

Taking note of submissions of a lawyer that opinions on the panel members have been formed on the basis of media reports about their pro-farm laws views, the bench said, "You people unnecessarily cast aspersions. Can the people expressing their views in some other context, be debarred from the committee?"

Farmer kills self at Tikri border

New Delhi: A farmer who allegedly consumed a poisonous substance at the Tikri border died during treatment at a hospital here on Wednesday, police said.

The deceased has been identified as Jai Bhagwan Rana (42), a resident of Pakasma village in Rohtak district of Haryana. He had consumed Sulphas tablets at the farmers' protest site at Tikri on Tuesday, they said. In a purported suicide note, Rana said he was a small farmer and many peasants have taken to the streets to protest against the farm laws.

Farmers reject police request to hold tractor march on KMP e-way

Parley again today as unions adamant on rally on Delhi's Outer Ring Road on R-Day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has suggested farmers' unions to hold their proposed "Tractor rally" on January 26 on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway, instead of Delhi's busy Outer Ring Road. However, farmers did not agree to the suggestion. Sources said a meeting will be held again on Thursday with farmers regarding the routes for their tractor rally. On Wednesday, senior police officials of the Delhi Police and its counterparts Haryana and Uttar Pradesh police officials met at Vigyan Bhawan to discuss the route and arrangements of the proposed rally on Republic Day.

According to sources, SS Yadav, the Joint Commissioner of Police, Northern Range coordinated the meeting from the Delhi Police with Depender Pathak, Special CP, Intelligence and Sanjay Singh, Special CP, Law and order.

"The farmers unions were suggested by the police officers to take out their rally on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway, but they did not agree. A meeting will be held on Thursday again to dig out a solution," said the sources.

Current jabs no panacea for future Covid strains: Study

Some coronaviruses may evolve to escape recognition by immune system

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Just when the newly-developed vaccines against Covid-19 had given some hopes to the world battling the pandemic, a new study pointed out that current vaccines may not work against future strain of the virus.

It also said that some coronaviruses — the family of viruses which includes the one causing Covid-19 — can evolve to escape recognition by the host immune system.

The study, published in the journal eLife, noted that if the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 which causes Covid-19 evolves in the same way as other pathogens, current vaccines against the virus may become outdated, requiring new ones to be made to match future strains.

"Some coronaviruses are known to reinfect humans, but it is not clear to what extent, this is due to our immune memory fading or antigenic drift," said first author of the study Kathryn Kistler from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in the US.

Currently, at least 8 countries, including India, have begun or granted approval for vaccinating their people against the virus. "We wanted to investigate whether there is any evidence of coronaviruses related to SARS-CoV-2 evolving to evade our immune responses," Kistler said.

When a person is infected by a virus, or vaccinated against it, cells part of their body's immune system produce antibodies that can recognise and bind to unique proteins on the virus' surface known as antigens.

In order to provide immunity against the virus, the immune system relies on being able to "remember" the antigens that relate to a specific virus, the scientists explained.

However, they said in some viruses, such as the seasonal flu, the antigens are likely to change and evolve in a process called antigenic drift, and the immune system may no longer respond to reinfection.

In the current study, the scientists looked at the four seasonal human coronaviruses (HCoVs) which are related to SARS-CoV-2 but typically cause milder symptoms, such as the common cold.

HCoVs, the scientists said, have been circulating in the human population for 20-60 years, meaning their antigens may have faced pressure to evolve against the human immune system.

Vaccination drive fails to gain momentum, Govt concerned

Only 7.86L healthcare staff vaccinated till 5th day of jab drive

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The anti-Covid-19 vaccination drive has failed to pick up the expected pace even after the fifth day when just 1,12,007 healthcare workers received the jab on Wednesday.

A total 7.86 lakh healthcare workers have been vaccinated since January 16 when the anti-Covid jab programme was launched with much fanfare in the country. The Government fears that with such a pace, it will take years to inoculate an estimated 3 crore healthcare and frontline workers that it plans to cover in the first phase.

"On Wednesday, 1,12,007 beneficiaries were vaccinated till 6 pm across 20 States and Union Territories," said Additional Secretary Manohar Agnani at a press conference here. He, however, said that the final report for the day will be complied by late in the night.

Ten cases of adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) — four in Delhi, two in Karnataka, and one each in Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and West Bengal — have required hospitalisation so far, Agnani said.

"Three people were hospitalised after vaccination in Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. All of them have been discharged. Four beneficiaries in Delhi were hospitalised after vaccination. Among them, one is under observation at Rajiv Gandhi Hospital, while three have been discharged. In Karnataka, one was discharged and one is under observation and in West Bengal, one is under observation," said the official.

"There has been no case of serious/severe adverse event attributable to Covid-19 vaccination till date," the official added.

A medic vaccinates a health worker with Covishield vaccine during a countrywide inoculation drive against Covid-19 at Thane Civil Hospital on Wednesday PTI

'Democracy has prevailed', Biden lays out vision to heal US

To sign Paris Climate, reversing the Muslim ban, among 15 orders

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Democracy has prevailed," newly inaugurated US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday in his maiden speech as he called on Americans "to defend the truth and defeat the lies".

Speaking shortly after taking oath as the 46th President of the United States, 78-year-old Biden also pledged to repair America's global alliances, which suffered during his predecessor Donald Trump's four-year regime. "This is America's day... Democracy has prevailed," Biden said, apparently referring to Trump's efforts to deny him victory in the November 3 election won by him. "With unity we can do great things," he said referring to the challenges ahead of him from fighting the coronavirus to addressing racial injustice.

"Unity is the path forward," he asserted, laying out his vision to defeat the pandemic, build back better, and unify and heal the nation. Hours after being sworn in as the 46th US president, Biden would sign 15 executive orders — including rejoining the Paris climate agreement, a 100-day mask mandate and reversing the Muslim ban — undoing some of the major policies of his predecessor Donald Trump.

President Joe Biden, his wife Jill Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband Doug Emhoff arrive at the steps of the US Capitol for the start of the official inauguration ceremonies in Washington on Wednesday AP

Donald Trump skips Biden's inauguration ceremony

Washington: Donald Trump on Wednesday skipped his successor Joe Biden's inauguration and exited the White House for the last time as the US President to board a flight to his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, which will be his permanent home after he failed to win his re-election bid.

Juvenile Justice Board shifts Pari case

Children's Court now to hold hearing

PNS ■ NAYAGARH

The Juvenile Justice Board, Nayagarh, on Wednesday transferred the case of sexual assault and murder of five-year-old girl Pari of Jadupur village in the district to the Nayagarh Children's Court.

The decision was taken as the accused belongs to the age group of 16-18 years. Further hearing of case would be held at Children's Court. The Juvenile Justice Board was earlier adjudicating case.The 17-year-old accused had allegedly sexually assaulted and strangled girl to death on July 14 last year. He then packed the body in a gunny bag and dumped it at a bush near a pond in village, police had said.

'Will try for Kalinga Regiment in Army'

Mohanty urges Odias to join armed forces

Stresses modernisation, tech enhancement in Army

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's Jagatsinghpur-born Chandi Prasad Mohanty, who is to be appointed the Vice-Chief of the Indian Army soon, on Wednesday said he would try to raise a Kalinga Regiment in the Army keeping in view the longstanding demand from Odisha.

Lt Gen Mohanty, who was addressing the cadets of the Sainik School here, appealed to the youths of the State to join the Army in large numbers. "I would call upon one from each village in Odisha to join the armed forces," he said. Mohanty said India has threats from both Pakistan and China and stressed for modernisation and technological advancement of Indian armed forces to deal with it.

"We have to enhance capacity building, infrastructure development, better our weaponry system and also communication and intelligentsia." The Indian armed forces like the Army, Navy and Air Force are not expanding in terms of quantity. Rather, emphasis is being given on infrastructure development and modernisation, he said."China is modernising in a big way and they are also assisting Pakistan to modernise in a big way. Therefore, Indian Army is also carrying out a lot of modernisation and capability enhancement. What is most important is that we are getting tremendous amount of support from our Prime Minister and Defence Minister," he said.

"After I take up my new role, this will be one of my prime responsibilities to carry forward this modernisation and capability development of Indian Army," Mohanty added.

State reports 157 new +ve

- TOTAL NOW 3,33,723
- 270 RECOVER; TOTAL RECOVERIES 3,30,221

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State on Wednesday registered 157 new Covid-19 positive cases in 24 districts and from the State pool, with which the total caseload increased to 3,33,723.

Of the new cases, 93 were reported from quarantine centres and 64 were local contact cases.Sundargarh district recorded the day's highest 30 new cases followed by Puri 20, Sambalpur 18 and Baleswar 12. Besides, two cases were reported from State pool.The number of total active cases in the State stood at 1,717. The cumulative tests were 74,52,020. Meanwhile, 270 more patients recovered on day, taking total recoveries to 3,30,221.

Now, devotees can enter Puri temple sans Covid report

SAROJ KUMAR MISHRA ■ PURI

Devotees can enter the Jagannath Temple here without Covid-19 negative certificates from Thursday. An estimated 30, pilgrims are already waiting in hotels and lodges here without Covid-free certificates to get a chance of temple entry. However, the devotees cannot purchase or partake of Mahaprasad at the Ananda Bazar or any other temple premise to avoid congregations. They would have to simply exit the shrine through the other three doors after darshan of the Lords.

However, if anybody wanting to have the Mahaprasad has to contact the temporary sale counters at the North and South Gates, where the Suar and Mahasuar Nijog, the temple cooks, would supply the offerings to them. The devotees coming from outside Puri would enter the temple through barricades stretched from Market Square.

They have to undergo thermal scanning and wear facemasks and maintain social distancing. Expecting huge footfalls of pilgrims due to the lifting of Covid restriction, police have made elaborate security arrangement in and around the temple. As many as 20 platoons of forces would be deployed.Central Range DIG Asis Singh and Puri Collector Samarth Verma and SP K Vishal Singh on Wednesday and reviewed the security arrangements near the Lions Gate.

Govt directs pvt schools to reduce fees

Relaxation to be made in seven slabs

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a big relief for students and parents, the State Government has directed all aided and unaided private schools to reduce fees in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is to be noted that parents' associations across the State had been demanding reduction of school fees since long following closure of all educational institutions due to the pandemic.

As per a notification issued by the School and Mass Education Department on Tuesday, the relaxation in school fees would be made in seven slabs: 7.5% for the fees ranging between Rs 6,001 and Rs 12,000 per annum, 12% for fees between Rs 12,001 and Rs 24,000, 15% for fees between Rs 24,001 between Rs 48,000, 20% for fees between Rs 48,001 and Rs 72,000, 25% for fees between Rs 72,001 and Rs 1 lakh and 26% for fees remaining above Rs 1 lakh, Besides, the schools cannot charge students for food and transport. Regarding hostel fees, a 30%-waiver would be given. Last year, parents' association's MD Mustaq and Prahallad Rout had filed PILs in the Orissa High Court seeking waiver of fees of private schools due to the pandemic. While the State Government had claimed that it had no power to regulate fees fixed by the private schools, the association argued that the resolution issued by the department concerned on September 23, 1996, which is still in vogue, gives the Government the power to regulate fees being charged by the schools.

Covid 19 stress

Drive kicks off to address kids' grievances

PNS ■ PURI

Children have suffered physically, mentally and educationally during Covid-19. Incidence of child marriage has increased. There is a fear that many poor children may drop out from schools.To listen to the grievances of the children, their service providers and duty-bearers, the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR) launched a three-day " Sisu Samparka Jatra and Grievance Hearing drive" in all the districts across Odisha.

While the OSCPCR inaugurated the drive on Wednesday from Puri in collaboration with the Child Fund and Action Aid, the CWCs were entrusted to organise the same in other districts. OSCPCR Chairperson Sandhyabati Pradhan said the drive would solve various problems of the children and energise the Government line departments and stakeholders to work towards resuming normalcy in the life of the Covid-affected children.

OHRC Member Asim Amitav Das said child rights are a part of human rights. WCD and Mission Shakti advisor Sulata Deo said the Government and the NGOs are doing good work, but everyone should take action at his or her

level to safeguard the rights of the children.State Child Protection Society Manager Pritikanta Panda highlighted the role played by the Government and Childline during Covid-19.

Attack on PCC chief: 3 more held; total arrests four

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

Police on Wednesday arrested three more persons in connection with the recent attack on Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Niranjan Patnaik's vehicle and his PSO Rakesh Singh in Keonjhar district.

The three accused were identified as Deepak Kumar Tarei, Sibananda Dehury and Santosh Naik. The total number of arrests in connection with the incident has now gone up to four. Earlier, the prime accused Sanjay Mohanty was apprehended by the police. A group of miscreants had attacked Patnaik's car near Kashipur under the Town police station Patnaik had escaped unhurt.

After registration of a complaint, the Keonjhar Town Police arrested the prime accused Sanjay Mohanty, who is said to be a local BJP leader.

Soon after Mohanty's arrest, the PCC president suspected a political links behind the incident and lashed out on at the State BJP leaders blaming them for the attack.

In a series of tweets, Patnaik alleged that all the miscreants involved in the incident belong to the BJP Yuva Morcha. "This is a clear case of political vendetta and desperation of the Odisha BJP.

BSF DG meets DGP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

BSF DG Rakesh Asthana, who is on a visit to Odisha, on Wednesday met State DGP Abhay and held discussions regarding various issues.Issues relating to the present Leftwing extremism activities, particularly in the areas where BSF companies are deployed, the progress made towards combating the menace, operational strategy, redeployment of BSF and coordination were discussed. State Police and BSF resolved to work with synergy to combat the LWE menace effectively.

NYCA helps disabled kids, leprosy home inmates

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Niladrivihar Youth & Cultural Association (NYCA) extended a helping hand physically, mentally retarded, hearing, visual impaired children and inhabitants staying in different shelter homes. Hyderabad based multinational company professionals Ranjit Panda and his wife Priyadarshini Panda along with a team of the NYCA led by its president Dr Prakash Chandra Panigrahi, general secretary Biswajit Pattnaik (Silu), members Bata Kushna Panda, Gadadhar Prasad Rath, Prakash Chandra Sahoo, Arjun Dehury and Niharika Gantayat distributed food items and chocolates to the inhabitants of Maa Bharabi Special School of Multiple Disabilities, bedsheets, towels, food items and other daily needs to the inhabitants of the Bibekananda Leprosy Home running under the aegis of Maa Bharabi Club at Narangarh, Malipada under Khordha district.

During the occasion, the leprosy home inhabitants showed their talents and the NYCA members spend some quality time in discussing their needs and problems and encouraged them to return to the mainstream of society.

Adibasi Mela to have hybrid model this yr

SMP launched for event to be held from Jan 26

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

As a milestone in taking the famous Adivasi Mela of Odisha beyond State and national boundaries, the Department of SC and ST Development and Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare have come up with a hybrid model of the fair by converting the challenges of Covid-19 to an opportunity.

The Social Media Plan (SMP) for the purpose was launched by Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra from the Lokseba Bhawan here on Wednesday in the presence of Development Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena and Principal Secretary Ranjana Chopra. Mohapatra said that as a positive response to the unprecedented pandemic, the department has excellently planned the hybrid model. The virtual mode of the Mela will have a marketing platform through which interested people can purchase the tribal products, he added. Mohapatra advised the department to develop a permanent digital marketing platform so that people from different parts of the globe can buy the products throughout the year. Development Commissioner Jena advised to make the marketing platform a sustainable source of rewarding income for tribal people of Odisha. Outlining the SMP, Chopra said, "It will be a comprehensive plan with multiple components.

Dedicated handles on facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Linkedln and YouTube have been created to reach out to more and more people." She added, "Various activities will be undertaken to engage the social media followers and keep them updated on the events of the Odisha Adivasi Mela 2021. The cultural programme will be available on virtual mode. One can also have a virtual visit to Adivasi Museum through the Mela platform."

She further said the Mela would also be held physically from January 26 to February 9 in the Adivasi Exhibition Ground, Bhubaneswar, and, its timing would be from 11 am till 7 pm each day.

Odisha's Mohanty appointed LIC MD

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Another Odia has made it to the top with Siddhartha Mohanty being appointed as Managing Director of the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India. He would serve as the LIC MD with effect from February 1 till his superannuation on June 30, 2023. Mohanty, who is currently the CEO of LIC Housing Finance, would replace TC Suseel Kumar, who would retire as the LIC MD on January 31.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the proposal of the department of financial services for Mohanty's appointment. Prior to joining the LIC Housing Finance, Mohanty was Executive Director in LIC handling the legal department. He had started his career with the LIC as a direct recruit officer in 1985.

On BBSR outskirts

Adulterated sauce, pickle unit unearthed

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In the ongoing drive against food adulteration mafia active in the State, a joint squad of Commissionerate police and Food Safety officials unearthed an adulterated sauce and pickle manufacturing unit at Pahal on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar on Wednesday.

Acting on a tipoff, the joint team conducted a raid at PK Food Product and confiscated the stock of adulterated sauce and pickles. They also seized packaging machines, chemicals, artificial colour, essence and huge quantity of raw materials meant manufacture sauce and pickles."The manufacturing unit was found producing very sub-standard products in unhygienic conditions. They are also using strong chemicals and colours which are beyond permissible level of FSSAI. We are examining the entire process of procurement and preparation of the food articles," said a food safety official.

NKBT holds foundation day fest

Honours eminent persons in city

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Nirmala Kruti Bikash Trust (NKBT) celebrated its 13th foundation day at Saheed Nagar here.The NKBT felicitated 45 persons from different fields including social work and journalism for their commitment to the society during the Covid-19 crisis. NKBT chairman Er Dillip Kumar Pattanayak, a Mechanical Engineer turned dedicated social worker, formed the Trust in 2007 in association with a few service oriented persons and corrected many children with cleft lip. On the occasion, a documentary film on the activities of social works during the Covid-19 was screened. At the beginning of the meeting, inaugural song and Odishi dance were presented by Swostidipa and Tanisha.

Miniature artist hails Biden through his craft

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Ahead of the oath-taking ceremony of US President-elect Joe Biden on Wednesday, noted Bhubaneswar-based miniature artist L Eswar Rao crafted a miniature of Biden inside a glass bottle.

Rao used his craftsmanship to extend his best wishes to Biden. The miniature carried a photo of Biden along with a message reading 'congratulations'. Notably, Biden and Kamala Harris were sworn in as the 46th President and the 49th Vice-President of the United States, respectively, on Wednesday. Kamala Harris has made history as America's first woman and first Black to take the office of Vice-President.

Earlier, Rao has created several miniatures, including an art of Sardar Vallabhai Patel using soap on the National Unity Day in 2018, a church inside a bottle for Christmas in 2019 and a woman's miniature on a pencil nib as a tribute to all women on the occasion of International Women's Day in 2020.

Mittal appointed S'pur University VC

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government on Wednesday appointed eminent academician Professor Sanjiv Mittal as the new Vice-Chancellor of the Sambalpur University.

In exercise of his powers Governor and Chancellor of Universities Prof Ganeshi Lal appointed Prof Mittal as the VC for a period of four years with effect from the date he assumes office. Dr Mittal is presently Professor of University School of Management Studies at the Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi, since 2007 With 29 years of teaching experience, including 13 years as Professor in Management Studies, Prof Mittal has authored eight books. He has contributed many articles in journals of national and international repute. He has conducted workshops on entrepreneurship development and business skills training and export as well as successfully guided 11 research scholars.

'Gopala Rahasya'-fame Rabi Mishra no more

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Eminent Odia actor of the 'Gopala Rahasya' fame, Rabi Mishra, passed away while undergoing treatment at a private hospital here on Wednesday. He had been admitted to the hospital following a cardiac arrest.

Mishra ruled the Odia film and television industries for over two decades. He acted in super-hit films like 'Gopala Rahasya', 'Bhai Hela Bhagari', 'Sakala Tirtha', 'Soubhagyabati', 'Maa Pari Kie Haba', 'Rakhi Bhijigala Aakhi Luha Re', 'Mana Rahiagal Tumari Thare', 'Mukhyamantri', 'Dhauli Express'. Mishra excelled in both positive and negative characters. He was currently playing the father character in a daily soap titled 'He Prabhu' on an entertainment channel.

Soon after reports of his demise, condolence started pouring in for him from different quarters.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said the actor's contribution to Odisha's film and television industries would always be remembered. Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said Mishra's flawless performances in television series had made him popular in every household in the State.

HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

Indiscreet media puts critical issues below cricket

BISWARAJ PATNAIK

India snatched a victory over Australia against odds' is news just fit to occupy sports page or some prominent space below critical news that has to do with the quality of life of the common folks. But in India, cricket steals all top space. Issues like farmers' agitation, corona vaccines and WhatsApp slapping coercive rules are relegated to obscure zones of front or following pages. This very viewpoint is likely to enrage countless people, mostly young, as they are cricket-crazy without ever realising just once that leading nations on the living planet place this colonial game at the seventh place among the ten most popular games in the world: soccer, badminton, field hockey, volleyball, basketball, tennis, cricket, table tennis.

But it is an established truth that the lazy, unemployed, directionless youths of India with all the free times at hand have found the decisive limited-overs cricket shows great fun.

Test series used to come and go; but after the World Cup was instituted, Indians kicked all other delightful, health-boosting community games out of the scene for good. Thus, kabbadi, volleyball and countless inexpensive, gear- or gadget-less sports religiously played by boys and girls, men and women to keep them together and bound have been losing respect since at least three decades. Hockey, fortunately, is the only one among the classical games that sprung back to prominence only in pockets of India, most significantly in Odisha. It is now robustly played and promoted in this eastern State in a manner that most developed nations envy.

Today, Bhubaneswar is known as the most exciting hockey capital of the world. The steel city of Rourkela is coming up with the biggest hockey stadium of India as hockey runs in the systems of the youths there, mostly from the aboriginal tribal communities.

Cricket-crazy Indians are enormous in number. No wonder, huge cricket stadiums get filled instantly when decisive limited-over matches are played. Routinely therefore, corporates from all over the globe have found it easy to place commercial ads during cricket seasons in India and the cricket controlling outfit called the BCCI easily scoops incalculable amounts of money from all quarters -- against ticket sales, as well as innumerable global corporates buying ad spaces and time on television and installing physical displays. Consequently, cricketers, mostly school or university dropouts, have turned millionaires by having a share in the loot. There, of course, is no reason why anyone should blame the cricket players for making money.

But that they are considered demigods is pure sacrilege. The Government has no control over the money making, splurging, siphoning or misappropriating huge wealth involved in the most popular game of India.

Incidentally, the controlling body BCCI, still a Madras-based non-profit organisation expected only to do social work is using all sorts of tricks to keep money for itself after paying off the promised dues to players. Because of the wagonloads of money the game makes for the BCCI, even political stalwarts like Sharad Pawar too fight elections to bear office at the stinking rich outfit.

Corporate giants, fixers, crooks and rascals masquerading as saints have grabbed positions of authority only to have a great time. The BCCI, an NGO, is the richest or the second richest sports organisation in the world today. They donate nothing for the poor or the disadvantaged even after left with piles of money after spending generously for the promotion of cricket in the country or elsewhere.

So, all the beautiful, culturally-linked games of India are only part of history today. Sensible parents who grew up amid the folk games of yore do not seem to suffer at the loss. If prodded or pecked, they say, without remorse, 'today's children are smart and omniscient because of the smartphone and internet; and they are doing what's good for them'.

Thus, cricket killed all other games in India including soccer and volleyball. Cricketing heroes, therefore, became filthy rich, the majority of them heartlessly greedy. Late Dhyanchand, the unforgettable hockey wizard, on whose birthday India observes the National Sports Day, was ignored when it came to bestowing upon a sports legend the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award specifically meant for exemplary contribution and sacrifice in enriching the life and culture of India. Sports were never in the domain of consideration for Bharat Ratna.

The Congress-led UPA Government, imagining a Bharat Ratna given to a cricket master would garner all youth votes to ensure election victories, modified the hitherto non-negotiable parameters and yardsticks for the most coveted award to accommodate Sachin Tendulkar as the recipient.

Sachin by then had been in news as an import tax evader. By persuading BJP leaders, he got a tax waiver for importing a free Ferrari car gifted by the FIAT company only because he was then the automobile giant's brand ambassador for the 'Palio S10' model in India.

A PIL with the Delhi High Court yielded results and the tax waiver by the executive was set aside. Eventually, the FIAT company cleared the dues and dropped Tendulkar. Around that time, Sachin was earning billions from cricket and more from commercial endorsements. They also made him an Air Force officer and subsequently a Rajya Sabha member who wasted public money for he hardly attended sessions.

Similarly, when Dhoni became a big player and minted money like he could never have dreamed, he too never donated respectably for any worthy cause. Only last year when the corona pandemic moved even street-level ordinary people to donate for the distressed, Dhoni coughed out only a meagre one lakh rupee.

Movie stars earning much less gave away crores of rupees to help the distressed and the helpless millions. Countless nondescript traders, pensioners and small business people did donate generously. But the cricket community, by and large, displayed monumental greed and callousness and remained smug.The recent test series victory in Australia has Indians going crazy with joy. They make stories of how most wonderful the Indian cricket team is. The media too, obviously run by similar cricket-mad people, have given the mundane cricket victory most space. Leading dailies, known for scruples and discretion, have shockingly carried the cricket story so boldly as to offend any sensible Indian.

Disturbing issues like the threat of tractor-driven agitation by farmers, the related Supreme Court rulings, the corona vaccine dilemma, the private school fees fixation and the questionable as well as coercive new WhatsApp rules have not been given proper space and time despite the fact that they affect the lives of the common folks. Thus, the mainstream media has gone insane.

The social media, though, is much more restrained and their coverage is a lot more sensible with contentious and critical issues occupying big space. Cricket occupies space down below, and rightly so.

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Ex-block chairman shot dead in Ganjam

Locals allege political link behind murder

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Close on the heels of the murder of a BJP leader and his associate in Mahanga in Cuttack district, a former Chairman of Beguniapada block under the Kodala police station in Ganjam district was shot dead by unidentified miscreants in broad daylight on Wednesday. The car-borne miscreants reportedly opened fire at Debaraj Sahoo at Sumandal Chhak from a close range while he was having tea at a shop between 9 am and 9.30 am. Immediately after committing the crime, the assailants sped away from the spot towards Khallikote.

Sahoo succumbed to the bullet injuries on the spot. Later, Ganjam Superintendent of Police Brijesh Kumar Rai rushed to the spot along with other senior police officials to the spot. It is suspected that the incident was fallout of old enmity.However locals alleged that it's a well-planned murder. As the panchayat elections are round the corner, Sahoo might have been eliminated.

Sahoo was the Block Chairman between 2007 and 2012 and continued to be active in politics. Hence, a murder conspiracy might have been hatched against him to settle political scores, alleged a local. "It is not yet clear whether it's a political murder or a case of business rivalry.

We have already got some evidence against the miscreants. We will nab them soon," said a police official. Notably, Sahu had a construction material business.The incident has triggered tension in the area.

Covid vaccination launched in six Keonjhar centres

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

Keonjhar Collector Ashish Thackre inaugurated the vaccinnation programme for the district at the District Headquarters Hospital on January 17.

Collector Thackre told that people were living in a state of uncertainty and anxiety for the last nine months and with the rollout of the vaccination drive, every one now felt a sense of security. Chief District Medical Officer Dr Ashok Kumar Dash informed that 573 health workers would be administered vaccine at 6 centers on the inaugural day and later, a total of 12,509 health workers and ICDS staff working in the district would covered phase wise.

Veenapani Barik, house keeping staff of the DHH was administered the inaugural vaccination. ADM(Revenue)Santosh Kumar Nayak , DPM,NHMDilip Kumar Dube, Consultant ,WHO Dr Santosh Sahu, DPRO Sanjiv Barik and others were present among others.

In Bargarh

ASHA Sathis submit memo against apathy

PNS ■ BARGARH

The ASHA Sathis submitted a memorandom at the district Collectorate, Bargarh, on Tuesday alleging apathy against them. They alleged that though the Central Government was giving them various facilities, they were deprived of the same due to apathy by the State Government.

In absence of district Collector Jyoti Ranjan Pradhan, they met Additional District Collector Mirdha Toppo and handed over the memorandum to him. According to the Central Government, Rs 6,000 per month, uniforms, skill training, promotion and other Government benefits are given to the ASHA Sathis.

INBRIEF

TRAFFIC AWARENESS DRIVE IN BRAHMAPUR

Brahmapur: A rally was organised on traffic awareness by the Lions Club of Brahmapur Galaxy under the leadership of its members Dharma Rao, HK Misra, LN Mohanty, Ratikant Sadangi. Members of the Walkers' Club and different NGOs participated with placards. RTO Bikas Choudhury, MVI Siba Sankar Choudhury, Traffic IIC Sunil Behera, additional RTO K Venkatesh, DIPRO RK Behera urged he public to observe traffic rules to save lives. Staffs of the Traffic Thana and different other police stations coordinated the event.

JMFC COURT BUILDING OPENED AT MOHANA

Paralakhemundi: Justice Sanjib Kuamr Senapati of the Orissa High Court inaugurated the new JMFC Court building at Mohana in Gajapati district recently. The building has all the latest facilities. Distrcit Judge Biswajit Das and district Collector Anupam Saha had earlier a number of times taken stock of the building's construction. Mohana being a backward area, the locals are happy that they won't have to travel far to get justice.

P'KHEMUNDI GIRL PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL DEBATE

Paralakhemundi: Priyanka Sahu, a student of the Centurion Public School here, participated in the virtual session of the National Women Parliament debate on January 13 and 14. Eminent people from diverse fields like sports, media, social sectors, art and culture deliberated on various women-centric issues. Ritu Chhabaria, Rajeshawar Birla, Sanpeet Bhatia Malliak Sarabhai Medha Patekar, Shivani and Shatabdi Roy were prominent among those who participated in the debate.

In Brahmapur

BJD youths, students congratulate Naveen

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The members of the BJD's youths and student wings held a meeting to congratulate party president Naveen Patnaik for being choosen as the number one Chief Minister of the country in a survey. The meeting held at Ramlingeshwar Entertainment Park was presided over by BYJD district president Ajit Kumar Panda and graced by MLA Bikram Kumar Panda. The MLA advised to maintain a close relationship with people as per the advice of the Chief Minister. The statue of Biju Patnaik was also garlanded on the occasion. Among others, Subash Moharana, Sanjit Panigrahi, Tambunath Panda, Durga Panda, Tejeshwar Swami, Sudhakar Swami, Laxmipriya Padhi, Udhab Behera, Sanghamitra Dalei, T Gopi, Surendra Moharana, Laxmi Sethi, Appa Rao and Chitrasena Mohapatra were present

NDRF Battalion Mundali holds Raising Day

Host of events held

PNS ■ ATHAGARH

The 03 Battalion NDRF Mundali, Cuttack celebrated the 16th National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Raising Day at its unit campus. On the auspicious occasion, a grand parade was organised under the able command of Insp/Exe Vinit Prabhakar and second in command Insp/Exe S K Bhoi. Commandant of 03rd BN NDRF Jacob Kispotta was the chef guest, who inspected the parade. In his speech, he highlighted the role of NDRF. He told about the big role of 03 Bn NDRF Mundali in the year 2020 during the cyclone "Amphan" in Odisha and West Bengal, when pandemic Covid-19 spread over the world.

"After completion of operation 80 personnel of our battalion were found Covid positive but our heroes had fought against Covid and returned as covid warriors," said Kispotta.

A prize distribution for the winners of annual sports competition for several games was held on the occasion.

Vedanta's first vaccination at J'suguda

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

The Vedanta Aluminium rolled out a Covid Vaccination programme for its healthcare staffs at Jharsuguda on Tuesday.

Rahul Sharma, Dy. CEO, Aluminium Business, Vedanta said that under Chief Minister's visionary leadership, the State has been at the forefront of combating the pandemic. "The safety and health of our employees and business partners is our foremost priority. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, we have lent extensive support to the State Government, district administrations of Jharsuguda and Kalahandi and the local communities, reaching out to more than 10 lakh people in the process. We remain committed to the fight against Covid and keep our employees and communities safe." One lakh personal protective equipments (PPEs) were provided to the State Government, he added.

The Vedanta's hospital at Lanjigarh supported the district administration and offered telemedicine facility alongside a 24X7 helpline to address concerns. The hospital continues to serve about 7,000 patients per month from the community.

Locals hold stir before Ramco plant

PNS ■ JAJPUR

Locals of Dharamsala block and Anti-Unemployment Manch members have been sitting in a dharna before the Ramco Cement factory in Jajpur district demanding fulfilment of their various demands. The locals alleged that the Ramco plant was not providing any employment opportunities to the local youths. Besides, it is not taking up any measures to combat pollution caused by the factory and is grabbing private and Government land in the area. The 300 agitators, consisting men and women prevented the employees from entering the factory by locking the gates. Getting information, the Dharamsala and Kuakhia police IIC s rushed to spot and tried to pacify the protestors by assuring them to take up their demands with concerned authorities and factory management. Butlocals warned that they would agitate indefinitely till all demands are met.

--Airport demand--

Postcard signature drive in Brahmapur begins

KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAPUR

Two days after a human chain rally conducted by the Forum for Development in the city for establishment of a domestic and cargo airport at Brahmapur, the Joint Action Committee (JAC) as scheduled earlier started its first phase of postcard signature campaign in front of the Khallikote Autonomous College here on Tuesday for onward transmission to the State CM. Hundreds of students, teachers and public signed the postcard voluntarily justifying the demand for a domestic and cargo airport at Brahmapur soon. The campaign received tremendous response from the public, claimed convener of JAC Rajendra Panda.The JAC consisting of members from two socio-cultural organizations, namely, the Manav Adhikar Surakshya Manch and the Ganjam Zilla Vikash Manch organised the drive in which the Ganjam Zilla Vikash Manch president and convener of JAC Rajendra Kumar Panda and MASM convener lawyer Abani Kumar Gaya were present and led the campaign. Mention may be made here that, earlier the JAC in its meeting held on last Sunday

threatened to go for "Brahmapur Bandh" if the Government does not consider its proposal for establishment of an airport in the city at the earliest.

The JAC had expressed its unhappiness over the lackadaisical attitude of both the Union and State Governments towards the long standing and genuine demand of the people of Ganjam district in general and silk city in particular, despite agitations and protests by the public over the years. As per the CDP approved by the BDA, an 8sq km land has reportedly been identified and kept reserved at Sithalapalli under Lakshmipur Mouza on the outskirts of Brahmapur which can be used for establishment of a domestic airport, sources said. Still the State Government has sat over the proposal and yet to send its recommendations to the Union Government in public interest, the JAC alleged. The JAC had also in its earlier meeting expressed its strong resentment over silence of the elected representatives of the district on the matter.

The JAC is going to hold similar such postcard signature campaign in different strategic and crowded places of the city in phases in favour of their demand, its leaders told. The members of JAC are going to conduct their second phase of postcard signature campaign in front of MKCG Medical College Ground Square on January 21 and thereafter at City's most crowded Girija Square on January 24.

Cats poisoned to death, plaint against neighbour

PNS ■ CUTTACK

An animal lover has approached the police seeking action against her neighbour after her three pet cats were allegedly poisoned to death at her residence.

A complaint has been lodged in this regard by Nilima Dalai, a resident of Mugabhanga, at the Cuttack Sadar police station on Tuesday sting that her cats were brutally killed by her neighbour Dilip Dalai in her absence at her house. "When I and my husband had been outside for some work, our neighbour Dilip Dalai alias Budha, who is an antisocial person, offered poisoned food to my domestic animals that resulted in death of my three cats," Nilima alleged.

The accused killed the pets over past grudges, she stated.

"Earlier, the accused had threatened my mother-in-law that he will kill our pets by poisoning them," she mentioned in the complaint. Since the Central and State Governments have framed the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Nirmala has sought action against the accused under various sections of the legislation.

'Give job or pay ₹6K-a-month allowance'

INTUC holds demo, submits memo for jobless youths

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Led by its president Satyabrata Nayak, the State Youth INTUC held a dharna in front of the ADM Office, Bhubaneswar pressing for a seven-point charter of demands. The agitators submitted a memorandum to the Governor through ADM, Bhubaneswar. The demands included job to all unemployed youths or unemployment allowance of Rs 6,000 per month; job and compensation to those who lost employment due to Covid -19 pandemic; rollback of the four Labour Codes and three farm laws; no privatization of PSUs; 80 per cent reservation in employment to local youths in private sector; free Covid vaccine for all; recruitment tests in Odia and use of Odia in official correspondences in Government offices. Former

MP and INTUC national vice president and State unit president Dr Rama Chandra Khuntia, Jatni MLA Suresh Kumar Routray, INTUC general secretary Kishore Jena, Congress leader Sibananda Ray, Jaya Krushna Malia, Shyam Sundar Mohanty, Prasant Mohapatra, Pranati Mishra, Padmakar Guru, Biswajit Das, Priyabrata Nayak and Sukumar Deo are participated.

We can build healthy environment if we like

SUBHANARAYAN SATAPATHY

Naturalist David Attenborough says, "People must feel that the natural world is important and valuable and beautiful and wonderful and an amazement and a pleasure."Yes, people feel it when they realize the natural resources surrounding us are protecting us, giving us every opportunity to live and enjoy. We know that natural resources are used to make food, fuel and raw materials.

All of the food that people eat comes from plants or animals. Natural resources such as coal, natural gas and oil provide heat, light and power. Today, about 80 percent of the world's energy consumption is sustained by the extraction of fossil fuels, which consists of oil, coal and gas.

Another nonrenewable resource that is exploited by humans is subsoil minerals such as precious metals that are mainly used in the production of industrial commodities. Think how we can live without natural resources and energy which have been generated from these resources. Rather than protecting and preserving the natural environment and its resources, people are extracting it more and more day by day. Still nature has no objection. Though nature sustained but we should not forget that it is impossible to live here in absence nature.

If we expand our township by cutting down forests, curtailing natural establishments, then our living span will be limited and one day our existence from the world will definitely disappear. If we continue the process, we should understand that we are devastating our residence. If we give attention towards preservation of natural resources, then existence of human and other creatures on world will be long. It should be remembered that the patience of nature is not its weakness rather it is our drawback that we are moving towards an artificial world.

Nature's preservation or protection is not a symbolic or emotional challenge but it was our traditional practice since time immemorial. So comparatively planting of trees shall be more than cutting of trees. There should be limited consumption of natural resources and rather they should be preserved for future for emergency use.

We are responsible for incidence of natural disasters like cyclone, earthquake and flood. But we do not stop over exploiting natural resources that leads to these crisis. Rally, awareness, orientation , capacity building are a part of protection of natural resources. Repeatedly, Blue, White, Green revolution should be undertaken with participation of community by forming and strengthening the Self Help Groups, Farmers Interest Groups, Common Interest Groups thereby conserving the environment.

Goal on environment protection of sustainable development is one of the mandates of every nation. Natural environment can be protected and preserved if the community formulates its protection plan with their involvement and participation at each level.Now people came out of lockdown and shutdown imposed to protect from the infections of Coronavirus. At that time, people experienced pure oxygen, water, air and environment which are healthy for all living beings. In present unlock process, again society is turning towards a polluted environment.

Then what did we learn from the pandemic? We can construct a world with full of natural resources for healthy living. We can make or mar. Truly, David Attenborough also says "It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living."

NTPC camp distributes clothes

PNS ■ TALCHER

The NTPC CSR has a policy to encourage donation of reusable cloths for distribution to needy people. As part of this policy, the CSR department of Talcher Thermal conducted a camp at Ghatasahi of Tikerpada.

Group General Manager DN Tiwari and Sagarika Ladies Club president Anju Tiwari distributed the clothes to the poor and needy prople.

Among others, AGM HR Charanjit Kumar and other members of HR department and members of Sagarika Ladies Club were present. Ward Member Dipak Behera and other people expressed there gratitude for conducting such a camp in the area of forest and hills to encourage the inhabitants. He also expressed his desire to have more such camps for the benefit of poor and needy people.

PM releases ₹2,691 cr to 6.1L to help build houses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stressing that ownership rights were being given to women, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday released a financial assistance of around ₹2,691 crore to 6.1 lakh beneficiaries in Uttar Pradesh under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G).

"Owning a house gives confidence," the Prime Minister said and pointed out that under the scheme two crore houses have been built in the rural areas.

Referring to the progress of housing scheme in UP, he said "this shows UP Government is active" and under BJP Government "UP ko nayi pehchaan aur nayi udaan mili hai".

Assembly polls are due in UP, electorally the most important State in the country, next year with the political scene already heating up. BJP President JP Nadda is on a two-day tour of the state from Thursday.

Modi said expressways in the state would be speeded up and completed soon.

The Modi-Government has promised 'housing for all' by 2022 under PMAY scheme.

Union Rural Development Minister Narendra Tomar and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath were also present at the launch, which was held via video conference.

The assistance would include the release of a first installment to 5.30 lakh beneficiaries, and a second installment to 80,000 beneficiaries who have already availed the first installment under PMAY-G.

"In the past few years, around 2 crore houses have been built in rural areas alone," Modi said during the launch.

"Under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, keys of 1.25 crore houses have been handed over to people. Around ₹1.50 lakh crore has been given by the Central Government alone, to build these houses," he said.

The Prime Minister compared these figures with that of the Opposition's, and said that people of Uttar Pradesh will never forgive the previous Governments for their wrong policies.

"I am talking about Uttarakhand Pradesh especially, the poor didn't believe that the Government can help them in constructing a house," he added. "The previous Awaas schemes, the kind of houses built under them were not hidden from anyone."

The Prime Minister said under the housing scheme his government has made special emphasis on giving ownership of houses to women.

PMAY-G is an extension of the Indira Awas, which was launched by the Congress Government in the 1980s. It gave ₹70,000 as cash incentives to rural families in need of pucca homes.

Modi's PMAY has increased the amount to Rs 1.2 lakh per house in plain areas and ₹1.3 lakh in hilly or remote areas. Each house needs to be at least 270 sqft in size.

Popularly known as the "housing for all" mission, through the scheme, the government aims to subsidise the construction of 2.95 crore rural houses and 1.2 urban houses by 2022. So far, 1.26 crore houses have been built across the country under the scheme, according to a release by the Prime Minister's Office.

Leakage of secret military operations treason: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday upped the ante on Centre and journalist Arnab Goswami for his explosive WhatsApp chats saying the leakage of secret military operations was treason and those who were party to the act deserved no mercy and must be punished.

Led by former Defence Minister AK Antony, the Congress demanded an enquiry to determine the source of the leak and whether the leak compromised the Balakot operations. Antony was joined by former home minister Sushil Kumar Shinde, former external affairs minister Salman Khurshid and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad

The attack on Centre and Goswami comes a day after former party chief Rahul Gandhi termed the leakage a criminal act and action to be taken with utmost importance. Rahul's sibling and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi too took to social media to express her disappointment the way Goverment is handling the current defence related leakage and said how can the Modi government remain a mute spectator in this criminal act when lives of nation's brave soldiers were lost in the Pulwama attack.

Expressing his shock on Goswami's remarks to ex-BARC chief Partho Dasgupta three days before the IAF strike in Balakot that "something big is going to happen", Antony said leaking official secret is a crime but leaking information on military operations was an anti national act and those involved must be punished.

Antony also said only four to five civilians in the top echelons of the government had the Balakot strike information and "someone from among them has leaked it."

"Having worked with the military people I am sure no one from the military could ever leak such information," the former defence minister said.

"One of the top five civilians in the government is suspect. It has to be enquired immediately on war footing as to who that person is. Whoever is responsible for the leakage must be punished for treason and this journalist who was in possession of sensitive military operations he has to be punished. The Government must order a proper enquiry. Whoever is responsible, whoever is party to the leakage of this sensitive military operation deserves no mercy. He has to be punished," said Antony.

Shinde said that "leaking of official secret is a criminal act but leaking of official secret about military operation, a national security matter, that too sensitive military operations especially a military strike is treason, anti national."

It is not just criminal action it is anti national activity, said Antony. He said only three or four or five ministers and officials could have known of the operation.

ED arrests founder and chairman of Mantena Constructions in PMLA case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday said it has arrested Srinivas Raju Mantena, founder and chairman of Mantena Constructions and his associate Aditya Tripathi of Arni Infra who is a resident of Bhopal under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

They are accused in the money laundering investigation into the e-Tender Scam in Madhya Pradesh where a large number of infrastructure companies, mostly based in Hyderabad, have conspired with few senior Government officials and IT service providers of MPSEDC to tamper the eTenders and to illegally obtain large value contracts.

The accused were produced before the PMLA Court, Bhopal and have been remanded to judicial custody till February 3, officials said.

The ED had initiated investigation based on the EOW, Bhopal FIR No 12/2019 dated April 10, 2019, where in Max Mantena Micro JV Hyderabad and GVPR Engineers Ltd., Hyderabad are named as the main beneficiaries of this scam.

As per the FIR, the MP e-Procurement Portal is managed by MPSEDC and Antares Systems Limited, Bangalore and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). They are given a contract for 5 years for the maintenance and operation of the said portal.

EOW, Bhopal has already filed a preliminary chargesheet and it has been established from the IP access logs that Osmo IT Solutions Pvt Limited of Vinay Choudhary and Varun Chathurvedi had misused the login credentials provided by Antares and had illegally accessed and tampered the e-tenders and changed the bid values of certain companies to make them L1, the ED said in a statement.

"In return they had taken illegal gratification from the bidding companies. Max Mantena JV Hyderabad had illegally won the tender No. 10030 worth ₹1,030 crore in this fashion. There are largenumber of other tenders which are also under scrutiny and are suspected to have been won by using the same modus operandi," it said.

During the investigation under PMLA, search operations were conducted in Hyderabad, Bhopal and Bangalore at more than 20 locations at the residence and office premises connected with Mantena Constructions, Max Infra, GVPR Engineers, Arni Infra, Osmo IT Solutions and Antares and large amount of incriminating documents and digital devices were seized.

Mantena group has seen a big spurt in successful bids in the last few years either directly or in association with other Hyderabad-based companies, it said.

Investigation conducted so far revealed that Srinivas Raju Mantena, has played a crucial role in the entire scam. With the assistance of his friend Aditya Tripathi he set up a front entity Arni Infra in Bhopal and used it to route funds for hawala activities.

Centre stresses upon need for people-friendly, safe transport

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday stressed upon the need for making the public transport people friendly, safe, affordable, accessible, cost effective and pollution free. Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said there is a need of implementing the Intelligent Transport System (ITS) in the operation as well as the National Common Mobility Card in order to make its operation fully digitised and efficient.

Addressing the 40th Meeting of Transport Development Council last evening, Gadkari said that States must increasingly adopt the alternative fuels in the operation of busses and stressed the use of CNG, LNG, Electric vehicles and ethanol blended fuels.

Transport Ministers from several states including Assam, Aandhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Goa, Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram participated in the meeting, along with their Transport Secretaries and Transport Commissioners.

Gadkari assured the states of his full support and cooperation in their endeavours to make public transport modern and efficient gave the example of the model of Transport for London. He said that state must avail all the schemes of central government such as FAME-II to gradually shift to electric vehicles as their cost would come down drastically in near future.

The Union Transport minister also stressed upon the need of innovation by the states and the need for improving the quality of buses and the public transport so that peoples are attracted to avail their services by shunning the personal vehicles.

Union Minister of State for RTH Gen (Retd) Dr V K Singh stressed upon the adoption of alternative fuels such as CNG, LNG and ethanol etc. which will not only reduce the vehicular pollution but would also save the precious forex.

Bird flu cases on rise in six of 12 afflicted States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Avian influenza continues to spread among poultry in six of the 12 afflicted States, where culling and containment measures are on. According to the Ministry of Animal Husbandry, avian influenza for poultry birds has been confirmed in six States - Kerala, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Punjab. The disease has been confirmed in crow, migratory and wild birds in 10 states which include Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan and Punjab.

In a statement, the ministry said that samples taken from two poultry farms and a dead crow in Punjab's Mohali district, which reported the state's first bird flu case, tested positive for the influenza on Wednesday. Reports of the samples from the farms and the crow were received on Wednesday, while for the first case, the report of samples taken from a dead bar-headed goose was received on Tuesday. Samples were taken from two poultry farms at Behra village in Mohali district's Dera Bassi and were sent to NIHSAD for confirmation on January 15 after the NRDDL stated them as suspected to be bird flu positive.

According to the ministry, the disease has been confirmed in Crow in SAS Nagar and Pinjore and Panchkula in Punjab.

"Control and Containment Operations are going on in the affected epicentres of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Haryana. The central team formed for monitoring the situation in the affected areas of the country has visited Satara, Latur, Parbhani and Beed districts of Maharashtra to monitor the epicenters of AI outbreak and conducting epidemiological studies," the ministry said.

Avian flu has significant economic impact. When chicken prices crash, they tend to bring down maize prices too, hurting farm incomes.Maize is a major feed used for poultry.

The poultry industry consumes about 14 million tonne of corn annually.

All the States are reporting to the Department on daily basis regarding the control measures adopted by the States/UTs based on the Revised Action Plan for Preparedness, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza 2021.

Bronze statue of seated Mahatma at Parliament complex relocated

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The space in front of the statue has been a preferred location for the Opposition lawmakers to protest against the Government policies

The iconic bronze statue of a seated Mahatma Gandhi at the Parliament complex was on Wednesday relocated from its place facing the main gate to a space near Gate number 3, to make space for the ongoing construction of the new Parliament building.

The 16 feet high bronze statue of a seated Bapu has been a constant and most preferable site of protests by opposition leaders to protest against the Government's policies. Sculpted by Ram Sutar, the statue was unveiled on Gandhi's birth anniversary in 1993 by then President Shanker Dayal Sharma.

Initial plan was to do so during the one-month gap between the first and the second part of Budget Session that begins on Jan 29

The space in front of the statue has been a preferred location for the Opposition lawmakers to protest against the government policies and proposed laws. During the last monsoon session, some Opposition lawmakers camped overnight in front of the statue to protest against the hurried passage of the farm bills.

Officials added the Gandhi statue is eventually planned to installed just outside the current Parliament building, where that of late former Union home minister Govind Ballabh Pant currently stands. Pant's statue is planned to be shifted to New Delhi Pant Marg named after him.

Maratha quota: SC to decide on Feb 5 schedule of hearing pleas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it would decide on February 5 the schedule of hearing on the pleas pertaining to the 2018 Maharashtra law granting reservation to Marathas in education and jobs after the state government said a case of this nature be heard once physical hearing commences.

The apex court is presently hearing matters through video-conferencing since March last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan was told by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, who was appearing for Maharashtra, that the state is requesting for an adjournment and the matter be heard in March.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

ई–निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

पत्र सं.–डब्ल्यू बी-74 डब्ल्यू-0/कार्य/डेगाना
दिनांक 20.01.2021

मंडल रेल प्रबन्धक, इंजीनियरिंग, उत्तर पश्चिम रेलवे, जोधपुर द्वारा भारत के राष्ट्रपति के लिये एवं उनकी ओर से ई–निविदा के माध्यम से प्रचलित नियमों के अन्तर्गत निर्धारित प्रपत्रों में निविदा निम्न कार्यों के लिए क्रमानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है– **ई–निविदा सूचना सं0 2020-21 : 84; कार्य का नाम व स्थान:** जोधपुर मंडल में विभिन्न मानव सहित समपार फाटकों पर टॉयलेट व पानी की सुविधा उपलब्ध करवाने का कार्य। **अनुमानित लागत रुपये : 1,12,92,720.23; बयाने की राशि रुपये: 0.00.** निविदा सूचना संख्या **2020-21/ 84** निविदा प्रस्तुत करने की तिथि **10.02.2021** को **15.00** बजे तक है। वेबसाईट का विवरण जहां पर ई–निविदा देखी व भरी जा सकती है- **www.ireps.gov.in** 23-AM/21

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Regd. Off.: 910, Chiranjiv Tower-43, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019
Phone: 011-26441015-18,
E-mail: complianceofficer@perfectpac.com
Website: www.perfectpac.com

NOTICE OF BOARD MEETING

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 that the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on **Thursday, January 28, 2021,** *inter-alia*, to consider and approve the Unaudited Financial Results of the Company for the quarter and nine months ended December 31, 2020 (the "Financial Results").

A copy of this Notice and Financial Results shall also be available at the Company's website www.perfectpac.com and the website of the Stock Exchanges BSE: www.bseindia.com and CSE: www.cse-india.com.

For **Perfectpac Limited**
Shefali Chauhan
Company Secretary

Place : New Delhi
Date : 20.01.2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

ANITA

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Anita D/o Rambir** R/o H.No. 60 Gali No. 3 Sainik Vihar, Mohan Garden, Ranhola, Delhi has been missing/ kidnapped since 13.11.2020 from the area of P.S. Ranhola, Delhi. In this regard, a case **FIR No. 949/20 u/s 363 IPC Dated 13.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. Ranhola, Delhi.** The description of the missing girl are as under.

Age: 17 Years, **Complexion:** Fair, **Height:** 5', **Face**: Long, **ID:** A mole on lips, **Wearing**: Green colour suit-salwar, cream colour sweater and red colour sleepers in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/kidnapped girl then please inform P.S. Ranhola, Delhi at following Tel No./ e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: http://cbi.nic.in, providing clue about the missing girl.

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639

Sd/- SHO
PS: Ranhola, Delhi
Ph.: 011-28363001

DP/541/OD/2020

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Mastana, S/o Anand Pal, R/o:** H. No. A/22, Bunker Colony, Ashok Vihar, Phase IV, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 426/19 U/s 302/201/34 IPC & 25/27 Arms Act,** registered at P.S. Bharat Nagar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued (unexecuted), stating that the said **Mastana** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Mastana** has absconded (or is concealing him self to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proceeding u/s 82 Cr.P.C. has been initiated in this case. Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Mastana** accused of **FIR No. 426/19 U/s 302/201/34 IPC & 25/27 Arms Act,** P.S. Bharat Nagar, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer said complaint on or before **09.03.2021.**

By Order
Sh. Babru Bhan
Addl. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate,
(North West) Room No. 101
Ist Floor, Rohini Courts, New Delhi

DP/616/NW/2021

Army urges veterans not to put on uniform, medals during political rallies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Army said there needs to be awareness among the fraternity of ex-servicemen with regard to provisions of wearing of uniforms by non-effective personnel

In the backdrop of some veterans attending the ongoing farmers agitation in Army uniform, the Army has issued an advisory asking them not put on uniform or medals in political rallies. The advisory also said donning the uniform or medals in against the rules.

The advisory was issued recently to the Kendriya Sainik Board wherein various sections of the Army Act were enumerated to urge the veterans to refrain from attending the political functions in uniform. The caution was sent out after some veterans attended the agitation at the Singhu and Tikri borders of the national capital, sources said here on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the local commanders were also sensitising the serving troops especially from Punjab about the ongoing agitation and instructed that they cannot be part of any protest while in service.

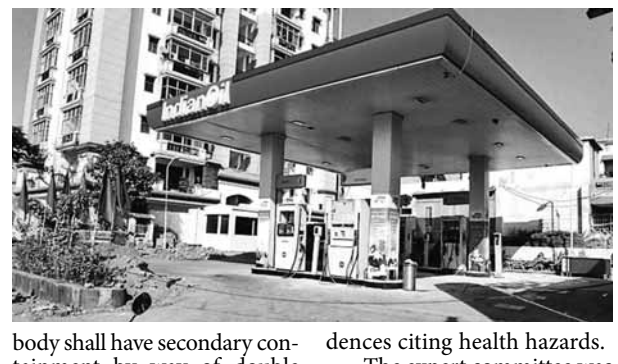
This step was taken after some video clips surfaced showing some serving jawans raising banners and protesting in the farmers' rallies some parts of north India. Officials also said the erring soldiers will be dealt with as per rules. These incidents took place when the soldiers had gone home on leave.

As regards veterans, they said the Army uniform can only be worn during official functions and not while attending a public gathering or protests.

The Army said there needs to be awareness among the fraternity of ex-servicemen with regard to provisions of wearing of uniforms by non-effective personnel.

New petrol pumps to be at least 50 m away from water bodies, says CPCB

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI



Almost a year after directing oil companies to ensure fuel stations are at least 50 metres away from schools, hospitals and residential areas, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has now asked them to maintain similar distance from water bodies too. The move is aimed at protecting the water bodies from getting any possible contamination due to seepage of diesel or petrol, if any.

The draft guidelines come in the backdrop of opposition by residents and environmentalists in Haryana over the Government's plan to allot 15,000 square metres of forest land in Chakkarpur village to Indian Oil Corporation to set up a fuel station, which they alleged would contaminate a nearby water channel in the fragile area.

The CPCB draft guidelines said that all the surface water bodies irrespective of utility shall be protected from any possible contamination. "These include lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, wetland, sea and any other. Retail outlets shall not be located within a distance of 50 metres from the nearest point of water bodies. In case of streams and rivers, the distance shall be considered from flood plain."

As a preventive measure, retail outlets coming within 50 meter to 100 metre from the nearest point of surface water body shall have secondary containment by way of double walled tanks or concrete protection walls so as to minimise groundwater soil contamination, said the guidelines which have been posted on the CPCB website for comments and suggestions by February 2, 2021.

It further said that ground water quality monitoring of retail outlets within 100 meter from the nearest point of surface water bodies shall be conducted by the OMCs once in every quarter.

Last year, an expert committee comprising members from IIT Kanpur, National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and CPCB had framed the guidelines for setting up of new petrol pumps in the country. It had prohibited setting up petrol pumps close to the schools, hospitals and residences citing health hazards.

The expert committee was set up on the directions of the NGT which is seized of a plea seeking a cap on the number of petrol pumps so as to avoid their adverse effects on the environment.

As per the guidelines, "Retail outlets shall not be located within a radial distance of 50 meters from schools, hospitals (10 beds and above) and residential areas designated as per local laws. In case of constraints in providing 50 meters distance, the retail outlet shall implement additional safety measures as prescribed by PESO(Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation).

"In no case, the distance between new retail outlets from schools, hospitals and residential areas shall be less than 30 meters. No high tension line shall pass over the retail outlet," the CPCB guidelines said.

'Goli maro…' slogan raised at Suvendu's rally

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ CHANDANNAGAR/HOOGHLY

A SUVENDU ADHIKARI-LED SAFFRON RALLY IN HOOGHLY DISTRICT PICKED UP ON WEDNESDAY FROM WHERE THE TMC WORKERS LEFT IN SOUTH KOLKATA A DAY BEFORE CALLING UPON THE LISTENERS TO SHOOT DOWN THE TRAITORS

The frightening "Goli maro slogan…" (shoot them) has traveled out of Delhi and continues to ride the poll bound air of Bengal with both the Trinamool Congress and the BJP mimicking the hate rhetoric coined by a Union Minister an year ago.

A Suvendu Adhikari-led saffron rally in Hooghly district picked up on Wednesday from where the TMC workers left in South Kolkata a day before calling upon the listeners to shoot down the traitors.

Even as the BJP supporters that walked the triumphant road show that ended at Circus Ground at Chandannagar shouted "*Desh ke Gaddaron ko Goli Maaro Salon ko* (shoot the traitors)" Suresh Sahoo the local BJP leader who led the slogan said "there is nothing wrong in the slogan as it was intended at persuading the army to shoot down the people who conspires against our motherland."

His superior leader and State BJP spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya however politely dissociated the party from such slogans saying "the BJP never supports such things," only to quickly tell between the "Goli Maro..." of TMC and BJP.

"Though the BJP does not promote such kind of slogans which might have been given in the heat of the moment … but this slogan cannot be equated with the one raised by the TMC leaders as our supporters were shouting the slogan condemning the people who are involved in anti-national activities whereas there slogan was aimed at the people who have left the Trinamool to join the BJP … this indicates provocation of violence."

On Tuesday another rally of the Bengal ruling party led by senior leaders like Arup Biswas and Sobhandeb Chattppadhyay both Ministers shouted "Bangal ke gaddaron ko Goli maro salon ko (shoot the traitors of Bengal)."

Much like Bhattacharya his TMC counterpart too distanced his party from such "avoidable coinages" but added "the BJP is doing the same thing today after teaching the TMC the moral conduct yesterday," asking "who are they asking the so-called army to shoot … aren't they asking the Indian citizens to be shot down … is this the kind of political change they are planning to bring in Bengal."

Meanwhile, Adhikari who led his fourth consecutive "house-full" road show on Wednesday once again challenged Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to compete from Nandigram as she earlier promised saying "let me tell you madam (Banerjee)! I personally undertake to ensure your defeat at Nandigram irrespective of whosoever contests from BJP against you."

Hailing Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "strongest Prime Minister with a definite vision … who has taken bold steps which many Governments would not take for years," Adhikari said "on the other hand TMC has been reduced to a private limited company with the Chief Minister as its Chairperson, her nephew (Abhishek Banerjee) as its Managing Director and an outsourced company (read the one of Prashant Kishore) as its electoral advisor."

Saying that he could not take decisions despite holding three ministerial posts in the Trinamool Government the former Bengal minister said that "in that party there is only one post and rest are lamp posts and I too was one of them."

Attacking the junior Banerjee he said "the Tolabaz (extortionist) nephew has to explain why he appointed Vinay Mishra as the vice president of TMC Yuva (party youth wing)" adding how Mishra — currently at large — is being frantically looked for by the CBI in cow, coal and sand smuggling cases.

"There is one step for the CBI before it reaches the door steps of the 'nephew' … it has only to arrest Vinay Mishra," he said.

Attacking the Chief Minister for mimicking the Central schemes and implementing them in Bengal by changing their names, Adhikari said "this Government talks of providing jobs whereas it has gobbled up three Departments ending more than 5.5 lakh jobs… in lieu of which she has created 25,000 contractual workers only."

Another TMC MLA joins BJP

PNS ■ KOLKATA

There was more erosion in the Trinamool banks with party's MLA from Shantipur, Arindam Bhattacharya joining the saffron party in Delhi.

Bhattacharya who joined the BJP in presence of party's Bengal observer Kailash Vijaybargiya said the "Mamata Banerjee Government has done nothing for Bengal in the past several years of its rule…. There is no industrialization, no future vision … we could not work for the party or the people as eligible people were not given responsibilities and only corrupt and sidekicks were decorated with higher posts."

Bhattacharya had won the Shantipur seat in Nadia district as a Congress candidate with Left support but changed over to the TMC though he would not resign after that. On Wednesday he joined the BJP.

On whether more people will join the saffron outfit in the coming days, Vijabargiya said "indeed there are many of them who are coming to us … and will join the party when our Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Bengal on January 30 and 31."

Incidentally at least two ministers and three MLAs of the ruling party had been speaking incoherently, sources said. Last week Vijayavargiya claimed that over 40 more were ready to jump ship.

Trouble continues for 'Tandav' with more FIRs

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid protests by the Opposition BJP, the Mumbai Police registered an FIR against the team members of web serial "*Tandav*", including Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan, serial director Ali Abbas Zafar and others.

A day after the BJP's spokesperson Ram Kadam and his supporters staged a protest march to the Ghatkopar police station in north-east Mumbai and lodged a complaint, the police lodged an FIR against the team members of "*Tandav*" which is currently being shown on the OTT platform Amazon Prime Video.

The "*Tandav*" members have been booked under sections 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups under religion, race et) 295-A (Deliberate and mischievous acts intended to outrage religious feelings) and 505 (2) (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-feelings between classes) of IPC.

Apart from Saif and director Ali Zafar, the others who have been named are the web serial's producer Himanshu Mehra, writer Gaurav Solanki, Amazon's top officials like Aparna Purohit and Amit Agarwal.

The registration of an FIR by the Ghatkpar police coincided with the arrival of a Uttar Pradesh Police team to investigate the complaints against the web series.

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh assured the visiting team that action would be taken in the "*Tandav*" matter.

Earlier on Sunday, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting had sought an explanation from the Amazon Prime Video on the controversial portions in the web serial.

On its part, the "*Tandav*" team tendered an apology saying: "The web series '*Tandav*' is a work of fiction and any resemblance to acts and persons and events is purely coincidental. The cast and crew did not have any intention to offend the sentiments of any individual, caste, community, race, religion or religious beliefs or insult or outrage any institution, political party or person, living or dead."

Mumbai Metro to get its first 'driverless' train on Jan 27

Operation to start in May

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Metro, which expects the first indigenously-manufactured driverless train from the Bharat Earth Movers Ltd (BEML) in the metropolis on January 27, plans to roll out the metro passenger services on Metro Metro-II A and VII in May this year.

Announcing this, Maharashtra's Urban Development Minister Eknath Shinde said, "After seven years, Mumbai is ready to welcome the new metro and Mumbaikars are curious about its "first look". This metro train will be tested on different fronts once it arrives in Mumbai. After that, we plan to introduce Metro in passenger service from May, 2021".

The first phase of coaches running on Metro Two A and Seven will leave Bangalore on January 22 for Mumbai and arrive at Charkop Metro Car Shed by January 27. "After that, the trial runs of this metro will start in the next two months with the necessary technical and other tests. We are planning to start these metro passenger services from May 2021," Shinde said.

The construction of metro lines and stations, which is being carried out through MMRDA, is in the final stages. The construction of the Metro train running on this route has been entrusted to BEML and this is the first indigenously built Metro train to be ready to arrive in Mumbai. "Under the guidance of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, work on metro projects has been accelerated," the Minister said.

850 MW Ratle Hydroelectric Project approved for J&K

PNS ■ JAMMU

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha holds Press conference on Ratle Hydroelectric Project on Wednesday Pioneer photo

After a long wait the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has finally approved construction of 850 MW Ratle Hydroelectric Project in Jammu & Kashmir at an investment of ₹5,282 crore. On its completion the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir will become power surplus, will create 4,000 jobs in J&K, directly & indirectly, and will contribute to overall socio-economic development of the UT.

While thanking the Prime Minister Lt- Gov Manoj Sinha termed it a historical decision as it will go a long way in ensuring unprecedented development in Jammu & Kashmir.

Mentioning the lacklustre approach of the successive Governments towards the execution of this important Hydroelectric Power Project, the Lt Governor said that Jammu & Kashmir was deprived of this mega project for so long because the previous regimes were scared to move ahead due to Pakistan's threats of going to International court for arbitration, and making representation in the World Bank.

He also observed, "now J&K is witnessing unprecedented growth and development in every sector; we are unlocking J&K's potential to be self-reliant in the energy sector within a short span of time".

Highlighting the key features of the mega project, the Lt Governor said that apart from making J&K energy sufficient, the project will create 4,000 jobs in J&K, directly & indirectly, and will contribute to overall socio-economic development of the UT. In addition, the Kwar project (540 MW) has been decided to be taken up. This will result in an investment of ₹4,264 crore and create more than 2000 jobs in the UT, he added.

CHINESE VILLAGE IN DISPUTED REGION

Clarify ground situation in Arunachal: Sena

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena's Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi on Wednesday asked the Centre several pertinent questions regarding the Chinese occupation of Indian territory, including whether India had given up its claim on the land occupied by China and what was the extent of the Beijing-occupied land recovered by the Narendra Modi Government ever since it came to power in 2014.

Alluding to media reports — based on the satellite images available in public domain — about the construction of new settlements by China in Indian Territory of Arunachal Pradesh during the past one year, Priyanka shot off identical letters to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, seeking answers to several questions regarding the Chinese troops' occupation in the Indian territory.

Among other things, Priyanka asked as to "how much of our land at present has been illegally occupied by China since 1947 onwards as per GoI records the chronology of occupation of these parcels of lands".

"What is the change in the status quo since 2014? Have we recovered any land illegally occupied by China or have we given up claim on them as justified by cabinet ministers and leaders? What is the Government of India doing to recover these occupied territories and have we lost any new territory since 2014?," the Sena MP asked.

Priyanka wanted to know as to what was stopping India from seeking accountability from China, "considering that the current government came on the plank of prioritising nationalism & border security".

"I look forward to your response considering the urgency and sensitivity of an issue of national importance that impacts every citizen of the nation," she stated in her identical letters to the Defence Minister and External Affairs Minister.

"China has been stepping up expansionism in the borderlands while our government is not even willing to call China out by name. The area where these villages have come up may be disputed, but international law forbids unilateral change of the status quo in such disputed territories," she said.

"China's construction of a village is just the latest example of how it is encroaching on areas inside India. China has no land claim in this occupied region that can be backed by international law," Priyanka stated.

"However now by constructing villages that were uninhabited but strategically important areas, it is seeking to challenge the international law. The construction of this village is a violation of a key part of multiple agreements reached by China with India that asked the two sides to strictly respect and observe the line of actual control and work together to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas," Priyanka wrote in her letter.

"The intrusion by China, as reported in the past one year based on satellite images, has been in Depsang Plains, Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Gogra Hot Springs, Dibang Valley, Chushul, Demchok, Chumar," she said.

Tiger triggers panic in UP village; forest dept teams deployed

PTI ■ SHAHJAHANPUR (UP)

The presence of a tiger in a village here was confirmed on Wednesday after the big cat and its cubs were seen in CCTV camera footage from the area, triggering a panic among locals.

Residents of Nagla Ibrahim village in Tilhar tehsil of the district had reported spotting a tiger and its cubs in the village about a week ago, Divisional Forest Officer Adarsh ??Kumar said.

After the reports, the forest department installed CCTV cameras around the village, and their footage has confirmed the presence of the big cat, he said. The official said movement in the area around Nagla Ibrahim village has been restricted, and farmers have also been stopped from going to the fields.

DMK likely to go it alone in Pondy as Stalin loyalist deputed to snatch power

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Puducherry is administered as on today by a coalition Government headed by V Narayanasamy of the Congress with the support of the DMK

On the eve of the visit of Congress supremo Rahul Gandhi to western Tamil Nadu, chinks in the party's alliance with DMK surfaced as the Dravidian major entrusted S Jagathrakshakan MP to form a winnable alliance in the union territory of Puducherry which goes to the polls along with Tamil Nadu to elect a new legislative assembly.

Puducherry is administered as on today by a coalition Government headed by V Narayanasamy of the Congress with the support of the DMK. Jagathrakshakan, a diehard loyalist of the Karunanidhi family, told the executive committee members of the DMK's Puducherry, to get ready to fight in all the 30 Assembky constituencies in the Union Territory.

"An alliance under the leadership of DMK will be formed here. Party president M K Stalin will announce the course of action the party would follow in Puducherry. He wants you to ensure victory in all 30 constituencies," said Jagatrakshakan who heads an industrialist family with interests ranging from alcohol to power production.

The DMK had contested the last assembly election in Puducherry as part of an alliance led by the Congress. "The development of Puducherry has taken a beating for long. The mills have been shut and nothing has been done to revive the airport and port during the last ten years," Jagatrakshakan pointed out.

KS Alagiri, president, TNCC was visibly upset over the development arising out of the DMK's stance on Puducherry. "We do not expect any major changes in the policy of DMK. But if need arises, we are always ready with an alternate course of action," said Alagiri while speaking to reporters at Tirupur.

Stalin, while speaking to a local newspaper in Chennai had ruled out any possibility of the DMK forming a coalition government in Tamil Nadu. "My earlier assessment was that the DMK would win 200 seats of its own.

Now I feel our prospects have increased in all 234 constituencies. The alliance partners are working hard with the common objective of forming a DMK Government," Stalin said.

Skiing resort of Gulmarg converted into a canvas by budding artists

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

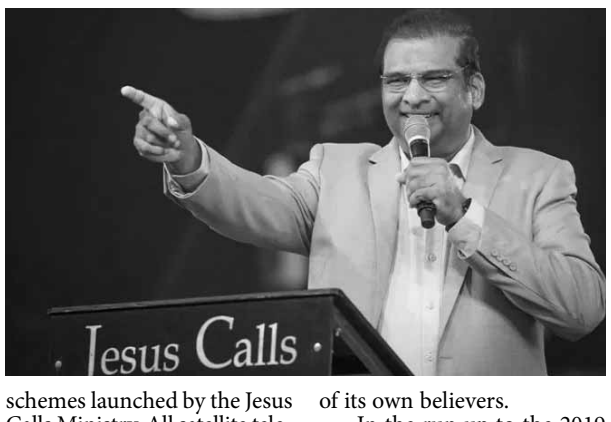
The Skiing resort of Gulmarg in Kashmir valley has been turned into a big canvas by the budding artists assembled there to create "ice sculptures" and other art forms. Braving sub zero temperature conditions these artists have already started working on different themes to give shape to their imagination.

To facilitate these artists the Department of Tourism has come forward to ensure they get a stimulating environment during the four day long competition. The department has also kept ready large ice blocks for the participants to ensure they are able to carve out the shape as per their chosen themes.

In the competition over 30 participants drawn from various districts of the Kashmir valley, both amateur and professional sculptures, are participating. On Wednesday Director Tourism, Kashmir Nisar Wani flagged off the participants from TRC, Srinagar. The special camp was organised to attract tourists and promote the rich cultural heritage of Jammu & Kashmir.

Evangelist Paul Dhinakaran comes under Income Tax scanner as 28 premises raided

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI



A day after three archbishops of the Catholic Church called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi at New Delhi, sleuths from the Department of Income Tax knocked on the doors of the palatial residence of Paul Dhinakaran, head of the Jesus Calls ministry and India's leading evangelist at Chennai and 27 other establishments owned by him across the State.

The premises that were raided include the Karunya Institute of Technology and Science at Coimbatore and Prayer Towers across the State. According to sources in the department, the raids were following specific inputs about large scale evasion of tax and non-disclosure of funds received from sources abroad for religious conversion.

Paul Dhinakaran is the son of late DGS Dhinakaran, founder of the Jesus Calls Ministry which has specialized in massive religious conversion using state-of-the-art methods. Prayer Intercessors manning the Prayer Towers across the globe will pray for customers who join various prayer schemes launched by the Jesus Calls Ministry. All satellite television channels in regional languages air programmes featuring the miracles happening across the world for customers joining the prayer schemes paying hefty amount.

The Prime Minister had on Tuesday had a meeting with a team of cardinals of the Catholic Church that included Baselios Cleemis Catholicos who once said that the Christian minorities were not safe under the Modi regime. The Church is reportedly upset over the growth of the ministry launched by the Dhinakarans which has poached thousands of its own believers.

In the run up to the 2019 Lok Sabha election, Paul Dhinakaran created a sensation all over Tamil Nadu with his prayer meetings where he emphasized the need to vote out the ruling regime. "Present leaders who are known to everybody shall be quietened in 2019 by the Lord.

Young leaders with forward looking principles and plans for progress shall be placed in authority in the nation in 2019. Young leaders would come to the rulership and leadership of the nation," Paul had said in these prayer meetings.

14 members of marriage party killed in Bengal road accident

PTI ■ JALPAIGURI (WB)

The cars of the marriage party were going towards Dhupguri on the wrong side of the road and the collision took place due to dense fog, a senior police officer said

Fourteen members, including four children, of a marriage party were killed and 10 others injured due to a collision between a stone-laden truck and their three vehicles in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district, police said on Wednesday.

The accident occurred in Jaldhaka area in Dhupguri block on Tuesday night, they said.

The cars of the marriage party were going towards Dhupguri on the wrong side of the road and the collision took place due to dense fog, a senior police officer said.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced an ex gratia of Rs 2.5 lakh each to the next of kin of those who were killed in the accident.

The state government will provide Rs 50,000 each to those who were seriously injured, she said at a programme in Purulia.

Banerjee also said Rs 25,000 would be given to those whose injuries are not serious.

"The loss cannot be compensated. But we would like to tell the families that the government is with them. We are providing compensation to the next of kin of the deceased and the injured persons. Our local MLA Sourav Chakraborty is already there and state minister Aroop Biswas is rushing to the spot," Banerjee said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was extremely anguished over the road accident and announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each to the next of kin of those who lost their lives in the incident.

He also said that Rs 50,000 each would be given to those injured, according to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Ten injured people are undergoing treatment in Jalpaiguri Super Speciality Hospital, the police officer said.

NCP to form front with like-minded parties for Goa polls: Pawar

PTI ■ PANAJI

NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Wednesday said his party intends to fight the 2022 Goa Legislative Assembly elections in alliance with the Congress and other like-minded parties.

Speaking to reporters in Panaji, Pawar said the NCP wants to fight the Goa Legislative Assembly elections "as a front" along with other parties to provide an alternative to the BJP.

"In Goa, we want to contest the election in alliance with the Congress and other like-minded parties, but we are yet to start dialogues with other political outfits," the NCP chief said. Pawar met the local NCP leadership including the party's state unit president Jose Philip D'Souza and Churchill Alemao, the party's lone MLA in the Assembly.

Senior party leader Prafulla Patel has been authorised to hold dialogues with other parties to form a front for the state Assembly elections, the NCP chief said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Let the leaders lead

Like elsewhere, prominent personalities of India should get the shots so that the common citizen feels reassured

When the virologists in different countries developed vaccines for Coronavirus, there was a sense of relief and jubilation globally and people could not wait for the inoculation drives to begin. However, that euphoria turned into fear, distrust and vaccine hesitancy when side-effects and deaths began to be reported in nations like Norway, the UK, the US, and so on. In India, too, two people died after getting vaccinated on January 16 but, after the post-mortem reports came in, the Government declared that the deaths were in no way related to the COVID-19 jab, but to cardiopulmonary disease. Of course, the sceptics will take this statement with a pinch of salt. However, even if we were to attribute these deaths in India to the vaccines, we must not let such incidents cloud our vision. If one were to look at the larger picture, the number of infections and deaths globally due to the pandemic till now is 96,700,231 and 2,067,913, respectively. In India, the number of infections has been 10,596,442 and the casualties have touched the 152,754-mark. As compared to this, of the 6,31,417 healthcare workers who have been vaccinated so far across 11,660 sessions in India, only nine adverse events requiring hospitalisation were reported. So, just 0.18 per cent minor adverse events have been reported and only 0.002 per cent of them needed to be hospitalised. According to the Health Ministry, this figure is in fact the lowest, so far as we know, in the world. So, it does not take a genius to understand that the advantages of getting the jab far outweigh the disadvantages. Plus, in such huge vaccination drives as the world is undertaking right now, adverse effects and some casualties are to be expected, particularly among the old, infirm and people with allergies. But the fact remains that globally, scientists and Governments are responding very quickly and, apart from the strong adverse event surveillance, they are being flexible and vigilant to finding out the causes and issuing directives on who can safely take the vaccine and who cannot. For instance, Norway has adjusted its advice on who should be administered the vaccine by giving individual doctors the discretion to make this decision.

In India too, Bharat Biotech, the company that developed Covaxin, is warning people with weak immunity and other medical conditions to consult a doctor before getting inoculated and, if possible, to avoid it altogether. However, till now the other vaccine that is also being used, AstraZeneca's Covishield, has seen a good response. Though India is battling vaccine hesitancy even among healthcare workers, the Centre plans to press on with the inoculation drive. This is because the Government realises that pandemics can be contained only when people become resistant to the disease-causing pathogen. There are two ways to acquire herd immunity: One, on exposure to the pathogen, people develop antibodies and immune response in the body and; second, the body develops antibodies when the vaccine is administered. Allowing the natural spread of a disease to generate herd immunity is not desirable as it comes at the cost of avoidable morbidity and mortality. With mass vaccination against COVID-19, the Government is determined to protect the people. We must help it in every way possible. We are a big country, and rolling out vaccines to 1.3 billion people is not an easy task. But we are a very determined country that successfully eradicated smallpox and polio. We have the resources and the experience. With the hard work of those leading and implementing the campaign and with the support of people, we are bound to succeed in our gigantic vaccination drive. However, if the Government truly wants the people to embrace the immunisation drive, prominent leaders of the country should get the shots like they did in other nations, so that the common citizen can feel reassured. The leaders of the country need to lead from the front and not let the common man feel like the proverbial guinea pig.

What's in a name?

Rather than quibbling over Neta*ji*'s birth anniversary, the Governments should have celebrated the event together

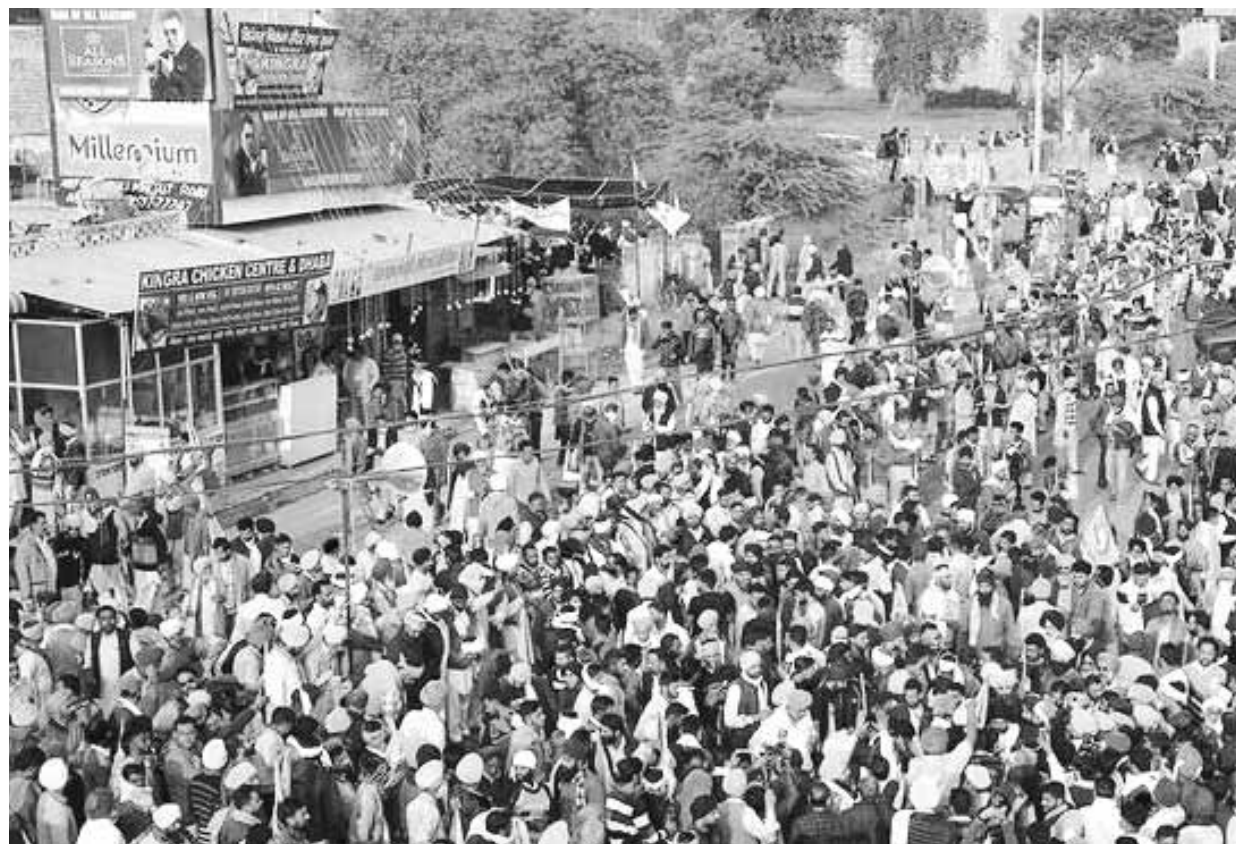
On the face of it, one would consider it a matter of great national pride and patriotism, though a little belated, that the Union Government has decided to celebrate the birth anniversary of one of India's greatest nationalist icons who worked hard in the quest for the nation's Independence, Neta*ji* Subhas Chandra Bose, on January 23 as 'Parakram Diwas'. However, the political controversy the announcement has kicked off is quite unnecessary and unsavoury, to put it mildly. There are allegations and counter-charges that the decision has been taken to usurp the legacy of the revolutionary leader, who was actually born in Cuttack, Bengal Presidency, British India. While the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) Government in West Bengal and the NDA Government at the Centre are in tandem on the issue of celebrating Neta*ji*'s birth anniversary, the bone of contention is the nomenclature the event should have: The Centre wants to call it 'Parakram Diwas' while the TMC and the All India Forward Bloc — which was founded by Neta*ji* and emerged as a faction within the Indian National Congress in 1939 — demand that the day be celebrated as 'Desh Prem Diwas'. Both the parties are also angry that they were not consulted when the decision was being taken. The Culture Ministry recently issued a notification stating that in order to "honour and remember Neta*ji*'s indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation", the Government has decided to celebrate his birthday every year as 'Parakram Diwas'. But the TMC leaders are sticking to their guns that it should continue to be called 'Desh Prem Diwas' (the State-level celebrations have been held at Darjeeling since 2014) and that January 23 should be declared a national holiday as Neta*ji* was a national leader and the head of the Azad Hind Fauj, and "these two aspects are not clearly reflected" in the name 'Parakram Diwas'.

With West Bengal Assembly elections on the cards, and especially when it comes to Neta*ji*'s birth anniversary, no party wants to let the opportunity to lure the voters slip from its hands. The State is expected to go to the polls in the first half of this year with the BJP hoping to wrest power from the TMC after emerging as the second-biggest party in Bengal in the 2019 general elections. The regional party's leaders have gone so far as to claim that it was a "stunt" by the NDA Government keeping in mind the upcoming Assembly poll in West Bengal, and "not a mark of respect" to Neta*ji*. The family members of Neta*ji* also put their weight behind 'Desh Prem Diwas', saying that the name would have been more appropriate "but we're happy with the announcement". Hectic preparations have already commenced for the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji in Kolkata, both by the State Government and the Centre. While the TMC Government has planned a massive procession in Kolkata, the Centre is also making preparations for a grand event at the Victoria Memorial Hall, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to be present. Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan will participate in a programme in Cuttack, Odisha, where Bose was born. Another programme will be held in Haripura village in Gujarat's Surat district where Bose was elected the president of the Indian National Congress in 1938. But the bottom line remains that the true respect and honest tributes to Neta*ji* had been if both the Governments had joined hands to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of one of India's greatest sons who strove to free India from the iron clutches of the British Empire.

The usual suspects

The SC-appointed panel to talk to farmers comprises a neo-con economist, a seed terrorist and a policy *sahib*, which has given rise to mistrust

INDRA SHEKHAR **SINGH**



As 2021 began, the Supreme Court (SC) appears to have got a taste for drama as it pitched a "biased committee" against the revolutionary, but peaceful, farmers camping on Delhi's borders. Why biased? Because all the four original members had unequivocally supported the farm "reforms". But the apex court believes that they will remain neutral; and Chief Justice of India SA Bobde orally observing that if a person on a panel has expressed views on the matter, it should not become ground for his disqualification from a committee and that "committee members are not judges; they can change their views". Meanwhile, Bhupinder Singh Mann rejected the SC's offer to be part of the committee and said he stands with Punjab. The three remaining members, who pledge to be "non-partisan", have only added to the mistrust of farmers because the media may see them as honourable but, to farmers, they are simply a neo-con economist, a known seed terrorist and a policy *sahib*.

Let us go back to the start of this mess. After repeated failure of talks between the NDA Government and the farmers, petitions were filed in the SC which gave them a patient ear and even admonished the Centre for its "handling of the issue". There was some jubilation when farmers were teased by names such as "P Sainath" to be included in the committee. But the celebration was short-lived; it was as if the SC was testing the waters before delivering the masterstroke: Four pro-Big Ag names were invited to the committee. They being men of the law, we can't expect the judges to understand much about agriculture but whosoever advised them, has put the integrity of India's top court in quagmire. Mann's polite refusal provides grist for this fact. Recently, committee member Anil Ghanwat has expressed fears that the farmers may not even participate in the proceedings.

How unbiased are the three remaining members — Ashok Gulati, Anil Ghanwat and Pramod Kumar Joshi? With a demonstrated history of promoting and advocating for Big Ag and US-style liberalisation, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Ashok Gulati, our neo-con economist, despite having worked in the Government for decades, is notorious as the poster child for Big Ag in India. His policy recommendations are hailed by the industry and vehemently opposed by farmers, whether on GM crops or farm-gate liberalisation. His economic models, to many farmers, are allied to the US industry interests and not to the welfare of Indian farmers and consumers. Gulati's models are a disservice to Gandhi's bread labour. Some would go so far as to say that his economic schizophrenia is so advanced for what he called the "1991 moment" for Indian agriculture, has turned out to be the biggest farmers' revolution in the history of our world.

Next we move to 'policy *sahib*' — Pramod K Joshi, who is the director for South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute. Without going too much into details about his personal views, the organisation he represents is heavily funded by the Big Ag corporations and allies. The Syngenta Foundation (Switzerland), The Rockefeller Foundation (United States), CropLife International (Belgium), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (United States), Cornell University (United States), the US Department of Agriculture (United States), KPMG East Africa and Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) are some of the biggies to generously donate to his kitty and push a global agenda through this organisation in countries like India. Farmers are curious as to why did the SC's advisors think of this international body? Does India have a dearth of *swadeshi* agriculturists or agrarian policy experts? Why the swerve from Aatmanirbhar Bharat on policy matters? This name in the committee exposes the invisible hand behind the farm "reforms".

Finally, we move to alleged 'seed terrorist' Anil Ghanwat, who is the president of Shetkari Sangathana (SS). It didn't take illegal seeds from China to reach the US or India in May 2020 for any member of the cotton seed industry to understand the term "seed terrorism". India has been an area of operation for many such illegal seed schemes which want to destroy India's native seeds, public health and seed industry by using criminal means. 'Seed terrorists' smuggle and peddle unapproved foreign seeds on India's soils and fields. They claim that it's good for the farmers but actually, as the past year has shown, sound the death-knell for Indian biodiversity and public health as these seeds can be a gateway for getting new pests or plant diseases into the country. In a bid to protect our biodiversity, the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh's (RSS) own Bharatiya Kisan Sangh has led a campaign in Maharashtra against this hazardous contamination and to curb the illegal spread of HT Bt Cotton. Keep in mind that COVID entered the country using humans as a gateway; similarly, the American pink bollworm and fall armyworm have mysteriously entered India. We don't know what new disease could be in store next?

A note on the history of the organisation: SS founder Sharad Joshi, a farmer leader for few, was a pariah in the national farmers' resistance movement. His stance on the World Trade Organisation (WTO), inclusion of agriculture into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Dunkel Draft alienated him from the farmers who resisted this takeover in the late 90s. His obsession for "technology" and "progress" was only meretricious. His Frankenstein still lives eating into the profits and health of maize to oilseed farmers.

Following the same tradition, the SS has openly violated the Environment Protection Act, National Biodiversity Act and various other criminally punishable legislations by illegally planting and peddling an unapproved genetically modified organism (GMO) HT Bt Cotton in Maharashtra. This HT Bt cotton is a herbicide tolerant (HT) cotton variety that is unapproved by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC). The SC's technical committee on GM crops had also a few years ago put a moratorium on HT crops due to bio-safety issues. Despite this, Ghanwat's organisation has been unabashedly part of a criminal conspiracy to contaminate our native cotton seeds and biodiversity. Last year alone, he caused a damage of over ₹400 crore to the legal seed businesses, from Maharashtra to Telangana. Due to such fly-by-night operators, the legal cotton businesses are finding their seed lots contaminated by this unapproved variety and, in fact, many seed companies have been taken to court and their licenses suspended, yet Ghanwat's SS proliferates. They continue to do irreversible damage to our environment and health. The seed officials have booked various members for some of these offences, yet the ring leader — instead of being reprimanded — has been elevated to a power position.

The judiciary is an independent pillar of Indian democracy, and in no way should it be under pressure to echo the will of the Government of the day. For, if they acquiesce, Indian democracy will be dented. By appointing a committee without consultation, the SC may also have committed the same mistake as the Government. The CJI, if he wants the farmers and people to restore their faith in the judiciary, should disband the committee for now and evaluate the members' profile. People like Ghanwat and his organisation who openly defy the rule of law, should be punished, not honoured.

(The writer is the Director – Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

Like millions of Indians, I am jubilant and proud at your heroic and historic victory at Brisbane. Your performance, against incredible odds, has brought glory to India.

Congress interim president
Sonia Gandhi

The high-speed rail is a successful demonstration of China's independent innovation. China is now a world leader in high-speed rail technology.

Chinese President
Xi Jinping

Nachave is a vivacious number that will definitely make you tap your feet. I always try to deliver a different and unique experience to music lovers.

Singer
Daler Mehndi

No adversity could stop them, frontline players injured, & won after a remarkable turnaround from the depths of 36 all out, inspiring for others. Kudos, India!

Former Pakistani cricketer
Wasim Akram

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kudos, Team India!

Sir — What Team India pulled off in Oz — a Test series win — is no mean feat. It was a glorious victory in the game of uncertainties, the memory of which will be long cherished. Watching a bunch of plucky Indian youngsters playing so well against the world's best team in a match that otherwise looked like being a David and Goliath contest was an uplifting experience.

The absolutely stunning victory at Gabba is sweeter because it was achieved in a Test cricket that showcases skills, subtleties and sophistication more than any other format and it was clinched by exceptionally talented boys hailing from disparate and diverse backgrounds from across the country. For the legions of Indian cricket fans, India lifting the coveted Border-Gavaskar Trophy was a fairytale ending.

For most Indians, cricket is an absolute religion. The bouncers and racial slurs and other tricks tried by the host could not make up for what it lacked to snatch a victory from a resurgent and exuberant Indian team.

G David Milton
Tamil Nadu

Shun politics, stand united against China

This refers to the editorial '*Remove Chinese hamlet*' (January 20). With China changing the *status quo* by constructing a village five km inside the disputed territory in Arunachal Pradesh, the ongoing tension between the two superpowers is going to escalate.

It appears that the Communist regime is hell-bent on strengthening and extending its territorial claims in violation of the international agreements and multiple treaties. The Chinese side doesn't respect the McMahon line, the demarcation between Tibet and India's Northeast, and constructs structures in the areas claimed by it. The development came as the Chinese and Indian troops are locked in a bitter standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 last year and multiple rounds of military and diplomatic-level talks failed to achieve any breakthrough.

The recent development has given yet another opportunity to the Opposition to take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the NDA Government. It is disheartening that at a time when President Xi Jinping-led China is undertaking such misadventures, we as a nation are not even united over the issue. It sends a very wrong message to the world and is a setback to India's global image. The leaders, belonging both to the Opposition and the ruling dispensation, should talk and build consensus to deal with the matter in an effective and efficient manner. India's territorial integrity is not a political matter and it cannot be compromised for the sake of politics.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

India's jabs gain repute

Sir — We should feel proud that the vaccines developed in India have been tagged as the least risky across the world. This is indeed a great achievement and a testimony to the expertise we possess in the sector.

With all these titles, our vaccines are gaining a huge demand and the MEA is receiving requests for the export of these vaccines. It is a welcome move by India to supply the life-saving vials to six countries. India is supplying it to the nations who need it the most like Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles. It is also considering the applications by three other nations and these too are in the final stages of approval. This step will help develop international cooperation and take India's diplomatic relations to a new high and, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, we are indeed honoured to have this opportunity to serve the world during the COVID pandemic.

Kavya Shah
Ujjain

Public holiday policy

Sir — It is a welcome move by the Supreme Court to seek the response of the Union Government on policy framework for declaring public holidays. A PIL complained that the Centre and State Governments arbitrarily notify public holidays.

It is true that the Governments declare public holidays on their whims and fancies to appease a section of population or vote bank. This is because in the absence of any guidelines or policy regarding the declaration of public holidays, the Governments use the opportunity to consolidate their vote banks.

At a time when we need to work diligently and incessantly with full devotion, increasing the number of holidays will decrease our productivity and output. It will make the Government employees lethargic and would give rise to a dilly-dally approach towards work. The need of the hour is that the Union Government should frame a national policy for declaring public holidays.

Amit Singh Kushwaha
Satna

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRSTCOLUMN

A risky business

Share redemption is like a double-edged sword. The very advantage associated with it can backfire and become a major disadvantage

HIMA BINDU **KOTA**

The recent announcement by the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL), pertaining to its share buyback worth over ₹1,046 crore as it looked to return surplus cash to bondholders — the biggest being the Centre — is perfectly in tune with the Government's efforts to raise funds for containing the rising fiscal deficit. The company's Board approved repurchase of the ₹6.97 crore dividend, which is about 1.55 per cent of the total paid-up capital, at a price of ₹150 per share. The Indian markets may see similar announcements by other Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) like Coal India Limited, National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd and National Mineral Development Corporation in days to come. GAIL has also declared an interim dividend of ₹2.50 per share for the coming year. This share buyback forms a part of the target set by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for raising ₹2.1 lakh crore from the disinvestment of PSUs in 2020-21. Share redemption is the process by which companies buy their own dividends which are traded on the bourses at the market value, and in addition to its stock, is a preferred way to repay cash to the shareholders. Paying dividends to bondholders is an expensive affair as it increases the cost of equity. Therefore, paying off shareowners through buybacks is less expensive and reduces the overall cost of the capital. Since 2016 through 2018, it was one of the most favoured ways of returning excess cash to bondholders. In 2018, Indian stock markets witnessed bond repurchases worth ₹54,600 crore. This run was somewhat stalled in 2019 by the Government's decision to tax these transactions. As many as 70 companies announced share buybacks to the tune of ₹35,460 crore in the first half of 2019. In the 2020 Budget, however, the new tax regime made share buybacks lucrative once again.

There are several reasons why firms buy back shares. First, to consolidate their stake as diverse and numerous policyholders or owners make it difficult for the company to take an undisputed decision, as numerous stakeholders with voting rights indulge in a power tussle. By redeeming shares, companies increase their voting rights and exercise more control over governance. For instance, OYO's share buyback from Sequoia and Lightspeed in 2019 increased the stake of Chief Executive Officer Ritesh Agarwal from a meagre 10 per cent to 30 per cent, increasing his say in decision-making. Second, by redeeming its shares, a firm sends positive signals about its future prospects and growth potential. A company may also believe that the current stock price is undervalued and takes it as a good opportunity to increase its bondholding keeping in mind future prospects This is known as the signaling effect. Third, share repurchase is one of the best uses for any idle cash reserve companies might have, especially when there are not enough chances to invest the excess money.

However, share redemption is like a double-edged sword. The very advantage associated with it can backfire and become its disadvantage. While competing in a high growth industry, buyback may not be considered a positive step as it may give an impression that the firm does not have enough avenues to invest its idle cash reserve. Long-term investors respond to such share buybacks by selling their stakes. For instance, IBM's buyback announcements between 1995 and 2000 made investors apprehensive about the company's ability to bring out new products and services. Further, share repurchase is not an isolated event and has to be always viewed in conjunction with other performance parameters. For instance, it will not send a positive signal about the future growth potential to the investors if profitability is declining or the financial outcomes are showing otherwise.

Basically, there are three ways in which companies buy back their shares. Open market repurchase is the most common buyback mechanism in which firms announce redemption of a certain number of bonds through a Press release but do not give details of price, timing and execution of the deal. In fixed-price tender offers, companies invite shareholders to sell their dividends to the firm at a fixed price, generally at a premium rate to the prevailing market price, within a given time frame. While in auction-based tender offers, firms disclose their willingness to pay a premium and seek tenders from owners for certain portion of shares. It is the responsibility of the shareholders to respond to the company about the quantity of shares to be sold within a specified time period. Studies on the impact of share buyback have found that share redemption boosts operating performance due to an increase in earnings per share, return on equity and return on assets, rise in stock prices and shareholders' value. But negative effects of share repurchase on the stock prices of the firms have been reported, too. Although buybacks bring a positive sentiment to the bourses, their attraction for firms and shareholders depend on factors that are unique to each case. The management has to decide the proper use of its funds — either to reinvest in its business or return cash to the shareholders — creating a balance between future growth and stockholder's value creation.

(*The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal.*)

POINT**COUNTER**POINT

FARMERS WANT TO TAKE OUT A TRACTOR RALLY ON THE OUTER RING ROAD IN THE CAPITAL, AS THEY INTEND TO CELEBRATE REPUBLIC DAY.
—ADVOCATE
PRASHANT BHUSHAN

OVER 5,000 TRACTORS IN THE CITY CANNOT BE ALLOWED, AS THEY CAN GO ALL OVER DELHI. IT'S LIKELY TO CREATE PROBLEMS.
—ATTORNEY-GENERAL
KK VENUGOPAL

Don't be an anti-vaxxer

There have been minor adverse events across India since the vaccination drive began on Jan 16. However, surveillance has been strong and will remain so in future, too

VM **KATOCH**

Vaccines go a long way in managing, controlling, eliminating deadly, sometimes debilitating infectious diseases. Smallpox was the first example of a dreaded disease, with a mortality rate as high as 30 per cent, being eradicated by a vaccine. But it was a long journey from the development of the vaccine to the elimination of the disease. Edward Jenner, an English physician, was the first to demonstrate the effect of a vaccine in 1796.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) initiated a campaign to eradicate smallpox in 1959, but despite their best efforts, smallpox was still widespread in 1966, causing regular outbreaks in multiple countries. Then in 1967 efforts were intensified and scientists came up with a higher quality freeze-dried vaccine, bifurcated needle and a stringent surveillance system. India achieved the target of eradication of smallpox in 1975 after a very intense vaccination and containment campaign. So, it took almost 200 years, when on May 8, 1980, the 33rd World Health Assembly officially declared the world free of the disease.

Smallpox is not the only example. Over the years, vaccines emerged as a powerful tool to protect populations against various disease-causing organisms. Our scientists have developed vaccines that provide complete or partial protection against diseases such as plague, cholera, rabies, polio, measles, rotavirus and influenza among others.

When COVID-19 hit the world last year, scientists across the globe came together to develop an effective vaccine against it. Interestingly, within 10 months of decoding the virus' genome sequence, many vaccines were not only developed but tested for their safety and efficacy. With vaccines we have achieved an important milestone in our fight against COVID. It is a matter of pride that two vaccines have become available in India. One has been fully made in India and the other has been developed in partnership and manufactured in the country. Till now, India had been trying to slow the spread of the infection and control the number of Coronavirus cases without a vaccine through conventional and known approaches like using masks, social distancing, hand hygiene, detection of cases, isolation, contact tracing and testing. Progress in medical management through modern as well as traditional medicine systems has also contributed to prevention and improved treatment outcomes in the country.

While all these methods will remain relevant till the virus is defeated, building the immune capacity of individuals and the population through vaccination can prove to be another highly effective shield against COVID. We are at an important juncture in our fight against the Coronavirus. On January 16, the Government rolled out the vaccines across the country. Its plan to inoculate 30 crore people in the first phase of the vaccination drive is an ambitious one, especially when the vaccine has to be given in two doses, at an interval of four-six weeks.

To execute this drive effectively, the Government has recruited an army of vaccinators, on-ground staff, experts to keep a watch on the adverse events that have been reported from many places, specialists to address these adverse events in the shortest possible time and data specialists to analyse the large amount of data the nationwide vaccine drive would generate. It has also created the physical infrastructure for the storage and transportation of the vaccine.

> "ALLOWING THE NATURAL SPREAD OF DISEASE TO GENERATE HERD IMMUNITY IS NOT DESIRABLE AS THIS COMES AT THE COST OF AVOIDABLE MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY. WITH MASS VACCINATION AGAINST COVID-19, THE GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE. WE MUST HELP IT IN EVERY WAY BY GETTING RID OF OUR VACCINE HESITANCY"

This sounds like the Government had to do too much in too short a time. But times have changed and viruses are becoming smarter. With humans travelling across the world, viruses too are travelling to all nooks and corners of the globe. As a result, an endemic turns into an epidemic and an epidemic turns into a pandemic in a blink of an eye. As we all know, this is what happened with the Coronavirus too. So, the fight in these times is not only against viruses, but also against time. Especially where the COVID-19 is concerned.

A new strain with the potential to spread faster has appeared in the UK, and several other countries, including India. There are many pockets in the country which are still not exposed to the virus. We don't know how the virus is going to behave in the coming months. It can come back in small waves, then spread to newer areas and we may also see another severe wave. Hence, we need to put in practice all the lessons we have learnt during past vaccination drives. From redesigning a vaccine campaign, to recalibrating it to address various issues that arise after its launch, to the redevelopment of a vaccine itself to address the mutation in the virus, the vaccination process may need to be changed according to the demands of time. For example, the first polio vaccine the Salk, which was developed in the early 1950s, was an injectable one. It brought a significant drop in the number of polio cases. Later, in the 1960s the oral poliovirus vaccine was developed. It had a live attenuated virus.

Apart from aspects related to science, for a vaccine campaign to achieve its target, it may have to overcome various social and political challenges as well. Every time, we introduce a new vaccine there is vaccine hesitancy. People have a lot of concerns — some of them are genuine while some arise out of rumours and misconceptions about how the vaccine can affect their health. There are many historical examples of such lack of communication or miscommunication becoming barriers in India which could be overcome by establishing good connection with people and their leaders. Hence, peoples' concerns should be identified, addressed as fast as possible by sharing scientific facts with them and in the language, they can understand. Providing complete information in an effective way, maintaining the confidence of people in information from authorised Government sources as well as the mainstream media is as important as the logistics of providing vaccines with highest standards of quality. This was done effectively in the past and hopefully it will be done so now too, especially as there is already a lot of reluctance across the country to take the shots after a few adverse incidents. However, the fact remains that only nine adverse events following immunisation that required hospitalisation have been recorded so far in India.

Second, adverse event surveillance after the vaccination has been strong so far. It will continue to remain so as the drive goes forward. Besides, real-time analysis of the reports as well as data generated from the various vaccine sites across the country will be important to further ensure the safety and efficacy of the vaccine as we go into the mass vaccination phase.

Whether it is smallpox or polio, we were able to eradicate the disease with a targeted approach. First, implement it at a wider scale. Slowly, identify the problematic areas. There could be places where the disease prevalence could be higher than the rest of the country, target that area. Then there could be pockets where people would be more hesitant to vaccines, target that area with clear communication strategies. Communicate with the community, the local leaders, address their concern. After some time, the country could face yet another wave of COVID, or issues of mutant variant(s) may emerge. We need a robust disease surveillance mechanism to handle any such situation and contain the outbreak before it spreads.

Pandemics can be contained only when people become resistant to the disease-causing pathogen. There are two ways to acquire herd immunity-one, on exposure to the pathogen people develop antibodies and immune response in the body and second, the body develops antibodies when we give the vaccine. Allowing the natural spread of disease to generate herd immunity is not desirable as this comes at the cost of avoidable morbidity and mortality. With mass vaccination against COVID-19, the Government is determined to protect the people. We must help it in every way by getting rid of our vaccine hesitancy.

(*The writer is former Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research and Secretary, Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The views expressed are personal.*)

A legendary feat by incredible Indians

Our netas, scientists, technocrats and babus must learn from the tremendous performance of the cricket team and herald a new era of excellence in all walks of life

VK **BAHUGUNA**

On Tuesday the Indian cricket team scripted an incredible Test victory which will be remembered for a long time in the annals of the cricketing world's history. The Australians were proud of the mighty, world-class fast bowling attacks of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood. All their former players and commentators overrated their overall capabilities to win and had almost written off this Indian team and predicted a complete whitewash.

However, they were stunned by the emerging talent of this underrated and inexperienced new breed of Indian cricketers. It is well-known that the Australians are masters of the nasty tactics of sledging. The despicable practice was invented by Fay Allen (nee Thomas) whereby some players seek to gain an advantage by insulting or verbally intimidating the opposing player. The purpose is to try to weaken the opponent's concentration, thereby causing them to make mistakes or underperform. However, the Australians were torn to pieces by the Indian batters and bowlers in the last three Test matches.

The dubious records created by Indian cricketers in Adelaide in the first Test by scoring their lowest-ever 36 Test runs in an inning must have hurt the boys a lot. The team changed tack after this humiliating defeat and rose from the ashes and won the second Test after India XI captain Virat Kohli left for home on paternity leave.

The stand-in captain Ajankya Rahane, his colleague Cheteshwar Pujara and other second-line cricketers have shown the world that they cannot be taken lightly anymore. There is an old saying: "Sometimes you have to die inside in order to rise from your own ashes and believe in yourself and love yourself to become a new person." The Indian team did just that by winning the second Test with style. Full credit goes to Rahane for his gutsy match-winning century and farsighted leadership.

The story of this Border-Gavaskar Trophy is something like this only. All the Australian experts and former cricketers had written off the Indian team by predicting a four-zero whitewash. All of them had forgotten that the trophy is still with India and times have changed. The Australian bowlers, with their short-pitched bodyline bowling reminded one of the bodyline tactics of England's cricket team for their Ashes Tour of Australia in 1932-33, in order to control the skills of the awesome Don Bradman.

The way India had batted in the second Test at Melbourne and the way Jadeja had launched a counter-attack with great courage and with an excellent exhibition of technique lower down the batting order, gave sufficient hints to Australian players that no matter what happened to them earlier in the Test, the Indians were determined to undo that ignominious defeat.

This was proved with sufficient firepower by our so far "second-string bowlers" who gave it back to the Australians and won India the

second Test and created a scare in the Australian camp in the third and fourth Test.

The way the Sydney Test was turned into a draw by the stubborn batting of an injured Hanuma Vihari and Ravichandran Ashwin, aided by Pujara and skipper Rahane, is the stuff of legends. They had taken several blows from the rising bouncers and short-pitched balls of Australian pacers, who left no stone unturned to intimidate the Indians.

In fact they were caught in their own game and the Indians resolutely defended and batted the whole day to deny the home team a victory. This solid batting by injured Indians will be remembered for a long time by both the teams and the cricketing world.

However, the victory in the series clincher fourth Test outclassed the Australians by all means, in all the fields of the game. The second-string bowlers showed the Australians that they too, were top quality players and matched their rivals on all fronts of the game. The batsmen, led by a gritty Pujara who exhibited an unparallel determination to guard his wicket, laid the foundation for others to complete the unprecedented task of snatching victory from Australia.

This Test series will be noted for the emergence of the young and dashing Shubman Gill as an elegant and technically-competent batsman who, if handled carefully, will be one of the batting superstars of the game along with an aggressive Pant.

On his part Pant, too, played positively and handled the bowlers with contempt and confidently scored runs in all directions with his determined and aggressive batting. He shattered the confidence of Australian bowlers and their Captain, too. This Test also revealed the makings of a world-class batting and pace bowler in Shardul Thakur, who will in all probability find himself in the same league as the great Kapil Dev in the future.

One of the major finds of this tour is Washington Sunder the dashing Tamil Nadu opener who destroyed Aussie bowling with his Vivian Richard-like shots apart from being an outstanding wicket taking, off-spinner who has proved that it will be difficult to ignore him in all formats of the game now.

The Indian captain also showed great sportsmanship by gifting a signed jersey to Australian bowler Lyon for completing 100 Tests.

Going forward, this emergence of youngsters on the international scene will result in a tough time for selectors who will be spoilt for choice now. Plus opposing teams will be in awe as India has an excellent bench strength in all areas of the game.

However, the actions of one of India's former heroes, Rahul Dravid in shaping this new Indian team under his tutelage as the coach of India's 'A' squad cannot be ignored. There was a resilience in this team that 'The Wall' himself would have been proud of. India's 'Young Turks' lifting the Border-Gavaskar Trophy is more than a redemption story, this is more than a coming-of-age story, this is an epic, a story for the ages. The Indian cricket team's determination is a story for the ages.

When India won the 2011 World Cup at the Wankhede Stadium they got an open-top bus ride through the city of Mumbai. However, this is not possible now due to the pandemic. But just because this team cannot get one right now, it does not mean they don't deserve the same honour.

If Indian society shows this type of dedication in other spheres of life, there is no reason why we cannot scale new heights and become a developed country sooner rather than later.

Our political class, scientists, technocrats and the bureaucracy must learn from this tremendous performance of the Indian cricket team and herald a new era of excellence in all walks of life. After all, history is always written by the victorious.

(*The writer is a former civil servant. The views expressed are personal.*)

FINAL HOURS OF HIS PRESIDENCY

Trump pardons ex-strategist Steve Bannon, 73 others

Washington: Outgoing President Donald Trump has pardoned his former political strategist Steve Bannon, one of the key architects of his 2016 electoral victory, as he issued a wave of pardons using the final hours of his presidency to grant clemency to 143 people.

The record 73 pardons and 70 commutations came in addition to the dozens of similar actions that Trump took after he lost the November 3 presidential elections to Joe Biden of the Democratic Party.

Biden, 78, will be sworn in as the 46th President of the United States on Wednesday.

The White House in a statement issued on Wednesday said that Trump granted a full pardon to Bannon, who was in charge of the final months of his 2016 presidential campaign.

Bannon was indicted in August when New York federal prosecutors charged him and three others with defrauding donors of more than a million dollars as part of an online fundraising campaign purportedly aimed at supporting Trump's border wall.

President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump board Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., on Wednesday AP

The White House in its statement said Bannon has been an important leader in the conservative movement and is known for his political acumen.

Besides Bannon, other pardon recipients included Elliott Broidy, a former top fundraiser for Trump's campaign who pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy relating to a secret lobbying campaign to influence the Trump administration on behalf of a foreign billionaire in exchange for millions of dollars, and Ken Kurson, a friend of Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner who was charged last October with cyberstalking during a heated divorce.

Trump also granted a full pardon to rapper Lil Wayne who had pleaded guilty to a gun possession charge in Miami.

Another rapper, Kodak Black, received a commutation after he pleaded guilty to a weapons charge.

Brett Berish of Sovereign Brands, who supports a pardon for Wayne, whose real name is Dwayne Michael Carter, described him as "trustworthy, kind-hearted and generous," the White House said.

Wayne has "exhibited this generosity through commitment to a variety of charities, including donations to research hospitals and a host of food-banks," it said.

He also pardoned former Republican Congressman P Rick Renzi of Arizona. In 2013, Renzi was convicted of extortion, bribery, insurance fraud, money laundering, and racketeering. He was sentenced to two years in Federal prison, two years of supervised release, and paid a $25,000 fine. ***PTI***

Bomb threat at US SC ahead of oath ceremony

Washington: A bomb threat was made to the US Supreme Court on Wednesday ahead of the inauguration of Joe Biden as president, but nothing was found by security personnel, the court said.

"The court received a bomb threat, the building and grounds were checked out, and the building is not being evacuated," said high court spokeswoman Kathleen Arberg. ***AFP***

Trump skips Biden's inauguration ceremony

Washington: Donald Trump on Wednesday skipped his successor Joe Biden's inauguration and exited the White House for the last time as US president, saying he had "an amazing four years" and hoping that it would not be a "long goodbye."

Trump left the White House on the Marine One presidential helicopter along with his wife Melania, hours before Biden's inauguration.

Following a short helicopter flight to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, he received a sendoff ceremony with a red carpet, military band, a 21-gun salute and crowd of about 200 guests in attendance.

He then boarded a final flight on Air Force One to begin his post-presidential life at his palatial Mar-a-Lago golf club in Palm Beach.

Trump, 74, had already announced that he will not attend the inauguration of Biden as President and Kamala Harris as the Vice President. He thus became the first president to skip his successor's inauguration since Andrew Johnson in 1869.

Trump also did not extend an invitation to President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

The meeting between sitting presidents and vice presidents and their successors is a time-honoured tradition that represents the peaceful transfer of power.

Walking down a red carpet rolled out for the departing leader, Trump and Melania both wearing black posed for a picture. ***PTI***

Biden: From being one of the youngest senators to oldest Prez

Washington: Joe Biden, known as a peoples' person, a reformer, an unifier and a healer, rose remarkably from humble beginnings to become the oldest American president in US history on Wednesday, reaching the pinnacle of his political career spanning nearly five decades.

The 78-year-old six-term Democratic senator, who triumphed over Republican President Donald Trump in the November 3 presidential election, ran twice unsuccessfully for president - in 1988 and 2008.

The presidential dreams that the veteran leader from Delaware had harboured since childhood seemed all but over for a third time until he won

South Carolina's Democratic Party primary on February 29 last year, forcing most rivals out of the race and making one of the most dramatic comebacks in American political history.

Biden, who has spent five decades in Washington and served two terms in the White House as former president Barack Obama's vice president, capitalised on that experience to portray himself as a tested leader and a better alternative to Trump.

While accepting the Democratic nomination in August, Biden pledged to restore the "soul of America", and be an "ally of the light, not the darkness."

Biden defeated 74-year-old Trump in the bitterly fought presidential election, becoming the oldest person ever to occupy the White House.

In his victory speech, Biden pledged to unite the country as he called it 'a time to heal in America'.

"I sought this office to restore the soul of America, to rebuild the backbone of this nation, the middle class and to make America respected around the world again, and to unite us here at home," he said.

Biden has a strong track record of being an ardent advocate of a strong India-US relationship both as a Senator from Delaware for over three decades and then as deputy of President Obama for eight years.

During his presidential campaign, Biden had said that India and the US were natural partners.

From playing a key role in the passage of India-US civil nuclear deal during a Republican administration to setting up the goal of a $500 billion in bilateral trade, Biden has strong ties with the Indian leadership across the aisle and has a large number of Indian-Americans within his close circuit. ***PTI***

Kamala: The inspiring story of many firsts

Washington: First-time Senator Kamala Harris, popularly called the "female Obama", created history by becoming the first woman, first Black and first Indian-American vice president of the United States.

In a historic speech after her victory in November, Harris remembered her late mother Shyamala Gopalan, a cancer researcher and civil rights activist from India, saying she had prepared her for this big day in her political career.

She also said that while she may be the first woman to occupy the vice president's office, she would not be the last.

Harris, 56, is known for many firsts. She has been a

county district attorney; the district attorney for San Francisco — the first woman, first African-American and first Indian-origin to be elected to the position.

She has several firsts in her role as vice president also: the first woman, the first African-American woman, the first Indian-American and the first Asian-American.

When Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden picked Harris in August last year as his running mate recognising the crucial role Black voters could play in his determined bid to defeat Donald Trump, the then California Senator was the third woman to be selected as the vice president on a major party ticket. Then-Alaska Governor Sarah Palin in 2008 and New York Representative Geraldine Ferraro in 1984 were the other two.

Before becoming Biden's running mate, Harris had her own presidential dreams, which she abandoned due to lack of the financial resources to continue her campaign.

She's one of the only three Asian Americans in the Senate and she's the first Indian-American ever to serve in the chamber.

During the Obama era, she was popularly called the "female Obama". A decade ago, journalist Gwen Ifill called Harris "the female Barack Obama" on the "Late Show With David Letterman".

Later, a small businessman from Willoughby Tony Pinto called her "a young, female version of the president".

She is considered to be close to Barack Obama, the first black American President, who endorsed her in her various elections including that of the US Senate in 2016. ***PTI***

Biden's immigration Bill proposes to eliminate per country cap, to benefit Indian IT professionals

Washington: Joe Biden, hours after being sworn in as the 46th President, will send a comprehensive immigration bill to Congress which among other things proposes to eliminate the per country cap for employment-based green cards, a move that would benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals in the US, whose current wait period for legal permanent residency runs into several decades.

Called the US Citizenship Act of 2021, the legislation modernises the immigration system, according to an incoming White House official.

It prioritises keeping families together, grows the country's economy, responsibly manages the border with smart investments, addresses the root causes of migration from Central America, and also ensures that the US remains a refuge for those fleeing persecution, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Describing this as a common-sense approach to solving immigration challenges, focusing on what works, the US Citizenship Act 2021 creates a roadmap to citizenship for a population that lives and works in the United States.

January 1, 2021 is the cut-off date for those undocumented workers. Two-thirds of undocumented immigrants have been in the US for 10 years or longer.

It provides an immediate pathway to green cards for individuals who meet certain criteria as they were dreamers or have been recipients of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS), or are farm workers and meet certain criteria.

They can apply for citizenship three years later. For those who don't meet those qualifications, there will be another path to citizenship, where they would be in an interim status for five years. ***PTI***

McConnell: Trump provoked Capitol siege, mob was fed lies

Washington: Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell on Tuesday explicitly blamed President Donald Trump for the deadly riot at the Capitol, saying the mob was "fed lies" and the president and others "provoked" those intent on overturning Democrat Joe Biden's election.

Ahead of Trump's historic second impeachment trial, McConnell's remarks were his most severe and public rebuke of the outgoing president. The GOP leader is setting a tone as Republicans weigh whether to convict Trump on the impeachment charge that will soon be sent over from the House: "incitement of insurrection."

"The mob was fed lies," McConnell said. "They were provoked by the president and other powerful people, and they tried to use fear and violence to stop a specific proceeding of the first branch of the federal government which they did not like." ***AP***

Popular Thai politician charged with defaming monarchy

Bangkok: Thai officials on Wednesday filed criminal charges against a popular former politician, accusing him of defaming the monarchy by broadcasting criticism of government efforts to secure supplies of coronavirus vaccines.

The action against Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit came just a day after Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha told reporters that his government will prosecute anyone who shares false information about coronavirus vaccines.

Thanathorn, former leader of the dissolved Future Forward Party, accused the government of acting too slowly in procuring the vaccines.

He also pointed out that the government's main contract for vaccine supply was made with a Thai company owned by the royal palace. The government and the company deny any wrongdoing.

"What Thanathorn said is not true at all. The monarchy has nothing to do with the vaccines and they are not in the position to respond to him in the public," said Thosaphol Pengsom, a vice minister attached to the prime minister's office.

Vice Minister of Digital Economy and Society Newin Chochaiyathip said at a news conference that anyone who shares Thanathorn's broadcast or distorted information about vaccines and monarchy judged to be distorted would be prosecuted.

Thanathorn's office said he had no immediate comment. The government has increasingly used the law against defaming the monarchy to crack down on critics.

The law, widely know as Article 112, makes insulting King Maha Vajiralongkorn or his family punishable by three to 15 years' imprisonment.

Thanathorn has long been a thorn in the side of Prayuth's government. His party, critical of the army, a pillar of the country's establishment, made a strong third-place showing in the 2019 general election, but he was forced out of Parliament when a court ruled that he had broken an election law. ***AP***

Around the Globe

Cairo: A "tragic" shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea off Libya's coast killed at least 43 migrants bound for Europe, the UN migration agency said Wednesday. The International Organisation for Migration said the shipwreck that took place a day earlier was the first maritime disaster in 2021 involving migrants seeking better lives in Europe.

Cairo: Armed men opened fire overnight, trying to storm the residence of a provincial governor in Sudan's restive Darfur region but were repelled by guards, officials said Wednesday.

Mexico City: Thefts of oxygen mounted as Mexico reported its highest daily death toll since the coronavirus pandemic began, with 1,584 deaths confirmed Tuesday. There was also a near-record one-day rise in new virus cases of 18,894.

Moscow: Chechnya's Kremlin-backed leader said Wednesday that his forces have killed six suspected militants, including a warlord accused of organizing a 2011 suicide attack at a Moscow airport.

Madrid: Madrid's emergency services say rescue teams, firefighters and police are working in a central area of the Spanish capital following an explosion that witnesses described as "extremely loud."

Athens (Greece): Lawmakers in Greece are set Wednesday to approve legislation to extend the country's territorial waters along its western coastline from six to 12 nautical miles. Opposition parties say they will vote with the center-right government or abstain in the vote.

Pandemic, surging food prices leave many in Asia hungry: UN

United Nations: United Nations agencies are warning that more than 350 million people in the Asia-Pacific region are going hungry as the coronavirus pandemic destroys jobs and pushes food prices higher.

The report issued Wednesday by four agencies says the pandemic is making it difficult for 1.9 billion people to afford healthy diets. It follows an earlier report that forecast that in a worst case scenario that 828 million people might suffer from acute hunger because of the crisis.

The latest estimate is that nearly 688 million people globally are undernourished, more than half of them in Asia. The largest share is in South Asian countries like Afghanistan, where four in 10 people are malnourished.

The report is mostly based on data up to 2019, before the pandemic struck. But it also estimates that an additional 140 million people were likely to have fallen into extreme poverty in 2020 due to the impact of virus outbreaks and lockdowns. ***AP***

UK virus strain detected in at least 60 countries: WHO

AFP ■ GENEVA

The UK coronavirus strain has been detected in at least 60 countries, the World Health Organization said Wednesday, 10 more than a week ago.

With the global death count now well past two million, and new variants of the virus causing deep concern, countries across the world are grappling with how to slow infections until vaccines become widely available.

The South African strain, which like the UK one is believed to be more infectious, has now been reported in 23 countries and territories, the WHO also announced in its weekly update.

It added that the number of new deaths climbed to a record high of 93,000 over the previous seven days, with 4.7 million new cases reported over the same period.

The arrival of mass vaccination campaigns in the US and Europe had brought hope that the end of the pandemic was in sight; the European Union said Tuesday it was aiming to inoculate 70 percent of its adult population before the end of August.

But many EU countries -- and other nations including India and Russia -- have struggled to get their inoculation programmes off the ground.

The United States remains home to the world's worst outbreak in overall numbers, and US President-elect Joe Biden made clear he would be taking no chances following his inauguration on Wednesday.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mrs. Neha Bhatia is the owner of First Floor built-up Western side portion of Land area measuring 50 sq. yrds., out of Total Land area measuring 100 sq. yrds., property bearing No. N-20-A, out of Rectangle No. 20, Killa No. 2/2, situated in the area of Village Khyala, Now abadi known as Vishnu Garden, North Block, Gali No. 1, New Delhi-110018 "Said property" by virtue of Gift Deed dated 25.04.2017, Registration No. 3431. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owner wants to sell the said property to someone who want to purchase the same by taking Home loan from our client Fullerton India Home Finance Ltd. Further, Photocopy of ATS & Will executed by Mr. Rajinder Singh in favour of his son Mr. Heera Singh in respect of said property are missing. If anybody has any objection/s upon the said property, and its ownership / its Title / Mortgage, Sale, Etc. kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

Kumar & Associates
(Advocates & Consultants)
200, IInd Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N. Delhi-15
Ph : 011-41112527-28 kumarassociates.advocate@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that **Mrs. Chanderlekha Singh** W/o Mr. P.P.N. Singh is intending to sell Third Floor (without roof rights), admeasuring 53.4175 Sq. Mtrs., Property No. 143, Khasra No. 1397/1097, Khewat No. 54, situated at Hari Nagar Ashram, New Delhi-110014, to **Mr. Mohit** S/o Sh. Basant Lal, to be financed by M/s. Hinduja Housing Finance Ltd. The Original Sale Deed 17.07.2013 regd. Vide doc. No. 6288 pertaining to the aforesaid property has been lost and LR NO. 55952/2021 has been registered on 19.01.2021 with Delhi Police.

If any person(s) have any objection(s) or claim in this property, then contact us within 10 days from date of this notice on Email: **heedvalues@gmail.com** or contact M/s. Hinduja Housing Finance Ltd., office at: Unit no. **418**, 4th Floor, Tower-2, Pearl Omaxe Building, Netaji Subhash Place, Pitampura 110034, failing which, it will be assumed that there are no claims or issues in respect of the aforesaid property.

Akash Ojha (Advocate)
Chamber No. 830, PHC, New Delhi - 110001

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Puneet Saini, Advocate on behalf of my client Sh Varinder Pasricha and Ms Vinita Pasricha R/o 1012, Faiz Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005 caused this notice to the General Public that my above-named clients has debarred and disowned their son namely Sunny Pasricha along with his family from their all movable and immovable property situated in Delhi because of his misbehave, cruelty and conduct, now my client has no connection with Sunny Pasricha and his family in any manner. Anybody deals with them shall be at their own risk, cost and consequences

Puneet Saini (Advocate)
I-43 Jungpura Ext. New Delhi-110014
puneetlegalavenues@yahoo.in; (M): 8810633505

NOTICE

We, Devendra Kumar Malik S/o Late. Sh. Deepchand R/o RZ-47, C-Block, Prem Nagar, Paprawat Road, Najafgarh, New Delhi-110043 and Ms. Vinod Bala Malik W/o Sh. Devendra Kumar Malik R/o RZ-47, C-Block, Prem Nagar, Paprawat Road, Najafgarh, New Delhi-110043 have disowned our son Amit Malik and his wife namely Ms. Anshula Gulia along with his daughter namely Amyra Malik from all their movable and immovable property/assets and have also ceased all relations in respect and it is further declared that any person whosoever deals with them shall do entirely at their own costs and risks/ responsibilities and if any legal liability comes against our son namely Amit Malik he is liable for all liability not liable for me and my wife or any of my family members.

Bharat Bhushan Finance & Commodity Brokers Ltd.
(CIN-L67120DL1992PLC049038)
Tel Nos-011-49800900, Fax: 011-49800933
E-mail: commodities@bharatbhushan.com,
Website: www.bbinvestments.in
Regd. Office : 503, Rohit House,
3, Tolstoy Marg, New Delhi - 110 001

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Regulation 47 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 ("listing regulations") that a meeting of the Board of Directors of M/s Bharat Bhushan Finance & Commodity Brokers Limited ("the Company") will be held on Friday, 29th January, 2021 at its Registered Office situated at 503, Rohit House, 3, Tolstoy Marg, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110 001, inter-alia to consider, approve and take on record, the Unaudited Financial Results of the Company for the quarter and nine months ended 31st December, 2020.

Further, pursuant to Regulation 47(2) of the listing regulations, this intimation is also available on the website of BSE Limited at (www.bseindia.com) where the Company's securities are listed and shall also be available on the website of the Company at (http://www.bbinvestments.in).

For Bharat Bhushan Finance & Commodity Brokers Limited
Sd/-
(Nisha Ahuja)
Director
DIN: 00001875

Place: New Delhi
Date: 21.01.2021

WESTERN RAILWAY

CONDUCTING FINAL LOCATION SURVEY

Advertised Tender Notice No. E-Tender/Survey/CCG/2021/01 dated 18.01.2021 for tender on E-tendering mode is hereby invited by Chief Administrative Officer (Construction), Station Building, 1st floor, Churchgate, Mumbai-400 020 for Conducting Final Location Survey of the following work :- **Tender No.: Dy.CE/C/G&S/CCG/Doubling/RJT-KNLS/FLS/01. Brief Description of work:** Conducting Final Location Survey including Drone survey, Soil exploration, Collecting Hydrological & other field Data, preparation and submission of land records, land acquisition proposal, demarcation of land boundary etc. including preparation and submission of GADs of bridges and detailed L section, plans and ESPs in connection with FLS for Doubling of Rajkot - Kanalus (111.20 Km) including Porbandar Yard Remodeling (3.00 Km) as MM. **Date/time of Opening of tender:** 12.02.2021 at 15.30 hrs. **Tender value:** 234.39 Lakhs. **Note:** For eligibility, terms and conditions, please visit relevant webpage **www.ireps.gov.in.** 592

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SEARCH OF MISSING/KIDNAPPED

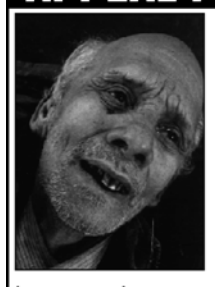
Darkasa

General public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo), **Namely:** Darkasa, **D/o:** Jalil, **R/o:** WZ-288, Shakurpur Village, Delhi **Aged:** 17 years, has been missing/kidnapped since 09.01.2021 from the area of PS Subhash Place, Delhi. In this regard a case **vide FIR No. 13/2021 u/s 363 IPC, Dated 09.01.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Subhash Place, Delhi.** Her physical description is as under: **Height:** 5' Feet, **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Clothing:** Green Colour Suit, Pink Colour Pajami and Badami Colour Shoes in feet.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing/kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, Subhash Place, Delhi. at **E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.nic.in or website : http://cbi.nic.in Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641**

S.H.O
P.S. Subhash Place, Delhi
DP/611/NW/2021. **Ph.: 011-27356336, 27353014, 8750870224**

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male namely **Deen Dayal Joshi,** S/o **Batchi Ram Joshi,** R/o **A-81, Gali No.09, D.C.M. Colony, Ebrahimpur, Mukhmelpur, Narela, North West, Delhi, Age:** Approx 65 years, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Height:** 170 Cms, **Built:** Normal, **Face:** Long, was wearing Blue colour Lining shirt, Black Jacket & Grey colour Pant, was found in unconcious condition on Footpath Hindustan Times Building, K.G. Marg, was admitted in RML Hospital vide MLC No. E/12187/39269. During the treatment he was expired. In this regard a **DD No. 03A, dated 19.01.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Barakhamba Road, New Delhi.**

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO
P.S. Barakhamba Road, New Delhi
DP/198/NDD/2021 **Ph.: 011-23413999, 23413800**

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that this person **Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** About 60 Years, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5'5", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Wearing:** Blue Colour Shirt & Sweater and Dark Blue Pant was found Lying at Kirby Place Red Light, Delhi Cantt., New Delhi, he was admitted to DDU Hospital vide MLC No. 5971/2020 dated 06.08.2020 and during treatment declared him dead on 14.08.2020.

In this regard a DD No. 55A, dated 14.08.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Delhi Cantt., New Delhi.

Dead Body has been kept preserved in DDU Hospital Mortuary for 72 hours for identification.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this dead person but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this dead person may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S. Delhi Cantt., New Delhi
DP/480/SW/2021 **Ph.: 011-25693161, 9810563274**

Sensex, Nifty soar to record highs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks galloped to lifetime highs on Wednesday, in lockstep with global markets which surged ahead of US President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration amid expectations of fresh stimulus by the incoming administration. Rallying for the second straight day, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced by 393.83 or 0.80 per cent to close at its fresh record of 49,792.12.

The broader NSE Nifty jumped 123.55 points or 0.85 per cent to settle at a lifetime high of 14,644.70.

World stocks advanced on Wednesday after US Treasury Secretary nominee Janet Yellen called for a hefty stimulus to protect the US economy.

Biden, who will be sworn into office on Wednesday, has laid out a $1.9 trillion stimulus package proposal to boost the economy.

Among Sensex stocks, Maruti rose the most by 2.75 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra (2.67 per cent), Mahindra & Mahindra (1.98 per cent) and Asian Paints (1.98 per cent).

Heavyweights Reliance Industries, Infosys, HDFC and TCS accounted for the lion's share of the gains.

Among losers, Power Grid dropped 1.75 per cent, NTPC 1.35 per cent, HDFC Bank 0.83 per cent and ITC 0.59 per cent.

"An optimistic western market aided the Indian market to touch lifetime highs with new buying in segments like auto, IT and PSU Bank. So far, the Q3 results are better than forecasted and this has led to continued buying across sectors.

"Ahead of Joe Biden's inauguration as President, the US market is on an upbeat mood with high expectations of a big US stimulus," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Sector-wise, BSE auto, energy, IT and teck indices climbed up to 2.18 per cent, while utilities, FMCG and telecom ended in the red.

In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap gauges jumped as much as 1.08 per cent. On the global markets front, Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.4 per cent and South Korea's Kospi by 0.6 per cent while Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.7 per cent.

Japanese market, however, dropped 0.4 per cent due to fresh Covid-19 concerns.

European bourses were trading in the green in early deals. The rupee gained for the second straight day and closed 12 paise higher at 73.05 against the US dollar.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.70 per cent to $56.29 per barrel. Foreign institutional investors were net buyers in the capital market as they purchased shares worth ₹257.55 crore on Tuesday, according to provisional exchange data.

₹ gains for 2nd day; settles 12p higher at 73.05/$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rising for the second session on the trot, the rupee finished 12 paise higher at 73.05 against the US dollar on Wednesday amid a rally in domestic equities and a weak greenback overseas.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 73.11, and hit an intra-day high of 73.05 and a low of 73.14.

It finally closed at 73.05, higher by 12 paise over its last close.

On Tuesday, the rupee had settled at 73.17 against the American currency.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, slipped 0.07 per cent to 90.43.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 393.83 points or 0.80 per cent higher at 49,792.12, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 123.55 points or 0.85 per cent to 14,644.70.

Foreign institutional investors remained net buyers in the capital market as they purchased shares worth ₹257.55 crore on Tuesday, according to provisional exchange data.

Working on addressing misinformation on user policy update: WhatsApp

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A day after India asked it to withdraw changes to its privacy policy, WhatsApp on Wednesday said the proposed change does not expand its ability to share user data with Facebook and that it is open to answering questions on the issue.

The Indian Government on Tuesday posed 14 questions to WhatsApp on its "invasive" changes in Terms of Service and Privacy Policy.

"We wish to reinforce that this update does not expand our ability to share data with Facebook. Our aim is to provide transparency and new options available to engage with businesses so they can serve their customers and grow," a WhatsApp spokesperson said.

The spokesperson added that WhatsApp will always protect personal messages with end-to-end encryption, so that neither WhatsApp nor Facebook can see them.

"We are working to address misinformation and remain available to answer any questions," the spokesperson further stated.

In a strongly worded letter to WhatsApp CEO Will Cathcart, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has said the proposed changes to the WhatsApp Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, without giving users an option to opt-out, "raise grave concerns regarding the implications for the choice and autonomy of Indian citizens".

The letter noted that with over 400 million users in India, the changes will have a disproportionate impact on the country's citizens, it said.

It has also asked WhatsApp to provide details of the services provided by it in India, categories of data collected and permissions and consents sought. It has also asked WhatsApp to withdraw the proposed changes and reconsider its approach to information privacy, freedom of choice and data security.

Weak reform implementation, financial sector woes could lower India's medium-term growth: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Wednesday said India's medium-term growth potential is at around 6.5 per cent but weak implementation of reforms, combined with continued financial sector problems, could lower its potential. It said the revival of the reform agenda is among the Indian Government's policy responses to the Covid-19 pandemic shock.

"If implemented effectively, we believe these reforms may help to support India's medium-term growth and partially offset downside pressures to investment from renewed asset-quality challenges in the financial sector and damaged corporate balance sheets," Fitch said.

It said the planned farm sector reforms aim to enhance efficiency, by giving farmers more flexibility over where to sell their produce by stripping out middle men and has the potential to improve farmers' income and reduce consumer prices.

"But, implementation risks are significant and the Supreme Court in mid-January suspended the relevant laws to facilitate a review and airing of farmer grievances," Fitch Ratings said. It added that segments of the farm lobby have protested for months, apparently over fears that the reform could result in abolition of minimum support prices, although the government has said this will not happen.

Further, the labour market reforms aim at improving worker access to social security (in the large unorganised sector), strengthen occupational safety requirements, speed up the resolution of labour disputes and ease migrant workers' ability to move between states.

Flipkart-Aditya Birla Fashion deal gets CCI nod

New Delhi: Competition Commission of India on Wednesday said it has approved the acquisition of 7.8 per cent minority stake in Aditya Birla Fashion by Flipkart Investments Private Ltd (FIPL). Aditya Birla Fashion had in October last year approved plans to raise ₹1,500 crore by issuing a 7.8 per cent stake on a preferential basis to Walmart-owned Flipkart Group.

"Commission approves acquisition of a 7.8 per cent minority stake in Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd by Flipkart Investments Private Ltd," the regulator said in a tweet.

With this infusion, Flipkart Group will own a 7.8 per cent equity stake in ABFRL on a fully diluted basis. The promoter and promoter group companies of ABFRL will hold about 55.13 per cent upon completion of the issuance, ABFRL said in a regulatory filing earlier. *PTI*

Indian insurers prepared to withstand economic downturn: Moody's

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian insurance firms are geared to withstand the economic downturn, as premium growth in general insurance segment will remain in positive territory and life premiums will stay broadly flat despite the weakening economy, Moody's Investors Service on Wednesday said.

"Although the economic slowdown has had an adverse impact on Indian insurers, with general insurance growth slowing to 2.5 per cent and life insurers' new business premiums falling by 1.7 per cent in the nine months to December 2020, we expect general insurance premium growth to remain in positive territory," Moody's VP and senior analyst Mohammed Ali Londe said.

This premium growth will be driven by strong demand for health and protection coverage, he added. In the nine months ended December 2020, health premiums grew by 13.7 per cent, helped by rising consumer awareness of these products during coronavirus pandemic and regulatory actions that enabled insurers to offer protection against the virus.

"We expect health premiums to continue growing strongly into 2021, when we anticipate that India's GDP growth will rebound to 10.8 per cent, leading to a gradual normalisation of economic activity," the agency said.

The growth prospects for general insurance are particularly positive, with the country's general insurance penetration rate standing at just 0.9 per cent. This is less than half the rate for China (2 per cent), which in turn lags behind developed markets such as the US (8.5 per cent), the report said. According to Moody's, insurers in the country have also responded to the crisis by rapidly developing appropriate products and improving their digital offerings.

"This has led to an increase in sales of health and protection policies, which we expect will drive further growth in the future," it noted.

The report said some Indian insurers' solvency remains inadequate due to weak profitability, resulting from the intense competition in the market.

Housing sales in Oct-Dec up 25% across 7 cities; demand rises 78% from Sep quarter

New Delhi: Housing sales rose 25 per cent year-on-year during the October-December period at 1,10,811 units across seven cities on pent up and festive demand, according to data analytic firm PropEquity. Housing sales stood at 88,976 units in the year-ago period.

Showing signs of recovery, total sales of home units in seven cities increased 78 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020 to 1,10,811 units as against 62,197 units in the third quarter of 2020.

"Housing market has definitely improved, and we are witnessing green shoots of recovery as evident from the latest Q4 report. As India embarks on its Covid vaccination drive, we believe it will further cement strong recoveries in the sector," said Samir Jasuja, Managing Director and Founder, PropEquity. *PTI*

Pimpri Chinchwad Police Commissioner Krishna Prakash enters World Book of Records

PNS ■ PUNE

Pimpri-Chinchwad Police Commissioner Krishna Prakash has been included in the World Book of Records, London for winning the 'Ironman' title.

"Krishna Prakash Prasad, IPS, has been honoured for being first Indian Government servant, civil servant, uniformed services officers including armed forces and paramilitary forces to earn the Iron Man title," said the certificate handed over to him.

Secretary of the World Book of Records London, Anurag Pandey and Dr Pradip Mishra handed over the certificate to Krishna Prakash at the police commissioner office in Chinchwad. Member of the British Parliament Virendra Sharma, Dr Alok Sharma, World Book of Records England Chairman Divakar Sukul and World Book of Records England, India president, and Delhi High Court Advocate Santosh Shukla and others met Commissioner Krishna Prakash and congratulated him.

EPFO net new enrolments dip to 10.11 lakh in Nov

New Delhi: Net new enrolments with retirement fund body EPFO slipped to 10.11 lakh in November from 10.56 lakh in October 2020, according to its latest payroll data released on Wednesday, providing a perspective on formal sector employment.

Provisional payroll data released by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) last month had shown that net new enrolments were at 11.54 lakh in October 2020.

"The provisional payroll of EPFO released today reveals that it has added around 10.11 lakh net subscribers in the month of November, 2020. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, EPFO has added around 45.29 lakh net subscribers base in the current financial year (from April to November, 2020).

"The data published comprises members who have joined during the month and whose contribution has been received," a labour ministry statement on the payroll data said. *PTI*

The Executive Engineer-II, Urban Development Department, Agartala, West Tripura, invites **e-tender** against press NIT No. 04/EE-II/UDD/EN/2020-21 Dated: **18-01-2021.**

For "Construction of 1000 seated capacity town hall at Mohanpur, Tripura / SH: Building portion including Acoustic works, internal water supply, sanitary installation and other Miscellaneous works".

With **Estimated cost: Rs.8,17,37,200.00, Earnest Money: Rs. 8,17,372.00 Time of Completion - 24 (Twenty Four) months. Last Date of bidding for bids** - 08-02-2021 upto 15.00Hrs.

For more details kindly visit: **https://tripuratenders.gov.in**

Note:-
NO NEGOTIATION WILL BE CONDUCTED WITH THE LOWEST BIDDER

Sd/-
(Er. C.S. Das)
Executive Engineer-II
Urban Development Department,,
ICA/C-2866/2020-21 Agartala, West Tripura,

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that my client, SMT. PUSHPA SURI W/o LATE SH. SATPAL SURI, owner of SFS FLAT NO. 26, POCKET-H, CAT-III, SARITA VIHAR, NEW DELHI has applied for issuance of Certified copies of relevant documents in DDA as the original documents i.e. Allotment Letter, 5th & Final Demand letter, Possession Letter, site possession & NOC to water and electric of the above said flat has been lost. An NCR/LR NO.721917/2017 dated 10/05/2017 to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi.

Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. 9599929505 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director LAB (H) or Director (H), D Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

Naveen Aggarwal (Advocate)
Chamber No M-7, Near SBI, Western Wing, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-110054

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mrs. Saloni is the owner of Portion/Flat of Second Floor (Front Side East Facing) without roof rights, area measuring 50 Sq. Yds., Part of Property Bearing No. J-79, out of Khasra No. 26/101, Village-Gharonda Neem ka Banger @ Patparganj, Block-J, Pandav Nagar, Illaqa Shahdara, Delhi "Said Property" by virtue of Sale Deed dated 18.06.2013, Registration No. 103, All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owner wants to sell the said property to someone who want to purchase the same by taking Home loan from our client Fullerton India Home Finance Ltd. Further, Original GPA, ATS & Will dated 12.11.2008 executed by Mrs. Pooja Narula in favour of Mrs. Sulochna Devi & the Last page of Registration particular of Original Sale Deed dated 18.06.2013, document no.103 executed by Mrs. Sulochna Devi in favour of Mrs. Saloni in respect of said property are missing. If anybody has any objection/s upon the said property, and its ownership / its Title / Mortgage, Sale, Etc. kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
200, IInd Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N. Delhi-15
Ph : 011-41112527-28 kumarassociates.advocate@gmail.com

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

Inder @ Sanju

General Public is hereby informed that one boy **Namely: Inder@Sanju, S/o: Ran Singh, R/o:** H.No. 682, near Saini Mohalla, Nangloi, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since **20.12.2020** from the area of P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi. In this regard a case vide **FIR No. 1169/20 U/s 364-A IPC dated 21.12.2020** has been registered at P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi. The description of the missing/ kidnapped boy is as under: **Age:** 15 years, **Height:** 5'10", **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Fair, **Wearing**: Blue colour shirt & jeans, pink colour sweater and green colour shoes in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the boy but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this boy kindly inform to the following.

Website: http//cbi.nic.in
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639
DP/585/OD/2020
SHO
P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi
Ph.:011-25946710, 7065036129

Govt. of Bihar

BIHAR RURAL ROAD DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (BRRDA)
GOVERNMENT OF BIHAR

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) cum REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL(RFP)
For Selection ofConsultancy Services forProject Management and Construction Supervision of Bridges on Rural Roads in the State of Bihar

BRRDA, RWD, Govt. of Bihar, invites Expression of Interest cum Request For Proposal (RFP) For Selection of Consultancy Services for Project Management and Construction Supervision of Bridges on Rural Roads in the State of Bihar from consultancy firm/agency, qualified&eligible as described in Terms of Reference (ToR) for the selection. The Expression of Interest (EoI) will remain valid for 02 (two) years initially and can be extended on the basis of performance and requirement.

BRRDA, as a step towards Institutional Effectiveness, feels to create Bridge Management Cell at HQ level comprising of some experienced personnel's in the Bridge Sector having expertise in planning, design and construction supervision to take care of the minor/major bridges either being implemented or proposed to be implemented in coming days.

Consultancy Agency selected will have to perform the activities like Planning, monitoring and Supervision of designs and quality of construction activities for bridges. This includes scrutiny of DPRs of different kind of Bridge Structure, along with Signature Bridge all type of bridges and quality Supervision and proof checking of its design before submission to STA / MoRD, GoI.

Interested Consultancy Agency should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The short-listingcriteria's are:

- Past experience in carrying out Construction, quality Supervision of Bridges in India funded by multilateral external funding agencies/central government agencies/state government agencies over the past (5) years.
- Annual turnover of the firm for at least the last Five years. (FY 15-16, 16-17,17-18, 18-19, 19-20) showing at least average annual turnover equivalent to INR 10.00 Cr.in any one of the last 5 financial years. (Consultancy Agency should submit audited financial reports of last five financialyears).

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to the fact that compensation provided for this assignment will be quoted in INR.Consultants may associate with other firms in the form of a **Joint Venture or a Sub-consultancy to enhance their qualifications.**

The EOI documents would be seen/downloaded from our website **www.rwdbihar.gov.in/ eadvtprd.bihar.gov.in**or may be obtained from the office of Secretary, BRRDA from **04.02.2021 (10:00 Hours) up to11.02.2021 (15:00Hours)** on payment of **Rs. 5000/- (Non-Refundable)** for each empanelment in form of bank draft from scheduled/nationalized bank in favour of **Secretary, BRRDA, RWD,Bihar** payable at **Patna**. Firms/Agencies downloading EoI document from the website will have to submit the Form/Document fee of Rs. 5000/-(Non-Refundable) in form of bank draft at the time of submission of EoI document. **Pre-Bid Meeting will be held on 05.02.2021at 15:00Hours** in the Conference Hall of BRRDA. The Department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the EOIs without assigning any reason.

Documents required for is as follows: -
(a) The Company/Firm/Agency should have required similar work experience of such type.
(b) The Company/Firm/Agency must enclose PAN/Service Tax/GST Registration (As applicable)
(c) Agency must submit the Demand Draft.

As per TOR Interested Consultancy firms may submit Expression of Interest in sealed envelopes clearly superscripted as

'Request for Expression of Interest cum Request for Proposal (RFP) For Selection of Consultancy Services for Project Management and Construction Supervision of Bridges on Rural Roads in the State of Bihar' in one original and one copy **upto11.02.2021on or before15:30 Hours**at the address mentioned below:
"Office of Secretary-cum-Empowered Officer, Bihar Rural Roads Development Agency, 3rd Floor, Land Development Bank,Budh Marg. Patna-800001".

The EOI may be submitted personally or through representative by dropping in the tender box of BRRDA or may be sent through Speed post. The EOI received after schedule date and time of submission will not be accepted. Late submission will not be entertained due to delay in postal services.

(Sanjay Dubey)
Secretary-cum-Empowered
Officer, BRRDA, Bihar
E-mail.id:pmgsyrwdbihar@gmail.com
PR. No. 011496 (RWD) 2020-21

खाद्य सामग्री- संबंधी किसी तरह की जानकारी अथवा सुझाव हेतु दूरभाष संख्या 0612–2217636 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।

AXIS BANK

Axis Bank Limited, Axis Bank, SCO 221, Paramjeet Tower, Sector 12,Karnal-Haryana-132001.
Controlling office: Axis House, Bombay Dyeing Compound, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli, Mumbai- 400025.

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the secured creditor, the physicalpossession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Secured Creditor will be sold on **"As is whereis"**, **"As is what is"** and **"Whatever there is"** basis on 02-03-2021on 11:00 AM at Axis Bank, SCO 221, Paramjeet Tower, Sector 12 , Karnal-Haryana-132001for recovery of Rs. 3, 01,490/- (Three Lakh One Thousand four Hundred Ninety Only) dues as on 30.08.2019along with further interest as applicable, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. incurred up to the date of actual payment and/or realization due to thesecured creditor from Mr.Satpal Kumar S/o Mr. Om Parkash & Mrs.Sushma Rani W/o Mr.Satpal Kumar. The reserveprice will be Rs.648787/- (Six Lakh Forty Eight Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty Seven Only)and the earnest money deposit will be Rs.65,000/-(Sixty Five Thousand Only) Last Date, Time and Venue for Submission of Bids with Sealed Offer/ Tender with EMD on 01-03-2021at the above mentioned address.

Account Number	Location / Details of the Immovable Property/Secured Assets possessed and put for sale	Encumbrances, if any known to the Bank.
Home Loan **PHR0394 02284418**	All piece and parcels of property i.e. freehold plot No. 30, measuring 100Sq. Yards i.e. 34 marlaas being 31/2196 shre of total land measuring 12 Kanal 4 marlas cmpried in Khewat No 246, Khatouni No. 368, Kitta 4 situated at Vaka Rakba Darra Khurd, Kirti Nagar within Municipal limits of Thanesar , Tehsil Thanesar Distt. Kurukshetra in the name of Mrs. Sushma Rani W/o Mr. Satpal Kumar	NO

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale,please refer to the link provided inthe securedcreditor's website i.e. Https://www.axisbank.com/auction-notices/

Date : 21-01-2021,
Place: Karnal , Haryana
Sd/-,
Authorized Officer,
Axis Bank Ltd.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARENCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED
(See Section 82 Cr. PC)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Gautam S/o Budhsen R/o H.No. A-736, Gali No. 13, Ground Floor, Bholanath Nagar, Shahadra, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 467/20 Dt. 16.10.20 u/s 419/420/34 IPC PS: Kapashera, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrants of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Gautam** could not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Gautam** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **Gautam of FIR No. 467/20 Dt. 16.10.20 u/s 419/420/34 IPC PS: Kapashera, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 26.02.2021.**

By order
Apoorva Rana
Metropolitan Magistrate
Court Room No. 316,
Dwarka Courts New Delhi
DP/470/SW/2021

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Alamgir Malik @ Bappi S/o** Jakaria Malik, **R/o** Village-Aushera, Post-Sehara Bazar, PS-Raina, Distt-Purva, Vardhman, West Bengal has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 395/2019, U/s 363/366/376 IPC & 6 POCSO Act** has been registered at **P.S. Adarsh Nagar, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Alamgir Malik @ Bappi** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Alamgir Malik @ Bappi** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Alamgir Malik @ Bappi** accused of **FIR No. 395/2019, U/s 363/366/376 IPC & 6 POCSO Act, P.S. Adarsh Nagar, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer said complaint on or before **24.02.2021**.

By Order
Ms. Vandana, ASJ-05/POCSO,
Room No. 302, 3rd Floor,
Distt. Court Rohini, New Delhi
DP/594/NW/2021-(Court Matter)

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

Dharamdev Narang

General Public is hereby informed that a person namely **Dharamdev Narang S/o Lt. Parmnand R/o** HP 6 Pitam Pura Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 13.01.2021. In this regard a **DD No. 54A dated 13.01.2021** has been lodged at PS, Maurya Enclave, Delhi.

The description of missing/kidnapped person is as under :

Name: Dharamdev Narang, **Father's Name :** Lt. Parmnand, **Age :** 63 years, **Height** : 5'5", **Face :** Round, **Complexion** : Wheatish, **Built :** Thin, **Wearing** : White line colour shirt and gray colour pant and slipper in feet and blue colour cort.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

Website : http://cbi.nic.in
e-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638/24368641
Extn.-210
Fax: 011-24368639
DP/610/NW/2021

SHO
P.S., Maurya Enclave, Delhi
Ph. : 011-27322353
27325006

Trend Blazer

'B'wood doesn't understand my worth'

Singer **NEHA BHASIN** has lately been concentrating on an independent music career lately. She feels Bollywood probably does not understand her worth as an artiste.

"I do not want to sing a random song just because it is of a Bollywood film. I do not want to sing something if my heart is not in it. Having said that, I think so far all the songs I sang are massive hits because they are some of the great compositions and lyrically good. I think Bollywood probably does not understand my worth, it never did. I really made peace with that," Neha said.

Neha started her journey as a singer with the Channel [V] all-girls pop band Viva before going solo.

'I could do all this because I was not associated with any political party. Otherwise I would have had to ask 100 questions before doing a job like this. Since it was my decision to connect with people and help them, I was able to reach out. Whatever I did, was not about caste or religion. I have been connecting with people a lot over the past year.'
—Sonu Sood

Actor **KUNAAL ROY KAPUR** doesn't like malice when it comes to feedback about his acting. He adds that he is up for constructive criticism from the audience.

"I try to make the best of the opportunities that come my way. I don't know whether I am overrated or underrated. I just want to act and get better with each performance. I feel there are many areas where I can improve and there are many genres I would like to explore," Kapur said.

The actor is currently seen in the Kajol-starrer OT-released film *Tribhanga: Tedhi Medhi Crazy.*

Emma on being pregnant

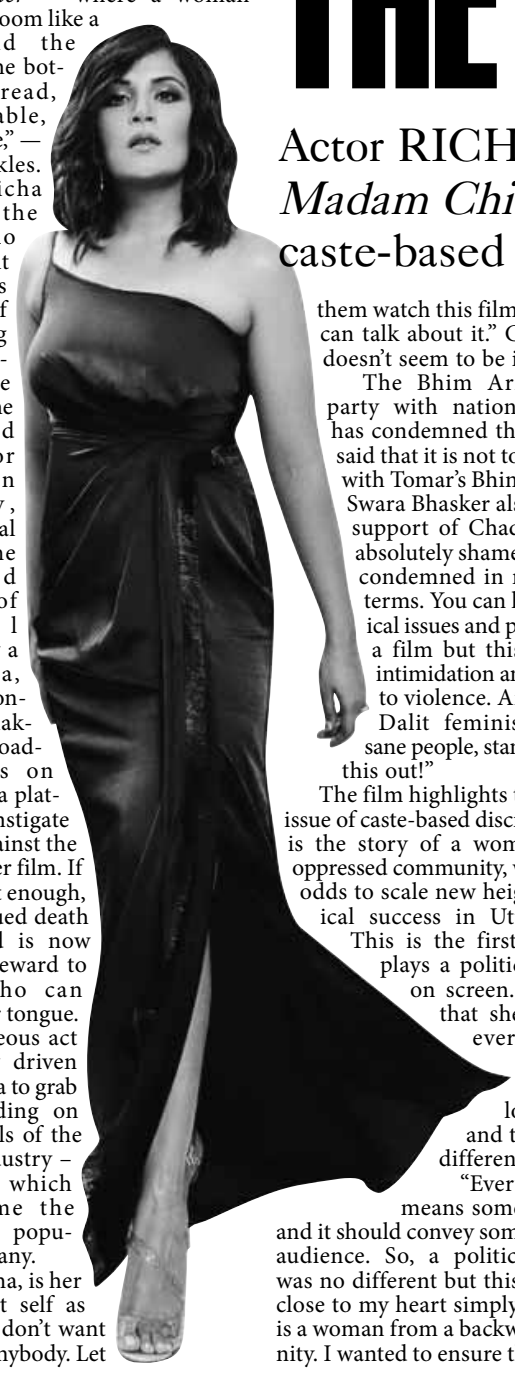
Actor **EMMA ROBERTS** says her close friends helped her through her pregnancy during the COVID pandemic.

"I feel so lucky because literally four of my close girlfriends were pregnant or have had a baby that year," Roberts said.

"So, I have had such a nice support group of other women that either were ahead of me in their pregnancy or on their second baby. I felt so lucky that I had people to text at all hours of the day and night. It's been so nice to have other women to talk to that are going through that. If I was the only one pregnant during this pandemic in isolation, then I would have felt even more isolated," she said, in an episode of *The Drew Barrymore Show.*

THE GRIM REALITY

Actor RICHA CHADHA says that her forthcoming film, *Madam Chief Minister,* highlights the pertinent issue of caste-based discrimination. By AYUSHI SHARMA



The very first poster of the forthcoming film, *Madam Chief Minister* — where a woman held up a broom like a sword and the tagline at the bottom read, "Untouchable, Unstoppable," — raised hackles. Actor Richa Chadha, the lead, who plays a Dalit woman, was accused of stereotyping the community. Despite retracting the poster and the actor issuing an apology, Nawab Satpal Tanwar, the reported founder of Akhil Bhartiya Bhim Sena, has been continuously making and uploading videos on social media platforms to instigate violence against the actor and her film. If that was not enough, he even issued death threats and is now offering a reward to anyone who can chop off her tongue. The outrageous act is certainly driven by an agenda to grab eyeballs riding on the coat tails of the popular industry – something which has become the highway to popularity for many.

But Richa, is her non chalant self as she says, "I don't want to amplify anybody. Let them watch this film and then we can talk about it." Certainly, she doesn't seem to be intimidated.

The Bhim Army, a Dalit party with national presence, has condemned this threat and said that it is not to be confused with Tomar's Bhim Sena. Actor Swara Bhasker also tweeted in support of Chadha, "This is absolutely shameful and to be condemned in no uncertain terms. You can have ideological issues and problems with a film but this is criminal intimidation and incitement to violence. Ambedkarites, Dalit feminists and just sane people, stand up and call this out!"

The film highlights the pertinent issue of caste-based discrimination. It is the story of a woman from an oppressed community, who defies all odds to scale new heights of political success in Uttar Pradesh. This is the first time Richa plays a political character on screen. She tells us that she has played every role with the same amount of love and zeal and this one is no different.

"Everything I play means something to me and it should convey something to the audience. So, a political character was no different but this one is quite close to my heart simply because she is a woman from a backward community. I wanted to ensure that I play her to the best of my ability. I have worked very hard for this," says the actor, who was last seen in the biopic, *Shakeela.*

"This character is inspired from several real life anecdotes and is not focussed on any one particular leader. My director, Subhash Kapoor, was a political journalist. He met a lot of people and gathered the stories. I think such real life stories are important, especially when you are making a film. It is based on interactions with many leaders. It's everything that we have seen and read about Indian politics, how MLAs behave before and after the election results are announced. So these are some elements of the film," adds she.

'My character is inspired from several real life anecdotes and is not focussed on any one particular leader. My director, Subhash Kapoor, was a political journalist. He met a lot of people and gathered the stories. I think such real life stories are important, especially when you are making a film'

In a country like India, where dissent, criticism and negative remarks are not looked upon kindly by the government, can a film like this voice the drawbacks about Indian government without facing challenges? She says, "I don't think this film passes a comment against the Indian or any other government. It's definitely a comment on the ugly reality of gender politics and caste-based discrimination."

Richa feels that in India, the caste system is found in many forms despite there being several laws prohibiting it. There are limits on interaction and behaviour with people from another social status. "I thought it only happens in slums and places that are removed from modern civilisation but that's not the case. When you read about the suicide of Rohith Vemula or the case of Pooja, a medical student and how she was bullied by her own medical practitioners, you realise that the reality is different. I don't know how we are ignoring such things. I hope that this film initiates some kind of a conversation. I learnt a lot about my own self and privilege while working on this," she says.

Let's hope India breaks the shackles of prejudice, discrimination and violence, and the country moves towards the heaven of freedom for all.

(The film releases on January 22. It also stars Manav Kaul, Saurabh Shukla, Akshay Oberoi and others.)

Shilpa, Amit reunite for new single

Singer Shilpa Rao has joined hands with composer Amit Trivedi on a new single. The new song titled *Rusvaaiyaan,* has been composed by Amit, and sung by Shilpa and Shahid Mallya.

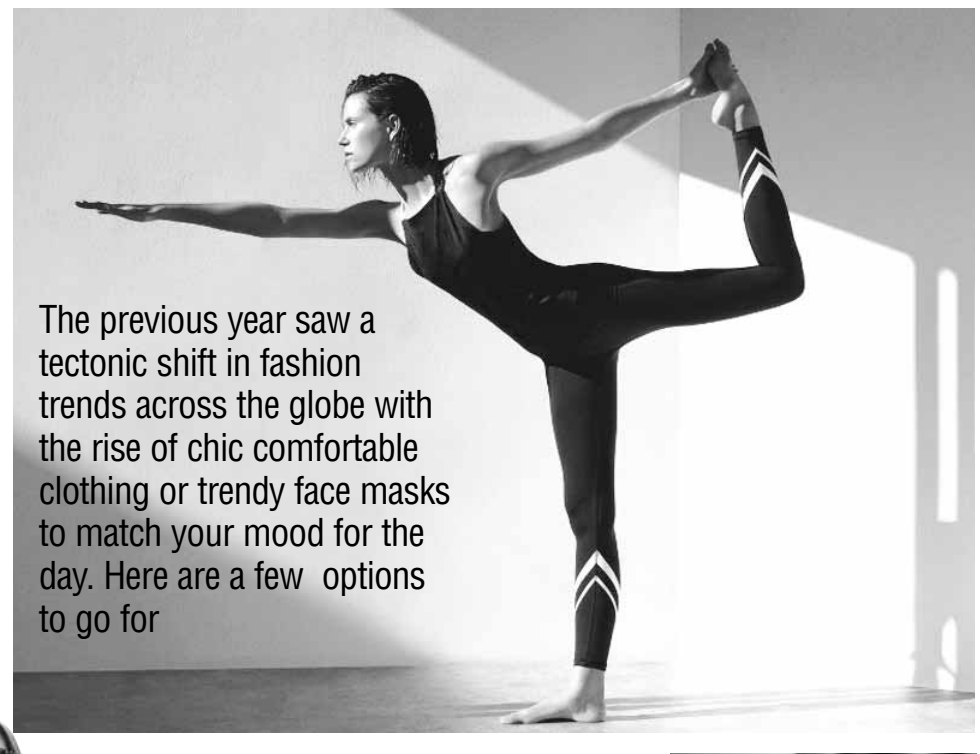
"There are many shades of love. We have seen in the history of music, people make song for lovers when they unite, the anticipation, the realisation the first time you see someone. But the other side of love is also kind of sweet pain that it brings, sometimes it doesn't work out and even if love brings you unhappiness or separation, love is still love and all shades of love have their own glory," said Shilpa.

"With *Rusvaaiyaan,* we are celebrating love in the form of pain that it brings to lovers, and all we trying to put out through the song is that we are all in this together so, even if you feel isolated, we are with you. I hope the song brings hope to people and they can keep having faith in love," she added.

In the non-film space, Shilpa and Amit had earlier collaborated on an upbeat track, *Raavan.* The duo had earlier worked together in films such as *Lootera* and *English Vinglish.*

Trend tool

Best look forward



The previous year saw a tectonic shift in fashion trends across the globe with the rise of chic comfortable clothing or trendy face masks to match your mood for the day. Here are a few options to go for

Look good to feel good is the mantra for men and women alike across all age groups. Everyone wants to appear on point and fashionably forward at all hours. The year 2020 has seen a major shift in fashion trends across the globe, be it the rise of chic comfortable clothing or trendy face masks to match your mood for the day. Businesses and designers have adapted to the current situation and directly translated their ideas into designs presented through live streamed shows, artful videos, YouTube streams and socially distanced in-person runways.

There is a collective hope that this year will be drastically different from the previous one while also bringing us an array of new trends. From 70s-inspired pieces of denim to decadent leather, check out the trendiest selections. Narendra Kumar, creative director, Amazon Fashion India, recommends some of the styles and looks to conquer 2021 fashion like a pro!

FOR HER

Floral print dresses: They never go out of vogue and can be styled in a myriad ways. Pair a bright coloured floral dress with a sleek belt to add shape to the outfit or go bold with a chunky jacket. Finish with a pair of strappy sandals and a bold red lipstick.

Square-neck tops: Unique necklines have been all the rage since the rise of the Zoom culture. Square-neck tops, in particular, look feminine and give you a chance to show off those structured collar bones. Pair these with a pair of high-rise jeans and a classic pair of sunglasses for a day-to-night look.

Pastel sweaters: Liven up your wardrobe with sweaters in pastels like blush pink or baby blue for a cheerful look. You can also go monotone by choosing accessories like a baguette bag and sandals in the same colour.

Yoga pants: Yoga pants have managed to slide their way back into our hearts. Workout in style with pants that are comfortable and match your aesthetic. Opt for solid colours or have fun with printed bold neon and animal prints to jazz up your ensemble.

Tank tops: As the athleisure trend continues to pick up speed, so do workout tank tops. A good quality tank top that allows you to move freely is an essential for any kind of workout. The colour options are endless.

Midi kurtas: Sophisticated and feminine, midi kurtas make for the perfect *desi* ensemble. Have fun with different patterns and colour options. You can also opt for a collared neckline to add a touch of elegance. Finish the look with *jhumkas* and some colorful bangles.

Terracotta-coloured culottes: Terracotta has made a comeback by taking Instagram and Pinterest by storm. Pair them with knee-high leather boots in the colder months or go for classic sneakers in summer.

Colourful bandanas: Bandanas are unquestionably cool and will add some pop to your outfit. You can go for bright colours to lift the gloom and pair it with a casual tee or even a sundress. This versatile accessory can be used as a necktie, a scarf or even as a makeshift top if you are feeling adventurous.

Digital watches: A digital wristwatch with a smart yet definitive dial goes well with everything. Find one that complements your personal taste. With intelligent and unique features like heart rate monitor, alarms and timers, a digital watch is a must-have in 2021.

Hoop earrings: Hoops in all sizes are on the trend watch more than ever now! Whether you are looking for occasion-worthy earrings or an everyday style, these minimalistic earrings will add just the right amount of vogue to your overall look.

FOR HIM

Printed polo t-shirts: There's nothing quite like the quintessential polo t-shirt. It's classic, yet simple and suits every occasion. You can also spice up your basic polo t-shirts by adding micro prints like micro-checks, fine stripes and geometric patterns or foliage and paisley prints for casual and evening wear.

Classic denims: Possibly the most versatile bottom wear, denim jeans are a smart and non-fussy piece of clothing. Remember, the most important rule while shopping for denims is that it must fit you well. The versatile garment can be paired with both formal and casual apparel.

Printed hoodies: A hoodie might not be the most fashion forward item in your wardrobe, but a printed one will completely change the game! For a contemporary urban outfit, consider pairing a hoodie with a solid coloured bomber jacket or pair it with a long coat for a semi formal look.

Monotone joggers: They have become the most preferred option for streetwear as it remains stylish and provides optimum comfort, be it indoors or outdoors. Style your pair of bottoms effortlessly with a graphic t-shirt and black Vans to go for that carefree look.

Grey pastel trousers: Be it a casual outing with friends or a conference at your workplace, a pair of grey pastel trousers can always work! Wear them with a teal coloured blazer and a printed t-shirt to complete that casual yet classy look.

Geometric print shorts: Slip into a pair of comfortable geometric print shorts this year to embrace the work-from-home culture. Pair it with your favourite casual t-shirts and espadrilles. To complete the look, pair with a brown or black hat.

Colorful sneakers: Sneakers have now become a staple in everybody's wardrobes. However, the shade-card has drastically changed from monotone and become less rigid. This year has seen a wide array of styles in shoes, especially in its colour mix, and the trend will continue in 2021 as well.

Earthy fragrances: An earthy fragrance adds a great sense of depth and warmth with natural elements coming to life through the senses. Dab a woody or a pine-scented perfume. Remember to choose one that is not too overwhelming.

BRIDGING THE GAP

With the inauguration of Kevadiya rail line by PM NARENDRA MODI, the Statue of Unity now has seamless connectivity

The world's tallest statue — 'Statue of Unity' of Iron Man Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at Kevadiya came on Indian Railway's map on Sunday. On this occasion, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the Dabhoi-Chandod rail line (18 km), new broad gauge railway line from Chandod to Kevadiya (32 km), newly electrified Pratapnagar-Kevadiya section (80 km), the new station buildings of Dabhoi Junction and flagged off eight new trains from various destinations to Kevadiya through video conferencing. With this milestone, a seamless connectivity by rail has been provided to pilgrims, passengers and tourists from different parts of the country visiting the various holy places nestled on the banks of river Narmada and other places of interest in the vicinity of the statue.

According to a press release issued by Sumit Thakur — Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, Piyush Goyal, Minister of Railways, Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Govt. of India virtually addressed the event from H. Nizamuddin. This was followed by a speech from Vijaybhai Rupani, Gujarat CM at Kevadiya and a short film showcasing the various milestones attained in commissioning the rail line and accomplishing the project within the set time. Uddhav Thackeray, CM, Maharashtra, Yogi Aditya Nath, CM, Uttar Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chauhan CM, Madhya Pradesh and Arvind Kejriwal, CM, Delhi also attended virtually.

On the occasion, Acharya Devvrat, Governor of Gujarat, Gitaben V. Rathva — Member of Parliament, Chhota Udepur and Alok Kansal — General Manager of

W. Rly were also present. Nitinbhai Patel, Deputy CM of Gujarat attended the joined event virtually at Ahmedabad station. The inaugural function was also attended at Pratapnagar station by Yogesh Patel, Minister of State of Narmada & Urban Housing, Govt. of Gujarat, Ranjanben D. Bhatt — Member of Parliament, Vadodara, Rajendra Trivedi, Speaker, Manisha Vakil, MLA and Seemaben Mohile, MLA. At Ahmedabad station, members of Parliament Dr. Kirit P. Solanki, Hasmukhbhai S. Patel and Narahari Amin attended the event. MPs Rahul Shewale, Gopla Shetty and Arvind Sawant alongwith MLAs Mangal Prabhat Lodha, Tamil R. Selvan and Kalidas Kolambkar were present at Dadar station. Suneet Sharma — Chairman & CEO, Railway Board along with its members, and various senior railway officers were also present through web link. Renowned celebrities from arts, music and sports attended the event virtually. All passengers traveling in the inaugural trains from Kevadiya, Ahmedabad, Dadar and Pratapnagar were presented with tickets to commemorate this historic event.

Various passengers shared their experience and felt proud to participate in the mega event. Rajasthan Meter Gauge Pravasi Sangh, President, Vimal Ranka, ZRUCC Member & General Secretary of Mumbai Rail Pravasi Sangh, Kailash Verma and ZRUCC Member Yogesh Mishra appreciated the efforts and expressed gratitude for these development projects.

The details of the project are summarised as under:

SALIENT FEATURES:

- The project was sanctioned at a cost of ₹811 cr.
- Land acquisition for new line project was completed on July 2020 and the project has been commissioned in five months.
- It has seven stations with three major (crossing) stations and four minor (halt) stations.
- Out of these, four stations are new — Moriya, Tilakwada, Garudeshwar and Kevadiya.
- There are eight major bridges, 79 minor bridges, nine road over bridges and 31 road under bridges.
- The sectional speed between Pratapnagar-Dabhoi has been raised from 75 kmph to 110 kmph in a span of 75 days and Dabhoi-Kevadiya section has been built with 110 kmph. The speed of the entire section from Pratapnagar-Kevadiya will be further enhanced to 130 kmph.
- The station buildings at Dabhoi junction, Chandod and Kevadiya have been designed aesthetically incorporating local features and modern passenger amenities. Also, Kevadiya station is India's first railway station with a green building certification since inception of construction.
- Modern engineering techniques and equipment such as Mobile Flash Butt Welding machines, Ready Mix Concrete (RMC), Heavy Earth Moving equipment, Heavy duty Road Cranes & Track Machines were deployed to quicken the pace of civil engineering work.
- A unique technical solution for design of minor bridges has been adopted by using locally available RCC hume pipes. This has not only reduced execution time but has also garnered a savings of approx ₹ 27 cr.
- Innovative technologies such as Factory Acceptance Test (FAT) & Sight Acceptance Test (SAT) for electronic interlocking signalling system through virtual mode (during COVID-19 pandemic) have been used to speed up the signalling works and to reduce commissioning time.
- Tower Wagons, Over Head Equipment (OHE) wiring train were utilised for expedition of electrification works.

BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT:

- Providing seamless rail connectivity to the world's tallest statue from various directions of the nation.
- The new Kevadiya Railway station is located approximately 6.5 km away from 'Statue of Unity.'
- The alignment passes through the tribal belt of Vadaj-Chandod-Moriya-Tilakwada-Garudeshwar and will bring development to the area/region.
- It will also provide connectivity to important religious and ancient pilgrim places on the banks of river Narmada such as old temples at Karnali, Poicha and Garudeshwar.
- It will boost both, domestic and international tourism.
- It will act as a catalyst for overall socio-economic development of the region.
- It will generate new employment and business opportunities.

NTPC breaks record

NTPC group generated its highest ever gross generation of 1009 million units on Monday. The achievement reinforces the group's commitment towards excellence in operation across its power stations.

Recently, as per the data published by Central Electricity Authority (CEA), NTPC Singrauli Unit 1 in Uttar Pradesh (UP), which had commenced operation 38 years ago, achieved the highest Plant Load Factor (PLF) of 100.24 per cent for the period (April to December 2020). This reflects the operation and maintenance capability of the group.

The group has achieved gross cumulative generation of 222.4 billion unit (BU) from April to December 2020, an increase of 3.8 per cent compared to the same period last year.

NTPC being an essential service provider, has maintained operations at its power stations during the lockdown phases while adhering to all the COVID related guidelines issued by the government.

INMAS and CRPF launch bike ambulance

Central Reserve Police Force and DRDO's Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) launched a bike ambulance RAKSHITA at CRPF Headquarters in New Delhi. Dr. A.P. Maheshwari, DG CRPF and Dr. A.K. Singh, DS & DG (LS), DRDO unveiled the bike ambulance developed by INMAS in collaboration with CRPF for golden hour life saving aid and evacuation.

DG CRPF expressed his gratitude to the team for their unrelenting efforts put in developing the bike ambulance and commended their tireless dedication and professional efficiency.

While expressing his deepest gratitude to DG CRPF for working together, giving regular inputs throughout the journey of the development of this life saving bike and entrusting INMAS with this innovation, Dr. A K promised to cooperate perpetually with CRPF for further improvements in 'Rakshita bike.'

In its endeavour to provide internal security to the nation, CRPF is deployed across the country. Most of these deployments are in remote and inhospitable areas like LWE affected areas, North East etc. where evacuation of sick or battle injured personnel becomes a challenge. Often, late evacuation results in loss of precious lives of the bravehearts. To mitigate this, in 2018 CRPF approached INMAS with the idea of developing an ambulance on motor bikes which is frequently used by CRPF for patrolling in these theaters. INMAS promptly put up a team of scientists and experts to make the idea a reality. The team developed a

prototype and improved it with the feedback from CRPF personnel deployed in disturbed areas.

Carefully custom built to the needs of emergency evacuation, 'Rakshita' is built on a Royal Enfield Classic 350CC and comes with quick fit in and fit out casualty evacuation seat (CSE) that has customised design reclining, hand immobiliser and harness jacket, physiological parameter measuring equipment with monitoring capability and auto warning system for driver, dashboard mounted LCD for measuring vital parameters, air splint medical and oxygen kit, saline and oxygen administration on the move, adjustable footrest and hand and foot strap for safety among others. 21 bike ambulances were inducted into CRPF recently.

IN SHORT

RITES Ltd has been awarded winner under the 'Plaque' category at the ICAI Awards for Excellence in Financial Reporting 2019-20. RITES' Director (Finance) Bibhu Prasad Nayak and Chief Financial Officer Parmod Kumar Narang received the award from Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises Arjun Ram Meghwal.

Despite the adverse financial circumstances arising out of the pandemic, the Government of Rajasthan has shown its commitment to the all-round development of the state. All work is being done under the guidance of the CM Ashok Gehlot. The PD account system has been implemented in place of bank accounts for the payment of all departments, state institutions as well as Panchayat Raj institutions and autonomous ones. It is worth mentioning that the PD account is a kind of bank account operated by the state government. The state ensures consolidation of these institutions even in odd financial situations.

GGSIPU celebrates Guru Gobind's birthday

Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University celebrated Guru Gobind Singh *ji*'s birth anniversary with full fervor through *shabad kirtan* and *ardas* followed by a blood donation camp.

The celebration started with the inauguration of blood donation camp by the Vice Chancellor of the University Padma Shri professor Mahesh Verma in presence of Atul Garg, Director, Delhi Fire Services as guest of honour and other senior army officers.

Around 100 units of blood was collected by Indian Red Cross Society. The Vice Chancellor, who is also a senior doctor, encouraged the donors with a motivation saying, "Blood donation is not a small donation, especially on this auspicious day of the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh *ji*, who sacrificed his entire life and family for the sake of humanity."

A dialogue on NEP

A dialogue on the 'New Education Policy 2020 — NEP Outreach,' was organised by the Nehru Centre, London with National Book Trust, India (under Ministry of Education) as the nodal agency, on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', Minister of Education, Govt. of India said that under the leadership of PM Modi, the NEP-2020 has been implemented with a futuristic mindset, thereby turning the challenges into opportunities. It will equip India to hold a position in the global knowledge system while maintaining and developing its traditional knowledge system. "Through the policy, we are hoping to transform education and putting a significant thrust on learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative, multidisciplinary and how to innovate, adapt and absorb new material in the novel and changing fields. Pedagogy is expected to evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centered, discussion-based, flexible and enjoyable," the minister added.

Vinay Sahastrabuddhe, President ICCR, in his opening remarks said that the NEP-2020 is one of the greatest reforms. Hon Jo Johnson, Educationist, Former

Minister for Universities, Science, Research & Innovation, United Kingdom, lauded India's NEP-2020 as an event of global significance and as a policy that will turn India into a global knowledge superpower, emphasising its strong focus on early years, teachers, universal numeracy and literacy. He also mentioned that the exciting fact about NEP-2020 is that it proposes to shift the mode of assessment from summative to formative, testing higher order skills like critical thinking, analysis and conceptual clarity.

Johnson and Dr. Pokhriyal also engaged in a dialogue on various provisions of the NEP-2020, such as teacher training, entry of top 100 foreign universities in India and education in Indian HEIs.

The engaging event was moderated by Amish Tripathi, Minister (Culture), High Commission of India, UK and Director, The Nehru Centre.

Kolkata Metro will run 118 services on Republic Day instead of 240 services in an interval of 15 minutes. The first service will start from both ends i.e. from Dum Dum and Kavi Subhash at 7 am and from Noapara at 7.09 am as usual. Only smart cards will be permitted. No tokens will be issued.

It was informed by Housing Commissioner Pawan Arora that Rajasthan *Awashan Mandal* has set a record by registering 50 projects in RERA in the shortest time. On this occasion, RERA Chairman, N.C. Goyal congratulated Commissioner Pawan Arora. It includes 46 projects of group housing scheme and four projects of plotted development scheme.

Warne predicts huge fall out in Oz team

PTI ■ BRISBANE

The legendary Shane Warne believes the embarrassing Test series loss to an under-strength India will result in a "huge fallout" in the Australian team and said a few heads could roll in the coming days.

India recorded one of their most memorable wins on Tuesday when they defeated a full-strength Australia by three wickets in the fourth Test here to pocket the four-match series 2-1 and retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

"I think there'll be a huge fallout from this (defeat). There's not too many times that you lose to the second or third (choice) side," Warne was quoted as saying by Fox Cricket.

"Their (Australia) tactics will come into question, and they have to. Bowlers will come into question, people's spot in the team will come into question. It has to. You can't just deflect it and flick it off and say India were too good for us," he added.

Warne was, however, effusive in his praise for the Indian team which braved injuries to its key players and absence of regular skipper Virat Kohli after the first Test on paternity leave to emerge triumphant.

"That's not taking anything away from those Indian guys that played but their first selection side, there's probably only two or three players in that side who would play."

India's Cheteshwar Pujara, second left, is congratulated by Australia's Matthew Wade after defeating Australia by three wickets on the final day AP

The spin legend said Australia didn't grab their chances in the series.

"Yes they were, but Australia had so many chances in this series to bury it and crush India, but they couldn't do it. They just couldn't do it," he said.

Warne was also critical of Tim Paine's captaincy and said the wicketkeeper didn't own up responsibility for his failed tactics.

"I think at times their tactics haven't been good enough, and I suppose that's got to come down to Tim Paine as captain," he said.

"It's not just Tim Paine's fault, the bowlers are allowed to say 'Tim I want to do this', so it's a combination between the bowlers and the captain. But at the end of the day, you are captain, you have to take responsibility. He'll be disappointed."

"Their (Australia) tactics will come into question, and they have to. Bowlers will come into question, people's spot in the team will come into question. It has to. You can't just deflect it and flick it off and say India were too good for us,"

We were scared to lose: Clarke

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former captain Michael Clarke has criticised Australia's "negative" approach in the Test loss to an under-strength Indian team, saying the hosts, instead of pushing aggressively for wins, seemed scared of defeat.

Clarke, however, refused to blame team leader Tim Paine for the unthinkable Test series defeat at home. An injury-ravaged India beat Australia by three wickets in the final game in Brisbane on Tuesday to win the series 2-1 and retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "I thought we might have been a tad negative at certain stages throughout because we were scared to lose versus attack hard and look to win the game," Clarke said on Big Sports Breakfast.

Clarke said it was the negative mindset that pegged Australia back.

"At the end of the day, whether we lost with 20 overs left in the game or on the last ball of the game, it didn't matter. We had to win that game to win that trophy.

"I sort of feel we should have approached the first ball of that game to the last ball of that game with a bit more of that attitude."

Clarke said there was a time when the buck stopped with the captain but it should not be the case anymore since there are other professionals, who call the shots in the Australian set up.

"When I played cricket, when I grew up watching my father ... The captain was accountable in the teams I played in. Through that transition of me captaining Australia, that changed.

"There had become a chairman of selectors that had more pull, there had become a high performance manager that had more pull, there had become a head coach who had more pull," he said.

CA lauds India for epic win

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia on Wednesday saluted the Indian team's "resilience, courage and skill" during its historic Test series win over the hosts and expressed gratitude to the BCCI for the "sacrifices" it made to ensure a smooth conduct of the epic contest.

A second-string Indian team, led by Ajinkya Rahane, braved all odds to defeat a full-strength Australia by three wickets at the Gabba here to win the four-Test series 2-1 and retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy on Tuesday in Brisbane.

"On behalf of everyone at Cricket Australia, we congratulate Team India for their resilience, courage and skill demonstrated in retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in a series that will be talked about for generations to come," CA wrote in a Thank You note to the BCCI.

The note, written by CA interim CEO Nick Hockley and Chair Earl Eddings, was addressed to "friends in Indian cricket", the BCCI, acknowledging the role played by the Sourav Ganguly-led board in successfully completing the tour amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Australian cricket will forever be grateful to the BCCI for their friendship, trust and commitment in helping to deliver a series that has brought joy to many millions of people around the world at a time they needed it most," the letter read.

"The unique challenges of international touring during a global pandemic are considerable and we thank India's players, coaches and support staff for all they have given.

"Over the past nine weeks, the Indian and Australian men's teams completed outstanding One-Day International and Twenty20 International series, followed by one of the greatest Border-Gavaskar Test series ever competed," it added.

THANK YOU

AN OPEN LETTER TO OUR FRIENDS IN INDIAN CRICKET

Australian cricket will forever be grateful to the BCCI for their friendship, trust and commitment in helping to deliver a series that has brought joy to many millions of people around the world at a time they needed it most.

The unique challenges of international touring during a global pandemic are considerable and we thank India's players, coaches and support staff for all they have given.

Over the past nine weeks, the Indian and Australian men's teams completed outstanding One Day International and Twenty20 International series, followed by one of the greatest Border-Gavaskar Test series ever contested.

Despite the many public health and logistical challenges, the BCCI engaged with a spirit of cooperation befitting their status as one of international sport's greatest ambassadors.

From the sublime fast bowling of Jasprit Bumrah and Pat Cummins, to the wonderful batting of Ajinkya Rahane and Steve Smith, to the exciting debuts of Shubman Gill and Cameron Green – and much, much more – the past two months of cricket have been absolutely enthralling.

We will never forget the sacrifices made by our friends at the BCCI that made all this possible.

May we also take this opportunity to thank everyone who played their part to deliver this memorable series – governments, health officials, venues, broadcast and commercial partners, cricket associations, players, match officials, staff and their families.

On behalf of everyone at Cricket Australia, we congratulate Team India for the resilience, courage and skill demonstrated in retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in a series that will be talked about for generations to come.

Earl Eddings, Chair
Nick Hockley, Interim CEO

Pant is now best-ranked keeper

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's Rishabh Pant became the top-ranked wicket-keeper batsman in the world after his sensational series-winning 89-run knock in the Brisbane match pushed him to a career-best 13th spot in the ICC Test batting rankings, issued on Wednesday.

Pant, who won many admirers for his fearless and mature batting, has 691 points in his kitty. South Africa's Quinton de Kock (677) is the next best wicket-keeper batsman in the list in the 15th position.

Australia batsman Marnus Labuschagne's first-innings century in Brisbane took him past India skipper Virat Kohli (862 points) to third position with a career-best 878 rating points. Kohli missed the action as he was on paternity leave.

Young India opener Shubman Gill continued his upward trajectory, moving up from 68th to 47th spot after a crucial 91 in the second innings of the fourth Test, which India won by three wickets on Tuesday.

Middle-order mainstay Cheteshwar Pujara moved up one place to seventh after his dogged effort, while Mohammad Siraj jumped 32 places to 45th after taking six wickets in the match, including a five-wicket haul in the second innings.

Rishabh Pant plays a pull shot during final day of the third test match AP

Debutant Washington Sundar and Shardul Thakur too gained in rankings following their useful contributions with both bat and ball.

Washington entered the rankings in 82nd (batting) and 97th (bowling) positions, while Thakur re-entered the batting list in 113th position and bowling list in 65th position.

Australia captain Tim Paine moved up three spots to 42nd after scores of 50 and 27 while fast bowler Josh Hazlewood leapfrogged New Zealand's Tim Southee to the fourth spot after grabbing six wickets in the match, including a haul of five for 57 in the first innings.

England's Joe Root has returned to the top five with his highest rating points tally (738) in two years after scoring a first-innings 228 to help his team win the first Test against Sri Lanka by seven wickets in Galle.

Root has advanced six places, overtaking the likes of Pakistan's Babar Azam and Pujara in the process.

England spinners Jack Leach and Dominic Bess made notable progress after their five-wicket hauls in Galle. Leach's second innings' figures of five for 122 lifted him three places to 40th while Bess's five for 30 in the first innings took him from 67th to 50th position.

Jonny Bairstow (up five places to 58th in batting) and Sam Curran (up two places to 39th in bowling) also gained.

For Sri Lanka, Lahiru Thirimanne's second innings century helped him progress 12 places to 87th position while left-arm spinner Lasith Embuldeniya (up six places to 47th) and medium pacer Asitha Fernando (up 11 places to 96th) also gained.

50% crowd likely for Eng Tests

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI brass is seriously contemplating allowing 50 percent crowd attendance at both Chepauk and the newly constructed Motera Stadium during India's upcoming four Test matches against England.

The first two Tests will be held in Chennai, beginning on February 5, while the next two will be played at the renovated stadium at Motera in Ahmedabad.

The BCCI is believed to be taking a cue from Cricket Australia which had allowed entry of spectators during the India series that concluded on Tuesday.

"As of now, we are likely to allow 50 percent spectators for the four Test matches. The BCCI is in talks with both state cricket associations (TNCA and GCA) and also state health authorities," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

However, the BCCI is also factoring the fluid public health situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and if case load in either Chennai or Ahmedabad increases, then the decision will change accordingly.

"If you allow 50 percent crowd with all necessary precautions, then it will be an indicator if we can also allow spectators during IPL in India," the source said.

In Ahmedabad, which can hold over one lakh spectators, spacing of seats to maintain social distancing will not be an issue.

Meanwhile, England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will name the squad for first two Test matches against India on Thursday.

This is the first time that a touring team is not naming a squad for full away series keeping the workload management of its players in mind.

The fact that Chennai and Ahmedabad will have two separate bio-bubbles and the teams will travel by chartered flight within the country may also be the reason that England, like the Indian team, decided to name its squad for two Tests.

Shakib returns with 4-8

AP ■ DHAKA

Shakib Al Hasan claimed 4-8 on his return to international cricket as Bangladesh made a winning start to the three-match ODI series by beating West Indies by six wickets in the opening game on Wednesday.

All-rounder Shakib was back after being given a two-year ban by the International Cricket Council in October 2019, with one year suspended, for failing to report approaches from a bookmaker.

Thanks to his wily left-arm spin, Bangladesh bowled the tourists out for 122 in 32.3 overs before reaching 125-4 with 97 balls to spare in reply.

Debutant Hasan Mahmud and fellow fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman also played key roles for the home team, taking 3-28 and 2-20 respectively.

Rain held the players up for about an hour after Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal won the toss and asked West Indies, featuring six ODI debutants, to bat.

Shakib, in his first game for Bangladesh since the 2019 World Cup, bowled seven overs in a row and ripped through the middle order as West Indies lost three wickets for 11 runs.

Debutant Kyle Mayers and Rovman Powell, who hit two sixes, provided some resistance with a partnership of 59 for the sixth wicket.

Mahmud picked up his first wicket by having Powell caught behind for 28 and followed up by trapping Raymon Reifer lbw for naught with his next ball.

Mayers top-scored with 40 before being undone by a Mehidi Hasan delivery that spun sharply.

Tamim, captaining the side for the first time after being appointed last March, then gave Bangladesh a flying start to its reply by hitting 44 before being stumped off West Indies captain Jason Mohammed.

Maxi, Malinga released, Raina retained

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chennai Super Kings retained veteran Suresh Raina for the upcoming IPL-14. The deadline for the eight franchises to submit the lists of retained and released players for the next edition of the lucrative league ended on Wednesday.

Also released by KXIP were West Indies all-rounder Sheldon Cottrell, Afghanistan's Mujeeb-ur-Rahman and New Zealand's Jimmy Neesham, who underwent a surgery recently to treat an injured finger.

CSK's Harbhajan Singh and Mumbai Indians' Lasith Malinga were among the other big names to be released by their respective sides ahead of next month's auction.

Harbhajan was joined by the likes of Kedar Jadhav, Piyush Chawla and Murali Vijay who were also let go by the franchise.

Also released by MI was Sherfane Rutherford, while Delhi Capitals decided to enter the next edition without English batsman Jason Roy, wicketkeeper Alex Carey, leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane and seamer Mohit Sharma.

Malinga had been a prominent part of MI's title-winning campaigns in the past though he was not there last time due to personal reasons.

The seasoned Raina was retained by the Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led CSK notwithstanding his sudden departure from the last IPL in the UAE.

It is believed the three-time winners decided to continue with Raina in order to bolster the batting order that struggled during a forgettable last season, which culminated in a seventh-place finish and a league-stage elimination for the first time since the tournament's inception in 2008.

Glenn Maxwell bats during practice session KXIP/Twitter

The left-handed Raina has been an integral part of the Super Kings from the beginning, emerging as their highest scorer while guiding them to two IPL titles.

Stoinis made useful contributions in the 2020 edition and helped the Capitals reach their first-ever IPL final.

Batting mostly in the middle order, he amassed 352 runs at an average of 25.14 and a strike rate of 148.52.

With the ball, he took 13 wickets at an economy of 9.53.

The Delhi-based franchise retained a total of 19 players including six overseas players.

KKR will be go into next month's auction with a 17-member squad after having released only five players from the team. The two-time champions have released Tom Banton and Chris Green among the foreign players and Siddhesh Lad, Nikhil Naik and M Siddharth among the Indians.

After Wednesday, RCB's total purse increased from Rs 6.4 crore to Rs 35.7 crore, Delhi Capitals' swelled to Rs 12.8 crore from 9 crore, Rajasthan Royals' purse jumped to 34.85 crore from Rs 14.75 crore, Kings XI Punjab saw an exponential rise from Rs 16.5 crore to Rs 53.2 crore, and Sunrisers Hyderabad went from Rs 10.1 crore to Rs 10.75 crore.

Two-time winners KKR's purse went up from Rs 8.5 crore to Rs 10.85 crore and from Rs 15 crore, three-time champions CSK's amount in the kitty increased to Rs 22.9 crore. Mumbai Indians were left with a purse of Rs 15.35 crore.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER

NIT No: OCPL/SER-119/2021Date: 21/01/2021

Sealed bids in prescribed format are invited from IT Companies/ agencies / firms forthe following work:

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Cost of Tender Paper	BID Security	Issue of Tender Document	Last date of Sale/Download of Tender Document
01	Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of Various IT Equipments at Bhubaneswar & Hemgir Office.	Rs.1,180/- (Rupees One Thousand One Hundred and Eighty Only) inclusive of GST @ 18%	Rs.20,000/- (Rupees Twenty Thousand Only)	21/01/2021	04/02/2021

For further details, bidders may visit our website, i.e www.ocpl.org.in . Any clarification mavplease be addressed to the undersigned at the above address or by email to: a.kanungo@ocpl.org.in.

Sd/-
Addl. General Manager (Commercial & Contracts)

Notice No: 23 /DBCS/SNG, Date: 19.01.2021.
E-532

TENDER CALL NOTICE (ଟେଣ୍ଡର ବିଜ୍ଞାପନ)

Sealed Tenders are invited from Registered Manufactures/Authorized Distributors/Suppliers through Speed Post/Register Post/Courier for SUPPLY & INSTALATION OF OPHTHALMIC INSTRUMENTS/EQUIPMENTS UNDER DISTRICT BLINDNESS CONTROL SOCIETY, SUNDARGARH (ଜିଲ୍ଲା ଅନ୍ଧତ୍ୱ ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ସମିତି ନିମନ୍ତେ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ହେଉଥିବା ଯନ୍ତ୍ରାଂଶ ଗୁଡିକର ଯୋଗାଣ ଏବଂ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ର କ୍ରୟ ନିମନ୍ତେ) for the Year 2020-21. The willing Manufactures/ Authorized Distributors/ Suppliers are requested to submit sealed tenders to the office of the undersigned on or before 12.02.2021 till 5 P.M. Tender documents can be downloaded/obtained from the district website www.sundergarh.nic.in/ DBCS, Sundargarh. This office will not entertain any tender after the due date/time fixed for at any circumstances. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or whole tender without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-
Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Sundargarh

OIPR-10100/11/0023/2021