

OPINION 6

THE USUAL
SUSPECTS

WORLD 8

PANDEMIC, SURGING FOOD PRICES
LEAVE MANY IN ASIA HUNGRY: UN

SPORT 12

WE WERE SCARED
TO LOSE: CLARKE

CHANDIGARH, THURSDAY JANUARY 21, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹2



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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



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

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."

SC irked at bias charge against panel members

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

Court seeks Govt's response on demand for panel reconstitution

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



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

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 anti-

gens. 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 (HCoV's) which are related to SARS-CoV-2 but typically cause milder symptoms, such as the common cold.

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 compiled 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.

The Ministry also said that the deaths reported after vaccination have not been found to be related to vaccination. "The post-mortem of the Moradabad case confirms cardio-pulmonary disease, while the Bellary case autopsy suggests myocardial infarction. The Shivamoga case too is a suspected case of myocardial infarction," the Ministry said.

Haryana Govt to reopen its schools for Classes 6 to 8 from Feb

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Education Minister Kanwal Pal Gujjar on Wednesday said that the schools in Haryana will reopen for Classes 6 to 8 from the first week of February.

He said, "The Covid-19 cases are gradually coming down and the situation has improved. Moreover, the Covid-19 vaccination drive has also begun. So, we have decided to reopen schools for Classes 6 to 8 from February

first week."

Talking to reporters in Chandigarh, the Minister said a decision on starting Classes 1 to 5 will be taken later. The schools will have to follow all guidelines related to face masks, sanitisers and social

distancing, he said.

After remaining shut for six months due to the Covid-19 outbreak, schools in Haryana had partially reopened in mid-September for students of Classes 9 to 12.

be allowed to attend schools from January 27. And from February 1 onwards, the schools will also be allowed to conduct physical classes for Classes I and II.

"The timings will remain same from 10 am to 3 pm and parents will have to provide written consent before sending their wards to schools," he said.

At the same time, the Minister also directed the state Education Department officials and school managements to ensure proper cleaning of premises and classrooms and follow all the Covid-19 safety norms strictly as per guidelines of the Central Government. Detailed guidelines will also be issued soon to all the District Education Officers which will be circulated to all government, aided and private schools, he said.

Singla said that as the schools have already been allowed to conduct classes from Classes V onwards, the District Education Officers, other officials and teachers have suggested that now the students studying in primary schools should also be allowed to come to the schools.

CAPSULE

SC REJECTS PETITIONS TO REVIEW AADHAAR ORDER

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has dismissed pleas seeking review of its 2018 verdict which had upheld the Aadhaar scheme as constitutionally valid but struck down some of its provisions, including its linking with bank accounts, mobile phones and school admissions.

TIGER TRIGGERS PANIC IN SHAHJAHANPUR VILLAGE

Shahjahanpur: The presence of a tiger and its cubs, seen in CCTV camera footage, in a village here triggered a panic among locals.

'TANDAV' SCENES CUT, BUT TROUBLE CONTINUES

Mumbai: At least two scenes were removed from the controversial web series "Tandav", which found itself in more trouble on Wednesday with an FIR against its makers, in Madhya Pradesh, and threats of another in Maharashtra.

'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 from fighting 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.

Biden's first presidential actions would also include sending a comprehensive bill on immigration to the Congress, incoming White House officials said. The immigration bill proposes a eight-year pathway to illegal immi-

grants and removing 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.

Biden asserted that he will be the president for all Americans, all those who voted for him and those who did not vote for him.

In his speech that lasted for 21 minutes, Biden praised Americans for rising to the challenge and reclaiming democracy. He mentioned the attempt to undo it at that exact location two weeks ago, and renewed his campaign goals of overcoming the pandemic, bringing racial justice and fighting climate change.

Biden also criticised those who have stoked anger and division, and asked those who

opposed him to "hear me out."

He called out those who lie for political power and profit. "There is truth, and there are lies," he added.

In a message to the international community, Biden said that he would rebuild the alliances frayed over the past four years. "We can make America once again the leading force of good in the world."

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.



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

COVID-19 VACCINATION DRIVE

No serious adverse events : Haryana NHM Director

MANOJ KUMAR ■ CHANDIGARH

Amid reports of vaccine hesitancy among doctors and health workers, Haryana National Health Mission (NHM) director, Dr VK Bansal, on Wednesday, said that the healthcare workers have no reason to doubt as except few mild cases, no serious adverse events have been reported so far after immunization.

Four days into the Covid-19 vaccination drive, almost 30,000 healthcare workers have received the shot in about 250 sessions across the State. No serious adverse event has occurred yet due to the vaccine, he reiterated. Bansal said that the Health Department will conduct a vaccination drive on Thursday at all the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) of the State to facilitate the health workers. All districts have picked four days in a week to hold Covid-19 vaccine sessions according to their arrangements, he added.

In an exclusive interview with 'The Pioneer' over the phone, Bansal talks about



Haryana National Health Mission (NHM) director Dr VK Bansal

ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive and steps being taken to complete the vaccination process in the State: Excerpts from the interview:

The turnout of healthcare workers has been lower than expected over fears linked to the safety of vaccines. How would you reach out to those health workers who have not turned up for vaccination so far?

No serious adverse event has occurred yet due to the vaccine. We are trying to allay their fears saying that the concerns about adverse effects and serious problems, as of now, seem to be unfounded, negligible and insignificant and that the adverse events following

immunisation reported "were fairly low in the first four days of the vaccination drive in the State. We urged healthcare workers not to hesitate to get the Covid-19 vaccine as it was also their societal responsibility to get inoculated apart from safety from coronavirus.

How many reports of adverse events following immunization have been found so far in Haryana?

So far 250 vaccine sessions have been held in the State and Covishield vaccine shots have been given to about 30,000 beneficiaries since the vaccination drive started. Officials are collecting data. As per report on Monday, the State reported 52 adverse events following immunization. But all are mild cases so far. We are repeatedly saying that no serious adverse event has occurred yet due to the vaccine.

Have you set the timeline for vaccination of healthcare workers in the State?

About 1.80 lakh healthcare workers will be administered the vaccine in the first phase.

All districts have picked four days in a week to hold Covid-19 vaccine sessions according to their arrangements. The Health Department will conduct a vaccination drive on Thursday at all the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) of the State to facilitate the health workers. All the health workers have been directed to go to PHCs concerned to get themselves vaccinated. The second dose of the vaccine would be administered to these recipients on the 28th day of the first dose. For this, the Chief Medical Officers (CMO) have been directed to ensure that the second dose of vaccine is kept safe for the beneficiaries. After the health workers, the vaccine will be administered to the frontline workers, including policemen, paramilitary forces' personnel, sanitation workers and disaster management volunteers. Thereafter, people above 50 years of age and those aged below 50 years with co-morbid conditions will be covered under the inoculation drive.

Will the Health

Department conduct a motivational programme among health workers to complete the vaccination drive at the earliest?

I along with Director General Health Services Suraj Bhan Kamboj, Additional Director General Health Services, Dr Veena Singh, Civil Surgeon, Panchkula Dr Jasjeet Kaur, State Immunization Officer Dr. Virender Ahlawat, were among the few who came forward and got themselves vaccinated so as to infuse confidence among other health workers of the State towards the vaccination. No deadline has been fixed for the vaccination as it would continue till all are vaccinated. Immunization sites will be increased. Self-motivation among health workers are needed to complete the vaccination process earliest. Moreover, we are not fulfilling our societal responsibility if a vaccine assigned to us is not being taken. The whole world is clamouring for a vaccine. We request all to accept the job. Vaccine hesitancy should extinguish because Covid-19 inoc-

ulation is taking us towards the elimination of this calamity. We are very fortunate that we are running this vaccination drive at a time when the pandemic looks like to be in a controlled situation. So in this period, by taking the jabs, we have to create a wall of vaccine induced immunity and be ready for any kind of eventuality in future.

Persons having multiple diseases seem to be victims of Covid-19. When would they be able to secure vaccines?

Definitely, such persons are at high risk of developing the infection and progressing towards severe illness. The vaccine will be safe for them and they are among the priority groups.

Is it necessary for a recovered person to take the vaccine?

A recovered patient will have a good amount of antibodies for at least three months. With the passage of time, the antibodies will begin to decrease. Vaccination after three months of recovery can supplement the formation of antibodies.

Centre should withdraw new agri laws without any delay: Punjab Ministers

PNS ■ DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Punjab's two Cabinet Ministers — Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa and Sukhbinder Singh Sarkaria — on Wednesday joined the ongoing protest dharna by the Congress MPs at Jantar Mantar in support of the agitating farmers.

They demanded that the Union Government should immediately withdraw the three black laws imposed on the farmers.

"For the last two months, farmers from across the country have been struggling in the bitter cold on the Delhi border. So far, more than 100 farmers have lost their lives during the protest. Despite this, the Union Government is still not taking any concrete steps to resolve the issue of farmers," they said.

They added that the Union Government is even sending notices to the farmers and supporters of farmers to suppress the agitation.

They added that the Union Government is even sending notices to the farmers and supporters of farmers to suppress the agitation

Bajwa and Sarkaria have appealed to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to make this an issue of ego and come forward to repeal the anti-farmer agriculture acts. They said that Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh had already convened a special session of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha and the House had unanimously repealed the new agriculture laws forced by the Union Government.

Union Government should also come out of the pressure of big corporates and immediately repeal these laws, they added.

Bird Flu now in Punjab too

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Bird flu — that has already hit nearly 12 States across the country including neighbouring Himachal Pradesh and Haryana — has perched in Punjab also with the State reporting three cases of the avian influenza in the past 24 hours.

The State recorded its first case on Tuesday when a goose, found dead a week ago at Siswan dam reservoir in Mohali district, tested positive for the H5N1 strain.

On Wednesday, samples from two poultry farms of Dera Bassi's Behra village tested positive for the H5N1 strain of bird flu at the Bhopal laboratory. Besides, a sample of a dead crow, taken in Mohali, has also tested positive.

Notably, the H5N1 strain primarily infects birds causing a highly infectious, severe res-

piratory disease. But, it can also be transmitted to humans. As per reports, the human cases of avian influenza occur occasionally with 60 percent mortality rate.

"We have been sending 50 samples of the bird droppings everyday for testing from the state's different poultry farms since the outbreak of bird flu. The report of samples taken from two poultry farms at Dera Bassi in Mohali was received this morning and tested positive," a senior government official told The Pioneer.

The samples from Dera Bassi's Alpha Poultry farm — having 55,000 livestock, and Royal Poultry farm — with 60,000 livestock — have been tested positive for the influenza.

The officials maintained that culling would be undertaken in the two poultry farms.

Mohali District Administration, on January

15, had sent a suspected case of bird flu from the area to a Northern Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (NRDDL) in Jalandhar. It was then sent to the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal, for further investigation.

Earlier, the goose was found dead near the Siswan Dam reservoir in Mohali and its samples were sent to the Northern Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (NRDDL) in Jalandhar for testing on January 8.

The samples were then sent to the Bhopal-based Institute of High Security Animal Diseases testing after the NRDDL found it to be a suspected case of bird flu.

The official said that a team of the Animal Husbandry Department had also visited the reservoir area.

Punjab reports four more Covid-19 deaths, 199 new cases

Among the fresh cases witnessed in the state, Ludhiana accounted for 38, Mohali 37 and Bathinda 25

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Four more persons died of COVID-19 in Punjab, taking the toll to 5,520, while 199 fresh coronavirus cases took the infection count to 1,71,136 on Wednesday, according to a medical bulletin. There are 2,405 active COVID-19 cases in the State now, it said.

Among the fresh cases witnessed in the state, Ludhiana accounted for 38, Mohali 37 and Bathinda 25. A total of 202 patients were discharged after recovering from the infection in a 24-hour period, taking the number of recoveries to 1,63,211, as per the bulletin. A total of 42,92,764 samples have been collected for testing so far in the state, it said.

4 DEATHS, 105 CASES IN HARYANA

Haryana on Wednesday reported four coronavirus fatalities which pushed the death toll to 2,997, while 105 fresh cases took the State's infection tally to 2,66,686. Of the new cases of infection, Faridabad reported 18 while 16 from Gurugram. Haryana has 1734 active cases at present with 2,61,955 patients discharged so far after recovery. The State has a recovery rate of 98.23 per cent, the bulletin stated.

28 NEW CASES IN CHANDIGARH

The union territory of Chandigarh on Wednesday reported 28 fresh COVID-19 cases taking the total infections to 20,623. No COVID-19 related death has been reported in the city in the last six days. 2,03,275 samples have so far been tested in the city. A total of 830 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours.

Punjab CM accuses Akalis, AAP of spreading lies

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

With an RTI response exposing the "lie" of the Centre's claim on the farm laws having been approved by the high-powered committee on agricultural reforms, Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Wednesday said that it was now obvious that the Akalis and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had been spreading a carnage of lies at the behest of the BJP-led Central Government, with whom the two parties were working in collusion to damage the farmers' interests.

Reports, citing a reply by the Planning Commission to a Right to Information (RTI) query, suggest that the farm ordinances were promulgated and introduced in the Parliament in June 2020 without the report of the Chief Ministers' committee being ever appraised by the Governing Council of

NITI Aayog.

"This is in stark contrast to the claims of the Central Government, which both SAD and AAP had been shamelessly parroting in an apparent bid to promote the BJP's anti-farmer agenda," said the Chief Minister.

Notably, the Union Minister of State for Food Danve Raosaheb Dadarao had claimed, before the Lok Sabha, that the high-powered committee had approved the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, which Capt Amarinder had categorically rejected and which has now been proved wrong by the RTI reply.

"Far from basing the farm laws on the discussions and decisions of the committee, the fact, as validated by the RTI response, is that the Committee report had not even been placed till now before the Governing Council of the NITI Aayog," Capt Amarinder pointed out.

Once the report is made

public, everyone will now know who said what in the Committee meetings, where Punjab was not even a part in the first one, while the second discussed some financial issues with Finance Minister Manpreet Badal in attendance and the third only participated by Secretary-level officials, he added.

The Chief Minister lambasted the state's opposition parties over their campaign of lies, deception, and misinformation to promote their collective agenda of instigating the people against the democratically-elected Congress Government in the State.

"Their bundle of lies have been completely exposed by the RTI response," he added, slamming the BJP, the SAD and AAP for shamelessly misleading the nation on such a sensitive issue which had triggered massive unrest and had the potential of disturbing the peace of his state and the country.

Chandigarh to get country's tallest air purifier tower

NISHU MAHAJAN ■ CHANDIGARH

Giant 24-metre-tall air purifier tower will be installed in the Union Territory of Chandigarh to combat air pollution. The country's tallest air purifier tower is expected to treat air within a circumference area of almost 500 meters.

The Central Pollution Control Board has notified Chandigarh as one of the non-attainment cities, where the air quality is worse than the prescribed standards.

"With an aim to improve air quality in the city, a 24 metres (78 feet) tall air purifier will soon be installed here. The tower is fitted with a system to suck polluted air, pass it through a filter which separates the particulate matter (PM 2.5 and PM10) and release the clean air," said Debendra Dalai, Director, UT Department of Environment, while talking to

The Pioneer.

He said, "A company named Pious Air Pvt Ltd has proposed to install the air purifier tower for free of cost on a pilot basis in the city. The total cost of the project i.e. Rs 1.5 crore would be borne by the company and it would be installed in next two months."

"The company has proposed five locations including two sites in Sector 17, Tribune Chowk, Transport Chowk and Industrial Area for the installation of air purifier tower. One location among them will be finalized soon for the installation," he added.

Apart from a giant air purifier tower, the UT Administration has planned to install ten small towers at different locations with poor air quality in the union territory.

Giving details, Dalai said, "10 small air purifier towers standing at 2-3 meters will be

installed at crowded places or where exposure to vehicular emissions is high in the city."

This would be done under Central Government's National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) to tackle the air pollution. The installation of each tower will cost around Rs 2-3 lakh and aims at reducing pollutants at specific spots and help improve air quality, he said.

He added, "Chandigarh has also been selected as one of the cities for the Source Apportionment study, to be conducted by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The study would be conducted for establishing the sources of pollutants in the city."

The Chandigarh Pollution Control Committee (CPCC) has also planned to launch a mobile based app for the city denizens for redressal of their grievances related to the poor

air quality.

In the past few years, Chandigarh has recorded a high concentration of PM 10- (particulate matters with diameter of 10 microns or less) and PM2.5 (particulate matters less than 2.5 microns)-form of air pollution, which is considered most serious.

Notably, the air quality index (AQI) was recorded at its worst ever in November 2019 in Chandigarh. The AQI was recorded between 300 and 400 in the city, according to the CPCC data.

An AQI between 0-50 is considered good, 51-100 satisfactory, 101-200 moderate, 201-300 poor, 301-400 very poor and 401-500 severe.

As per the general analysis by CPCC, stubble burning, vehicle emissions, industries emissions and construction works are the major factors for air pollution in the city.

CM announces revision of Haryana Schedule Rates

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To eradicate corruption, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Wednesday announced revision of Haryana Schedule Rates (HSR) which remained unchanged since 1987. As per the announcement, new HSR will come into force from March 1, 2021.

Besides this, once the new HSR becomes effective, all the items will be included in the HSR, putting an end to inclusion of non-scheduled items. The revised HSR will act as base for inviting new tenders and evaluating work performance. The HSR will be revised after every five years, announced the Chief Minister.

Presiding over the first of its kind meeting with Administrative Secretaries and Civil Engineer Contractors held here, Khattar also announced that from now onwards, State-level IT solutions will be introduced for works pertaining to civil engineering. This IT system will be implemented from April 1, 2021. Under this system, contractors will have to get themselves registered. Apart from this, the registered contractors will not have to give bid security. However, at the time of registration they will now have to fill a bid security declaration form, announced Khattar.

Bringing in more transparency in the tendering works,

Khattar announced that from now onwards, e-tendering of all the civil works will be done, thereby putting an end to the manual tendering process. Along with this, IT-based technical evaluation and allotment of work will too be done online by the concerned departments. Besides this, manual filling up of Measurement Books (MB) by the contractors will be replaced to the 'e-medium'. The Chief Minister announced that now the payment of bills will be made within a period of 30 days, from the date the bill is passed. If any department causes delay in payment of any contractor, then the concerned contractor will be paid an interest amount at the rate of 10 percent per annum for the

delayed period. However, if the payment is made within the fixed period of 30 days, then the State Government will deduct the interest amount at the rate of 10 percent per annum from the bill payment.

The technical evaluation will be done for the civil works above rupees one crore and the technical report of these works will be uploaded on the State-level IT system.

The objections regarding this report will be invited within a period of seven days and the same should be resolved within a period of 15 days. Furthermore an Integrity pact will be included in all the tenders amounting above rupees one crore, announced the Chief Minister.

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 Awas 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 navi pehchaan aur navi 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 Uttarakhnad 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 Indra 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 tipped 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 Government 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 GVRP 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 Chaturvedi 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, GVRP 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 Pnjore 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.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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 Babu 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



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

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 be 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
प्र सं.-डब्ल्यू.बी-74 डब्ल्यू.आर/कार्य/देमाना
दिनांक 20.01.2021
मंडल रेल प्रबंधक, इंजीनियरिंग, उत्तर पश्चिम
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एच रनकी ओर से ई-निविदा के माध्यम से
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आमंत्रित की जाती है- ई-निविदा सूचना
सं० 2020-21 : 84, कार्य का नाम व स्थान-
जोधपुर मंडल में विभिन्न मानव रहित रानपाय
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निविदा प्रस्तुत करने की तिथि 10.02.2021
को 15.00 बजे तक है। वेबसाइट का विवरण
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NOTICE OF BOARD MEETING
Notice is hereby given that pursuant to
Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of
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 Exchange
BSE: www.bseindia.com and CSE:
www.cse-india.com.
For Perfectpac Limited
Place : New Delhi Shefali Chauhan
Date : 20.01.2021 Company Secretary

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED
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, Rahnola, Delhi** has been missing/ kidnapped since 13.11.2020 from the area of P.S. Rahnola, Delhi. In this regard, a case **FIR No. 949/20 u/s 363 IPC Dated 13.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. Rahnola, 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. Rahnola, 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 Sd/- SHO
Fax No. 011-24368639 PS: Rahnola, Delhi
DP/541/OD/2020 Ph.: 011-28363001

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
1st Floor, Rohini Courts, New Delhi
DP/616/NW/2021

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

home on leave.

As regards veterans, they said the Army official 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 AI 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 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 resi-



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 resi-

dences 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

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

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

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 Chattopadhyay 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 con-

tests 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, Vijaybargiya 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 Vijaybargiya 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 enmi-

ty 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 Ghatkopar 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 Mumbaiers 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

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



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

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

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 Assembly constituencies in the Union Territory.

“An alliance under the

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

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 Jagathrakshakan 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,” Jagathrakshakan 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 sculptors, 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 Intercrossors 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 Basileos 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)

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 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

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.

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.

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 Netaji'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, Netaji 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 Netaji'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 Netaji 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 Netaji'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 Netaji 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 Netaji'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 Netaji. The family members of Netaji 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 Netaji 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.



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 master-stroke: 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 noto-



rious 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 contam-

inate 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

FIRST COLUMN

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 signalling 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.)

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



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

“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”



vaccine drive would generate. It has also created the physical infrastructure for the storage and transportation of the vaccine.

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 despi-

cable 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 unparalleled 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 victor.

(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



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

fundraising campaign purportedly aimed at supporting Trump's border wall.

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 Willowoughy 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 known 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**

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.

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.

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. yds, out of Total Land area measuring 100 sq. yds, property bearing No. N-20-A, out of Record No. 20, Killa No. 222 situated in the area of Village of Nara, near about known as Vahnu Garden, North Block, Gali No. 1, New Delhi-110018. Said property is by virtue of Gift Deed dated 25.04.2017. Registration No. 5421. 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 Fulestion India Home Finance Ltd. Further, Photocopy of ATS & Will executed by Mr. Rajendra Singh in favour of his son Mr. Neha Singh in respect of said property are missing. If anybody has any objection 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
200, 1st Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Mohi Nagar, New Delhi-15
Ph: 011-4112527-28, kumarassociatesadvisors@gmail.com

Bharat Bhushan Finance & Commodity Brokers Ltd.
(CIN: L67203, 1932PL 672033)
Tel Nos: 011-48009300, Fax: 011-48009333
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 information 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
(Nisha Ahuja)
Place: New Delhi Director
Date: 21.01.2021 DIN: 00001875

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that Mrs. Chandanika Singh W/o Mr. PPM. Singh is intending to sell Third Floor (without roof rights) addressing 53.4175 Sq. Mtrs., Property No. 143, Kharsa No. 1357/1087, Khewat No. 54, situated at Hari Nagar Ashram, New Delhi-110014, to Mr. Mohit S/o Sh. Basant Lal, to be transacted by M/s. winnida Housing Finance Ltd. The Original Sale Deed 17/01/2013 regd. Vide doc. No. 6288 pertaining to the aforesaid property has been lost and LR No. 55592/2021 has been registered on 19.01.2021 with Delhi Police. If any person(s) have any objections or claim in this property, then contact us within 10 days from date of this notice on Email: heerdevlaxmi@gmail.com or contact M/s. Hinduja Housing Finance Ltd., office at: Unit no. 418, 4th Floor, Tower-2, Pearl Omase Building, Netaji Subhash Place, Patnamura 110034, failing which it will be assumed that there are no claims or issues in respect of the aforesaid property.

Akash Dija (Advocate)
Chamber No. 830, PNC, New Delhi - 110001

WESTERN RAILWAY
CONDUCTING FINAL LOCATION SURVEY
Advertised Tender Notice No. E-TenderSurvey/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/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 ESDs in connection with FLS for Doubling of Rajkot - Kanalus (111.20 Km) including Porbandar Yard Remodeling (3.00 Km) as PM. **Deadline 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**
Like us on: www.facebook.com/WesternRly
P.S. Subhash Place, Delhi
DP/611/NW/2021. Ph: 011-27356336, 27353014, 8750870224

PUBLIC NOTICE
I, Puneet Saini, Advocate on behalf of my client Sh. Vandner Pasricha and Ms. Vinita Pasricha Rio 1012, Fair Road, Kano Bagan, 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 misbehavior, 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
puneetlaxmevents@yahoo.in (M): 8810633505

SEARCH OF MISSING/KIDNAPPED
General public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo), **Namely: Darkasa, D/o: Jailli, 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 Pajama 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@cbl.gov.nic.in or website : <http://cbl.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
Ph: 011-23413999, 23413800
DP/198/NDD/2021**

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
Ph: 011-25693161, 9810563274
DP/480/SW/2021

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.

₹ 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.

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

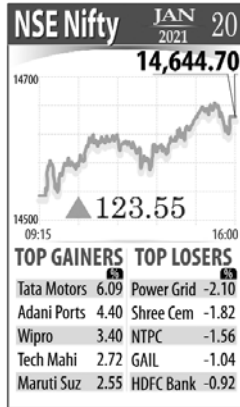
Biden, who will be sworn into office on Wednesday, has laid out a \$1.9 trillion stimulus package proposal to boost the economy.

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 tech 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.

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.

produce by stripping out middle men and has the potential to improve farmers' income and reduce consumer prices.

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 premi-

ums 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.

The Executive Engineer-II, Urban Development Department, Agartala, West Tripura, invites e-tender against press NIT No. 04/EE-II/UD/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-II, SARITA VIHAR, NEW DELHI has applied for issuance of Certified copies of relevant documents in DDA as the original documents (i.e. Allotment Letter, 5 & Final Demand Letter, Possession Letter, site possession & NOC to water and electric of the above said flat has been lost. An NCRLR No.7218172017 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. 959929505 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 appear or write to Deputy Director (AB) (H) or Director (H), D Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

Naveen Aggarwal (Advocate)

Chamber No. M-7, Near SBI, Western Wing, 1st Hazrat Court, Delhi-110055

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mrs. Saloni is the owner of Portion Plot of Second Floor (Front Side East Facing) without roof rights, area measuring 50 Sq. Yds. Part of Property Bearing No. J-79, out of Khirna No. 20/101 Village-Gharonda Neem ka Banger @ Patnangy, Block-J, Pandav Nagar, Ilasa Shahdara Delhi "Said Property" by virtue of Sale Deed dated 18.05.2015, 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 Fultion India Home Finance Ltd. Further Original GPA, AT&S & Will dated 12.11.2018 executed by Mrs. Pooja Narula in favour of Mrs. Saloni Devi & the Last page of Registration particular of Original Sale Deed dated 18.05.2015, document no.103 executed by Mrs. Saloni Devi in favour of Mrs. Saloni in respect of said property are missing. If anybody has any objection 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, 2nd Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Meen Nagar, N. Delhi-110017 Ph: 011-411281-21, kumarassociatesadvocates@gmail.com

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

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one boy **Name: Inder @ Sanju, S/o: Ran Singh, R/o: H.No. 682, near Saini Mohalla, Nanloi, 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://cbl.nic.in
E-mail Id - cbl@cbl.gov.in
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639
DP/585/OD/2020

SHO P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi
Ph: 011-25946710, 7065036129

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE 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, Shahdara, 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 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 POC SO Act** has been registered at **P.S. Adarsh Nagar, Delhi** and it has been returned 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 POC SO 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

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, Build : Thin, Wearing : White line colour shirt and grey colour pant and slipper in feet and blue colour cort.
If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

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

Name: Dharamdev Narang, Father's Name : Lt. Parmnand, Age : 63 years, Height : 5'5", Face : Round, Complexion : Wheatish, Build : Thin, Wearing : White line colour shirt and grey colour pant and slipper in feet and blue colour cort.
If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

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

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 physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Secured Creditor will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis on 02-03-2021 at 11:00 AM at Axis Bank, SCO 221, Paramjeet Tower, Sector 12, Karnal-Haryana-132001 for recovery of Rs. 3,01,490/- (Three Lakh One Thousand four Hundred Ninety Only) dues as on 30.06.2019 (Bidding with further interest as applicable, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. incurred up to the date of actual payment and/or realization due to the secured creditor from Mr. Satpal Kumar S/o Mr. Om Parkash & Mrs. Sushma Rani W/o Mr. Satpal Kumar. The reserve price will be Rs.648787/- (Six Lakh Fourty 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 01-03-2021 at 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 share of total land measuring 12 Kanal 4 marlaas comprised in Khewat No 246, Khatouni No. 368, Kitta 4 situated at Vaka Rakha 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 in the secured creditor's website i.e. <https://www.axisbank.com/auction/notices/>

Date : 21-01-2021, Place: Karnal, Haryana

Sd/-
Authorized Officer,
Axis Bank Ltd.

Govt. of Bihar
BIHAR RURAL ROAD DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (BRRDA) GOVERNMENT OF BIHAR
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) 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

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-listing criteria'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 Crore in any one of the last 5 financial years. (Consultancy Agency should submit audited financial reports of last five financial years).

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 will be seen/downloaded from our website www.rwdbihar.gov.in/eadvtrpd.bihar.gov.in may be obtained from the office of Secretary, BRRDA from 04.02.2021 (10:00 Hours) up to 11.02.2021 (15:00Hours) on payment of Rs. 5000/- (Non-Refundable) for each empannelment 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 05.02.2021 at 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:-

- The Company/Firm/Agency should have required similar work experience of such type.
- The Company/Firm/Agency must enclose PAN/Service Tax/GST Registration (As applicable)
- 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 upto 11.02.2021 02.00 or before 15:30 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

सात समझी-संखी किसी तरह की जानकारी अद्वय सुझाव हूँ दूसरी संख्या 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।

Trend Slazer

'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 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

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**

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, *Shakuntla*.

"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.

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 gen-

der 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.)

'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'



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*.



Best look forward

Look good to feel good is the Lmantra 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



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

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 out-

fit. 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 minimalist 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 con-

temporary 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 Vijaybhairu 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 joint 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. Sunet 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 trav-

elling 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 hump 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 co-operate 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, physi-

ological 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.



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

A dialogue on NEP



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 Awasthi 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.



