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No headway in Govt-farmers talks

As farmer leaders stick to their guns, Govt says Acts won't be repealed; next talks on Jan 8

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The seventh round of talks between protesting farmers' unions and the Government failed to end the impasse on Monday as the Government ruled out rollback of the three agricultural laws and the farmer leaders refused to call off their agitation till that happens. The next round of talks will be held on January 8.

According to farmers' leader Sarwan Singh Pandher of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, the Union Ministers have clearly said that the laws will not be repealed. "The Ministers even told us to approach the Supreme Court for repeal of the laws," he said. The farmer leaders said they will continue with their agitation till the laws are repealed.

The Government, represented by Union Ministers Narendra Singh Tomar, Piyush Goyal and Som Prakash, told the delegation of 41 participating union leaders that it would review any clause the protesters have a problem with. The Ministers also asked the farmer leaders to point out what they considered objectionable in the legislations. The Government has maintained that these apprehen-



Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson Rakesh Tikait, along with other union leaders, leaves Vigyan Bhawan after the seventh round of talks with the Centre in New Delhi on Monday

PTI

sions are misplaced and has ruled out repealing the laws.

Sources said the Government has offered a joint committee on minimum support price for crops to discuss the farmers' demand for legalising it, but the union leaders remained adamant on discussing the repeal of the farm laws. During the meeting, the Government listed various

benefits from the three laws, enacted a few months ago, but farmers kept insisting that the legislation must be withdrawn to address their apprehensions that the new Acts would weaken the MSP and mandi system and leave them at the mercy of big corporates.

After the meeting, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the

Government is sensitive about farmers' issues and offered clause-wise discussion on the three Acts but they could not reach a conclusion.

"We are hopeful that we can find a solution in the next meeting on January 8," Tomar said but asserted that efforts need to be made from both sides for a solution to be reached (*taali dono haathon se*

baji hai). "The meeting was held in good atmosphere but farmers were adamant on their demands and we could not arrive at any conclusion. The Government wanted a clause-wise discussion on the legislations to take forward the talks," he said.

"Several rounds of talks are held during such important issues. The Government has to decide keeping in mind farmers of the entire country. Both sides want to resolve the issue. The laws have been made keeping in mind the best interest of farmers," Tomar added.

The first two hours of talks focussed only on the three laws and the other key demand of farmers for a legal guarantee to the MSP procurement system did not come up for discussions.

Sources said before the meeting at Vigyan Bhawan began, both parties observed a two-minute silence as a mark of tribute to the 50 protesting farmers who died during the agitation.

Farmer leaders, however, alleged that it was the Government's "ego problem" that was coming in the way of resolving the issues and they insisted they would not relent on their key demands for the repeal of the three laws and a

legal guarantee for the MSP (minimum support price) system for procurement of their crops. The Government is not interested in resolving the issue, claimed farmer leaders.

From the very beginning of the meeting, union leaders kept on insisting on the repeal of the three contentious farm laws and the two sides took a long break after just about one hour of discussions. Farmer leaders said the Government informed them that it needs to consult internally and thereafter it would come back to the unions. During the meeting, farmers categorically told the Ministers that they don't want clause by clause discussions on three farm laws.

"We have already rejected any alternative to repeal. We will not go home until the laws are withdrawn," the union leaders said.

Farmers' leader of Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), Rakesh Tikait said that "Kanun wapsi nahi, to ghar wapsi nahi" (We will not go home until the laws are withdrawn). The union leaders will also have their own meeting on Tuesday to decide their next course of action.

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Covishield job to cost Govt ₹219-292/shot

It is likely to cost ₹1,000 per dose when available in open market

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government will have to shell out between ₹219 to ₹292 per shot of Covishield vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford and sold and manufactured by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) in the country. The SII has a licence to produce the shot and has already manufactured close to 50 million doses.

The Government has plans to roll out the vaccination drive at the earliest with at least 3 crore health workers and corona warriors to be given the job in the first phase.

However, the Covishield vaccine is likely to cost ₹1,000 per dose when it is available in the open market and for private use. As of now, the SII cannot export or sell in the open market its Covid-19 vaccine.

Adar Poonawalla, chief

executive officer of the SII, has said that the vaccine manufacturer is likely to charge a special price of ₹200 per dose for the first 100 million jobs, which it will supply to the Government.

Indian drug regulator on Sunday approved Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin for restricted emergency use in the country. "We want the vaccine to be affordable and accessible to all. The Government of India will receive it at a far more affordable price of \$3-4, since they will be buying in a larger volume," he said.

Poonawalla, said the priority supplies will go to India and the GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization) nations.

Only after meeting their requirements, "the private market will open up where the pricing would be \$6-8 per dose," he said. Serum will have 100 million doses in a month, and will possibly double it by April.

The Government has indicated that it may need 300 million doses before July 2021, with frontline health workers and the elderly given priority.

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38 test positive for UK Covid strain, each kept in single-room isolation

Genome sequencing on other specimens is going on: Ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 38 people have tested positive for the new UK variant of SARS-CoV-2 in India so far, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday.

These include the 29 cases which were announced till Friday. All these people have been kept in single-room isolation in designated health-care facilities by respective State Governments and their close contacts have also been put under quarantine, the Ministry said.

Of the 38, the mutated UK strain was detected in eight

samples at the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), New Delhi, 11 in the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), Delhi, one in the National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani (near Kolkata).

The other five samples were detected in the National Institute of Virology in Pune, three in Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad and 10 were sequenced at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences Hospital (NIMHANS), Bengaluru.

The NCBS, InSTEM in Bengaluru, CDFD in Hyderabad, ILS in Bhubaneswar and NCCS in Pune have so far found no UK mutant virus, the Ministry said.

"A total of 38 samples have been found to be positive with the new UK variant genome," the Ministry said.

It said comprehensive contact tracing has been initiated for co-travellers, family contacts and others. Genome sequencing on other specimens is going on, it added.

"The situation is under careful watch and regular advice is being provided to the States for enhanced surveillance, containment, testing and dispatch of samples to INSACOG labs," the Ministry stated.

The presence of the new UK variant has already been reported by Denmark, Netherlands, Australia, Italy, Sweden, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Japan, Lebanon and Singapore.

Bharat Biotech slams critics for raising doubt on Covaxin's efficacy

Company's MD clarifies phase 3 trial will be over in next 3 days

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

After the DCGI's decision to approve Covaxin kicked up a major row with a string of experts pointing to the lack of its efficacy data, its developer Bharat Biotech hit out on Monday at critics asserting that the company was in "no way" inferior to Pfizer, a US pharma MNC, in terms of coronavirus vaccine.

Bharat Biotech managing director Dr Krishna Ella clarified the phase 3 trial in India will be over in the next two-three days and the data should be available by February or March.

While claiming that Bharat Biotech is the only firm to have published five articles on the Covid-19 vaccine process, Dr Ella at a virtual Press conference also questioned Serum Institute of India's Covishield authorisation in the absence of phase 3 data from Indian trials.

"They don't have any immunogenicity data — why were they given the licence? They have been given licences based on the UK data. Where is their Indian data?" Dr Ella asked without naming SII.

Dr Ella also took an opportunity to slam AIIMS director



Dr Randeep Guleria for his comment regarding the use of Covaxin as a "backup".

"I don't understand what is 'backup'. On TV, everyone can sling mud at each other. We are all now cleaning our coats. There is no backup for humans. No backup for virus," Dr Ella said.

"I have not got any Gates Foundation money. Still, we have taken the risk and manufactured 20 million doses. We are an Indian company struggling alone," he said.

On Sunday the DCGI granted "restricted use in an emergency situation in public interest" to Covaxin and AstraZeneca-Oxford University's Covishield, which will be produced by Pune-based SII.

The drug regulator and the Hyderabad firm has been drawing flak for getting approval for the Covaxin with experts flagging the lack of phase III trial data and others questioning the drug's efficacy, branding it "... safe, like water".

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Modi lauds scientists, says desi vaccines must draw global nod

PM: World's biggest vaccination drive against coronavirus set to begin in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lauding scientists and technicians for coming out with India's indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine, Prime Minister Modi on Monday said world's biggest vaccination drive against coronavirus is set to begin in the country.

"World's biggest Covid-19 vaccination programme set to begin in India. For this, the country is proud of the contributions of its scientists and technicians," Modi said. He was addressing scientists at the National Metrology Conclave.

Asserting that "Made in India" products should not only have a global demand but also global acceptance, the PM said, adding, "Quality is as much important as quantity, our standards should rise with our scale in our quest for Aatmanirbhar Bharat".

Modi said in any progressive society, research is key and effective and its effects are commercial and social. They also help widen approach and thinking.

"We do not want to fill the world with Indian products, but we must win the hearts of every customer of Indian prod-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivers the inaugural address at the National Metrology Conclave through video conference in New Delhi on Monday

PTI

ucts in every corner of the world," he said.

Quality of services in our country and products, both public or private sector will determine India's strength in the world, he reiterated.

The Prime Minister pointed out that historically any country has progressed in direct correlation to its effort to promote science. He termed this "value creation cycle" of science, technology and industry. He said scientific invention creates technology and this leads to industry development. Industry, in turn, invests further in science for new research.

"This value creation cycle of science to mass creation has become all the more important in today's world when the country is moving forward with the goal of Aatmanirbhar India. CSIR will have to play its role in this," he said.

Modi also dedicated the

National Atomic Timescale and Bhartiya Nirdeshak Dravya Pranali to the nation and laid the foundation stone of the National Environmental Standards Laboratory through video conference. The conclave was organised by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL), New Delhi, on its 75th year of inception. The NPL is one of the oldest laboratories in the country.

Modi said metrology also sets the foundation for any scientific achievement and no research can proceed without measurements.

"Even our achievement has to be measured on some scale. The credibility of the country in the world will be dependent on the reliability of its metrology. Metrology is like a mirror showing us our standing in the world, the scope for improvement," said the PM.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL
CASES: 1,03,57,564
DEATHS: 1,49,886
RECOVERED: 99,75,317
ACTIVE: 2,28,106

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	19,47,011	49,695	18,47,361
Karnataka	9,21,938	12,107	8,98,919
Andhra Pradesh	8,83,210	7,118	8,73,149
Tamil Nadu	8,21,550	12,166	8,01,414
Kerala	7,78,874	3,161	7,12,389
Delhi	6,27,256	10,597	6,11,970
Uttar Pradesh	5,88,834	8,411	5,67,962
West Bengal	5,55,572	9,817	5,36,084
Odisha	3,30,492	1,938	3,26,507
Rajasthan	3,10,278	2,714	2,99,375
Telangana	2,87,740	1,551	2,81,083
Chhattisgarh	2,83,515	3,412	2,70,337
Haryana	2,63,312	2,923	2,57,652
Bihar	2,54,278	1,408	2,48,640
Gujarat	2,47,926	4,321	2,34,658
Madhya Pradesh	2,44,026	3,641	2,31,533

ED chargesheets ex-IAS officer for money laundering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a chargesheet against former Chhattisgarh cadre IAS officer Babul Agrawal in a money laundering case involving attachment of properties worth about ₹64 crore.

Besides Agrawal, his brothers Ashok Kumar Agrawal and Pawan Kumar Agrawal, who are also Directors of Prime Ispat Ltd, Raipur, Sunil Agrawal (Chartered Accountant) and others were charged by the ED under Prevention of Money Laundering Act in a case relating to corruption, cheating and forgery.

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Jack Ma missing after conflict with Chinese Govt

IANS ■ BEIJING/NEW DELHI

Tech billionaire and Alibaba founder Jack Ma has "disappeared" from public life and has not been spotted for at least two months amid the conflict with the Chinese regulators.

The Financial Times reported that Ma was recently replaced as a judge in the final of TV show "Africa's Business Heroes". "His photograph was removed from the judging webpage," the report claimed.

The final took place in November, shortly after Ma "made a candid speech criticising China's regulators and its state-owned banks".

Continued on Page 2

HP becomes 4th State to be hit by bird flu

PTI ■ SHIMLA/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Himachal Pradesh on Monday became the fourth state to report cases of bird flu after Rajasthan, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, with officials confirming that migratory birds found dead at Pong Dam Lake in Kangra district have tested positive for the dreaded avian influenza.

In Rajasthan, deaths of more than 170 new birds were reported from some districts on Monday, taking the total fatalities in recent days to over 425. Bird flu has been confirmed only in Jhalawar (district).

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Gzb crematorium roof cave-in: 3 civic officials arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ GHAZIABAD

Three civic officials were arrested on Monday over the collapse of a crematorium roof that claimed 24 lives here as tension spiralled in the area with the families of the victims blocking the Delhi-Meerut highway by placing two bodies on the road to press for their demand for higher compensation.

They lifted the blockade and agreed to cremate the bodies after hours of protest as officials agreed for ₹10 lakh compensation and a government job for each victim's family, Superintendent of Police (Rural) Iraj Raja said.

Continued on Page 2

India's S-400 deal may trigger US sanctions: Report

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

India's multi-billion dollar deal to purchase the Russian-made S-400 air defence system may trigger US sanctions on New Delhi, a US Congressional report has warned.

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) — an independent and bipartisan research wing of US Congress — in its latest report to Congress, said India is "eager for more technology-sharing and co-production initiatives, while the United States urges more reforms in India's defence offsets policy and higher Foreign Direct Investment caps in its defence sector".

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Row over Trump's phone call to Georgia poll chief to 'find' votes to reverse Biden's win

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump, in an extraordinary one-hour phone call, told Georgia's election chief to reverse President-elect Joe Biden's win and urged him to "find" enough votes to overturn his defeat in the swing state in the November 3 election, according to a secretly-recorded audio of the conversation posted by a major American media outlet.

The Washington Post reported that during the phone call on Saturday Trump urged fellow Republican Brad Raffensperger, the Georgia sec-

retary of state, to "find" enough votes to overturn his defeat, a development that legal scholars described as a flagrant abuse of power and a potential criminal act.

"The people of Georgia are angry, the people in the country are angry. And there's nothing wrong with saying, you know, that you've recalculated," Trump told Raffensperger.

"All I want to do is this. I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have. Because we won the state," he said.

Trump lost the election in Georgia by 11,779 votes.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

JUDGE: ASSANGE CAN'T BE EXTRADITED TO US

London: A British judge on Monday rejected the United States' request to extradite WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange to face espionage charges on mental health grounds, saying his extradition would be "oppressive". Assange has been charged in the US under the Espionage Act.

GANGSTER FROM BIHAR HELD IN DELHI

New Delhi: The Delhi Police, in a joint operation with its Bihar counterpart, has arrested a 24-year-old wanted criminal and extortionist hailing from Bihar in the national Capital, officials said on Monday. The accused, who was nabbed from a spot near the Rajokri flyover, has been identified as Aditya Tiwari, a resident of Bihar's Gopalganj district, they added.

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REMOVAL OF SHAHI IDGAH MOSQUE Mathura Court fixes Jan 15 for hearing plea

Mathura (UP): A Mathura court has fixed January 15 for hearing a plea filed by Hindu Army, an organisation seeking the removal of Shahi Idgah mosque located near Krishna Jannabhoomi temple here. This is the third suit filed in the case. The earlier suits were filed by advocate Hari Shankar Jain and others; and by advocate Mahendra Pratap Singh for five plaintiffs, in the court of Civil Judge (Senior Division)

Neha Bhadouria. "January 15 has been fixed as the next date of hearing in the case by Judge Neha Bhadouria," advocate Shailendra Singh said. The plea was earlier listed for hearing on December 22. It, however, could not be taken up for hearing due to the death of Mathura Bar Association member. The judge then slated January 4 for hearing in the case. **PTI**

Assam Govt to launch ₹100-a-day incentive for school-going girl students

Guwahati: In a first of its kind initiative to promote education of the girl child, Assam Education Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said every school-going girl student will get ₹100 per day for attending classes. The state government is currently distributing 22,000 two-wheelers to Class 12 girl students who passed in the first division from the state board under the Pragyan Bharti Scheme, he said at Sivasagar on Sunday. The state government will incur an expenditure of ₹144.30 crore for the purpose. The minister said the ₹100-a-day scheme will be launched by the end of the current month, but did not speak

Families seek bodies of 3 terrorists killed in Srinagar encounter

Srinagar: Families of three alleged militants, killed in an encounter with security forces at Parimpora on the outskirts of the city last week, on Monday demanded the return of their bodies and a fair investigation into the incident. According to security forces, Ajaz Maqbool Ganai, Zubair Ahmad Lone and Athar Mushtaq Wani were killed in an encounter on December 31. Police said while they were not listed as terrorists in their records, two of them had "radical" thoughts. Holding placards that read "we want justice" and "stop killing innocents", the relatives of the slain youths held a protest demonstration on Residency Road here, demanding that their bodies be handed over to them so that they can perform their last rites. The families also demanded a fair investigation into the incident, which they allege was a fake encounter. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah were among several mainstream politicians who called for returning the bodies to their families. **PTI**

Paused by Covid-19, India's Arctic expedition to resume in June

Panaji: After a gap of a year due to Covid-19 pandemic, India's annual expedition to the Arctic will resume this year in the month of June, a senior Union government official said on Monday. Talking to reporters in Vasco town, about 30 kms away from here, M Ravichandran, Director, National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), said the annual expedition to the Arctic region will be held from June to October. "Last year, the expedition was cancelled because of COVID-19 outbreak. This year, we are resuming the expedition. It will be held from June to October," he said. He said about 150-200 crew from India would be participating in the expedition in the batches of 10 at a time. India embarked upon the Arctic research by launching first scientific expedition to Arctic in the first week of August, 2007, using the interna-

tional research facility in the Spitsbergen Island of Norway. Subsequently, India has been sending scientific teams every summer and winter for carrying out studies in the Arctic, primarily in the fields of glaciology, hydrochemistry, microbiology, and atmospheric sciences. Ravichandran said the crew will embark on the mission by flight. "There's a science village in the Arctic where representatives of seven countries would stay together," Ravichandran said. He said the crew for the expedition will go in batches as the capacity of the Indian station in the Arctic is ten. "Once ten people return, another batch of ten members will go," he added. Ravichandran and other senior officials of the NCPOR were in Vasco on Monday to give a send-off to India's scientific expedition to Antarctica. **PTI**

3 held in Delhi after video of mother-daughter duo being sexually assaulted goes viral

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI "The incident was reported from an area of JJ colony in Wazirpur. In view of the gravity of the case, multiple teams were constituted to trace the victims and the accused," said the DCP. "Police teams examined CCTV footage, besides local intelligence was collected and local enquiry initiated at nearby bus stops, metro stations and shelter homes," said the DCP. "Both the victims were traced and statements of the 35-year-old woman, a rag picker, and her 18-year-old daughter were recorded. Their medical examination has been conducted," said the DCP.

The Delhi Police has arrested three men, after a video of a mother-daughter duo allegedly being sexually assaulted by two unidentified men in north-west Delhi's Wazirpur area was being circulated on social media. The accused, Sonu (22), Amit (24) and Ritik (18), were arrested in connection with the incident. Police said that Ritik had filmed the act. According to Vijayanta Arya, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Northwest, the act came to light on Sunday after a video started circulating on social media.

HC allows termination of 25-week pregnancy as foetus unlikely to survive with abnormalities

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Monday granted permission to a woman for medical termination of her 25-week pregnancy as survival of the foetus, suffering from serious abnormalities, is unlikely. The high court allowed the petition by the 25-year-old pregnant woman who was seeking permission to abort the foetus on the ground that it was suffering from Bilateral Agenesis and Anlyaramni, considering the report of AIIMS that the condition is poor and "survival of foetus is unlikely". "I see no reason to deny permission for medical termination of pregnancy. The petition is therefore allowed," Justice Navin Chawla said. The court's permission was required as Section 3 of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act does not permit termination of pregnancy in case the period of gestation is more than 20 weeks. The high court had earlier directed

the Medical Superintendent (MS) of AIIMS to forthwith constitute a board to examine the condition of the woman whose foetus was suffering from serious abnormalities. It had asked the MS of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to submit the report regarding the medical condition of the foetus and the possibility of the foetus not surviving in the circumstances it would be futile to compel the petitioner to undergo the full terms of pregnancy. The plea said during an ultra-sonography, conducted on the woman at the gestational age of 25 weeks, it was discovered that the fetus suffered from Bilateral Renal Agenesis (both kidneys absent) thereby making it incompatible with life. **PTI**

Row over Trump's phone call to Georgia poll chief...

From Page 1 "Flipping the state is a great testament to our country. It's a testament that they can admit to a mistake. A lot of people think it wasn't a mistake, it was much more criminal than that. But it's a big problem in Georgia, and it's not a problem that's going away," he said. "The people of Georgia know that this was a scam, and because of what you've done to the president, a lot of people aren't going out to vote [in the runoffs]. A lot of Republicans are going to vote negative because they hate what you did to the president," said the outgoing president. According to The Washington Post report, throughout the call, Raffensperger and his office's general counsel rejected Trump's assertions, explaining that the president is relying on debunked conspiracy theories and that President-elect Joe Biden's 11,779-vote victory in Georgia was fair and accurate. "Well, Mr. President, the challenge that you have is, the data you have is wrong," Raffensperger said. Trump reiterated that there is no way he lost Georgia. Trump has refused to concede to Biden, a Democrat. He has falsely asserted he won the race while publicly pressuring Republican lawmakers to "step up and fight for the Presidency."

Covishield job to cost...

From Page 1 Poonawalla said Serum was in touch with the Government for the vaccine's procurement. "Initially, we will supply 50 million doses and we will get more confirmations over the course of the next few days," he added. After the regulator's nod, Serum expects formalities to be completed in the next 7 to 10 days for the rollout to begin. When asked if the SII has been barred by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) not to export the vaccine till vulnerable populations in India are protected, Poonawalla said: "We will start exporting the vaccine post the Government's approval and talks are going on." "Our priority list will see us cater to the Indian market first, then the COVAX countries. Optimistically, by March-April we should have permissions in place," he added. When asked if the company was negotiating bilateral agreements with other countries too for the vaccine, Poonawalla said: "We have bilateral partnerships with nations like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Morocco, etc." On the efficacy of Covishield, he noted that the company has proven in its trials that it has a 100 per cent efficacy on hospitalisation, implying that there were zero hospitalisations found in the people who took the vaccine globally.

No headway in Govt-farmers talks

From Page 1 "The Government is under tremendous pressure. We don't want a discussion on any other topic except for repeal of the laws. Protests will not be withdrawn until the laws are repealed," All India Kisan Sabha general secretary Hannan Mollah said. The two sides took a long break after just about one hour of discussions. The representatives of protesting farmers had their own food, arranged from langar (community kitchen), as they have been doing for the last few times. However, unlike in the last round of talks on December 30, the Ministers did not join the union leaders for the langar food and were seen having their own discussion separately during the break, which lasted for more than one and half hours. The two sides got together again to resume their discussions at around 5.15 pm, but no headway could be made as the talks remained focussed on the farmers' demand for the repeal of the Acts.

Gzb crematorium...

From Page 1 He said that Muradnagar Nagar Palika Executive Officer Niharika Singh, Junior Engineer Chandra Pal and Supervisor Ashish were arrested this morning as they were involved in the tendering process for building the structure that collapsed Sunday, killing 24 people and injuring 17 others. Police teams are also conducting raids at possible hideouts of contractor Ajay Tyagi to arrest him, Raja said. Officials said construction work for the shelter at the crematorium, estimated to cost around Rs 55 crore, was started two months ago and it was opened for public nearly 15 days ago. The road blockade near the Muradnagar Police Station had led to a massive traffic jam with hundreds of vehicles getting piled up during the morning rush hour. The protesters were insisting District Magistrate Ajay Shankar Pandey be called for a talk with them so that they can register their demands including Rs 20 lakh compensation for each of the grieving families and a government job for one of their members. The DM, Senior Superintendent of Police Kalanidhi Naithani and other senior officials later reached the protest site and spoke to them over their demands, officials said.

Jack Ma missing...

From Page 1 "Ma was dressed down by officials in Beijing and the \$37 billion initial public offering of his company Ant Group was suspended. He has not been seen in public since," the report further said. A spokesperson for Alibaba was quoted as saying that "due to a schedule conflict Mr Ma could no longer be part of the finale judge panel of Africa's Business Heroes earlier this year (2020)". Last month, as China's top market watchdog began investigation into alleged anti-competition practices by the e-commerce giant Alibaba, the country also laid out "rectification plan" for Ma's fintech venture Ant Group. According to a report in TechCrunch, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, "summoned Ant Group for regulatory talks on December 26th, announcing a sweeping plan for the fintech firm to 'rectify' its regulatory violations". The banking authority laid out a five-point compliance agenda for Ant Group. The agenda is that Ant Group should return to its roots in payments and bring more

transparency to transactions. Ant Group said it has established an internal "rectification workforce" to work on all the regulatory requirements. Xinhua news agency had first reported that The People's Bank of China, China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, China Securities Regulatory Commission, and State Administration of Foreign Exchange will "interview Ant Group in the near future". The State Administration for Market Regulation started investigation into alleged anti-competition practices by e-commerce giant Alibaba, as Beijing tightened control of an expanding Internet. In a brief note, the State Administration for Market Regulation said that it is investigating Alibaba over its "choosing one from two" policy. As part of this policy, merchants are forced to sell exclusively on Alibaba e-commerce platforms and skip rivals like JD.com. Alibaba Group said in a statement that they have received notification from the State Administration for Market Regulation.

ED chargesheets ex-IAS officer...

From Page 1 The ED initiated investigations under PMLA on the basis of FIR registered by ACB, Chhattisgarh under provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 which discloses the disproportionate assets amassed by Babul Agrawal and his family members, pursuant to search action conducted by the Income Tax Department in February 2010 at their premises as also that of the CA. Besides the action by the ACB, Chhattisgarh, three more FIRs were registered and followed up with chargesheets by the CBI against Babul Agrawal and others. These FIRs were registered under Indian Penal Code Sections relating to criminal conspiracy, cheating, impersonation, forgery and using forged documents as genuine also violations under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

India's S-400 deal may trigger US...

From Page 1 Prepared for the members of the Congress for them to take informed decisions, the report went on to warn that "India's multi-billion dollar deal to purchase the Russian-made S-400 air defence system may trigger US sanctions on India under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act". The CRS reports are neither an official report of the US Congress nor reflect the view of Congressmen. They are prepared by independent experts for the lawmakers to take informed decisions. In October 2018, India had signed a USD 5 billion deal with Russia to buy five units of the S-400 air defence missile systems, despite a warning from the Trump administration that going ahead with the contract may invite US sanctions. In 2019, India made the first tranche of payment of around USD 800 million to Russia for the missile systems. The S-400 is known as Russia's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile defence system. Last month, Russia had said that implementation of its ongoing defence deals with

India including the supply of a batch of S-400 missile systems is advancing well notwithstanding the threat of US sanctions. At a press conference in New Delhi last month, Russian ambassador to India Nikolay Kudashev appeared to criticise the US sanctions on Turkey for procuring the S-400 missile systems under a USD 2.5 billion deal, saying Moscow does not recognise such unilateral actions. "We do not recognise or welcome unilateral sanctions as a language or tool or instrument of interstate or international relations, other than those applied by the UN Security Council, this is also the case of Turkey," he said. "As far as India is concerned, we share the same platform. India's position is also crystal clear. No sanctions are acknowledged other than those imposed by the UN Security Council. Whatever the future is, we believe that our ties could withstand the coming challenges," he said. Kudashev was asked to comment on the US sanctions on Turkey under the provisions of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). **PTI**

Bharat...

From Page 1 On Sunday, Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla too had said to a news channel that "... only three vaccines are with proven efficacy - Pfizer, Moderna and Oxford-AstraZeneca. Everything else... safe, just like water." Taking exception to the criticism, a visibly upset Bharat Biotech MD said, "We don't deserve this backlash," and asserted that his company had carried out "200 per cent honest clinical trials", had an established track record in producing 16 safe and efficacious vaccines,

and was transparent with all data. "Don't accuse us of inexperience. We are a global company... have manufactured 16 vaccines. It is not correct to say we are not transparent with data. We conduct clinical trials in many countries, including the UK. The point is we are not an Indian company... but a global one," he stressed. "We have published in a lot of journals. We were the first to identify the Zika virus and the first to file a global patent for the Zika vaccine and the Chikungunya vaccine. It is not correct to say that we are not transparent with data... we don't deserve the backlash," Dr Ella added. He also said the company had

"the only BSL-3 (bio-safety level 3) production facility in the world". While hailing DCGI decision to give nod for Covaxin. "We are not just conducting clinical trials in India. We have done clinical trials in more than 12 countries including the UK. We are doing clinical trials in Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh & other countries. We are not just an Indian company, we are truly a global company," Ella also said. On the query about the likely cost of the vaccine, Dr Ella said in the beginning, the cost of the vaccine may be a little higher. As the scale of production increases, the price will be controlled by the mar-

ket, he said. "Currently, we have 20 million doses. We are aiming to achieve 700 million doses capacity in four facilities -- three in Hyderabad and one in Bengaluru. We are encountering so many problems including related to logistics," he said. On being asked about whether the vaccine will be effective on a new strain of the virus, Ella said, "Give me one week's time, I will give you confirm data." Covishield, meanwhile, has completed all three phases, with trials taking place in India and around the world, and submitted data to the DCGI, which said the drug was 70.42 per cent effective.

HP becomes...

From Page 1 Report of other deaths is yet to come, according to the state animal husbandry department. As some parts of Kerala too reported the influenza outbreak, authorities have ordered culling of ducks, hens and other domestic birds within one km radius of the affected areas in Kottayam and Alappuzha districts. Officials said some 40,000 birds will have to be culled to check the spread of the H5N8 virus. A farm in Kerala's Kottayam has recently seen deaths of around 1,500 ducks due to bird flu recently. Bird flu is a highly infectious and severe respiratory disease in birds caused by the H5N1 influenza virus, which can occasionally infect humans as well. In Himachal Pradesh, around 1,800 migratory birds, most of them bar-headed geese, have been found dead in the Pong Dam Lake sanctuary. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Archana Sharma said the laboratory at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute in Bareilly detected avian influenza in the samples of dead birds, while citing the information conveyed by the Centre. At the same time, she said that her department was awaiting confirmation by the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal, as it was the nodal body for testing this disease.

Northern Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Jalandhar has also suspected avian influenza in the bird samples, she added. Kangra District Magistrate Rakesh Prajapati has prohibited slaughtering, sale, purchase and export of any poultry, birds, fish of any breed and their related products, including eggs, meat, chicken, etc. in Fatehpur, Dehra, Jawali and Indora subdivisions of the district. Exercising his powers under Sections 34 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the official said that shops selling these products would also remain closed in these four subdivisions. Prajapati also banned the movement of locals and tourists within a kilometre radius of Pong Dam. In Himachal's Pong Dam Lake wildlife sanctuary, wildlife staff first reported the sudden death of four bar-headed geese and one common teal in the Fatehpur area last Monday. The next day, over four hundred migratory waterfowl were found dead in Majhar, Bathari, Sihal, Jagnoli, Chatta, Dhameta and Kuthera areas in the wildlife ranges of Dhameta and Nagrota. Subsequently, hundreds of more birds were found dead each day, totalling 1,773 till Sunday, she said. She said that more than 90 per cent of the dead birds were bar-headed geese, the most common migratory species at the lake who arrive here from Central Asia, Russia, Mongolia and other regions in winters after crossing the Himalayan ranges. There are eight-nine other bird species whose members have been found dead.

Last year, more than one lakh migratory birds had camped at the lake by late January and this year, over 50,000 have arrived so far. The dead birds are being disposed off as per bird-flu protocol, officials said, adding that no such deaths have been reported so far from other water bodies in the state. Wildlife, veterinary and animal husbandry staff across the state have been put on alert and asked to immediately report the death of any bird or animal. The Gopalpur zoo in Kangra which is situated near the Pong Lake has been put on high alert. Recently, a bird flu alert has been sounded in Rajasthan after crows were found dead in half a dozen districts. Bird flu cases were also confirmed in dead crows in Indore in Madhya Pradesh. Bird flu virus was detected in around 50 crows whose carcasses were found in Indore in Madhya Pradesh last week, prompting authorities to issue an alert. In Rajasthan, 80 bird deaths were reported in Bikaner on Sunday, 42 in Sawai Madhopur, 12 in Kota, 12 in Baran, eight each in Pali and Jaipur, six in Dausa, five in Jodhpur and two in Jhalawar, according to the state animal husbandry department. The deaths have been reported in 15 districts of the state. Kerala, which saw the last major case of bird flu in 2016, has sounded high alert in the affected districts considering the potential of the virus to infect humans, even though officials said the situation was under control. **PTI**

NOIDA New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

(A) 1. **50/CGM/SM(WC-2)/2020-21**, Name of Work:- C/o Stadium (P/L BM & BC on Internal roads on Stadium Campus, Sector-21A), Noida
Cost -Rs. 53.64 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date **19.01.2021 upto 5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 20.01.2021 at 11.00 AM.

CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER, NOIDA
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

Office of the Superintending Engineer, Moradabad Circle, P.W.D. Moradabad
E-Procurement Short Terms Notice Inviting Tenders

No. 4834/E-Tender/MBD Circle/20-21 Dated: 21-12-2021

1. On behalf of the Governor of UP, tenders for following work are invited by the Superintending Engineer, Moradabad Circle, PWD Moradabad online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> & Prarahi website <http://wms.up.gov.in/prarahi> from registered contractors from 09-01-2021 at 10.00 am to 21-01-2021 at 17:00 Hrs. Technical bid/Prequalification of tenders shall be opened on 22-01-2021 at 12:00 Hrs. In office of undersigned by tender committee in presence of authorised representatives/ bidders who wish to be present. Financial bid of the tenders who qualify in technical bid shall be opened on date and time as specified by a notice in the office of undersigned. In case of Government holiday the required process shall be carried out on next working day. Amount mentioned in column 5 & 7 shall be mandatory deposited by net banking only on E-Tender Portal.

SL. No.	DISTRICT	Name of Work	Estimated cost Bid (Rs. in Lac)	(Bid Security Rs. in Lac)	Time of completion of the work (Including rainy season)	Cost of tender documents including GST	Category of road contractor eligible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Moradabad	Renewal work with B.C. and construction of Drain on Lakki Fazalpur Mini Bypass Road (O.D.R.)	550.00	11.00	3 Month	2354.00	A (Road Category)

Rules / conditions & details of the tender are available at website <http://etender.up.nic.in>.

Executive Engineer, Construction Division-1 PWD Moradabad
U.P.: 158413, Date : 01.01.2021
For and on behalf of Governor of UP
Mail ID:- semoradabad14@yahoo.com

Accept farmers' demands, repeal farm laws: Kejriwal to Centre

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener Arvind Kejriwal on Monday appealed to the Centre to accept all the demands of the protesting farmers and repeal the three farm laws. Meanwhile, the seventh rounds of talks between the farmers union and the Centre Government remained inconclusive and next meeting is expected on January 8.

In a tweet ahead of the protesting farmer unions' meeting with the Centre, Kejriwal lauded their resolve in continuing their agitation despite rains and cold weather.

"Salute to the resolve of the farmers staying firm on the roads despite rains and cold. I appeal to the Centre to accept all the demands of the farmers and repeal the three black farm laws in today's meeting," Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi.

Farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and some other states are camping at several entry points of the



national capital blocking the highways, demanding that the Centre repeal the farm laws and give legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

Protesting farmers who have been camping at Delhi borders for the last 40 days, braving bone-chilling cold and now rains have threatened to intensify their protest if their two major demands -- repeal of the three new farm laws and legal backing for the mini-

mum support price (MSP) -- are not accepted by the government in the January 4 meeting.

Enacted in September 2020, the government has presented these laws as major farm reforms and aimed at increasing farmers' income, but protesting farmers have raised concerns that these legislations would weaken the MSP and mandi systems and leave them at the mercy of big corporates.

Delhi, Noida borders remain partially closed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Due to the ongoing farmers' protest against the Centre new farm laws, the routes connecting Delhi to Ghaziabad and Noida via Ghazipur and Chilla borders remained partially closed on Monday.

The traffic movement was also diverted from the Singhu and Tikri borders as farmers stayed put there for the last 40 days.

The Delhi Traffic Police on Monday advised commuters to take alternate routes for coming to Delhi via Anand Vihar, DND, Bhopra and Loni borders.

In a series of tweets on Monday, the traffic police said Singhu, Auchandi, Piau Maniyari, Saboli and Mangesh borders are closed for traffic movement.

"Please take alternate route

via Lampur Safiabad, Palla & Singhu school toll tax borders. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba & GTK road. Please avoid Outer Ring Road, GTK Road & NH-44," it said.

"The Chilla and Ghazipur borders are closed for traffic coming from Noida & Ghaziabad to Delhi because of farmer protests. Please take alternate route for coming to Delhi via Anand Vihar, DND, Bhopra & Loni Borders," it said.

The traffic police said Tikri and Dhansa borders are also closed for traffic movement. "Jhatikara Border is open only for LMV (Cars/Light Motor Vehicles), two wheelers and pedestrian movement," it said in another tweet.

According to the traffic police, people travelling to Haryana can take the routes via Jharoda (only single carriage-way), Daurala, Kapashera,

Badusarai, Rajokri NH-8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundaheha borders.

Farmers from different states have been camping at various border points of Delhi for 40 days now to demand the repeal of the three farm laws enacted in September and a legal backing for the minimum support price (MSP)

The farmers had a difficult morning on Sunday as overnight rains left their tents waterlogged, firewood and blankets soaked, and intensified the cold. However, the farmers have said the weather will not dampen their spirit and they will continue the protest till their demands are met.

Since the farmers arrived at the national capital's borders in late November, the Delhi Traffic Police has been posting alerts on its official Twitter handle to inform commuters about

road closures across the city. The seventh round of talks between the government and

farmer unions remained inconclusive and they are expected to meet again on January 8.



Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

BJP blames AAP for demolition of Hanuman temple

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party on Monday alleged there was a conspiracy the way Arvind Kejriwal's Government demolished the ancient Hanuman Mandir in Chandni Chowk.

Attacking Kejriwal, Delhi BJP President Adesh Gupta and Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri demanded re-designing of the temple.

The BJP leaders will meet Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal for the reconstruction of the temple at Chandni Chowk and to intervene in this matter.

Gupta said that the Delhi Religious Committee is headed by a Minister of Kejriwal Government, Satyendar Jain and if he wanted he could have resolved the matter but he did not do so at the behest of CM Kejriwal.

"Religious organizations and priests of the temple also requested to save the Prachin Hanuman Mandir, but the CM did not accept their request. When the work of modification in Chandni Chowk was started, the local RWAs, Stakeholders, Market Associations and Traders Associations opposed it but the Kejriwal government did not stop the work," he added.

The temple committee and the local people also requested the PWD officials that even though the temple is small but it is ancient and shouldn't be touched. Earlier, in November, 2020 the local people of Chandni Chowk moved

to the High Court to save the temple, but the High Court clearly said that on matters related to religions or religious places, the religious committee under the state government resolves it.

Condemning the temple demolition, LoP Bidhuri said that religious committee under the state government has the right to take a stand in the court that the demolishing of the temple will hurt the faith of the people and that the law and order may be disturbed, so the temple should not be demolished, but religious committee of the Kejriwal government did not present its stand in court to save the ancient Hanuman temple.



BJP accusing AAP to escape public anger, it demolished temple: Pathak

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak on Monday said that the BJP-ruled MCD first broke the ancient Hanuman temple of Chandni Chowk and now accusing the AAP to avoid the public anger over this heinous crime.

"To hide this reality from the people of Delhi with the help of Delhi Police the BJP

demolished this temple when everybody was asleep," Pathak said, "Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta and other top leaders of the BJP are directly responsible for demolishing this ancient Hanuman Temple; AAP demands that stringent actions must be taken against these leaders for committing such a heinous crime."

"It was BJP ruled MCD who demolished the hundred-year-old ancient Hanuman Temple located in the Chandni

Chowk area," "Now to divert the attention of people from this heinous crime committed by the BJP they are falsely accusing the AAP"

"It is very clear that this ancient Hanuman temple was demolished by the BJP ruled North MCD. It is also very much known that this comes under the jurisdiction of the BJP ruled North MCD. The BJP has demolished this ancient Hanuman Temple with the help of police during midnight," the AAP leader said.

He said, "On behalf of the Aam Aadmi Party I am saying this on the basis of concrete proof. The BJP ruled MCD has recently submitted an affidavit in the court where they have clearly noted that this Hanuman temple was built in an encroached area.

Pathak said, "Adesh Gupta is a very senior leader and also a councillor of the BJP ruled North MCD. He is well aware of the fact that this demolition is being done by the BJP ruled North MCD with the help of Delhi Police which comes under the BJP ruled central government. Now the BJP is trying to divert the attention of the people and in a very fabricated manner, they are accusing the Aam Aadmi Party of this heinous crime," Pathak added.

AAP's politics revolves around making baseless allegations against MCDs: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor has said like all political parties Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) too is free to carry on its political agenda but it is really shocking that AAP's entire politics revolves around making baseless allegations against BJP ruled civic bodies.

"AAP is running Delhi

Government and if its leaders feel that MCDs are as corrupt as they regularly allege then why don't they order an inquiry against MCDs through local government or through any independent agency like CBI," he said.

AAP has organised 1500 Mohalla Sabha to reach every citizen aiming to inform about alleged MCD scam. "On December 11 2020 AAP minister Satyendra Jain had announced that he has asked

Addl. Chief Secretary of Urban Development Department to hold an inquiry into Rs. 2500 crores scam in MCDs related to rent dispute between North and South civic bodies and give report in 2 days." Over 3 weeks have lapsed however Delhi is yet to see any inquiry report, this is so because no scam took place," he said. "Its all a dirty political campaign by AAP to tarnish image of BJP ruled civic bodies."

BJP, AAP indulging in cheap publicity stunt, alleges Cong

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Anil Kumar on Monday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled Municipal Corporations of Delhi (MCD) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government in Delhi were indulging in cheap publicity stunts regarding the removal of a temple on the main Chandni Chowk road.

Kumar said that both BJP and AAP governments have admitted in the Court that this temple was an encroachment on the pedestrian pathway of Chandni Chowk and it was demolished when Delhi Police, Delhi Government and the BJP together got a direction from the Delhi High Court.

"The normal procedure is that if a temple or other religious structures are removed for the specific purpose of development, then they are

allotted alternate places for relocating such shrines," he said.

Kumar recalled that when the Sant Gaur Ravi Das Temple at the Tughlakabad forest area was demolished by the DDA, the Modi Government at the Centre had filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court that it was willing "to give place in the same site for reconstruction of the Guru Ravidas Temple".

He said that the same justice formula could have been adopted in this case too, but instead, BJP and Arvind Government have indulged in a shadow boxing to stoke religious sentiments.

Kumar said that political "up man ship" should be avoided on such sensitive issues, while adhering to court orders, in the larger public interest, as it is clearly evident that the BJP and AAP Governments were playing a "fixed match" in this case.

AAP to hold 2,500 'Mohalla Sabha' across city from Jan 7

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) in-charge Durgesh Pathak said that they are going to hold 2,500 'Mohalla Sabha' across Delhi from January 7-15.

Pathak said that in the last 15 years the BJP has transformed MCD to a den of corruption. "If you open any file of the MCD you will find some corruption or other. The MCD has become a factory of corruption and from the last few days, the AAP is continuously unmasking and exposing the corruptions of the BJP ruled MCD," he said.

"The AAP wants to take these issues of corruption of the BJP to every single citizen of

Delhi. The AAP will go door to door and apprise the people of Delhi regarding these scams done by the BJP. The AAP will hold around 2500 Mohalla Sabhas across the capital," said Pathak.

"During these meetings, we will ask for the suggestions from the citizens of Delhi on the matters of corruption by the BJP. These meetings or Mohalla Sabhas will start on 7th January of this month. Till 15th January this Mohalla Sabhas will be continued," said Pathak.

"The AAP has identified around 600 speakers to address these Mohalla Sabhas. Party's MLAs, councillors, district in-charges, Lok Sabha in-charges, sangathan mantris and ward in-charges etc. will communicate with people during these Mohalla Sabhas," said Pathak.

KRISHNA TAKES CHARGE OF GDA VICE-CHAIRMAN

Ghaziabad: Krishna, an IAS officer of 2011 batch, took charge of vice-chairman of the Ghaziabad Development Authority on Monday. Prior to this he has served the post of Modinagar SDM, Ghaziabad and Chief Development Officer, GDA vice-president Kanchan Verma, posted at the same post, has been transferred to the post of Managing Director of UP Medical Supply Corporation.

PNS

2,223 kg marijuana recovered from truck in Gurugram

Two arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Two truck drivers were arrested here on Sunday night allegedly after the recovery of over 2,223 kilograms of marijuana from a truck, officials said on Monday.

The accused were identified as Bhupender (34) and Omji (34) both are residents of Kanauj district in Uttar Pradesh. They were smuggling marijuana valued at crore of rupees from Orissa to Uklana in Hisar, police said.

The accused were hiding the contraband inside bags of cottonseed. The duo had also

struck a deal with their accomplice of Rs 4 lakh to supply the contraband to Uklana.

1 truck, 380 bags of cottonseed, 70 bags of marijuana (2,233.20 kg) recovered from their possession.

"After getting a tip-off, a crime unit Sector-10 of the Gurugram conducted a raid near the Panchgaon Chowk on

the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway and arrested the duo on Sunday at around 11.30 pm," ACP (crime), Preet Pal Sangwan said.

During the search, 70 gunny bags containing 2,223.200 kilogram of marijuana were found concealed in a middle cavity of the vehicle, the ACP said.

"During questioning the culprit disclosed that he had hidden the contraband in the truck among cottonseed bags so that the police could be misled during checking and they could easily supply the consignment at the designated place. They used to sell marijuana after dividing it into small packets," Sangwan said.

Both the arrested culprits were booked under the Narcotic Substances and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at the Bilaspur police station in Gurugram, the police said.

The accused were produced before a local court on Monday for further investigations.

Gangster from Bihar held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Special Cell of Delhi Police in a joint operation with its Bihar counterpart arrested a 24-year-old wanted criminal and extortionist hailing from the eastern State in the national Capital. Police said that he was on run for last one year and was carrying a reward of Rs 50,000 on information leading to his arrest.

The accused, who was nabbed from a spot near the Rajokri flyover, has been identified as Aditya Tiwari, a resident of Bihar's Gopalganj district. Police said that Tiwari was arrested from the service road parallel to the Rajokri flyover on Friday. A semi-automatic pistol and five live cartridges were seized from his possession, the police said.

According to Pramod Singh Kushwaha, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Special Cell, police received specific inputs that two gangsters from Bihar -- Tiwari and Manish -- wanted in a number of criminal cases were hiding in Delhi-NCR.



Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

through a voice message on his phone. They also asked the complainant to warn Sub-Inspector Dinesh, the Station House Officer (SHO) of the Vishambharpur police station in Gopalganj, of dire consequences if he continued chasing them," said the DCP.

"Tiwari is found involved in 26 cases in Bihar, including those related to murder, attempt to murder, assault on police, robbery, dacoity and kidnapping. Presently, he was wanted in more than 16 cases, the DCP said.

"In July 2020, Tiwari and his gang members had opened fire at a doctor, who is also the owner of a hospital in Gopalganj, to terrorise him as he was reluctant to pay the extortion amount as demanded by the gang," said the DCP.

"The gang members had also hurled four hand grenades at the hospital. When the hospital owner did not yield under their pressure, they fired at the hospital from AK-47 rifles and carbine machine guns," said the DCP adding that efforts are being made to arrest Manish.

Cop, his son held for proxy candidate during force's recruitment exam

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested its constable and his son after the latter used a proxy candidate during the force's recruitment exam in Muzaffarpur district in Bihar.

The accused has been identified as head constable Vineet and his 21 year-old son Kashish. Police said that Vineet was posted at the New Delhi Railways Station and suspected to have arranged the proxy candidate.

According to a senior police official, Kashish, who was pursuing graduation from distance learning, applied for the post of constable in the force.

"Kashish filed Muzaffarpur as his exam centre. The exam was conducted on November 27, 2020. However, another person appeared in the examination centre and took the exam on behalf of Kashish," he said.

"The staff selection commission (SSC) found something wrong and had filed a complaint regarding the matter with Delhi Police. When the Delhi Police was investigating the case, the matter came into light. Thereafter, a case was registered under relevant sections and Vineet and his son Kashish were arrested from the national capital on Sunday," said the senior police official.

Police said that the further investigation is underway.

Two dreaded criminals held after gunfight in G'gram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

The crime branch unit Sector-39 of the Gurugram police arrested two dreaded criminals after an exchange of fire in the early hours on Monday from Rithoj village in Gurugram.

However, three other criminals managed to escape the spot due to darkness. The arrested two criminals sustained gunshot wounds in their legs while two policemen also suffered bullet injuries during the shootout, officials said on Monday. All the injured are undergoing treatment at the Civil Hospital Sector-10A in Gurugram. The police have recovered a Mahindra Scorpio and two pistols from their possession.

The arrested accused have been identified as Sunil Kumar alias Sonu of Charkhi Dabri and Sandeep of Hanuman district in Rajasthan while the absconding culprits were identified as Shri Bhagwan of Rohtak, Amit of Bikaner and Rahul Barar of Bathinda in Punjab. According to the police, all the criminals were involved in heinous crimes committed in Rajasthan and Punjab.

The gunfight broke out at around 4.00 am on Monday morning near the Rithoj village in Gurugram.

"All the five criminals in a Scorpio were intercepted by the police team headed by Sub-Inspector Rajkumar near the Badshahpur government school on the Sohna Road after a tip-off. After seeing the police party the accused had tried to flee the spot while firing on the police party. In retaliation the police also fired several rounds on the culprits in which two accused received bullet injuries and later the police overpowered them," ACP (crime), Preet Pal Sangwan said.

"Both criminals Sunil and Sandeep were hit on their legs during the subsequent gunfight and the remaining culprits managed to escape the spot due to darkness. The injured duo were taken into custody and were treated at a Gurugram civil hospital," ACP (crime), Preet Pal Sangwan said.

Policeman Kapil received bullet injury on his shoulder and his colleague Sandeep received gunshot wounds in his leg during the exchange of fire and were admitted at the same hospital. Dozens of fires took place during the gunfight, a senior police official said.

"The arrested accused are undergoing treatment in a government hospital. The police will take their custody once they are discharged from the hospital. Further probe is underway," Sangwan added.

B'desh tri-services to be part of R-Day parade

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Bangladesh tri-service contingent will participate in the forthcoming Republic Day parade this year, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the India-Pakistan war and liberation of Bangladesh.

Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson is the chief guest for the Republic Day celebrations at the Rajpath.

Given the raging corona pandemic, this year's parade will commence from its traditional spot Vijay Chowk and end at the National Stadium instead of Red Fort. It means the parade will cover a distance of about three kms instead of nine kms in earlier years.

Moreover, not more than 25,000 spectators will be allowed to witness the parade as against one lakh earlier. Also, children will not be allowed to see the parade at the venue as a safety measure against pandemic, sources said here on Monday.

The fly past will take place, they said adding the number of soldiers in the marching contingents have also been reduced as a precaution. As against the 115 marchers in the previous years, only 96 will march down the Rajpath this time.

As regards the Bangladesh contingent, they said it will arrive in Delhi on January 12 and will depart on January 30. Upon arrival, the contingent will be quarantined till January



19. The contingent includes a marching contingent and a military band.

Indian Air Force (IAF) planes will ferry the contingent to and from Bangladesh. The contingent will be carrying their own ceremonial rifles and the personnel will be in their combat dress during the march past. It will also visit places of historical significance in Agra and Ajmer on January 28 and 29 before their departure.

Sources said the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has requested the Bangladesh side to include personnel from the Army Units which took part in the Liberation War in the visiting contingent. India and Bangladesh have planned a series of events through the year to mark the 50th anniversary. In 2018, French Army became the first foreign contingent to take part in the

Republic Day parade on Rajpath.

Incidentally, more than 150 Army jawans tested positive last month. They were part of the marching contingents for the Republic Day and the Army Day on January 15. Adequate steps were taken to quarantine them.

Giving details of the corona test, sources said, "The soldiers who came in from outside to participate in various parades were tested before putting them into a safe bubble. Some of them tested positive. Almost all except seven are asymptomatic."

These were among the few thousand soldiers who have been tested, the source stated. Officials said the soldiers who tested positive were quarantined at the Delhi Cantonment where Covid-19 facilities have been set up since April.

Cong forms 4-member panel for seat-sharing talks with Left in Bengal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday constituted a four-member committee under the chairmanship of West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury to hold talks with the Left parties regarding seat-sharing and joint programmes for the upcoming West Bengal Assembly elections. The members are Abdul Mannan, Pradip Bhattacharya and Nepal Mahato.

Both the parties have engaged in talks for long to take on the ruling Trinamool Congress and an aggressive BJP, which made inroads in Bengal during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The committee has been chosen to meticulously work on the data and analysis and decide on the seats based on the ground reports from the workers of the alliances team.

West Bengal Congress in-charge Jitin Prasada said talks on seat sharing will begin soon and the party will fight with full force to restore the pride of Bengal which is being "destroyed by the BJP and TMC".

Chowdhury had announced last month that the Congress high command had given its approval to tie up with the Left in West Bengal. The Congress had also contested the last assembly election in alliance with the Left. In the last election, the CPI-



M had contested 148 seats and won 26. Congress had contested 92 but won 44, registering a better strike rate than its partner in the State. The TMC had swept the election by winning 211 of 295 seats.

The West Bengal assembly elections is expected to be a difficult terrain for the ruling TMC this year as the BJP has made massive inroads in Bengal with high pitched campaigns led by its top leaders including Home Minister Amit Shah. In the Lok Sabha elections 2019 BJP won 18 Lok Sabha seats with close to 41 per cent vote share which is just two per cent less than what TMC got.

BJP has sharpened its attack on Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the recent past.

In one of the recent public rallies, Home Minister Amit Shah said that his party will form the next government by winning over 200 seats. AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi has also announced that his party will contest the next Assembly polls in Bengal.

CBI books Delhi-based firm for cheating PNB

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case on a complaint from Punjab National Bank against a Delhi-based private company Sonar Industries Ltd and others including its directors/guarantors and unknown public servants/private persons for causing a loss of ₹168.73 crore to the public sector lender.

The CBI on Monday conducted searches at five locations in Delhi at the office and residential premises of the accused firm and individuals in the case.

"It was alleged that the said accused had cheated the Punjab National Bank by way of diversion of bank funds, fraudulent transactions, criminal misappropriation etc.," the CBI said in a statement.

Besides the firm, its promoter Jitendra Kejriwal, directors Roop Kishore Tuli and Mohan Kumar Jha have also been named as accused in the case.

Earlier, the Sonar Industries Ltd. Was incorporated as Donear Décor Pvt Ltd. In May, 2004.

The company is engaged in the business of manufacturing decorative plywood, veneers and laminates sold under the brand names Donear/Sonar.

DARE scientist, US firm under CBI scanner for irregularities in procurement of radar components

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has booked a Defence Avionics Research Establishment (DARE) scientist and a US-based firm for alleged irregularities in the import of radar components worth about USD one million in 2009, officials said.

The agency registered the case after getting clearance to lodge FIR against Priya Suresh, a scientist then posted at DARE, Bengaluru, they said.

Besides her, the CBI has named AKON Inc based in California in the US in its FIR for allegedly sending incomplete equipment even after receiving payments for 35 VCO-based RF Generator used in radar-based electronic warfare for USD one million (Rs 7.3 crore as per present exchange rates), they said.

It is alleged that the company was selected for supplying the equipment through a global tender and 90 per cent of the payment was made in three tranches in February, 2009, they said.

The CBI has alleged that she had accepted these 35 units even after having knowledge from AKON representatives through emails that these units were in developmental stage, they said.

The agency, which did a preliminary enquiry into the matter before filing the FIR, found that 24 units were sent back for "upgrade" without stating the nature of upgrade, 11 remained in DARE store till

CBI has named AKON Inc based in California in the US in its FIR for allegedly sending incomplete equipment even after receiving payments

2011 unused and untested, they alleged.

She allegedly allowed balance payment to be made to AKON certifying that units were working satisfactorily knowing that 24 units are still with the USA-based vendor, they said.

In 2011, after ensuring payment to the vendor, the scientist recommended that 11 units held in store are not working at all and should be sent back to the vendor for repair, they said.

The CBI has alleged that even now only 13 units are held by DARE and the remaining are with AKON, it said.

The units supplied by the vendor did not meet the specifications of the order and their weight were approximately three times more than the dummy provided by it, they said.

Testing of VCO-based radar threat simulator could not be completed by a Bengaluru-based vendor even after full payment of ₹9.5 lakh because of non-supply of the component by AKON, it said.

2020 eighth warmest year since 1901

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday said that the average mean land surface temperature was 0.29 degree Celsius above normal over the country in 2020 and it was the eighth warmest year on record since national-wide records commenced in 1901.

According to the IMD, extreme weather events like extremely heavy rainfall, floods, landslides, thunderstorm, lightning and cold waves had claimed over 1900 lives in 2020.

The IMD said that the averaged seasonal mean temperatures were also above the average during all the seasons except pre-monsoon season while averaged mean monthly temperatures were warmer than the normal during all the months of the year except March and June in the country.

"The monsoon and post-monsoon seasons with mean temperature anomalies (Actual temperature-Normal temperature) of +0.43 degree Celsius and +0.53 degree Celsius respectively mainly contributed to this warming. Mean temperature during the winter was also above normal with anomaly of +0.14 degree Celsius. However, during the pre-monsoon season temperature was



below normal (-0.03 degree Celsius)," the IMD said in a statement on Climate of India during 2020.

The five warmest years on record in order were: 2016 (+0.71 degree Celsius), 2009 (+0.55 degree Celsius), 2017 (+0.541 degree Celsius), 2010 (+0.539 degree C), and 2015 (+0.42 degree Celsius). It may be mentioned that 12 out of 15 warmest years were during the recent 15 years (2006-2020). Past decade (2001-2010/2011-2020) was also the warmest decade on record with anomalies of 0.23 degree Celsius/0.34 degree Celsius.

The country averaged annual mean temperature during 1901-2020 showed an increasing trend of 0.62 degree Celsius/100 years with significant increasing trend in maximum temperature (0.99 degree

Celsius/100 years) and relatively lower increasing trend (0.24 degree Celsius/100 years) in minimum temperature.

The Global mean surface temperature anomaly during 2020 (January to October as per WMO state of the global climate) is +1.2 degree Celsius.

The IMD said that the country also experienced other high impact weather events like, extremely heavy rainfall, floods, landslide, thunderstorm, lightning and cold waves. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were the most adversely affected states during the year which reportedly claimed more than 350 deaths from each state mainly due to thunderstorm, lightning & cold wave events.

Heavy rainfall and flood related incidents reportedly claimed over 600 lives from different parts of the country

during pre-monsoon, monsoon & post-monsoon seasons. Of these, 129 lives were reportedly claimed from Assam, 72 from Kerala [Specifically, 65 persons reportedly claimed dead in a single day from Pettimudi in Munnar, Idukki district of Kerala on 7th August due to landslide.], 61 from Telangana (while, 59 lives reportedly claimed only during the period 1st to 20th October), 54 lives from Bihar, 50 from Maharashtra, 48 Uttar Pradesh, & 38 from Himachal Pradesh.

Thunderstorms and lightning reportedly have claimed 815 lives from different parts of the country. Among these, 280 from Bihar, 220 from Uttar Pradesh, 122 from Jharkhand, 72 from Madhya Pradesh, 23 from Maharashtra and 20 from Andhra Pradesh were significant.

"Cold wave conditions mainly prevailed over central parts of the country especially in the month of January. It caused deaths of about 150 people. Of these deaths, 88 deaths were reported from Uttar Pradesh alone, 45 from Bihar only on single day on 1st January & 16 from Jharkhand," the IMD said.

"The annual rainfall over the country was 109 % of long period average (LPA) of 117.7 cms. During 2020, 5 cyclones formed over the North Indian Ocean," it added.

I-T officials visit Vadra's house to record statement under benami assets law

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax department on Monday visited the premises of Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, to record his statement in connection with its probe against him under the benami assets law, official sources said.

They said Vadra was asked to join the investigation at the tax authority's office but as he cited Covid-19 restrictions, a team of officials visited his premises in Delhi's Sukhdev Vihar area.

A department team has gone to record Vadra's statement under the provisions of the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, they said.

The department has been probing Vadra, the husband of Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, on charges of alleged possession of some undisclosed assets in the UK.

The Enforcement Directorate too is investigating these charges, under the anti-money laundering law, against the businessman.

Vadra had denied any wrongdoing in the past even as the Congress party had called the action political vendetta.



India to launch the 40th scientific expedition to Antarctica on Monday marking four decades of the country's scientific endeavour to the southern white continent. The 40th expedition journey will be flagged off from Goa on January 5, with 43 members onboard Agency

Bharat Biotech allowed to conduct its trials on children above 12

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech, which received emergency approval for its Covid-19 vaccine only in "clinical trial mode", has been allowed to conduct its trials on children who are above the age of 12 years. The vaccine has already been used for children above 12 in the last round and has been found safe.

The Hyderabad-based firm is conducting Phase 3 trials.



Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine 'Covishield', manufactured by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) has been approved for those above the age of 18. The DCGI had on Sunday approved Bharat Biotech's 'Covaxin' and Serum's 'Covishield' for emergency use in the country, paving the way for a massive inoculation drive.

So far, the Government has said the vaccination drive is intended only for adults but this provides hope that if there is sufficient data, then it can be extended fully to children in the future. The drug regulator clarified the age requisites for active immunisation in a document while giving permission to manufacture Covaxin.

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan had clarified on Sunday that emergency approval for Covaxin is different from the one given for Serum Institute's Covishield because Covaxin's use will be

in clinical trial mode. All its recipients will be tracked and monitored as if they are participating in a trial.

Bharat Biotech's Covaxin was "safe and provides a robust immune response", said DCGI's VG Somani.

The DCGI has also asked the drug firm to submit updated safety, efficacy and immunogenicity data from the ongoing Phase I, II and III clinical trials till the completion of trials.

DCGI nod giant step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat: Naidu



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Naidu stressed that this development can benefit not only Indians but the larger humanity

A day after the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) gave its nod for the emergency use approval for two indigenous vaccines against Covid-19 on Sunday, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Monday termed it as India's leap of science and manifestation of the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Naidu stressed that this development can benefit not only Indians but the larger humanity. He also appealed to the people to express the same spirit in taking the vaccine as they did while persevering through the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

shielding humanity from the deadly disease by demonstrating its ability to mass produce the much-needed vaccine and offer its own version as well. India's indigenous vaccine (Covaxin) has certain unique features based on the whole virus approach. This is a commendable achievement and all concerned deserve kudos for the foresight and perseverance and fruition of spirited efforts," Naidu was quoted in a Press release from Vice President's

Secretariat. Referring to the devastating effects of Covid-19 last year, Naidu hailed the spirited scientific efforts to come out with vaccines. He further said, "While the celebrations can wait till every needy person gets the vaccine shot, it's not out of context to say cheers to this optimistic moment."

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

He noted that India's spirited efforts towards making vaccines available offers hope to people across the globe conferring on India the leadership role in the collective fight against the most dreaded health challenge of the last 100 years since the outbreak of Spanish Flu.

Noting that development and administration of vaccine are guided by a stringent regime of protocols and strict monitoring of attendant data without any compromise, the Vice President referred to the regulator's assurance to the nation of due diligence before giving nod to the two vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin on Sunday.

"India's leap of science with the vaccine announcement is a clear manifestation of the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat," Naidu stated.

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Punjab Univ students seek enquiry into police atrocities on farmers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Thirty-five students of Punjab University have written to Chief Justice of India (CJI) SA Bobde and other judges of the Supreme Court seeking an enquiry into alleged police atrocities on the farmers protesting at Delhi borders against the three farm laws.

Aanchal Sawa, one of the signatories of the letter, told PTI that the apex court registry has provided the diary number to the letter which may be registered and heard as a PIL.

In the open letter, the students of the Centre for Human Rights and Duties of the university have alleged that there has been "illegitimate use of water cannons, tear gases shells and lathis on peaceful protesting farmers" by police authorities which needs to be probed.

Seeking inquiry into police excesses and illegal detention of some protesters, the letter has also sought a direction to authorities "to withdraw all the cases against innocent farmers which were registered under political vendetta".

SC asks Centre to withdraw or amend 2017 rules on confiscating animals during trial

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Monday asked the Centre to either withdraw or amend rules notified in 2017 for confiscating animals of traders and transporters during the pendency of trial in cases under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, saying they are contrary to the law.

The top court said the rules will be stayed if not withdrawn or amended by the Centre as the law provides that animals can be confiscat-

ed only if a person is convicted under the Act.

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ed only if a person is convicted under the Act.

A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian said that animals are a source of livelihood for the people concerned. The bench told Additional Solicitor General Jayant K Sud, appearing for the Centre, that the government cannot confiscate the cattle and keep it before a person is convicted. At the outset, Sud informed the bench that the 2017 rules have been notified. The bench said that animals are a source of livelihood. We are not talking about pet dogs and cats. People live on the basis of their animals.

Akhilesh makes amends over vaccine remark, says did not insult scientists

Lucknow: Two days after Akhilesh Yadav said he will not get himself injected with a "BJP vaccine" against coronavirus, the Samajwadi Party chief asserted Monday that he had never insulted the scientists who developed it.

Yadav's comment on Saturday that he could not trust a vaccine which would be used by a BJP government had triggered sharp reactions from the ruling party as well as leaders like Omar Abdullah of the National Conference.

The SP chief had tried to make amends on Twitter the same day, saying he was not referring to the scientists.

Questioned again by reporters on his remarks, the SP asked the Centre to tell when the poor people in the state will get the anti-COVID shot and if it will be available free.

"I have never raised any questions on any scientist developing the vaccine or any person helping in making the vaccine. I only raised questions on the BJP as people do not have faith in the party because of the decisions taken by it," he said. But he appeared to raise doubts again against the vaccines set to be rolled out in the country in the coming days, asking what hap-

pened with the Haryana minister who had got himself vaccinated.

"The government hospital could not treat him, so he went to a private hospital to save his life," Yadav said.

The apparent reference was to Haryana's Anil Vij who had tested positive for coronavirus days after taking part in a trial for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. It was however clarified then that not all participants in the trial were injected with the vaccine - a proportion of them were administered placebos. In any case, it needed two shots days apart for the immunity to kick in.

Akhilesh Yadav said after the "debate" on the vaccines, the government should come forward and remove all doubts. "We want to know from the government when the poor people in the state will get vaccinated, and whether it will be free of cost or not," he said.

"The government should tell its plan. First of all the people of the press should get vaccinated. I am saying this with full seriousness that you people risked your lives during the COVID-19 coverage, and some of your people lost their lives," Yadav added.

Gujarat fully equipped for Covid vaccination: Rupani

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on Monday said the state is fully equipped for the COVID-19 vaccination drive and will begin the process as soon as the central government announces the plan.

Preparations related to cold chain infrastructure, survey and training of vaccinators have been completed, Rupani said addressing an event at Ahwa in Dang district.

India's drugs regulator on Sunday approved Oxford COVID-19 vaccine Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute, and indigenously developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use in the country, paving the way for a massive inoculation drive.

"Gujarat is fully equipped for vaccination against COVID-19. Soon, the Made in India vaccine will be available and the vaccination process will start," Rupani said.

The state government has made necessary arrangements for the vaccination, he said.

"Cold chains have been set up, survey work has been completed, and training for vaccination has also been given to the personnel (concerned)," Rupani said.

The state government will start the process in accordance with the Centre's plan, he added.

The Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, has tied up with AstraZeneca to manufacture Covishield, while Covaxin has been indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

On Sunday, Gujarat's tally of coronavirus cases rose to 2,47,228 with the addition of 715 fresh infections.

The state has so far reported 4,318 deaths due to COVID-19, according to official figures.

14,000 health, field workers will first be vaccinated: CM

Puducherry: Chief Minister of Puducherry V Narayanasamy said on Monday that the territorial administration has readied infrastructure to vaccinate 14,000 health and field workers against COVID-19.

Addressing a virtual press conference, he said the vaccines were expected to be made available by the Centre in 10 days.

"We have, in the meanwhile, got ready the infrastructure to first inoculate 14,000 personnel of Health Department and field staff," he said.

Right now, 13,000 personnel and workers had registered themselves for coverage and no time will be lost to inoculate the workers and health staff, he said.

The territorial government would meet the expenditure to purchase the vaccines for free inoculation, the Chief Minister said. He said 41 centres were readied for the inoculation. While Puducherry would have 29 centres, Karaikal would have eight, Mahe three and Yanam one.

Each of the centres would vaccinate around 200 people a day, he said.

Those above 50 and those with diabetes and blood pressure would be covered in the next phase.

Cold chain facilities were also in place to preserve the vaccine. While Puducherry would have 36 cold chain units, Karaikal would have 15 followed by Mahe three and Yanam one. He said Puducherry had recorded the largest number of sample tests. The recovery rate was high and fatality rate low. The test positivity was 0.8 per cent now.

He mentioned the dedicated work by health staff, officials of the Revenue Department, police personnel and other departments to ensure that the pandemic was kept at bay.

Post-Covid care now Rajasthan Govt's top priority: Health Min Sharma

Jaipur: Rajasthan Health Minister Raghu Sharma on Monday said the state government, after bringing down the daily case count of COVID-19, is now focusing on reducing the post-COVID-19 effect.

Post-COVID-19 care treatment is now the top priority of the state government, he said.

Sharma requested the people, who have recovered from COVID-19 but have post-COVID effects, to consult and take treatment at 'post-COVID care clinics' and 'day care centres' run by the medical and health department.

He said the people who have recovered from COVID-19 should be in constant touch with the doctors if they have any kind of post-COVID symptoms such as physical weakness, weakness in lungs, pain in hands and legs so that it can be cured.

The health minister said many symptoms are appearing as post-COVID effects and in the view of it, post-COVID centres have been set up at the government medical institutions in the state.

Didi demands national holiday on Netaji's birth anniversary

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Controversial farm laws and celebration of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary have suddenly become the two central topics ahead of Bengal Assembly elections.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday renewed her demands for declaring January 23 the birth anniversary of Netaji as a national holiday.

"I personally feel we haven't done anything important for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose after independence. I've written a letter to Centre to declare 23rd January, birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, as a national holiday. It is my demand," the Chief Minister said unraveling grand programmes including an apolitical rally to celebrate the national icon's birth day which would be observed as "Desh

Nayak Diwas."

In what experts called a ploy to evaluate her support base, Banerjee said, "the people of the State would be encouraged to blow conch shells and give azaans at the time of Netaji's birth."

The Chief Minister said she had earlier written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting him to consider declaring Netaji's anniversary as a national holiday. The Government schools would be asked to prepare Jai Hind and Azad Hind brigades to promote nationalism, Banerjee who held video conferences with civil society members said.

Banerjee also said that she was against playing politics with farmers adding her Government would bring a motion in the State Assembly denouncing the farm laws.

"There should not be any politics over the farmers... they are our food providers... We are thinking

to bring a motion in the State Assembly against the farm law for which the House will be opened for a couple of days," Banerjee said.

Threatening a nationwide stir she had earlier said that the "the central government must withdraw this anti-people law."

With an apparent eye on the elections the Chief Minister also announced a slew of welfare projects particularly free eye care.

The Government would free eye treatment to the people of the State and would "provide free spectacles to 8.25 lakh people," Banerjee said adding 20 lakh cataract operations would also be conducted free of cost.

The students would be given free eye care in the Government schools, she said adding the eye treatment would be provided in about 1,200 gram panchayats and primary health care centres.

Former IAS, judges, veterans defend UP anti-conversion law

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

Defending the anti-conversion law enacted by the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh, a group of former judges, civil servants and veterans on Monday hit out at its critics, saying they seem to have "usurped" the constitutional power of judicial review to put every law of the land to the "test of their own whims."

In a statement signed by 224 persons, including those from academia, they claimed that the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, referred as 'love jihad' law by Hindutva groups, applies to everyone and safeguards the dignity of women.

Slamming the law's critics for terming it illegal and anti-Muslim, the statement alleged that it is a "shocking obsession of this biased group to stoke communal fire by instigating the religious minorities". Former UP chief secretary

Yogendra Narain, former Punjab chief secretary Sarvesh Koushal, former Haryana chief secretary Dharam Vir, former Delhi High Court chief justice Rajendra Menon, former ambassador Lakshmi Puri and former Maharashtra DGP Praveen Dixit are among the signatories to the statement.

Their support to the law came days after 104 retired civil servants alleged that Uttar Pradesh has become the "epicentre of politics of hate, division and bigotry" and the institutions of governance are "steeped in communal poison". They had sought repeal of the law, saying it is being used to particularly victimise Muslim men.

Countering them, the statement said 'Ganga-Jamuni' culture, a colloquial term for peaceful interfaith existence, does not stand for unlawful conversions with criminal intent, leading to murders, mutilation, torture and betrayal of women in particular. "We strongly believe in a secular India with harmonious coexistence of people of all faiths,

and consider unlawful conversions with wrongful intent and questionable means a threat to communal harmony... We urge all state governments to discharge their functions in the best public interest in maintaining law and order, social harmony and dignity of women without succumbing to any pressures," it said.

The signatories said the former civil servants, who had issued a statement slamming the law, should have kept in mind that even prior to India's independence, princely states, including Kota, Patna, Surguja, Udaipur, and Kalandhandi, had passed laws regarding religious conversions.

After independence, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand among others had legislated on matters relating to unlawful conversions, they noted, adding that new laws reflect the evolving needs of a dynamic society.

They said it is a hasty generalisation based on a solitary incident

of alleged lapse in Moradabad that the law itself has been dubbed as illegal and, in particular, anti-Muslim. The critics lost sight of a large number of incidents where hapless victim women have been "brutally murdered" in a ghastly manner in the course of inter-faith marriages and conversions, they said, citing several cases.

The group of 104 former civil servants is "visibly biased", they alleged, accusing them of working with an anti-establishment attitude and availing of every opportunity to "put the Indian democracy, its institutions, and persons legitimately holding high offices in poor light before the whole world by making ill-considered public statements."

Those defending the law said this "politically motivated pressure-group" does not represent thousands of former civil servants, judges, veterans and other "nationalist intellectuals" who believe in India emerging as the greatest democracy of the world, and "a global icon" bringing pride to every Indian.

My supporters won't let you become CM: Alagiri to Stalin

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Till Sunday morning Anna Arivalayam, the headquarters of the DMK in Chennai's Mount Road looked like a beehive of activities. But by evening the ambience in the party office has given way to a sense of uncertainty. What shocked the party leadership and cadre was the announcement from Madurai.

M K Alagiri, the Madurai based son of late M Karunanidhi, the former Chief Minister who was also the party chief for nearly five decades delivered a powerful blow to the chief ministerial dreams of M K Stalin, the reigning president of the party who is also the younger brother of the former.

"Stalin can never become the chief minister of Tamil Nadu without my support. My supporters will never let Stalin become the chief minister," Alagiri declared while addressing his followers in a public meeting. The DMK leadership has not responded to Alagiri's salvo till Monday evening.

Alagiri, who was the organising secretary of the DMK for

the southern districts of the State was expelled from the primary membership of the party allegedly for anti-party activities. "Till this day I have not been told the reason for my expulsion from the party. It was a conspiracy hatched by certain leaders in the party in order to appease Stalin," said Alagiri.

Alagiri, who was the union minister for fertilisers and chemicals during 2009 to 2013 in the second UPA Government, has been lying low since 2013 after his expulsion from the party. He did not campaign actively for the party in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and the DMK was obliterated in the hustings. The DMK could not win against the AIADMK in the 2016 assembly election despite the anti-incumbency factor. This is being seen as the fall out of Alagiri's non-cooperation with the party leadership.

Political commentators point out that whenever Alagiri had been antagonised by the party leadership, the DMK was mauled in the polls. "He is a force to reckon with in southern Tamil Nadu and the DMK can never afford to ignore him," said a political commentator in

Chennai.

Bhanumathi Swaminathan, a former banker with a leading corporate bank said Alagiri is capable of spoiling the prospects of the DMK.

"He has been portrayed as a rough and arrogant person which is a blatant lie. Alagiri is a nice and jovial person. Since he worships in temples, the Dravidian media had created a notion that he is power hungry and incapable. Having known him for years, I can say that he is respected and loved by thousands," said Bhanumathi.

She pointed out how Alagiri singlehandedly ensured the defeat of many DMK bigwigs in the 2001 election despite a favourable situation. "All Karunanidhi had to do was to accommodate five or six persons recommended by Alagiri as candidates. Stalin vetoed Alagiri's request for which the DMK had to pay heavy price," she said.

There are reports that Alagiri may launch a separate party and form a front with like minded parties. "He has friends in all parties in the State who are always willing to help him," said a long time associate.

Indian shooter Ved Prakash earn kudos in England

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

The only shooter and international shooting referee Vedprakash Sharma, who represented India from Aligarh at the International Shooting Championships, has earned kudos for the country. The Scanner League being organized by England started on January 3. The first league round was played on 3 January. In this, Vedprakash performed seventh in the top-8, performing brilliantly. He is the only participant from India to participate in this competition.

Vedprakash said that, in the age group above 40 years, a veteran shooters from 60 countries are participating.

It is important to be in the top-8 in shooting sports from National to Olympic. Because only the shooters in the top-8 list go to the next round or the final. He took aim in this online competition through Switzerland's state-of-the-art machine.

4 killed in lightning, rain-related incidents

Aligarh: Due to the intermittent rains since Sunday morning, a farm owner and the laborer standing near the ground, died of lightning in the farm of Aurangabad village of Harduaganj. At the same time, teenager died after being hit by falling walls due to heavy rain in Lodha. And a farmer died due to excessive cold in Gangiri.

According to the Harduaganj representative, Chandraveer (46) son of Ram Singh, a resident of village Shahpur, has a farm in the neighbouring village of Aurangabad. Chandraveer went to the farm to break the pea pod. At the same time, Vinod Manjhi's son, Gandhi Manjhi, a Gaya resident of Bihar, who works on a brick kiln located in the neighborhood, also reached out to talk to Chandraveer in some connection. Both were talking and suddenly a heavy rain came with hail, which they ran to avoid.

10,362 Maha recoveries on Mon

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a significant development, as many as 10,362 patients were discharged from various hospitals in Maharashtra after full recovery from Covid-19 on Monday, even as the deaths dipped further to 29 and the infections came down to 2765 in the state.

Mumbai's downward trend continued, with the daily death tally plummeting to three for the second consecutive day.

As a result, the Covid-19 toll rose from 11,135 to 11,138, while the total infections in the metropolis climbed to 2,94,986.

As 10,362 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March this year went up to 18,47,361. The recovery rate in the state rose from 94.59 per cent to 94.88 per cent.

A day after the deaths in Maharashtra dropped to 35 and the state logged 3282 infections, the Covid-19 deaths slid further to 29, while the infections went down further by 517 to touch a daily tally of 2765.

With 29 fresh deaths in the

state, the total number of deaths in the state went up from 49,666 to 49,695. With 2765 fresh infections and a further increase of 2110 positive cases because of the reconciliation process, the total number of infected cases climbed from 19,42,136 to 19,47,011.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state dropped from 54,317. The fatality rate in the state stood at 2.56 per cent to 2.55 per cent.

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase from 3,74,272 to 3,74,748 while the total number of deaths in Pune went up from 7,770 to 7772.

Thane district remained in the third spot -after Pune and Mumbai - after the total number of infections rose from 2,55,678 to 2,59,123 while the total deaths climbed from 5593 to 5599.

Of the 1,30,04,876 samples sent to laboratories, 19,47,011 have tested positive (14.97 per cent) for COVID-19 until Monday.

Currently, 2,41,728 people are in home quarantine while 3078 people are in institutional quarantine.

Kerala youth commission to provide self-defence training to women

Thiruvananthapuram: At a time when Women's safety is a huge concern, a state-run agency is offering a platform for them to get training in martial arts for free of cost in Kerala.

The State Youth Commission, aimed at empowering youth and protecting their rights, is getting ready to give free self-defence training for young women.

The objective of the programme was to prepare every woman in the southern state for self-defence against physical assault, Commission officials here said.

Those women, aged between 18 and 40 years who have registered with the Community Volunteer Force of the state government, can apply for the free martial arts training, the officials said.

Chintha Jerome, Chairperson of the Youth Commission, said the training programme would begin in Thiruvananthapuram district in the initial phase.

Schools, colleges reopen in Bihar after over 9 months

Patna: All educational institutions in Bihar, including schools, colleges and coaching centres, reopened on Monday after a gap of over nine months.

Physical classes were held for students of standards 9-12 in schools and final year students in colleges. The institutions were closed since March 14 due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Wearing of masks, use of hand sanitiser and maintenance of physical distancing have been made mandatory at the educational institutions. Schools have been asked to operate at half the strength to ensure social distancing in classes.

Attendance, however, remained thin as many parents were apprehensive of sending their wards to the educational institutions till they were vaccinated. Many students, on the other hand, were enthusiastic about the development. "I am happy that schools have reopened as students were getting badly affected. Most of

the children studying in government schools do not have laptops to carry out online studies. Our syllabus is lagging and we will work hard to cover it," a class 9 student of Patna's Miller High School said.

Another class 11 student said that though COVID-19 fears loom large, studies are equally important and cannot be missed, while assuring that safety protocols will be maintained.

Teachers too seemed happy to be able to take physical classes again.

"It is good that we are getting an opportunity to teach students in physical classrooms. All these months we used to come to schools but did not have teaching work," an educator of Miller High School said.

The attendance of class 11 and 12 students is lesser than that of class 9 and 10 pupils, he said.

Students have to bring consent letters from their guardians to be able to attend the classes, another teacher said.

Kerala colleges, varsities open after a gap of over 290 days

Thiruvananthapuram: After schools, Colleges and university campuses opened partially in Kerala on Monday, after remaining closed for over 290 days due to restrictions and lockdown imposed in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

Over 1,350 higher education institutions including arts and science and engineering colleges, state universities and the lone central university in the state located in Kasaragod welcomed a limited number of students in compliance with strict COVID protocols.

Classes restarted for the final year undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Thermal screening, mandatory usage of face masks, social distancing and frequent sanitisation of campuses greeted students of each institution.

As per the government instructions, only 50 per cent of

students were allowed in each class and shift system was introduced in many institutions based on the strength of students.

The respective institutions can arrange the classes in their campus in two shifts between 8.30 AM to 5 PM on all days except Sundays, it said.

The decision to increase the working hours and to conduct classes on Saturday has irked a section of the academic fraternity especially those belonging to teachers' unions affiliated to opposition parties.

Schools in the southern state, remained closed since the coronavirus-induced lockdown in March, had opened partially on January 1 in adherence to COVID guidelines.

Classes began for 10th and 12th standard students in the schools in government and private sectors.

Puducherry: Schools re-opened with adherence to Covid-19 norms

Puducherry: All schools here and in Karaikal re-opened on Monday with adherence to Covid-19 safety norms. The schools remained shut for nine months due to the pandemic-induced lockdown.

Today, the institutions re-opened for half-a-day from 10 AM to 1 PM. Students were subjected to thermal scanning to assess their body temperature, a source said.

The premises of schools were disinfected as per the standard operating procedures before being re-opened.

Attendance was not insisted upon and letters of consent from parents were made necessary.

Already, students in standards X, XI and XII have been attending classes from December 17 in view of the public exams in the next few months. Full-day classes would be held from January 18. Attendance ranged between 80 to cent per cent, the source said.



An Indian Cormorant sitting on a pole is silhouetted during sunset, in Nadia on Monday

Politics of vaccine

The Govt needs to be upfront about the inoculation drive but the Opp, too, needs to act with equal responsibility



India's planned vaccination drive against the Coronavirus has understandably generated a lot of curiosity, controversy, questions and anxieties. And at this stage of the pandemic, where the nation is being challenged by wave attacks of the mutant virus and when our healthcare systems are being worn out to contain the spiral, the deadliest threat comes not so much from the disease itself but from misinformation. It is of utmost importance, therefore, that we follow science and transparency, go for an exact enumeration of facts as they are rather than claiming a human achievement and send out the right kind of

public service message. Certainly, we can do away without politicising the vaccine process, be it by the Government, which needs to curb its over-ambitiousness, or the Opposition, which is questioning every move just for the sake of doing so. While clearing two vaccines for emergency use — Serum Institute's Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin — the Government is obviously acting on the notion that though their efficacy and immunogenicity are still not fully proven as they are still in the trial stage, they are safe enough to be administered and good enough to trigger fightback responses in a major part of the population, break the chain of transmission and build up herd immunity. Every nation is betting on this and our evaluators are still seeking data for those vaccines even cleared in the West. The drug regulator has built in checks and balances, making their emergency use approval conditional on the developers submitting details of both the progress and side-effects to it every fortnight. Besides, each person receiving the dose will be monitored and their responses updated as if they are in the "clinical trial mode". As for the use of Covaxin, which is still awaiting data from its ongoing clinical trials, the Government and the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) are repeatedly clarifying that it is a back-up vaccine and the first series to be rolled out will be that of the Serum Institute, which has advanced in trials and results. Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has himself said while vaccines approved globally based on gene encoding spike proteins have protective efficacy of over 90 per cent, Covaxin — which is based on the whole inactivated virus — has other antigenic epitopes in addition to spike protein. So it's likely to have similar protective efficacy, even for the new strain that has surfaced in the US. But the fact of the matter is that suppositions are not good enough and the Government should immediately prioritise an information dissemination system comprising experts, and not bureaucrats, to maintain transparency. Suppression of information could be risky given that the vaccine's effectiveness could vary among different people and gene pools as would its side-effects. The fact that the Government did not take questions while approving the vaccine use, therefore, backfired somewhat and exposed it to the Opposition's charges of opacity on a sensitive issue, much like in Russia and China. It is good to clarify that the proposed dosage regime is a work in progress and could be amended depending on shifting data interpretation.

There should be a systematic myth-busting and detailed protocols for adverse reactions to eliminate fears and doubts. People must be made fully aware of what could go wrong, too, and how that could be taken care of easily as well. Without this interactivity, there will continue to be a trust deficit. The Government's challenge is to treat a complex issue with sensitivity, maturity and certain simplicity, all at the same time. Of course, equal responsibility is expected of the Opposition. We certainly could have done without the kind of response that came from Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav, who said he wouldn't opt for the inoculation simply because he didn't believe in a "BJP vaccine". Or the Congress casting doubts on the indigenously-developed Covaxin, running down an effort that is being pioneered by the nation's best minds. The vaccine has already been used on children above 12 in the previous round and has been declared safe. Its third-level trials are on with the biggest sample size and it could actually turn out to be our *aatmanirbhar* asset. The questions that the Opposition indeed needs to ask are about how what looks like a Central plan, using a general election-like apparatus, will be implemented neutrally in States, particularly the non-BJP ones. Kerala has already argued that given its highest peak since the outbreak and with a large part of its population suffering co-morbidities, it be given priority for vaccine allocation. How much of the costs will be divided between the Centre and the States? Who will ensure quality, demarcate the population slabs and who will command this new data of public health? In the end, public health issues become political, and this is the toughest challenge we need to overcome.

Bubble breach

Very few meals that Indian athletes have had have ever set off such an intensive discussion



On the face of it, what some Indian cricketers in Australia did by stepping out for a meal was not a big deal. After adhering to Australia's quarantine norms, they were fully within their rights to step out for a spread. The question is whether an overenthusiastic Indian fan breached their "bubble" by hugging one of the players, as he claimed on the social media. Of course, since that breach we have seen clarifications and what not and the "supposed" breach of the bubble has become part of the "mind games" that are a feature of any Australian tour. And, of course, there are those in India who are more upset about what the cricketers were eating rather than anything else. However, this incident also highlights something else

together and that is more worrying than what these sportsmen ate or did not eat. The problem with any top-level athletes is that they are superstars. Indian Test players are no exception and, given that the Indian diaspora loves their cricketers, they will be mobbed, hugged or kissed wherever they go. Until the Coronavirus upended our lives and particularly that of global athletes, that was not a problem. Now, however, all sportspeople — particularly superstars like Indian cricketers — will have to lead very ascetic lives, much like Lewis Hamilton did during the 2020 Formula 1 season.

That is not going to be an easy task for anyone, particularly for a top-level sport star. But this is a decision that they have to take for themselves, even if they have the ability to go out like the quartet of Indian cricketers in Australia: How much do they want to push the limits and, more importantly, can they push the limits at a time when everybody and their uncle has a smartphone? It is almost certain that in the coming months, a top-level athlete will get caught in a scandal, where they breached the bubble by spending the night with someone or the other. While that was par for the course before everything went down, it is not the right thing today. It is not easy staying isolated with only your team and support staff for company, particularly in a strange land. Modern communication technologies do make things easier but, make no mistake, staying for days in a strange hotel room is not a great life, no matter how good the monetary compensation. Sports authorities — and in the case of India, a quick aside where we wish Sourav Ganguly a quick recovery from his cardiac issues — have to dedicate time and effort to soothe the mental health issues that isolation will bring on.

A thick hide is a must

As a growing number of CMs takes umbrage at being criticised, they'd better understand that getting flak is a professional hazard in public life



A SURYA PRAKASH

The recent judgment of the Allahabad High Court upholding the freedom of expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) and chiding the State of Uttar Pradesh (UP) for malicious prosecution of a person who had criticised the Chief Minister for "poor handling of law and order in his State", should hopefully have a salutary effect on the State Governments which have been recklessly using penal provisions in our laws against those who express dissent.

The case pertained to a First Information Report (FIR) lodged in August 2020 against Yashwant Singh, who put out a tweet criticising the Chief Minister for transforming the State "into a jungle raj in which no law and order prevails". The tweet also made reference to various incidents of abduction, demand of ransom and murders. He was accused of violating two provisions in the law — Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) pertaining to defamation and Section 66D of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2008, which pertains to personation, or what is commonly understood as impersonation. Yashwant Singh petitioned the High Court and sought the quashing of the FIR.

The petitioner's counsel contended that the right to comment on the affairs of the State was well within Yashwant Singh's constitutional right envisaged under Article 19 of the Constitution of India and that "mere dissent does not amount to criminality". Hence, the FIR registered against him was *mala fide* "and was meant only to coerce him to stop expressing his dissent against the State Government". He also contended that no offence had been made out and that the FIR should be quashed.

A Division Bench, comprising Justices Pankaj Naqvi and Vivek Agarwal of the Allahabad High Court, has made a succinct but significant observation while quashing the FIR and other proceedings against the petitioner. Referring to the charge of "defamation" under Section 500 of the IPC, the judges said that no case had been made out "as the alleged tweet cannot be said to fall within the mischief of defamation". The judges struck a blow for democracy when they said that "expressing dissent on the law and order situation in the State is a hallmark of a constitutional liberal democracy like ours, constitutionally protected under Article 19 of the Constitution".

The second charge against the



petitioner pertained to violation of Section 66D of the IT Act, 2008, which states: "Whoever, by means of any communication device or computer resource, cheats by personation, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to a fine which may extend to ₹1 lakh." The judges analysed these provisions *vis-à-vis* the allegation made in the FIR and said that they did not find "even remotely" a commission of offence under Section 66D, as the said provision relates to cheating by personation and it is not the case of prosecution that while committing the overt act, the petitioner tweeted using somebody else's twitter handle nor was there any allegation of cheating. Hence, the court concluded that no offence had been made out under this Section as well.

As far as the State is concerned, this is indeed a damning indictment of the Government and the police. To prosecute a citizen for criminal defamation — which can entail a fine or a jail term which can extend up to two years — because he is disappointed with the Chief Minister's handling of the law and order situation is something unheard of in this country, and the judges have rightly ticked off the State for doing so.

But this scenario is not confined to UP only. Several other Chief Ministers and State Governments have begun challenging the basic freedoms given to all citizens by the Constitution. The State of West Bengal would

SEVERAL CHIEF MINISTERS AND STATE GOVERNMENTS HAVE STARTED CHALLENGING THE BASIC FREEDOMS GIVEN TO ALL CITIZENS BY THE CONSTITUTION

head this list, not only for the sheer number of such cases but also for starting this trend of jailing its critics. It all started with the Mamata Banerjee Government arresting Prof Ambikesh Mahapatra of Jadavpur University and his friend in 2012 and charging them with offences under the IT Act for circulating cartoons lampooning the Chief Minister. Following his arrest,

Prof Mahapatra moved the State Human Rights Commission, which criticised their arrest and directed the State Government to pay each of them a compensation of ₹50,000. The State did not comply with the directions of the commission, compelling the Professor to move the Calcutta High Court. The court upheld the rights commission's order and enhanced the amount of compensation payable to Prof Mahapatra and his friend to ₹75,000 each.

Even more absurd was the sedition charge slapped on a folk singer in Tamil Nadu in 2015 for criticising the then Chief Minister J Jayalalitha's policy on the issue of prohibition.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Kerala Government was unhappy with the State Lalithakala Akademi's decision to select a cartoon, which mocked a Bishop accused of rape, for its annual awards. Several Christian outfits and the State Government wanted the autonomous body to re-consider its decision. The Akademi, however, did not relent.

Those of us who are senior citizens, have lived and thrived in a healthy democratic environment in this country in which we have said much harsher things against the persons in power. At the height of the controversy over the kickbacks paid by Bofors, the Swedish arms manufacturer, to Indian politicians and others, the *Indian Express* ran Ram Jethmalani's famous 10 questions to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi every day. Reading those questions, Rajiv must have

squirmed every morning but he had to grin and bear it!

In fact, many of these Chief Ministers must look at how Prime Minister Narendra Modi deals with those who abuse him on the social media. The Modi-baiters constantly upload cartoons and memes seeking to ridicule him on Twitter and Facebook. They often generate hashtags like "#WorstPrime-Minister" or some such and begin a trend along with their camp followers. On his last birthday, they created a hashtag, "#NationalUnemploymentDay", and kept it going the whole day. He is probably the most trolled Indian. Often, his political enemies cross the limits of decency. As Modi himself said at a public meeting during the last Lok Sabha elections, a Congress leader called him "*gandi naali ka keeda*" (a gutter insect) while another said that he was a "mad dog". Can there be anything more defamatory and abusive than this? If the Prime Minister's Office were to prosecute all these people, Modi would need to create a full-fledged department to handle these prosecutions.

In fact, this is one of the professional hazards of being in public life in a democracy and, over the years, and especially in the age of social media, the politicians across democratic countries — including India — have learnt to develop a thick hide. Some of our Chief Ministers must follow suit.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUND BITE

Party's State leaders and cadres should strive to ensure our victory in the ensuing by-elections to the Belagavi Lok Sabha seat and two Assembly seats.
Karnataka CM
BS Yediyurappa



The countries, including Russia and China, which voted against a resolution recently adopted by the 75th UNGA on the human rights situation of the Rohingya refugees, could play a better role.
Bangladesh Foreign Minister
AK Abdul Momen



Deepika Padukone has done a really good job in making all of us feel comfortable on the set. There are no intimidating vibes. We did workshops together, too. She is a very caring person.
Actor
Ananya Panday



Opening batsman David Warner brings the X-factor to Australia and the team would love to have him play the third Test against India even if he is not 100 per cent fit.
Australian cricketer
Nathan Lyon



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Roof collapse tragedy

Sir — The roof of a shelter at a crematorium in UP's Muradnagar collapsed on Sunday, claiming at least 24 lives and injuring many others. The roof collapsed at a time when several people had taken shelter under the structure during a heavy downpour.

It is a serious case of negligence on the part of the administration which failed to improve the condition of the dilapidated structure. Those injured are undergoing treatment at different hospitals. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had on Sunday announced ₹2 lakh as financial relief for the families of each of the deceased. The victims' kin blocked the Delhi-Meerut Highway demanding higher compensation.

On Monday three municipal officials were arrested by the Ghaziabad police over the roof collapse incident.

The State Government should ensure better management at such places and take steps to make sure that overcrowding is avoided at the funerals during the COVID-19.

MR Jayanthi
Ghaziabad

Govt, farmers should engage Nobel laureates

The Union Government and the agitating farmers must engage Nobel laureates like Amartya Sen and Abhijit Banerjee in the ongoing parleys to find an amicable solution to their stalemate. The protesting farmers and the Centre are yet to reach an agreement over the recently introduced farm laws that have emerged as a bone of contention between the growers and the Government.

Sen and Banerjee can suggest ways of ending the imbroglia and emerging from the crisis. Sen has made immense contributions to welfare economics and social justice. Banerjee is currently the Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). They both have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the agriculture scenario and the challenges it faces.

Indian agriculture is prone to a plethora of problems, including abuse of land, extremity of weather, lack of infrastructure, stockpiling of grains, the chain of middlemen and several other factors that make life miserable for the farmers.

The seventh round of talks between the farmers'



representatives and the Government began on Monday as the agitation entered the 40th day, with the farmers still not ready to settle for anything less than the repeal of the three farm laws and a legal guarantee on the Minimum Support Price (MSP). The farmers' leaders have announced a fortnight-long campaign, rallies and *dharma* between January 6 and January 12. The agitating farmers have already announced a tractor rally on January 26 towards Delhi to press for their demands.

Madhu P V
Secunderabad

Speedy recovery

Sir — BCCI president and former India captain Sourav Ganguly, who has undergone angioplasty after a mild heart attack, is now stable and his health parameters are being closely monitored.

The 48-year-old suffered chest discomfort on Saturday while exercising at his home gym

and was admitted to a hospital in Kolkata.

We, the cricket fans, pray for his speedy recovery. Since even active cricketers suffer such mild attacks, it is time to routinely undergo medical tests annually to avoid a major setback.

The incident should also be taken as a warning by the general public. We should learn

from it and the health authorities should strive to take awareness, education and training to the citizens to increase the chances of saving more lives as the immediate minutes following a heart attack are critical and a trained person can mean the difference between life and death.

CKR Nathan
Kolkata

Vaccine supply chain

Sir — After the expert committee's approval for both Serum Institute of India's Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, the ball is in the Government's court to ensure seamless administration of these vaccines to the citizens.

The supply chain infrastructure and management would be tested to the core during this exercise. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has already announced that the vaccination will be free across the nation and, in the first phase of COVID-19 inoculation, it shall be provided to one crore healthcare and two crore frontline workers.

The Government cannot be lax in its approach towards combating the deadly virus. Comprehensive supply chain mechanisms need to be prepared and shared with people so that total transparency is maintained to gain people's trust. All COVID protocols, like social distancing and wearing masks, must be seriously followed till all the citizens get vaccinated.

Bal Govind
Noida

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

What lies ahead for Sasikala?

Soon to be released from prison, the late Jayalalithaa's companion is keeping her cards close to her chest. But 2021 is not 2017



KALYANI SHANKAR

VK Sasikala, a close aide and companion of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, will be released from prison soon. Post-Jayalalithaa's demise in December 2016, there was massive political turmoil and a major power struggle within the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) until Sasikala was sent to jail in February 2017 for four years. She is expected to walk out of the Parappana Agrahara prison in Bengaluru in January-end after completing her prison term in a disproportionate assets case. The big question is, will she become a factor in Tamil Nadu politics ahead of the Assembly elections scheduled to be held in April-May? Some believe that Sasikala can play a role and others say that she might bide her time for now but there is no way to know what her plans for the future are.

For Sasikala, it was the proverbial slip between the cup and the lip in 2017. She was about to become the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu soon after Jayalalithaa's death but destiny took her to prison. People close to her say her ambition is intact though the politics of the State has changed in the last four years. Since, according to the law, Sasikala cannot contest elections for the next six years, she can only wield power from behind the throne.

In the absence of "Ammma", what impact will "Chinna Amma" have in politics of the State? Sasikala's evolution into a politician after emerging from Jayalalithaa's shadow was cut short abruptly and she should realise that the power she had as Amma's companion was entirely on the seasoned politician's terms. As of now, the options before her are not many. Much has happened in the State in the four years in which she was incarcerated. Chief Minister E Palaniswami has not only consolidated his hold in the Government and the party, he is also on friendly terms with the BJP. His biggest achievement is keeping the party united so far.

There is speculation that she might try to regain her lost position in the AIADMK and grab power back from Palaniswami as she still has many loyalists in the party. Her re-entry into the AIADMK would further complicate the political environment in the State. Her one-time loyalists, Palaniswami and the Deputy Chief Minister of the State O Panneerselvam, will resist this. However, the Ministers reiterating the party line notwithstanding, some second-rung party leaders striking a "working relationship" with the Sasikala-TTV Dhinakaran camp would only be beneficial for the AIADMK in the long run. Initially, the Coronavirus crisis had helped the AIADMK to improve its standing in the State. However, the growing number of infections eventually led to a dip in the popularity of Palaniswami. Above all, the party has also announced an alliance with the BJP for the forthcoming Assembly polls. The saffron party seems to be promoting the concept of a coalition Government in Tamil Nadu, an idea that the AIADMK is opposing strongly. The party has never shared power and all indications are that it does not intend to start now. The sudden raid on Sasikala's property and the Income-Tax Department's recent decision to attach a new palatial bungalow under construction for her, opposite Jayalalithaa's house in the posh Poes Garden area, are an indication of this.

The next best option for Sasikala is to head her nephew Dhinakaran's party, the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK). Even this can pose a serious challenge to the incumbent AIADMK in the forthcoming polls. He had floated the party with Sasikala's approval in 2017 and the AMMK has already taken away five per cent of the AIADMK's votes. It must be remembered that Tamil Nadu has chosen either the DMK or the AIADMK since 1967. It is the turn of the DMK now. Sasikala has plenty of money and also political insight, given her long association with Amma. It is said that she and her nephew have some influence in South Tamil Nadu. This might cut into the AIADMK's votes even further. Dhinakaran's silence is an indication that there could be some deal in the works. There is also talk of a merger of the AIADMK and the AMMK but it is unclear as to what role Sasikala will play if this happens. The third option before Chinna Amma is to take a back seat, silently support the AIADMK and wait for 2026. However, an ambitious woman like Sasikala might not opt for this and try to run the show from behind the scenes.

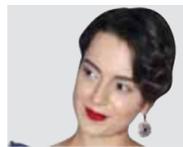
"There will be no change in the party's stand on matters concerning Sasikala," the Chief Minister said recently. The statement assumes significance as it's the first time that he has made a public statement on Sasikala's impending release and her future in the AIADMK. The AMMK, meanwhile, claimed her release would have an impact on State politics. "We are eagerly awaiting Chinna Amma's release," said AMMK spokesperson CR Saraswathi. But for the jail term, Sasikala might have played a much bigger role in the AIADMK and Tamil Nadu politics. She is keeping her cards close to her chest but 2021 is not 2017. She will play her role directly or indirectly, however small it might be.

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

THE HOUSES THAT I BUILT ARE BEING DEMOLISHED BY THE CONGRESS. I WISH I WAS AS SMART AS YOU AND WOULD'VE KEPT THE CONGRESS HAPPY.

—ACTOR
KANGANA RANAUT

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



I HAVE PROOF THAT I BOUGHT MY OFFICE WITH MY HARD-EARNED MONEY. I BOUGHT MY FLAT MUCH BEFORE I ENTERED POLITICS.

—ACTOR-POLITICIAN
URMILA MATONDKAR

A taxing problem

India's sovereign taxation rights on capital gains cannot be held hostage to its bilateral investment treaties with other countries



UTTAM GUPTA

The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) tribunal in The Hague has rejected the back tax demands of Indian tax authorities in both, the Cairn and Vodafone cases. These back taxes relate to capital gains made on transactions in 2006-2007. According to the PCA, the demands have been rejected on two counts. First, they violate India's obligations under Bilateral Investment Treaties. Second, they are based on a retrospective amendment to a tax law passed in 2012. Both the arguments are untenable. As regards the first, tax is levied on the earnings of the companies from their operations in India. The Government has done nothing to put their investment at risk. As for the second, the 2012 amendment was only in the nature of a "clarification" to remove ambiguity and bring out the real intent of the law i.e. levy tax on income generated from an underlying asset in India. This is irrespective of how the transaction was given effect. Even when it involves indirect transfer of shares, it can't be construed as a change in the law itself. The Narendra Modi Government has challenged, rightly so, the tribunal's order in the Vodafone case and is expected to follow suit in the Cairn case, too.

The capital gains made by the firms on sale of their ownership in Indian companies run into tens of thousands of crores. But on September 25, 2020, the PCA rejected the I-T Department's demand for ₹22,100 crore in back taxes (₹7,990 crore plus interest and penalty) relating to Vodafone Group Plc (the British telecom giant) \$11 billion acquisition of 67 per cent stake in the Hutchison Essar Ltd (HEL) — an Indian company running a mobile phone business — owned by Hutchison Whampoa (HW) in February 2007.

The tribunal held that the Indian Government's demand from Vodafone using retrospective legislation was in "breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment" assured under the bilateral investment protection pact between India and the Netherlands. It also asked the Centre to reimburse Vodafone 60 per cent of its legal costs (about ₹85 crore) and half of the Euro 6,000 cost borne by Vodafone for appointing an arbitrator on the panel. Second, on December 23, 2020, a three-member tribunal at the PCA invalidated India's March 2015 tax claim of around ₹24,000 crore (₹10,247 crore in tax plus interest and penalty) on the British behemoth Cairn Energy on capital gains made by it on the "internal reorganisation of its India business" run by Cairn India in 2006-07 (then, Cairn UK transferred shares of its subsidiary Cairn India Holdings to Cairn India).

It also ordered the Indian I-T Department to return up to \$1.2 billion to Cairn Energy in funds withheld by the former including the (i) value of the latter's 10 per cent shares in Cairn India attached and sold (during 2011, even as Cairn Energy had sold majority of its holding in Cairn India to Vedanta, the department did not allow it to sell 10 per cent); (ii) seizure of dividends that the company paid to its parent and (iii) tax refunds withheld to recover the tax demand. Add \$200 million of interest on these amounts and \$20 million of arbitration cost, the total comes to \$1.4 billion. Cairn can use the arbitration award to approach courts in countries such as the UK to seize any property owned by India overseas to recover the money, if the award is not honoured.

There is widespread consternation over the decision of the Indian Government to raise the demands in the very first place and thereafter pursue these in the court. Critics argue that raising the demand using a retrospective amendment in tax laws (this



“UNDOUBTEDLY, INDIA NEEDS FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN ITS MARCH TOWARDS ACCELERATED GROWTH. BUT THIS CAN'T BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL FORGO ITS LEGITIMATE TAX DUES ON THE GAINS MADE BY FOREIGN INVESTORS FROM THEIR OPERATIONS HERE. IT SHOULD PURSUE ALL AVAILABLE LEGAL OPTIONS TO MAKE VODAFONE AND CAIRN PAY UP”

was enacted in 2012 to negate a judgment of the Supreme Court in the Vodafone case that had declared untenable a tax demand earlier raised on the February 2007 transaction; armed with this amendment, it resurrected that demand in 2013 besides raising demand on Cairn Energy using the same law) affects long-term stability of the fiscal environment and undermines investor confidence.

Prima facie, retrospective amendment in tax laws may look bad. Investors can argue that they take decisions on the basis of prevailing laws of the land and if laws are changed midstream, this is unfair as it undermines the very basis of the business decision. The million-dollar question is: Did the then Government fundamentally alter the law? To get to the bottom of the truth, we need to closely look at the genesis behind the 2012 amendment.

The cardinal principle of taxation is that tax is levied on income generated from an asset. In the Vodafone case, the underlying asset was the mobile phone business then run by HEL. HW having 67 per cent shareholding in HEL through its fully owned Cayman Island-based subsidiary, viz; CGP Investments sold the entire 67 per cent to Vodafone's Netherland-based subsidiary Vodafone International Holding. From the sale of these shares, HW made major capital gains. This was made possible due to increase in valuation of the Indian asset, viz; HEL — rechristened Vodafone India Limited (VIL) after acquisition of majority shares by Vodafone. Hence, the Indian Government is fully entitled to collect tax on this income. Yet, the firms exploited an ambiguity in the extant law by citing that the transaction took place between two foreign entities CGP Investments and Vodafone International Holding Ltd (the buyer), thus, camouflaging it as an "indirect transfer" of Indian assets.

To stop abuse and plug the loophole of such indirect transfer of Indian assets, in 2012, the Government amended the law to make such transfers (albeit indirect) taxable in India. As per an amendment to Section 9 of the Income-Tax Act in 2012, if any share or interest in a foreign entity derives its value substantially from the assets located in India, then such share or interest is deemed to be situated in India and any income arising from transfer of such a share or interest is deemed to arise in India.

The amendment was merely in the nature of a "clarification" to the substituting law aimed at making the intention of the law explicit. Quite clearly, the real intent was to ensure that the income generated from an "underlying asset" in India irrespective of how this transaction was given effect — even when it involves indirect transfer of shares — is taxed by the Indian Government.

Enacted after the aforementioned transactions had happened, while this may give it the colour of being retrospective, the fact remains that the amendment was only in the nature of a "clarification." It can't be construed as a change in the law itself. Assuming for the sake of argument that the Centre can't collect tax then, are we to infer that the capital gains made from sale of Indian assets will go untaxed? Does it not violate the basic tenet of taxation?

The demand raised by the I-T Department is pursuant to a law passed by a sovereign Parliament. There is absolutely nothing illegal about it. Had it been so, the top court would have declared it invalid. The ruling of the international arbitration tribunal in the two cases cites the tax demand as being violation of India's obligation under Bilateral Investment Treaty with the countries concerned. The argument does not hold water as the Indian Government has only levied tax on

the earnings of the companies. There is nothing to suggest that it has put at risk the latter's investment in India. Even so, taxation is not covered under investment protection treaties and the law on taxation is a sovereign right of the country.

In the Cairn Energy case, the tribunal has referred to a statement by the then Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, on November 7, 2014, that his Government had taken a "policy decision that as far as this Government is concerned, even though there is a sovereign power of retrospective taxation, we are not going to exercise that power." The demand raised by the I-T Department is in no way incongruous with Jaitley's assertion as it is merely the result of removing an ambiguity in the extant law and certainly does not fall in the category of retrospective tax.

To conclude, India's sovereign taxation rights can't be held hostage to its bilateral investment treaties with other countries. Keeping this overarching consideration in mind and opinion of the Solicitor General that an "arbitral tribunal can't render a law passed by a sovereign Parliament ineffective," the Government has decided to challenge the tribunal's order. In the Vodafone case, on December 24, 2020, it filed a petition in the Singapore court well within the three-month deadline from the date of order. In the Cairn Energy case too, it should challenge the tribunal's order.

Undoubtedly, India needs foreign investment in its march towards accelerated growth. But this can't be taken to mean that the Government will forgo its legitimate tax dues on the gains made by foreign investors from their operations here. It should pursue all available legal options to make Vodafone and Cairn pay up.

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

The pandemic calls for more emotional resilience

History has taught us that humanity has always moved towards a brighter future and emerged stronger after every disaster

severe fear, anxiety due to the lockdown and isolation necessitated by the pandemic. A major part of the world's population will carry emotional scars left by the outbreak.

The need of the hour is to be mentally resilient and focus on healing our emotional scars so that we can regain physical and psychological fitness. Emotional resilience is the ability of people to bounce back from adversities and difficulties. Life, as we all know, is full of ups and downs. A resilient person not only bounces back from a setback but achieves a higher threshold of emotional well-being. Emotional resilience is a skill that can be learnt by anyone by following these simple steps.

Acceptance: The first step towards gaining emotional resilience is the acceptance of reality. Many of us tend to avoid adverse situations but this doesn't help solve the problem. Avoidance only makes the situation worse. We have to learn to perceive reality in an honest and pragmatic manner. We should neither be too pessimistic nor should we be over-

optimistic about life. We also have to assess the causes of our difficulties in a clear and rational way. It is only after thorough introspection that we can begin the journey to overcome adversities and bounce back.

Adaptation and innovation: The second step is to adapt to the new situation. Remaining firmly wedded to the past does not really help the cause because what had worked before will rarely work in a changed scenario. Continuously pondering over past successes and regretting mistakes stops us from moving forward. We should not only adapt ourselves to the new realities of life but must find innovative ways to thrive in them. In the current scenario, humanity needs to change its behaviour, attitude, thoughts, emotions and learn new skills to overcome adverse circumstances. For our progress and growth, we must adapt continuously, else we will become extinct.

Manage negative emotions: When faced with adversities, we often experience negative emotions like anger, frustration, hopelessness

and despair. Many people ask, "Why me?" None of these negative emotions help. Such thoughts not only act as barriers to our revival but also tend to make us physically and emotionally weak. The key is to remain optimistic and focus on the future instead of the past.

Opportunity in adversity: Napoleon Hill, the self-help guru, famously said: "In every adversity lies an opportunity." The trick is to focus our energies and abilities not only to spot the opportunity but to exploit it for our growth. As we navigate through the darkness, we need to continuously strive to find the light. Our Vedic mantra "Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya (lead me from darkness to the light)" has never been as relevant as it is these days.

Control what you can: Steven Covey, the famous management guru, developed a simple but highly effective model of commanding the controllable. Many people worry a lot about situations, factors and circumstances that are beyond their jurisdiction. Emotionally resilient people

focus on what they can control while ignoring everything they can neither influence nor control. Worrying about the uncontrollable is a futile exercise leading to frustration, stress and anxiety.

Resetting: We have to reset our goals and dreams in the backdrop of the new situation. Many of our future plans like buying a new house, getting married, going for a holiday, studying abroad, promotions and so on may have to be deferred or even cancelled. We must not regret that our original targets can no longer be fulfilled. But we must define a new set of goals and dreams that are achievable in the changed circumstances.

Rebalance: We have already started to rebalance our lives and the concept of Work From Home (WFH) has been the biggest driver of this. In the new normal, we have to restore focus on work, self, families, friends and society.

Renewal and regrowth: Time and again nature has proved that after every cataclysmic disaster, life comes back to normal as the natural regen-

eration process begins. Our rejuvenation should begin with a positive desire to grow and with the optimistic view that the future is bright. History has taught us that we have always moved towards a brighter future and have emerged stronger after every disaster. People can cope with stress and anxiety by taking care of themselves. On every flight, we are told to put on the oxygen mask before helping others. Taking care of oneself is not selfishness but is indeed the best way to help others. "Me time" and hobbies are absolutely essential now. Sleep, rest, breaks from screen time and exercise are essential.

Organise yourself: In the beginning, we all thought that WFH was temporary. Now it seems that WFH or a hybrid variant of remote working will be the norm of the future. People have to organise themselves, their homes, time and energy, given that the working environment and methods have changed forever.

Set clear boundaries: The changed work situation has led to different types of expectations from boss-

es, colleagues, family and friends. Now, everybody feels that they can interrupt any time but these intrusions and expectations cause frustration and relationship rifts. People have to set clear boundaries and agree on a new set of behavioural rules even with their children.

Stay positive: Bad or negative times require an extra dose of positivity and optimism. Don't brood, don't think of the worst, don't be obsessed about the vaccine. Instead, laugh, play, look at the sky, hear a bird sing, tell your children a story, enjoy the warmth of your partner's embrace. The world has a lot more light than darkness in it. Further, don't be shy or afraid of seeking professional advice from a counsellor or a psychologist. They are trained to heal people emotionally and to guide them on their journey of resilience, renewal and regrowth. And these three positives are what the world needs the most right now.

(The writer is chief psychologist at Emotionally.in. The views expressed are personal.)



ROMA KUMAR

Even as the new decade begins, the world continues to reel under the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. To date, there are over 85,554,736 confirmed cases of COVID-19 while 1,851,952 people have succumbed to the deadly infection globally. In the midst of a global race to inoculate people against the virus, the pandemic continues to mutate and resurge in several parts of the world.

If we take into account frontline workers, including healthcare professionals, their families and friends, billions would have direct exposure to the infection and would experience

Warning to Trump by 10 ex-Pentagon chiefs

Washington: In an extraordinary rebuke of President Donald Trump, all 10 living former secretaries of defense have cautioned against any move to involve the military in pursuing claims of election fraud, arguing that it would take the country into "dangerous, unlawful and unconstitutional territory."

The 10 men, both Democrats and Republicans, signed on to an opinion article published in The Washington Post on Sunday that implicitly questioned Trump's willingness to follow his Constitutional duty to peacefully relinquish power on January 20.

Following the November 3 election and subsequent recounts in some states, as well as unsuccessful court challenges, the outcome is clear, they wrote, while not specifying Trump in the article.

"The time for questioning the results has passed; the time for the formal counting of the electoral college votes, as prescribed in the Constitution and statute, has arrived," they wrote.

The former Pentagon chiefs warned against use of the military in any effort to change the outcome.

"Efforts to involve the U.S. Armed forces in resolving election disputes would take us into dangerous, unlawful and unconstitutional territory," they wrote. "Civilian and military officials who direct or carry out such measures would be accountable, including potentially facing criminal penalties, for the grave consequences of their actions on our republic."

A number of senior military officers, including Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have said publicly in recent weeks that the military has no role in determining the outcome of

U.S. Elections and that their loyalty is to the Constitution, not to an individual leader or a political party.

The 10 former Pentagon leaders also warned in their Post article of the dangers of impeding a full and smooth transition at Defense Department prior to Inauguration Day as part of a transfer to power to President-elect Joe Biden. Biden has complained of efforts by Trump-appointed Pentagon officials to obstruct his transition.

Without mentioning a specific example, the former defense secretaries wrote that transfers of power "often occur at times of international uncertainty about U.S. National security policy and posture," adding, "They can be a moment when the nation is vulnerable to actions by adversaries seeking to take advantage of the situation." **AP**

Assange can't be extradited to US, says British judge

London: A British judge on Monday rejected the United States' request to extradite WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange to face espionage charges on mental health grounds, saying his extradition would be "oppressive".

District Judge Vanessa Baraitser, presiding over the case at the Old Bailey court in London, ruled that Assange was likely to commit suicide if extradited to the US, where he is wanted on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over WikiLeaks publication of leaked military and diplomatic documents a decade ago.

The charges carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison.

"The overall impression is of a depressed and sometimes despairing man fearful for his future," the judge said.

The US government said it would appeal the decision and have 14 days to lodge the paperwork. This means Assange is not likely to be freed from London's Belmarsh Prison, where he is being held, right away.

Lawyers for the 49-year-old



Julian Assange supporters celebrate after a ruling that he cannot be extradited to the United States, outside the Old Bailey in London on Monday **AP**

Australian activist, who was re-arrested in September last year over the espionage charges, argued that he was acting as a journalist and is entitled to First Amendment protections of freedom of speech for publishing leaked documents that exposed US military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

However, the US indictment claims Assange conspired with army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to crack a scrambled password, known as "hash", to a classified US defence department computer.

Assange denies plotting with Manning to crack an encrypted password on US Department of

Defence computers and claims there is no evidence anyone's safety was put at risk.

He appeared at the Old Bailey as Judge Baraitser delivered her judgment. The judge rejected defence claims on the charges, saying Assange's conduct would amount to "offences in this jurisdiction that would

not be protected by his right to freedom of speech."

However, she noted that he suffered from clinical depression that would be exacerbated by the isolation he would likely face in US prison, adding he had the "intellect and determination" to circumvent any suicide prevention measures.

"Faced with the conditions of near total isolation without the protective factors which limited his risk at HMP Belmarsh, I am satisfied the procedures described by the US will not prevent Mr Assange from finding a way to commit suicide and for this reason I have decided extradition would be oppressive by reason of mental harm and I order his discharge," she said.

Assange, who wore a suit and face mask as he appeared in the dock, closed his eyes in relief as the judge read out her ruling. His fiancée, Stella Moris, with whom he has two young sons, was also at the Old Bailey for the hearing. WikiLeaks editor-in-chief Kristinn Hrafnsson described the case as "an historic, large-scale attack on freedom of speech." **PTI**

Iran says it begins 20% uranium enrichment

Tehran: Iran said on Monday it has begun enriching uranium up to 20 per cent at an underground nuclear facility, a short, technical step to weapons-grade levels of 90 per cent amid escalating tensions with the US.

Iranian state television quoted spokesman Ali Rabiee as saying that President Hassan Rouhani has given the order for the move at the Fordo facility.

Iran's decision to begin enriching to 20 per cent a decade ago nearly brought an Israeli strike targeting its nuclear facilities, tensions that only abated with the 2015 atomic deal. A resumption of 20 per cent enrichment could see that brinkmanship return.

The move comes after President Donald Trump withdrew the US unilaterally from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. In the time since, there have been a series of escalating incidents between the two countries.

Iran's decision comes after its parliament passed a bill, later approved by a constitutional watchdog, aimed at hiking enrichment to pressure Europe into providing sanctions relief.

Greece names first openly gay Minister

Athens: The center-right Government in Greece named the country's first openly gay minister in a cabinet reshuffle on Monday.

Nicholas Yatromanolakis, 44, was named as the new deputy minister of culture after being promoted from the position of general secretary at the ministry.

The government retained its ministers of health and finance and most other key positions in the reshuffle.

Greece is reeling from the impact of the pandemic that caused a spike in deaths in the fall and is expected to have caused a 10.5 per cent contraction of its gross domestic product in 2020.

Despite the difficulties, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis left most key cabinet positions unchanged, retaining Christos Staikouras as finance minister and Vasilis Kilikias as health minister. Vaccinations were expanded from nine to 50 hospitals nationwide Monday. **AP**

Pakistan's minority Shia Hazara community protests killing of 11 coal miners by terrorists

Karachi: Pakistan's Shia Hazara community members blocked several roads in Balochistan's capital city Quetta as they held protests against the massacre of 11 coal miners from the minority community by the Islamic State terrorists in the restive province, according to media reports on Monday.

The Hazara community members were joined by some political parties as they blocked several roads in the provincial capital, demanding the Balochistan government either arrest the terrorists responsible for the killing or resign, the Geo News reported.

Terrorists on Sunday abducted and shot dead the 11 coal miners after separating them from others, in the latest targeted attack on the minority communities in the country.

The miners were shot dead from a close range shortly after being abducted by the armed terrorists in the province's mountainous Machh area. The



People of the Shia Hazara community gather around the caskets of coal mine workers who were killed by unknown gunmen near the Machh coal field during a sit-in protest in Quetta, Pakistan on Monday **AP**

Islamic State has taken responsibility for the attack.

Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) leader Syed Muhammad Agha Raza said Prime Minister Imran Khan should come to Quetta to meet them and reassure the families of the victims. A traffic jam was reported at the thoroughfare from the Baleli checkpoint to the intersection at Quetta's Airport Road due to the protest, with

dozens of vehicles stranded and passengers and transporters facing difficulties in travelling.

Various Hazara political parties and organisations held a meeting to discuss the Machh massacre and strategies going forward. The government of Balochistan ruled out any security lapses and its spokesperson, Liaquat Shahwani, told the daily that the incident was an act of terrorism. **PTI**

Nancy Pelosi re-elected as Speaker of US House of Representatives

Washington: Veteran Democratic Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi has been narrowly re-elected as the Speaker of the US House of Representatives for a fourth time, as a new Congress took office amidst raging coronavirus crisis and political uncertainty.

Pelosi, 80, secured 216 votes in a tight contest against Republican Kevin McCarthy, who got support from 209 Congressmen, after Democrats lost 11 seats in the November elections to command a narrower 222-212 majority.

According to the House Clerk, a total of 427 votes were cast. One vote went to Senator Tammy Duckworth and one to Congressman Hakeem Jeffries.

"I am honored to be nominated by my colleagues to serve as the Speaker of the House for the 117th Congress," Pelosi said in a tweet on



Sunday.

Notably, six Democratic lawmakers did not vote for Pelosi, while all the 209 Republicans stood by McCarthy, who is now the House Minority Leader. The Democratic Party has 222 seats in the House.

Following the election of the House Speaker, Pelosi administered the oath to the rest of the members of the House starting with the first-time members elect. The US House of Representatives has a strength of 435 voting members and six non-voting members. **PTI**

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Public at large is hereby informed that my client Smt. Gursaran Kaur W/o Late Shri Gurcharan Singh alias Gurcharan Singh Baba and S. Gurpreet Singh S/o S. Harinder Pal Singh R/o WZ-938/1, Ground Floor, 34 Sant Gurb, Tikka Nagar, New Delhi-110018 declared that they have transferred their property in favour of Amit Singh S/o Late S. Gurcharan Singh alias Gurcharan Singh Baba the mentioned property through relinquishment Deed executed by both the parties and they are absolute owner of the property. If somebody has any objections regarding this property or will please contact me within 10 days at Advocate Amarendra K. Dubey, (Enr. No. D-200/2013) 501A, 5th Floor, Usha Kiran Building, Commercial Complex, Azadpur, Delhi-110033 Mob.: 9598801188.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is brought to the notice of general public that ownership of 02 catering stalls and 03 trolleys at Bahadurgarh railway station was held by late sh. Ghanashyam who had expired on 01.10.2020. The contract is being considered to transfer in the name of snt. Veena w/o late Sh. Ghanashyam R/O 19/286 Lal Chand Colony, Bahadurgarh, Haryana-124507 if any person have any objection to this, it may be reported in writing to the office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager(P.S., drn office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055 within 21 days from the publication of this notice.

Before Debts Recovery Tribunal-II, Delhi
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001

O.A. No. 402/19 Dt. 02-11-2020

ORIENTAL BANK OF COMMERCE
Versus
Applicant

K.S. IMPEX LTD. & ORS.
Respondent

Defendant

2. Mr. Shyam Garg S/o Sh. T.R. Garg
3. Mr. Rahul Garg S/o Sh. Shyam Garg
4. Mrs. Sarita Garg W/o Sh. Shyam Garg
All at : R/O Flat No. C-2, Plot No. C-5, Prasana Apartment Near Nanak Piao Gurdwara Bhamra Shah Marg, Delhi-09

Whereas the above named applicant(s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of Rs 36,03,48,163.00 (Rs Thirty Six Crore Three Lakh Forty Eight Thousand One Hundred Sixty Three Only) against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 25-02-2021 at 10.30 A.M.

Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

By order of the Tribunal
For Registrar, DRT-II, Delhi

Bulgaria reports 4 cases of side effects from Pfizer vaccine

Bulgaria: Four Bulgarians vaccinated against Covid-19 with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine developed mild to moderate side effects, Bulgarian Drug Agency executive director Bogdan Kirilov said on Monday.

Bulgaria's vaccination campaign began on December 27 among the priority group including medical workers. By Monday, nearly 5,000 people had been inoculated.

"Side effects ranged from mild to moderate. The persons who experienced them have already recovered," Mr Kirilov said, as quoted by the Bulgarian



National Radio.

According to the official, the side effects included two cases of pain, one case of dizziness and one case of insignificant temperature rise.

Earlier in the day, Bulgaria received the second shipment of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, consisting of 25,000 doses. According to Health Minister Kostadin Angelov, the mass vaccination in Bulgaria would likely begin sometime in the February-March period. **AFP**

Iran acknowledges it seized South Korean oil tanker

Dubai: Iranian state television has acknowledged that Tehran seized a South Korean-flagged oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz.

The report on Monday alleged that the MT Hankuk Chemi had been stopped by Iranian authorities over alleged "oil pollution" in the Persian Gulf and the strait.

The semiofficial Fars news agency said Iran's Revolutionary Guards naval forces seized the ship. Satellite data from MarineTraffic.Com showed the MT Hankuk Chemi off the port of Bandar Abbas on Monday afternoon without explanation. It had been traveling from Saudi Arabia to Fujairah in the UAE. The ships owners could not be immediately reached for comment. **AP**

China denies Covid leaked from Wuhan lab, says global outbreaks caused pandemic

Beijing: China on Monday vehemently refuted the US charge that the novel coronavirus was leaked from a bio lab in the country and asserted that the pandemic was likely to have been caused by separate outbreaks in multiple places in the world.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying's remarks came amidst reports that a ten-member team of the World Health Organisation (WHO) scientists would visit China this month to probe the origin of the coronavirus, which emerged in Wuhan in December 2019.

Beijing is yet to confirm the visit by the WHO team and remained silent about granting

permission for it to visit Wuhan city in central China.

"I have no detailed information for you," Hua told a media briefing here when asked about the visit of the WHO team and whether its schedule included a visit to Wuhan.

"China attaches high importance to cooperation with the WHO. We have been providing support and convenience for WHO's work," Hua said.

China has been proactively questioning the widely-held view that the deadly outbreak broke out in a wet market in Wuhan where the live animals are sold. The market remained closed and sealed since early last year. **PTI**

गाजियाबाद विकास प्राधिकरण
विकास पथ, गाजियाबाद
पत्रांक सं०: 3780/मा० प्लान/जोन-1/2020 दिनांक: 02.01.2021

सार्वजनिक सूचना

एतद्द्वारा सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मैसर्स वी.एक्स.एल. डवलपर्स एण्ड इन्फ्रा० प्रा० लि० द्वारा खसरा सं० 1022 ग्राम मोरटा पर प्राधिकरण से पूर्व मे मानचित्र सं० 162/जोन-1/ले-आउट/2017 दिनांक 22.06.17 स्वीकृत कराया गया है। वर्तमान मे मैसर्स वी. एक्स.एल. डवलपर्स एण्ड इन्फ्रा० प्रा० लि० द्वारा अपनी कम्पनी का नाम मैसर्स के.जी.टैक एसोसियेटेड प्रा० लि० परिवर्तित कर दिया गया है, तथा कम्पनी का नया नाम प्राधिकरण के अभिलेखो मे दर्ज कराये जाने का प्रस्ताव प्रस्तुत किया गया है। कम्पनी के उक्त नाम परिवर्तन के सम्बन्ध मे जन-सामान्य से प्रकाशन की तिथि से 01 माह की अवधि हेतु आपत्ति/सुझाव आमंत्रित किये जाते है। इस सम्बन्ध मे किसी व्यक्ति/संस्था को आपत्ति/सुझाव प्रस्तुत करना हो तो उक्त नियत अवधि के अन्तर्गत अपनी आपत्ति/सुझाव कार्यालय मुख्य नगर नियोजक, गाजियाबाद विकास प्राधिकरण में किसी भी कार्यदिवस मे प्राप्त करा सकते है। नियत अवधि के उपरान्त प्राप्त होने वाले आपत्ति/सुझावों पर विचार किया जाना सम्भव नही होगा।

उपाध्यक्ष

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that the timings of the following Special Trains will be revised as under:-

Train No. & Name	Station	Existing Time	Revised Time	Date (from Originating Station)
02434 H. Nizamuddin-Chennai Central Rajdhani Superfast Special (Bi-weekly)	Warangal	11:56/11:57	11:14/11:15	with immediate effect
02433 Chennai Central- H. Nizamuddin Rajdhani Superfast Special (Bi-weekly)	Warangal	14:31/14:33	14:13/14:14	
02957 Ahmedabad Jn- New Delhi- Rajdhani Express Special	Ajmer	00:55/01:00	00:50/01:05	From 05.01.2021
	Jaipur	02:50/03:00	03:00/03:05	
02958 New Delhi- Ahmedabad Jn- Rajdhani Express Special	Jaipur	00:15/00:25	00:05/00:10	
	Ajmer	02:25/02:30	02:15/02:30	with immediate effect
	Falna	04:55/04:56	05:00/05:01	
	Abu Road	06:10/06:15	06:15/06:18	
	Mahesana	07:58/08:00	08:08/08:10	

NOTE :- The time-table of other stations of the above special trains will hold good.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <http://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

Please join us on

Security Helpline No. 182

Integrated Helpline No. 139

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Scotland goes into full lockdown, England to follow suit as Covid-19 cases spike

London: Scotland on Monday announced a tougher stay-at-home lockdown for the month of January to try and control the rapid spread of a new variant of coronavirus, as UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that there was "no question we're going to have to take tougher measures" in England.

The devolved administrations of the United Kingdom set their individual levels of restrictions but most of the country was already under the tough Tier 4 lockdown measures, requiring all non-essential retail to shut down and also a ban on different households mixing.

However, Scotland First Minister Nicola Sturgeon reconvened the Scottish Parliament on Monday to declare that from midnight, new laws will require everyone in Scotland to stay at home and work from home where possible.

Outdoor gatherings are also to be cut back, with people only

allowed to meet one person from one other household.

"We can already see - by looking at infection rates in the south of England - some of what could happen here in Scotland. To prevent that, we need to act immediately and firmly," said Sturgeon.

"For government, that means introducing tough measures - as we have done today. And for all of us, it means sticking to the rules," she said.

The announcement came as Johnson indicated that he will be setting out tougher lockdown rules for England as well, amid pressure from the Opposition Labour Party to impose a complete nationwide lockdown.

"No question we're going to have to take tougher measures," said Johnson, during a hospital visit in north London on Monday, the day the National Health Service (NHS) began administering the first set of Oxford University jabs. **PTI**

Sensex closes above 48,000 for 1st time

AS VACCINE APPROVALS BOLSTER RECOVERY HOPES

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Rising for the ninth straight session, the BSE Sensex closed above the 48,000-mark for the first time on Monday as investor sentiment got a boost after India approved two coronavirus vaccines over the weekend.

A strengthening rupee, positive global cues and encouraging macroeconomic data gave further impetus to risk appetite, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 307.82 points or 0.64 per cent higher at 48,176.80. It touched a record intra-day peak of 48,220.47. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty jumped 114.40 points or 0.82 per cent to its fresh lifetime high of 14,132.90. It scaled an all-time high of 14,147.95 during the session. ONGC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, spurring 4.02 per cent, followed by TCS, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, M&M, HUL, Sun Pharma and L&T. On the other hand, Kotak Bank, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, PowerGrid and Titan were among the lag-

gards, shedding up to 1.43 per cent. India's drugs regulator on Sunday approved Oxford-AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine Covishield and indigenously-developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use in the country. Experts said the approvals and likely commencement of inoculation process soon bode well for the markets and economy.

"Emboldened by the likely rollout of the vaccines this month, bulls went berserk, bolstered by IT and metal stocks with able support from pharma stocks. PMI data and renewed buying in select financials provided buoyancy across the broader markets," said S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities.

India's manufacturing sector activity strengthened in December, with manufacturers stepping up production and input buying amid efforts to rebuild their inventories following business closures earlier in the year, PMI data showed. The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing

Managers' Index (PMI) was at 56.4 in December, a tick higher than November's 56.3 and above the critical 50 threshold for the fifth straight month.

Sector-wise, BSE metal, IT, teck, oil and gas, auto, industrials and telecom indices rallied up to 5.34 per cent, while bank and consumer durables slipped.

Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices rose up to 1.42 per cent.

Global equities surged as vaccine rollout in multiple countries enthused investors.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Seoul and Hong Kong ended on a positive note, while Tokyo was in the red.

Stock exchanges in Europe opened with significant gains. Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 1.31 per cent to USD 52.48 per barrel. The rupee appreciated by 9 paise to close at 73.02 against the US dollar on Monday, supported by sustained foreign fund inflows and weakness of the American currency overseas. Traders said approval to two Covid-19 vaccines in the country also improved sentiments.

India's drugs regulator on Sunday approved Oxford-AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute, and indigenously developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use in the country, paving the way for a massive inoculation drive. At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened at 72.93 against the US dollar and witnessed an intraday high of 72.90 and a low of 73.03. The local unit finally settled at 73.02, registering a rise of 9 paise over its previous close. This is the rupee's highest level since September 1, 2020, when it had closed at 72.87. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.51 per cent to 89.47.

Rupee rises 9 paise to 73.02 per US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 9 paise to close at a four-month high of 73.02 against the US dollar on Monday, supported by sustained foreign fund inflows and weakness of the American currency overseas. Traders said approval to two Covid-19 vaccines in the country also improved sentiments.

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Transformational change

The North Eastern Council (NEC) has been at the forefront of bringing about development in an area which faces several challenges. K Moses Chalai, Secretary, NEC, tells Saimi Sattar about the roadmap ahead

hood projects are the core areas that NEC has taken up. Everything that it did was not perfect as the Council was still evolving. A third-party evaluation said that NEC has done its job though it could have been better.

One positive aspect is that NEC has a very strong goodwill of the States. The affection of the region towards it is also immense.



How has its role evolved?
It continues to do many things. NEC needs to see how it can continue to be relevant and useful while spearheading initiatives that were done in the past. There are a few initiatives which are trend-setters. Any organisation in the world in a democratic system, like a political party, has to go back to the people to say that it is still good and relevant after every five years. NEC has been given 50 years and it is very important that it is also subjected to this yardstick. As a part of the organisation, we are quite willing to step up and meet that challenge. Relatively, the resources of the Council have not gone up while those available to the States have increased dramatically. Definitely the resources need to commensurate the efforts of the NEC. However, it needs to be kept in mind that resource utilisation isn't easy. When the money comes in, it can't be just put in anywhere. There has to be proper planning and parameters have to be followed. But we do need to step up.

We should continue to work on power and basic infrastructure because there is still a need for these.

There is another role which was outlined by our Chairman, Home Minister, Amit Shah. He has said that 30 per cent of the NEC budget should be apportioned and provided to backward areas and deprived sections which have been left out. This has kicked in from this financial year. We are working and struggling as this is a new

area. Looking back, I agree that some portion of the resources need to go forward in blocks which have not seen NEC projects. The Council does not lag behind anyone in terms of output and outcome vis-a-vis resources in comparison with any government organisation. It is perhaps among the better ones as compared to other organisations under Central and State governments.

Any new areas that NEC should be focussing on?

Technology is definitely one area that needs to pick up. NEC should step into that area and do better. For instance, in bamboo, the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) are saying that, NEC needs to go all out and make it impactful. But for that resources are needed. The authorities in Delhi have promised that resources would be found to undertake projects in the area. The government in Delhi is impatient and wants to go big. The NEC is also conducting studies with the Ministry of DoNER, IIMS, NEDFI under the lead given by the PM. So, plans are being prepared for different subjects.

Do you see NEC's role expanding then?
Yes, and it should...

Firms laud BSNL for favour to desi companies on project expansion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic telecom gear-makers have welcomed the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)'s move to give preference to Indian companies in its network upgradation and expansion project.

Termining the move as the right direction in fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative of making 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) on Sunday said that it would ensure level-playing field for all indigenous technologies and also strengthen India's cyber security preparedness.

In his letter to Telecom Secretary Anshu Prakash, PHDCCI Telecom Committee's Mentor and Co-Chairman of Telecom Export Promotion Council, Sandeep Aggarwal has said it was a bold "Vocal for Local" decision to make "Atmanirbhar Bharat".

Jack Ma's 'disappearance' may hit Indian firms in long run

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Call it a double whammy. First, reports surfaced in August last year that China's Alibaba Group has put on hold plans to invest in Indian companies amid geopolitical tensions between the two nations. Now, the "disappearing" act by Alibaba founder and owner of fintech venture Ant Group, Jack Ma, may have left top-notch Indian digital firms flummoxed.

According to US-based PitchBook that delivers data on private capital markets, Alibaba and its affiliates Alibaba Capital Partners and Ant Group (earlier known as Ant Financial) invested more than \$2 billion in Indian companies since 2015.

Overall, in the last five years, Chinese investors (including Tencent) have poured in over \$5.7 billion into the Indian start-up ecosystem, according to data from Venture Intelligence.

The companies where Alibaba Group via its fintech ventures have invested in include digital payments plat-



form Paytm, online food delivery platform Zomato and BigBasket.

Zomato in January last year raised \$150 million from Ant Financial. Ant Financial has been an investor in Zomato since 2018. Meanwhile, Paytm in December refuted a report that claimed that Ant Group is considering the sale of its 30 per cent stake in the home-grown digital payments major. Ant Group also said that the report is based on "false information".

Jack Ma's fallout with the Chinese government started when the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE) in November postponed Ant Group's listing

at \$37 billion, which would have been the biggest IPO ever. The Shanghai Stock Exchange cited regulatory changes as the reason behind this sudden suspension. Alibaba shares plunged by almost 10 per cent in Hong Kong after the news, as Ma lost more than \$3 billion in his net worth. Since then, Ma has been nearly untraceable. On December 26, the People's Bank of China, "summoned Ant Group for regulatory talks, announcing a sweeping plan for the fintech firm to 'rectify' its regulatory violations".

What are the future plans of North Eastern Council?
NEC will carry on with its mandates. We are a regional planning body and we will continue to do that for Northeast and also provide certain inputs on whatever the States come up with. We will continue to do a number of studies, some of which are ongoing, for this. These studies are linked to some practical usage as well.

Second, as per the advice and mandate provided by the Prime Minister at the NEC Plenary, the Council is also going to become a state-of-the-art resource centre which will provide consultancy, skills, resources and cutting-edge ideas. It will carry on projects and schemes. It is a funding agency and will continue to do that.

So, will this be a separate, independent unit or will it be a subsidiary of the NEC?
First in a statement and later in a petition before the High Court, the company said it has "nothing whatsoever to do with the three farm laws currently debated in the country, and in no way benefits from them". None of the group companies has done any corporate or contract farming in the past and has "absolutely no plans to enter this business", the firm said, adding it has not purchased any agricultural land, directly or indirectly, in Punjab and Haryana or anywhere else in the country.

While its retail units selling daily essentials to electronic products, "it does not purchase

Reliance: Not in contract farming business; vested interest behind attack on telecom towers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd on Monday said it is not in the business of corporate or contract farming and blamed "vested interests" behind vandalism of the firm's telecom towers in Punjab. The company also filed a petition in the Punjab and Haryana High Court seeking the help of authorities to stop attacks on its telecom towers by farmers protesting against the three new farm laws on the belief that they favour big corporates.

any food grains directly from farmers," the statement said. It has never entered into long-term procurement contracts to gain an unfair advantage over farmers or sought that its suppliers buy from farmers at less than remunerative prices, nor will it ever do so," it added. The company blamed "vested interests" and "business rivals" behind vandalism of nearly a fifth of its 9,000 telecom towers in Punjab. The miscreants indulging in vandalism have been instigated and aided by vested interests and our business rivals," Reliance said.

December manufacturing growth inches up: PMI

New Delhi: India's manufacturing sector growth inched up in December, as improving business environment pushed order flow. The headline seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) inched up to 56.4 (index reading) in December up from 56.3 in November. The PMI varied between 0 and 100, with a reading above 50 indicating an overall increase compared to the previous month. IANS

Sugar production up 42% in Oct-Dec at 110.22 lakh tonne: ISMA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's sugar production increased 42 per cent year-on-year during October-December period at 110.22 lakh tonne on higher cane output and an early start of mills in Maharashtra, according to trade data.

Sugar marketing year runs from October to September.

Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said in a statement that mills produced 110.22 lakh tonne of sugar during October-December period of 2020-21 sugar marketing year, ending September, to liquidate surplus stock.

ing period of the previous year. In Maharashtra, sugar production stood at 39.86 lakh tonne during the period under review as against 16.50 lakh tonne in the year-ago period. Sugar output in Uttar Pradesh rose marginally at 33.66 lakh tonne from 33.16 lakh tonne.

Around 10 lakh tonne of sugar export contracts are said to have been entered into by now and sugar has already started moving for exports.

The government has set a target of 60 lakh tonne of sugar exports during the 2020-21 marketing year, ending September, to liquidate surplus stock.

Krishna Karunesh takes charge as vice chairman of Gzb Dev Authority

PNS ■ GHAZIABAD

Krishna Karunesh, the newly appointed vice-chairman of the Ghaziabad Development Authority, took charge today. Krishna is an IAS officer of 2011 batch.

Prior to this he has also lived here in the post of Modinagar SDM, SDM Ghaziabad City and Chief Development Officer. GDA vice-president Kanchan Verma, posted at the same post, has been transferred to the post of Managing Director of Uttar Pradesh Medical Supply Corporation.

Diadem Miss India, Mrs India Legacy

Gurugram: National Pageant Diadem Miss India and Mrs India Legacy 2020 took the center stage at Kingdom of Dreams in Gurugram. Nikita Jagdev was crowned Diadem Miss India 2020, while Rajveer Kaur Punni and Rituja Ravan were the first and second runners-up. Priyanka Juneja won the title of Mrs India Legacy 2020, and Agarti Changd and Shrishti Singh were the first and second runners-ups. Dr Archana Chaudhary won the Mrs India Legacy Classic 2020, while Madhuri Saha and Vishakha Ranjan were first and second runners-up.

N-E India to get 3rd international airport by March 2021

IANS ■ AGARTALA

After Guwahati and Imphal, Agartala's Maharaja Bir Bikram (MBB) Airport is set to become the third international airport in the north-eastern region, after a ₹438 crore project under construction is completed in March 2021. Airport Authority of India (AAI) officials said on Monday.

Construction work on the new integrated terminal building of MBB Airport has been completed and now the interior work is going on. By March

31, all the work would be completed, an AAI official added.

"Through the MBB Airport, the state government is keen to begin air connectivity with Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries," a senior AAI official told IANS preferring anonymity. He said the new terminal has been designed to handle 1,000 domestic and 200 international passengers during peak hours, making it an annual handling capacity of three million passengers.

"The new airport apron

has the capacity to park six aircraft at a time. With a built-up area of 30,000 square metre, the new terminal building would be equipped with 20 check-in counters, four passenger boarding bridges, conveyor belts and passenger-friendly modern facilities and amenities.

"Advanced intelligent building management systems have been used to optimise the consumption of energy," the official added. He said locally available bamboo is used widely in the state for construction whereas tribal art work and crafts are

included to promote cultural tourism. The art and craft work is displayed all over the terminal in the form of sculptures, 'jaali' work, furniture and murals. The bamboo architecture is represented in the facade of the terminal building by way of a floral 'jaali' pattern depicting the forests and greenery of the region, placed equidistant from each other." Depiction of local motifs in metal cladding would create vibrancy while displaying glimpses of the local art to the passengers," the AAI official said.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male **Namely: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: approx. 45 years, Height: 5' 7", Complexion: Black, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Blue & white checkdar kurta and payjama, who was found at AAA Hospital Civil Line, Kashmere Gate, Delhi. In this regard a case DD No. 32-A Dated 29.12.2020 has been registered at P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi.**

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

Sd/- SHO
P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi
DP/853/N/2021 (UIDB) Tel.: 011-23968730

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person **Namely: Unknown, S/o Unknown, R/o Unknown, Age: about 30-35 years, Height: 5'5", Face: Long, Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Thin, Hair: Black, Wearing: Mehroon colour jersey, blue colour shirt, Grey colour pant and bare feet has been found dead at footpath of Angoori Bagh, behind of metro gate no. 3, Delhi on 25.12.2020. In this regard a case vide DD No. 57A dated 25.12.2020 has been lodged at Police Station Kotwali, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for 72 hours in Subzi Mandi Mortuary, Delhi.**

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

SHO :
P.S. Kotwali, Delhi
North Distt., Delhi
Tel. No. 011-23977100, 23953442, 8750870121

DP/849/N/2021

Office Of Executive Officer

Nagar Panchayat, Swargashram Jonk, Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand Email: eonpjonk@gmail.com

Letter - 717 **Notice Inviting Tender (NIT)** Date- 04 January, 2020

Office of Executive Officer, Nagar Panchayat, Swargashram, Jonk, Pauri Garhwal on behalf of "Governor of Uttarakhand" invites following tenders under two bid system through E-tendering Process. Detailed eligibility criteria, EMD, ITB, and other terms & conditions of the tender document can be seen at <https://uktenders.gov.in>. Any amendment in future against the tender shall be uploaded on <https://uktenders.gov.in>

Dates	Supply of manpower for managing solid waste during Maha Kumbh at Haridwar.	Supplying Vehicles and machinery for collection & transportation of solid waste at Haridwar during Maha Kumbh 2021.
Document Download Start Date	04.01.2021, 10:00 AM	04.01.2021, 10:00 AM
Last date of receiving queries	08.01.2021 upto 05.00 PM	08.01.2021 upto 05.00 PM
Pre-bid conference	09.01.2021, 04.00 PM	09.01.2021, 02.00 PM
Proposal Due Date	16.01.2021 upto 04.00 noon	16.01.2021 upto 12.00 PM
Opening of Technical Bids	16.01.2021 upto 05.00 PM	16.01.2021 upto 03.00 PM
Cost of Tender Document	Rs. 5900/- (Rs Five Thousand Nine Hundred Only)	Rs. 5900/- (Rs Five Thousand Nine Hundred Only)

Executive Officer, Nagar Panchayat, Swargashram, Jonk,

Appeal for Identification

General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body **Name: Unknown, S/o Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 45 years, Height: 5'6", Complexion: Wheatish, Gender: Male, Built: Thin, Face: Long, Wearing: Grey Colour Trousers & Upper Inner, Mix Yellow, Black & Blue Colour Sweater and Bare foot is lying dead on footpath, in front of Shauchalay, Labour Chowk, Chandni Chowk, Kotwali, Delhi**

on 24.12.2020. In this regard, **DD No. 20-A Dated 24.12.2020 U/s 174** has been lodged at PS Kotwali, Delhi. The dead body of the deceased has been preserved in AAAG Hospital Subzi Mandi, Delhi Mortuary for 72 Hours.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this male but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this male may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S., Kotwali, Delhi
Ph. : 011-23977100, 8750870121

DP/845/N/2021

VaccineCheck

The Central Licensing Authority on Sunday granted permission to Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech to manufacture 'Covaxin' for sale and distribution, after the indigenous coronavirus vaccine received regulatory approval for emergency use. The approval has also been given to Serum Institute of India's 'Covishield' vaccine

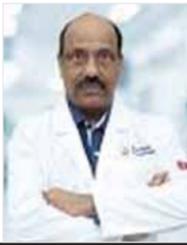


DOCYARD

DR BIPIN KUMAR DUBEY

HOD Cardiology,
HCMCT

MANIPAL HOSPITALS, DWARKA,
NEW DELHI



Warm up your heart



The onset of winter can evoke mixed reactions in common people, some people welcome the cold weather while others are afraid of catching flu, respiratory diseases, frostbite in winter weather. But there's another cause of concern which many people might not even be aware of. Cold weather can cause blood vessels constriction, increase in heart beats which can raise blood pressure due to increased sympathetic tone and also increased clot formation tendency of body, thus increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke.

As a matter of fact, chances of heart attacks goes up by nearly 33 per cent during winter. Needless to say, it is imperative that people should take adequate care to stay warm during the winter. Elders specifically tend to be vulnerable during these cold months as the cold can cause a dramatic drop in their body temperature thus leading to hypothermia. If the body temperature dips under 95 degrees, the resulting hypothermia can cause severe damage to the heart muscle. Further, patients afflicted with Angina need to be particularly careful as the cold weather can cause coronary arteries spasm leading to heart attack.

Symptoms: Knowing that the risk for a heart attack is greater in the winter, it's wise to stay alert and look out for symptoms that might point to heart attack

- Acute chest pain or discomfort usually diffuse retrosternal but may on left or right side of chest , shoulder, neck or lower jaw stomach, radiating to upper limb, associated with
- Nausea ,vomiting or dizziness,
- Shortness of breath;
- Women, in particular, have to stay vigilant as the symptoms can present a little differently leading them to disregard the warning signs.

Hence, it's vital that they always stay alert to any possible symptoms even if they experience atypical symptoms.

Prevention

- **Eating Healthy:** One should take low fat, low sugar, low salt, high protein balance food, which should contain fruits and vegetables, fiber-rich whole grains, fatty-fish (salmon, sardine) nuts, legumes, and seeds . Also reduce alcohol consumption, stop smoking.

- **Staying active:** Avoid outdoor activity and exercise in extreme cold, indoor exercise, indoor games and yoga would help keep you fit and healthy.

- **Getting enough sleep:** Getting 7 to 8 hours of good sleep is crucial for good health.

- **Dressing for the weather:** People should avoid heading out the door half-dressed at all costs. It's vital that people cover up themselves by wearing layers of clothing especially a coat, hats, gloves and heavy socks to avoid hypothermia (low body temperature). Since a lot of heat gets lost from the head, it's also recommended to wear a scarf and/or a hat before stepping outside.

- **Washing hands frequently:** It has been long known that respiratory infections can increase the chances of getting a heart attack. One should avoid such scenarios by washing hands regularly with soap and water. Additionally, if any flu symptoms are noticeable such as a fever, a viral cough, or body aches, immediate steps should be taken to consult a doctor for a flu shot.

- Consult your doctor if you have any of heart attack symptoms without delay.

WARMFOODS

PUMPKIN SEEDS: Pumpkin seeds are packed full of valuable nutrients. Eating only a small amount can provide you with a substantial quantity of healthy fats, magnesium and zinc.

It includes several health benefits like improved heart health, prostate health and protection against certain cancers.

They also contain a lot of antioxidants like carotenoids and Vitamin E and a decent amount of polyunsaturated fatty acids, potassium, Vitamin B2 (riboflavin) and folate.

Diets rich in pumpkin seeds have been associated with a reduced risk of stomach, breast, lung, prostate and colon cancers. Pumpkin, pumpkin seeds, pumpkin seed powder and pumpkin juice can reduce blood sugar and is especially important for people with Diabetes.

If you have trouble sleeping, you may want to eat some pumpkin seeds before bed. They're a natural source of tryptophan, an amino acid that can help promote sleep.



With the New Year, people have new hopes for a bright and healthy future. DR SHUCHIN BAJAJ lists health trends that will rule 2021

2020 was quite a turbulent year for all of us as it threw us to many unprecedented challenges, which we were not ready to accept. But, no doubt the year had been quite a life-changer in both big and small ways.

With the news of new strain of mutated coronavirus, it shows that the challenging times are not yet done. We still have to learn many new things and adapt with it. However, all these challenges have made us realise that nothing is more important than one's health. We have been pushed to make a healthier society, by having an access to whole, fresh and nutritious food.

Here are some of the emerging health and wellness trends that the year gone by has paved the way for:

MENTAL HEALTH IS PRIORITY

No one knows how long the uncertainty is going to last, and that has had significant impacts on the mental health of all of us. The fact that many people across the globe have succumbed to the disease has only increased their worries. According to a survey by the WHO, the coronavirus pandemic disrupted critical mental health services in 93 per cent of the countries worldwide. Isolation, the loss of loved ones, economic uncertainty

Eat right

and fear of the disease have caused an alarming spike in cases of stress and anxiety. As such, the Union government spends less than 0.05 percent of the total health budget on mental health. With just one mental health professional per 13000 people, most mental health specialists shoulder an unreasonably excess case load without recourse to any form of institutional support. The situation has only gotten worse due to the pandemic. We need to increase investment in mental health programs and destigmatise the conversation surrounding it in both professional and personal spaces

CHILD CARE IS WAY FORWARD

During the unprecedented health crisis of coronavirus pandemic, sources of safety, comfort, social interaction and mental stimulation found in the familiar routine of millions of kids by the school have been abruptly taken away. This has put the pressure on parents to juggle multiple roles of friends, siblings, teachers besides donning their role as father and mother. This has also put an end to the competitive parenting. Now, the parenting has become more sensitive, patient and adaptable. Parents have been getting enough time to bond with their kids. They have also understood the need of staying physically active for them as well as for their

Consuming Vitamin C rich foods like lemon, orange, gooseberry, guava and pineapple will stay on priority. Besides, zinc rich foods like cashew nuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, legumes, lentils, chickpeas and beans that help the immune system function optimally will also be the need

kids. More outdoor yoga and playdates at the park are the ways for parents-kids bonding.

BOOST IMMUNITY

As the coronavirus pandemic is still in our environment, people would like to have those food-items which would strengthen their immunity to fight with any infection. Consuming Vitamin C rich foods like lemon, orange, gooseberry, guava and pineapple will be always on priority. Besides, zinc rich foods like cashew nuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, legumes, lentils, chickpeas and beans that help the immune system function optimally will also be the need. People are replacing regular tea with ginger tea, tulsi tea or green tea. For a simple detox drink, grind up onions, ginger, garlic, turmeric, black pepper, lemon juice and jaggery, with a little honey for sweetness. Honey also has antioxidant and antibacterial properties that improve digestion and boost immunity.

TELEMEDICINE WILL RULE

Though it has not been a new concept, it has been in maximum use this year. While this approach has the potential to be a game-changer, especially in a country like India with uneven health infrastructure, a low doctor patient ratio, and a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases, scaling up the implementation will require closely-coordinated action between tech firms, governments, and healthcare providers to ensure that we overcome the existing barriers.

Even our Government recognised the role telemedicine is playing to alleviate the burden of our fragile healthcare systems, and issued a gazette notification that lay down the practice guidelines detailing the standards, norms and procedures that doctors have to follow while practicing telemedicine through nay mode of digital communication.

The writer is Internal Medicine, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals, New Delhi

PEPPER IT UP



A pinch of black pepper per meal is all that is needed to make it work like a charm, says DR VIJAY KAMAT

Often called the 'king of spices', Black pepper is one of the most popular spices in the world. Black pepper is a hot, pungent, healing spice extensively used in Ayurvedic formulations. A pinch per meal is all that is needed to make it work like a charm. Not only is it used as a spice but also has medicinal values besides the many black pepper benefits, making it an important ingredient in Ayurveda.

Black pepper, which comes from the Sanskrit word Maricha, was once known as black gold. It has one of the longest histories as a sought-after spice, due to its ability to flavour foods, act as a preservative and add heat to a dish. Black pepper offers a range of health benefits in addition to its flavour-enhancing properties.

It is rich in vitamins and minerals such as copper, magnesium, calcium, iron, phosphorus, Vitamin C, B2, and B6. It also has substantial quantities of fibre, which is essential for good digestion.

Following are some amazing benefits of Black Pepper:

Enhances digestion: Black pepper may help to stimulate essential digestive juices. It has carminative properties too, which can help to reduce discomfort and gas buildup in your intestines.

Treat cold & cough: Black pepper may benefit both internally and externally to reduce inflammation and cold. It also potentially provides relief from sinusitis and nasal congestion. These properties make it an important ingredient in Ayurvedic cough and cold tonics.

Immune support: A strong immune system is important for helping you avoid illness and black pepper may help here as well. Its active compounds have a role in boosting white blood cells, which your body uses to fight off invading bacteria and viruses.

Treats ulcers: Black pepper has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that may help stomach ulcers. It may also fight problems arising due to stomach mucosal damage.

Skin care: It's believed that black pepper may help fight with the pigmentation problem.

Absorption of nutrients: When consumed with other nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables, black pepper may benefit the body's ability to absorb maximum nutrition. It potentially increases the bio-availability and accessibility of nutrients by sharing their benefits with different parts of the body.

Other black pepper benefits on health may include prevention of cardiovascular disease, cancer and liver problems.

Cooking with Black Pepper

Here are some ways to add freshly ground black pepper to your daily diet:

- Use a dash or powdered black pepper to add flavour and spice to your meats, fish, vegetables, salad dressings, soups, stir-fries, pasta, fruits juices, curries and more.

- Black pepper tea may help promote weight loss. Just add 1/2-1 tsp freshly ground black pepper to your tea and drink.

- Crush black peppercorns and add to a teaspoon of honey. It helps treat cold and cough.

The writer is Medical Director, Biogetica

DadiKaKehna

Itchy scalp is common and can happen during any season. It goes without saying that it can be extremely annoying. ROSHANI DEVI shares easy home remedies that can help



No one likes to scratch his head all the time. However, an itchy scalp will leave you without a second option. Here are a few tips that can help.

First, take help from apple cider vinegar. It has antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and antifungal properties. It can help reduce itching caused by dry skin. Try diluting apple cider vinegar in warm water and using it as a rinse after shampooing to alleviate dandruff and an itchy scalp.

Second, use organic coconut oil. It can help soothe dry and itchy scalp.

Third, peppermint oil can help. It may be effective at reducing dandruff and soothing the scalp, calming down itch. Try diluting it with another oil, such as olive oil, and massaging it into the scalp before shampooing. You can also use peppermint tea as a rinse after shampooing.

Fourth, meditation can work wonders. As surprising as it may sound, but meditation has the answer for several problems. Try meditating for about 15-20 minutes daily and it can help relieve itchy scalp caused by anxiety.

Flag down the red zone

Suicide is one of the prominent reasons for death among people aged between 15 and 24. DR SAMANT DARSHI tells you the risk factors to look out for

Suicide is a worldwide issue. Talking about suicide is important, typically because suicide has emerged into a global challenge that needs to be given close attention. Suicide is one of the prominent reasons for death in the people aged between 15 and 24. It has been noticed across the world that men die due to suicide more than women. In 25 countries affiliated with the World Health Organisation, suicide is a crime. In India with the decriminalisation of suicide, we have taken a potent step towards mitigating the ostracism and social rejection of individuals afflicted by suicide.

However, we still have a long way to go, the stigma and labelling surrounding seeking help, prevents many people from accessing a trained clinician. Cultural and social realities are major influences in determining the experience, expression of psychological distress and the likelihood of seeking professional help. Hence

unless we normalise the idea of speaking up about psychological pain, individuals will continue to remain subdued and will not open up with their struggles. It is important that we initiate and encourage discourses around suicide.

RISK FACTORS

- The risk of suicide is seldom limited to one factor it is often a complex amalgamation of biological, psychological, social and cultural factors. Sometimes a recent activating event like a professional letdown, loss of a loved one, personal injury/disease, relationship failure, academic disappointment, job loss or legal trouble can increase the risk for suicide.

- Increased risk of suicide is noticed in individuals suffering from a mental health disorder. It is not uncommon to see individuals suffering from bipolar illness (particularly in a depressive or mixed episode), major depressive disorder, schizophrenia (command hallucina-

tions to hurt yourself) and other mental health disorders like severe anxiety, eating disorders demonstrating suicidal behavior.

- Psychological factors like hopelessness, helplessness, impulsivity, agitation, aggressive behaviors, polarised thinking, closed mindedness increase the risk for suicidal behavior.

- Occasionally chronic physical pain or other acute medical problem (AIDS, COPD, cancer, etc.) can also be instrumental in increasing the risk for suicide.

- Easy access to lethal methods of harming oneself like easy availability of guns, pills also increases the likelihood of self-harm.

It is possible to prevent suicides. Be vigilant of a potential conflict that the person is going through; help can be extended by being with the person and encouraging him/her to speak. Seek help from a mental health professional.

The writer is Consultant Psychiatrist, Psymate, Noida

INBRIEF

Labo, a Switzerland-based global innovative cosmetic products leader, has recently entered the Indian market in collaboration with Zee Laboratories Ltd. The company has debuted in the country with its celebrated skin and hair care product range — Cresina Enhanced HFSC, Cresina enhanced anti-hair loss complete therapy and Fillerina 12 HA Densifying fillers and creams.

Based on eight Swiss & European Patents, providing essential proteins, peptides and cyclodextrins to the hair, the Cresina range of products are designed for both men and women and are the first clinically-developed dermo-cosmetic PRP & Minoxidil replacement treatments.

Speaking about the partnership and the launch of the products, Rohan Mukul, Director, Zee Laboratories Ltd, said, "The strategic collaboration marks Zee Labs' entry into the aesthetic dermatology segment in India, which is currently booming in the country. Zee Labs is a well-known name in pharmaceutical and affordable medicine, and through this strategic partnership with Labo, we continue our striding effort to bring the best quality wellness products in the country."

Trend Blazer

Shilpa shares yoga tips

Actor SHILPA SHETTY suggested a few yoga moves that can help one get back to the daily grind after the festive season.

"Changing gears and shifting back to a daily routine after the holiday season is never going to be easy. But, maintaining a healthy balance between calm & chaos is inexplicably crucial. This is an exercise I do religiously when I want to center myself," she tweeted.

"Inhale and take a deep breath in, filled with positive thoughts and exhale all the negative thoughts/emotions into the universe as love and light. This meditation helps you focus on the things that need attention, centers and gives you the ammunition to tackle with the stress in your daily grind," she added.



GOOD VIBES ONLY

With maximum time being spent indoors, it's important to explore newer ways of designing your home in a positive and safe way. Here's how you can do it with pantone colour of the year 2021

2020 has been revolutionary in many ways, our lifestyle changed, everyone has cocooned into their homes and spending more time indoors. We all somehow learned to maintain a balance between staying calm and aspirational. Inspired by this phase, Pantone announced

'Illuminating' which is a bright yellow colour and 'Ultimate Gray' which assures feelings of composure and resilience. Today, with maximum time being spent at home, it's important to brighten our nests to be able to rise and shine. As we constantly crave encouragement and upliftment,

how about we bid farewell to gloominess and splash merriment of Pantone 2021 colours to our homes?

Read on to explore newer ways of designing your abode that speaks the language of positivity, hopefulness, vibrancy and safety.

maintain and durable, you don't have to worry about the wear and tear of your walls.

Adding 2021's Pantone shade will add a positive element in the room. So, you can add this shade in smaller elements like cushions and lamps to oomph the look. Place a soft and warm rug in the Pantone shade 'Ultimate Gray' so that your child too feels the encouragement and steadiness of this shade. Go for wood pattern laminates in natural light brown shade for keeping all the toys and other hobby stuff arranged at one place. Trust us, this fun and frolic space will make your child go super happy.

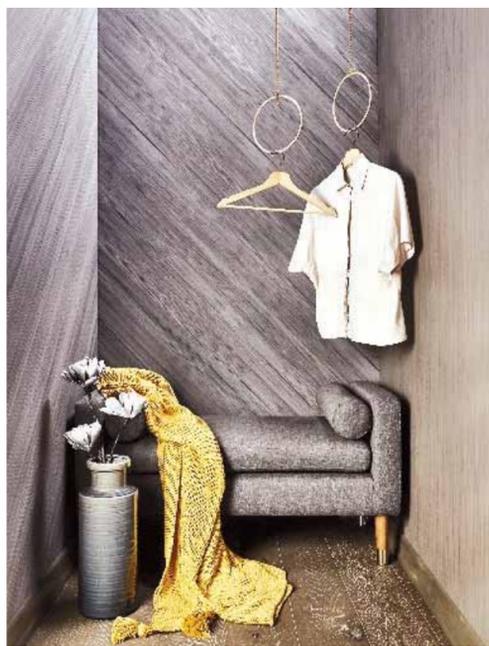
This new year, Pantone 2021 colours are here to spread hope and good vibes that are essential to the human spirit. Since, we truly need to feel positive inside out, these distinct home decor ideas will take care of your indoor safety and elevate your mood at the same time.

(The author Parul Mittal is the director of Greenlam Industries Ltd.)



CHILL FOR CHILDREN

Now that kids are bound to stay at home for a longer time, make their space more fun, cheerful, and lively. They should have a space where they can have their play dates, study, or even just scribble. This space should be designed like a blank canvas where your child can explore themselves freely and feel upbeat to match their energy levels. For the walls, one can opt for natural veneer from Decowood Veneers whose neutral light shades are perfect for distinguishing other vibrant colours in your space. Since, these veneers are easy to



UP AND WORKING

While offices usually remind of boring tiny cubicles, working from home has given an opportunity to state your style using all your creativity. Also, the coming year will see work from home to continue to be a part of our lives for few more months. How about we give a quick makeover to your study desk? Some like to keep their desk spick and span while some prefer to keep all the office essentials or non-essentials together. Whatever your calling is, go for a study table and chair in the refreshing yellow shade 'Illuminating'. Now pair a book stand or case in the earthy shade of 'Ultimate Gray'. This marriage of Pantone 2021

colours will instantly infuse zeal and cheer.

To make this natural look in sync with other interior elements, go for light brown wooden flooring options. For instance, this Oak Topaz from Mikasa Floors seamlessly blends with your colour scheme. Moreover, these floors are composed of three stability providing layers real hard wood, a stabilising core and a balancing layer, you don't have to worry about the climate change. As finishing touches, just place a white lamp and a pen holder to complete the look. This vibrant and simple decor set-up will help you boost your thought process and give your best performance.



THE CLOSET CHARM

As we welcome a new year with optimism and strength, let the same spirit get reflected in your dressing space. After all, that is where you start and end your day. We can't deny that too many shades, textures, and prints can sometimes look complex and unpleasing, this is where a calm colour paired with a bright

undertone can help you create a soothing space. An urbane closet with subtle shades and a hint of light truly rejuvenates your mood.

Laminate your wall panels with the soothing essence of light grey shade that can also help you keep health and hygiene intact. For instance, go for grey colour laminate decors from

Greenlam Laminates which offers a safeguard plus technology with health & hygiene features - antivirus, antibacterial, antifungal that retard and kill up to 99 per cent of viruses and bacteria which come in contact with the surface. These laminates are proven effective against COVID-19 virus with 99 per cent efficacy in 30 minutes of exposure to

the laminate surface, so that you and your family can stay stress free and healthy. As you will go about showcasing your clothes and other precious collections, make some room for a seating arrangement in one corner. Here, you can use a bright yellow throw along with some flowers by the side to make it look effortlessly flamboyant.

'Just like the name, the film Tribhanga: Tedhi Medhi Crazy is a celebration of women and all

their beautiful imperfections. We need to embrace these imperfections and live on our own terms, just the way Nayan, Anu, and Masha do in this film. My character is outspoken and opinionated much like how the audience knows me, yet is completely different.'

-Kajol

Actor ANANYA PANDAY finds working with DEEPIKA PADUKONE anything but intimidating. She calls Deepika the biggest sweetheart.



She is currently working with Deepika in Shakun Batra's untitled next film that also features Siddhant Chaturvedi.

Asked if it's intimidating to work with a star, Ananya said, "Not at all. She (Deepika) is the biggest sweetheart. As beautiful as she is on the outside, she is as beautiful on the inside. She is one of the nicest and warmest people ever. She is literally like my sister. We have a really good relationship."

Demi returns to the studio

Singer DEMI LOVATO is back in the studio, says her manager Scooter Braun. He took to Twitter to share that Lovato is working on new music.

"Demi is in the studio," Braun wrote along with an emoji of eyes. Last month, Lovato posted:

"Recording a song for my loyal Lovatics - The ones who support me and whatever makes me happy."

The singer's last album was *Tell Me You Love Me*, which released in 2017. In between, she released a series of singles including 2018's *Sober* and last year's *Anyone, I love me, Still have me* and *Commander in Chief*.



2021 promises light at the end of the tunnel

The entertainment industry that came to a halt in March 2020 is being resurrected in parts. The TV industry has become as good as normal as has the OTT content-making



For the film industry, a year starts like any other. There would be about 150 new releases and there would be a few major star films to look forward to. Stars and filmmakers, on their part, plan and book the cinema chains for the festive period.

Earlier, it was not easy to announce a release date of a film, for a film faced many hurdles before it reached the silver screen - star dates, raw stock supply, finance and so on. Even when a film was complete, no producer dared announce the release date. That offended the Censor Board! Yes, things worked that way in those days. Even the trade papers that ran a column for the forthcoming release programme of films, had to put a disclaimer: Subject to Censor!!

So, even if you managed well with star dates, raw stock and finances, censor certification would often delay a film's release. Indefinitely in some cases.

The only film producer who dared announce the release date of his film, *Bezubaan*, directed by renowned Telugu director Babu, was Pranlal Mehta, who was known to be meticulous. He announced the release date on the day of its launch through an ad in the Screen Weekly and that surprised the whole trade. That was 1982 and he delivered as promised. Not that things changed thereafter that every producer could follow the trend.

Things have changed much since. Filmmaking has become a disciplined process. Artists work on one film at a

time and, as a result, even the release date of a film, which is in the conception stage, can be announced! How things have changed! At least, the preferred slots of the Republic Day, Independence Day, Diwali, Eid and the Christmas weekends, the most sought-after, are booked for big films. For the rest, the release slots are always available looking at how multiplex screens have spread themselves so thin.

Come 2021, we are faced with a situation worse than those older days of uncertainties when the one making a film could not even assume his release plan! Quite a few major films are ready for release and still not certain about when they will see them hit the screen. And, this is not about Censor hurdle.

It is the Corona pandemic that has ruined industries, trades, life as we lived it and other aspects along with the film business. While other industries are gradually turning the page, for the film industry things are still uncertain.

The entertainment industry that came to a halt in March 2020, is being resurrected in parts - that is to say the TV entertainment has become as good as normal, as has the OTT content making. The film shootings are also underway but to a very limited extent, with a lot of restrictions. No maker will roll a new film project till the picture is clear as to when can a film reach the cinemas.

So, what does the industry look forward to in 2021? The answer is, nothing yet, not so soon. As far as the exhibition trade is concerned, there is no

certainty. Just when things looked like getting back to normal, here comes a threat of a mutated COVID-19 virus! Now, that adds to the scepticism and the scary situation just when there seemed to be a light at the end of the tunnel. Add to that, the periodic night curfews imposed in various states. That, coupled with the limited seat occupancy rule, it is not viable for either the cinemas or the filmmakers to go for a theatrical release.

A few films are ready for release in 2021 and there are quite a few in various stages of production. These include: Aamir Khan's *Laal Singh Chaddha*, Shah Rukh Khan's *Pathan*, Salman Khan's *Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai* and *Antim*, Hrithik Roshan's *Krrish 4* and the remake of *Vikram Vedha*, Ajay Devgn's *Bhuj, MayDay* and one more, Ranbir Kapoor's *Brahmastra*, *Animal* and a rom com; Ranveer Singh's *Cirkus*, besides a line-up of six Akshay Kumar films: *Bell Bottom*, *Atrangi Re*, *Bachchan Pandey*, *Prithviraj*, *Ram Setu*, *Raksha Bandhan* and a sci-fi film with Jagan Shakti! There are also Rohit Shetty's *Sooryavanshi* starring Akshay and Kabir Khan's *83* starring Ranveer Singh.

relief in his films.

As for *Laal Singh Chaddha*, I would not count on a great opening response, but looking at Aamir Khan's past record with a film like *Dangal*, he can spring a surprise. Nobody knows about *Laal Singh Chaddha* but few knew about the wrestler Phogat family when *Dangal* released, either. With this film, the only problem is that it is inspired from the Hollywood film, *Forrest Gump*. Needs to be seen how Aamir Khan carries it off. Earlier, Shah Rukh Khan in *My Name Is Khan*, and Salman Khan in *Tubelight*, have tried to play odd characters without success.

Then there is *Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai*, a Salman Khan film. This time, a remake of a South Korean action comedy, *Veteran*.

83 is a Kapil Dev story and just because of him, the film may bring in the footfalls like *Neerja* did because of who Neerja Bhanot was. Here again, the pairing may prove to be a drawback for obvious reasons.

Finally, *Thalaiva*. It seems to have better prospects in the South considering it is based on the life of the late Tamil actor-turned-politician, J Jayalalitha. An OTT streaming content on her life, *Queen*, is already available.

So, when it comes to drawing audience to the cinema halls on day one, first show, so far the only film likely to make it happen is *Sooryavanshi*.

But, these seven films can't feed the cinemas all round 2021. The reason to mention this is, for the time being, not many films are in the making which can sustain the cinemas for a weekend, if not for a week. The smaller projects can't feed a cinema for more than a few days as was proved by the recent release, *Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari*.

The good news for the cinemas is that the COVID-19 pandemic vaccines are about to reach the markets, following which the audience may resume its cinema-going routine and even the seating capacity limits may be withdrawn gradually.

Hopefully, things should start getting back to normal before summer 2021.

(The writer, Vinod Mirani, is a veteran film writer and box office analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

-IANS



Ayushmann roped in for big project

Bollywood star Ayushmann Khurrana is back in Mumbai after six months and rumour has it that he is in town to sign and start a big project that rolls soon. Ayushmann, who was in his hometown Chandigarh since June end, has maintained that he has discovered some projects during the pandemic and that he can't wait to announce them. Looks like, a big announcement is coming our way.

A trade source reveals, "It is a project that will stand out because of its storytelling. It will see him collaborating with one of the best film-makers. Things are being kept under wraps but we expect an announcement soon."

The actor says, "I will have three releases in 2021 and my intent with these releases is to bring people back to the theatres." As of now we know that his next two films are *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* and *Doctor G*. So, the revelation that there will be a third film releasing this year, means there will be an announcement soon.

He earlier said, "I'm hoping to entertain the people thoroughly through my brand of cinema. I would want to offer audiences some of the best content that they could hopefully cherish and engage with."

He added, "I have an ambition to do the best films that my industry is producing and I strive hard to discover them. It's almost like a personal journey to reinvent myself on screen with every film."

We have plans for world-class Rohit: Lyon

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia will have plans chalked out for the returning Rohit Sharma, seasoned off-spinner Nathan Lyon said on Monday, describing the swashbuckling India opener as one of the best players in world cricket.

Having missed the limited overs leg of the tour and the Tests in Adelaide and Melbourne due to an injury, Rohit has joined an upbeat Indian team for the last two matches and Lyon is aware of the threat the batsman can pose with his wide range of strokes.

"Obviously, Rohit Sharma is one of the best players in the world going around, so it is going to be a big challenge for us bowlers, but we are going to show our way from it, we love challenging ourselves," Lyon said at a virtual press conference.

"He (Rohit) is a big input for Indian side, so it is going to be interesting to see who they leave out.

"But we will have our plans ready for Rohit, and hopefully, we can get on top of him nice and early, but respecting how good a cricketer Rohit is," added Lyon, who is on the verge of playing his 100th Test.

Rohit has been named India's vice-captain for the remaining two Tests after he missed the first two as he was recovering from an injury sustained during the IPL.

Lyon said one of India skipper Ajinkya Rahane's strengths is that he does not indulge in sledging or conversations with the opposition bowlers while he is in the middle.

"He (Rahane) is obviously a world-class batter, which obviously helps with everything. I think the patience that he shows at the crease, he doesn't seem to get (frustrated) much.

"He (Rahane) doesn't buy into any sledging or any conversation out there in the middle, he is pretty calm and collective batter (of the) opposition, so it is few different things that he offers.



Indian Test vice-captain Rohit Sharma reacts during Team India's practice session

cricket.com.au/Twitter

"... But he is obviously leader of India at the moment as Virat (Kohli) is not here, so he is standing up at the moment and I know we will have our plans ready to hopefully combat him come the SCG Test," he said.

Lyon also had words of praise for his Indian counterpart Ravichandran Ashwin and said the Tamil Nadu off-spinner has bowled quite straighter to the Australian batsman and they had no answer to that.

"Yeah, Ashwin is bowling very well. He is a world-class spinner and I have said that throughout my whole career. He has bowled quite a straight line to our batters, which they haven't had come up with a plan as yet.

"I think they will come up with one of them and counter Ashwin's plan in Sydney," said Lyon, who has 394 wickets from 94 Tests.

"But he (Ashwin) is a world-class bowler and what you expect, he has got a decent record around the world, so hats off to him," the Australian added.

Lyon also stated that he has devised "a couple of different plans" for Rahane, who hit a dogged match-winning 112 in the Melbourne Test.

"I think (Ajinkya) Rahane played me extremely well in Melbourne, so I know I am going to come up with a couple of different plans for him and a few different guys, so I am looking forward to putting them in place.

"But, to be honest with you, we have been pretty accurate with our bowling, as a squad to take 20 wickets quite quickly in Adelaide but then challenged little bit in Melbourne.

"But to stay there and keep creating chances, that was a positive. So, we are very confident as a bowling group and I know personally I have got a few different plans to put in place."

According to the 33-year-old Lyon, Indian batters have always tried to be attacking against him.

"I think they (Indian batsmen) have played me pretty similar. Every series I come up against India, they try to be quite attacking," he said.

CA deny India sought venue change

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley on Monday dismissed reports that the Indian team is reluctant to play the fourth Test in Brisbane because of stricter quarantine rules there.

Hockley said the Indian cricket board is "fully across (and) supportive" of quarantine requirements in Queensland.

"We speak to our counterparts at the BCCI daily," he told reporters here. "We've had nothing formal from the BCCI to suggest anything other than they're supportive. Both teams have wanted to play the schedule as we've set out," he asserted.

The fourth game is due from January 15 at the Gabba.

The Australian media has claimed that the Brisbane Test is in jeopardy because of the tourists' reluctance to travel there in view of harder quarantine rules, having already served one upon entering Australia in November.

The reports, citing unnamed sources, claimed that the Indian team

wanted the fourth Test to be also held in Sydney.

Queensland has closed its borders for people travelling from New South Wales, of which Sydney is the capital, due to the rising cases of Covid-19 in the city and surrounding areas.

Earlier in the day, Australia's leading spinner Nathan Lyon had called on players from both teams to "get out there and play the game" instead of worrying over things that are beyond their control.

"I am not really worried about what's being reported, it is for us to worry about what we can control and the information that we are receiving from the people at Cricket Australia and the medical people," Lyon had said.

"It is just about us making sure that we are very well prepared for the Sydney Test, everyone keeps talking about the Gabba Test.

"But there is a massive Test match in just couple of days at the SCG and that is where our focus is 100 per cent at the moment," the veteran off-spinner added.

Team India Covid free

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

The Indian cricket team and its support staff have returned negative in the latest Covid-19 tests conducted here ahead of the third Test against Australia in Sydney, the BCCI said on Monday.

The game is due to start on January 7 and the Indian team landed in Sydney on Monday as scheduled.

"Playing members of the Indian Cricket Team and support staff underwent an RT-PCR Test for Covid-19 on January 3, 2021. All tests have returned negative results," the BCCI said in a short statement.

The statement came a couple of days after five Indian players — vice-captain Rohit Sharma, opener Shubman Gill, stumper Rishabh Pant, pacer Navdeep Saini and batsman Prithvi Shaw — were placed in isolation when a video of them at an indoor restaurant was posted by a fan on Twitter.

The five were, however, allowed to train and travel with the team for the match in Sydney. According to sources in the Indian contingent, they have been cleared to play in the third Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

All the players and support staff returning negative for Covid-19 is welcome news for the Indian team amid the controversy around the alleged breach of bio-security protocols.

SCG crowd capacity limited to 25%

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The crowd limit for the third Test between India and Australia, beginning here from Thursday, has been reduced to 25 per cent of the SCG's seating capacity on advice of the New South Wales Government after fresh Covid-19 cases were recorded in the city.

Approximately 9500 people would be allowed to watch the game with the series currently locked at 1-1. The SCG has a seating capacity of about 38,000.

"Reducing the capacity of the venue is crucial in achieving social distancing requirements, and we sincerely thank ticket-holders for their patience, as we process refunds today, reconfigure the SCG seating plan to deliver these social distancing measures and go back on sale," Cricket Australia CEO Nick Hockley said in a statement.



PATTINSON OUT

Australian pacer James Pattinson was on Monday ruled out of the third Test against India due to bruised ribs, the home team's cricket board said in a statement.

"Fast bowler James Pattinson has been ruled out of our Australian squad for the third

#AUSvIND Vodafone Test with bruised ribs," said Cricket Australia (CA).

A replacement has not been named for Pattinson, who got injured after a fall at home.

"He will not be replaced in the squad and will be assessed further ahead of the Brisbane Test match," CA added.

Kane's 112 puts NZ in control

AFP ■ CHRISTCHURCH

A classic century by Kane Williamson in an unbroken 215-run stand with Henry Nicholls hauled New Zealand into a strong position at 286/3 at stumps on day two of the second Test against Pakistan on Monday.

New Zealand, having recovered from 71/3 in Christchurch, ended the day trailing Pakistan's first innings 297 by just 11 runs with seven wickets in hand.

Williamson, newly installed as the world's No 1 Test batsman, was unbeaten on 112, his 24th century, with Nicholls on 89.

Even when New Zealand were in trouble there was a sense in the side that Williamson would save them.

It was Williamson's third century in as many Tests in the past month, although fortune was on his side.

Late in the day, he was dropped twice and survived a run out when the ball had only partially dislodged in the split second it took to get his bat across the crease.

Pakistan, without a win in 10 away Tests since 2018, would

2nd Test, Day 3
Live from 3:30am IST
FANCODE APP

have felt their luck was changing when New Zealand slumped from 52 without loss to 71/3 when Ross Taylor departed in the fifth over after lunch.

It could have been 74/4 when Nicholls was given out early, caught behind for three, only for the dismissal to be reversed by the TV umpire who detected Shaheen Afridi's delivery was a no ball.

With New Zealand in trouble, Williamson was all patience as he took 70 deliveries to reach 20, but he then put his foot down.

The next 30 runs came off 35 balls to reach 50 and he took just 35 balls to race from 50 to 100.

"It's very difficult to get his wicket," said Pakistan quick bowler Mohammad Abbas. "We had some plans against him but he's a world-class player. He took his time and when he settled at the crease he got some runs. We bowled well early but after tea some catches were dropped and that's why we're struggling."

de Kock off successive deliveries. It was the third successive wicket by Mendis.

Karunaratne's innings continued a fightback which started with the team's bowlers, who restricted South Africa's first innings lead to 145. Vishwa Fernando took 5/101, his first five-wicket haul in Tests, as South Africa were bowled out for 302, losing their last nine wickets for 84 runs.

South Africa's collapse seemed unlikely when Dean Elgar (127) and Rassie van der Dussen (67) scored 68 runs off 14 overs in the first hour of the day. Their second-wicket stand was worth 184 before the mid-morning drinks break brought a change in fortunes, with both

Debutant Minod Bhanuka played a rash pull against the pace of Anrich Nortje and was out for one, with Keshav Maharaj taking a superb catch at midwicket, running several metres before diving full length. Niroshan Dickwella made 18 not out to survive with Karunaratne until the close.

Paulo Dybala added the fourth deep into injury time as Andrea Pirlo's side moved on from their first defeat of the season to Fiorentina last time out.

"It wasn't the best Juventus because we were coming off a bad defeat, we were a bit fearful at the beginning," said Pirlo.

"Slowly we grew and in the second half we did better. It's a delicate moment but we have to have confidence in what we can achieve and the determination to get there."

Karunaratne takes SL into lead

AFP ■ JOHANNESBURG

Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne ensured his team would avoid an innings defeat but the tourists were in a precarious position at the end of the second day of the second and final Test against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium on Monday.

The tourists were 150/4 at the close in Johannesburg, a lead of five runs with six wickets remaining.

Karunaratne, one of five left-handers in the Sri Lankan top six, made 91 not out off 116 balls with 17 fours.

But there was only one partnership of note, 85 for the second wicket with Lahiru Thirimanne, who scored 31. They came together after Kusal Perera had been bowled with only one run scored.

Fast bowler Lungi Ngidi took the first three wickets to finish the day with 3/26, having Thirimanne and Kusal Mendis caught down the leg side by wicketkeeper Quinton



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2nd Test, Day 3
Live from 1:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1

batsmen dismissed in the first two overs after drinks. Elgar, who made 95 in South Africa's innings win in the first Test at Centurion, completed his 13th Test century after starting the day on 92. He hit 22 fours in a 163-ball innings.

Perera, who made 64 and 60 in his previous two innings, was bowled for one by a ball from Ngidi which swung in from around the wicket. But Karunaratne and Thirimanne both batted with assurance before Ngidi struck again.

Debutant Minod Bhanuka played a rash pull against the pace of Anrich Nortje and was out for one, with Keshav Maharaj taking a superb catch at midwicket, running several metres before diving full length. Niroshan Dickwella made 18 not out to survive with Karunaratne until the close.

Sanjay Kapoor elected AICF President, Chauhan retains Secretary's post

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The impasse in the Indian Chess finally came to an end on Monday as incumbent Secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan and his team scored a huge victory over the camp headed by sitting President P R V Raja in an online election conducted as per the directives of the Tamil Nadu High Court.

Chauhan, who got re-elected to the Secretary post, is seen as a player friendly administrator.

The outcome comes as a huge blow to the Raja, one of the biggest industrialists of Tamil Nadu, who lost by a marginal 33-31 votes to Dr Sanjay Kapoor of Uttar Pradesh.

Chauhan won 35-29 against his rival M Dongre of Maharashtra.

In the other key post Naresh Sharma from Haryana topped incumbent Kishor Bandekar by 34-30 votes.

Team Bharat Singh won 11

of the total 15 posts comprising President, Secretary, Treasurer, five Vice Presidents, and three Joint Secretaries.

The rival camp won one Vice President and three Joint Secretaries posts.

"We are going to work as a team, I have been fighting this for almost 1.5 years now, just for justice and the good sense has finally prevailed. The justice is delivered and the Indian Chess is in good hands is all I can promise for now. All our election promises will be delivered," said Bharat Singh Chauhan.

The AICF has split into two factions, one led by Raja and the other by Chauhan. The two have been at loggerheads for some time over various issues, including the conduct of the elections.

Several legal battles were fought in the past one and a half year and there were instances when the president and the secretary suspended each other at different times.

After a long-drawn battle, a court-appointed observer Justice (retired) K Kannan presided over the election process held online because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was the first time since 2005 that the AICF elections saw a contest as the candidates were chosen unanimously in the last 15 years.

Apart from the president, secretary and treasurer, six vice-presidents and six joint secretaries were also elected.

TEAM AICF

President(1): Dr Sanjay Kapoor
Vice Presidents (6): Anantha DP, Bhavesh Patel, Vipnesh Bhardwaj, Ajay Ajmera, PC Lallianthanga & Er Niapung Konia.

Secretary: Bharat Singh Chauhan.

Joint Secretaries: Rajesh R, Mahendra Dhakal, Atul Kumar, Mughaho Awomi, Diljeet Khanna & Atanu Lahiri.
Treasurer: Naresh Sharma.

Ronaldo surpasses Pele's scoring record

Cristiano moves past Pele's domestic goal tally with his 758th strike in Juve's 4-1 win

AFP ■ TURIN

Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as champions Juventus bounced back from their first Serie A defeat of the season by beating Udinese 4-1 on Sunday to move up to fifth place.

The Milan clubs are top of the Italian league with Juventus 10 points adrift of the summit having played a game less.

Leaders AC Milan stayed one point ahead of Inter with a 2-0 win over midtable Benevento despite playing an hour a man down.

City rivals Inter extended their winning streak to eight league games with a dominant 6-2 victory over lowly Crotone

with Lautaro Martinez bagging a hat-trick.

But Milan restored their advantage thanks to a Franck Kessie penalty on 15 minutes and Rafael Leao's terrific curling strike from a tight angle shortly after half-time.

Sandro Tonali's sending off after 33 minutes for a high tackle on Artur Ionita did not hold back Stefano Pioli's side.

Gianluigi Donnarumma was solid in the Milan goal while Gianluca Caprari dragged a penalty wide on the hour.

"We don't let ourselves be put under pressure by the results of the opponents," said Pioli whose side are unbeaten in 27 league games going back to March.

"We're ambitious, we're not hiding it and we aim to win the next match as well against Juventus (on

Wednesday)."

Ronaldo once again proved decisive for Juventus scoring a goal in each half to bring his league-leading tally to 14 this campaign and teeing up Federico Chiesa after the break.

Paulo Dybala added the fourth deep into injury time as Andrea Pirlo's side moved on from their first defeat of the season to Fiorentina last time out.

"It wasn't the best Juventus because we were coming off a bad defeat, we were a bit fearful at the beginning," said Pirlo.

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SINGLES

GANGULY MAY UNDERGO ANOTHER ANGIOPLASTY

KOLKATA: Cricket Board president and former India captain Sourav Ganguly will have to undergo another angioplasty in a "few days or weeks" but can for now be discharged from hospital as his condition is "stable", the CEO of the medical facility said on Monday. A nine-member board of senior doctors discussed Ganguly's condition and reached a consensus that though necessary, angioplasty can be deferred to a later date as he is stable. Woodlands Hospital MD and CEO Dr Rupali Basu said. "The angioplasty will take place for sure in a few days or weeks. He will be discharged most probably the day after tomorrow," she said.

SHAKIB IN B'DESH'S PRELIMINARY SQUAD

DHAKA: Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Monday named Shakib Al Hasan in the preliminary squad for the Test and T20I series against the West Indies, marking the star all-rounder's return to national reckoning after serving a ban for not reporting corrupt approaches. The southpaw was banned for two years, one year of it was suspended, for failing to report corrupt approaches by an alleged Indian bookie during the IPL. Former skipper Mashrafe Mortaza, who is the country's highest wicket-taker in the 50 over format and also the longest-serving captain, was left out of the 24-member ODI squad.

BARCA BEAT HUESCA 1-0 IN LA LIGA

HUESCA: Barcelona won 1-0 at bottom side Huesca on Sunday as Lionel Messi became the first non-Spaniard to make 500 appearances in the La Liga. Messi returned for Barca after missing the final game of 2020 with an ankle knock and swung in a cross for Frenkie de Jong to divert home for the only goal on 27 minutes. Although Ronald Koeman's side began a potentially season-defining run of four consecutive away matches with a comfortable win, they remain a distant 10 points behind Atletico in fifth having played a game more.

FLETCHER JOINS MAN UTD COACHING STAFF

MANCHESTER: Former Manchester United midfielder Darren Fletcher joined the team's coaching staff on Monday after a short spell in charge of the under-16s. Fletcher spent 20 years as a player with United, making more than 340 appearances for the senior team from 2003-15 after coming through the academy.

BINDRA HOPEFUL OF INDIA'S BEST-EVER SHOW

NEW DELHI: India's only individual Olympic Gold medalist Abhinav Bindra is hopeful of the country recording its best-ever medal haul in the upcoming edition of the mega-event in Tokyo, saying each of the athlete can be counted as a "realistic" prospect. India's best showing at the Games remains the six medals it won in London in 2012. "Tokyo Olympics could end up with our best ever medal haul even though the times are challenging due to the Covid-19 pandemic," Bindra said on Monday. "Sport is not scripted but I do hope that we come back with our best medal haul and that means we will come back with 5-6 medals and better the London haul, which, remains our best."

RIJJU OPTIMIST ABOUT NATIONAL GAMES

SHILLONG: Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijju on Monday expressed optimism that the National Games, the calendar of which was affected by Covid-19 pandemic, will be held this year in Goa and in Meghalaya next year. He assured full help and support from his ministry. The Union Sports Minister admitted that the calendar for the games was in jeopardy due to Covid-19 and that the infrastructure was also affected. "Dates are becoming a problem. Goa missed the chance last year because of Covid-19. Hopefully this year Goa could host the games", Rijju told PTI. AGENCIES