

OPINION 8

A THICK HIDE
IS A MUST

WORLD 11

BULGARIA REPORTS 4 CASES OF
SIDE EFFECTS FROM PFIZER VACCINE

SPORT 14

JUVE, AC MILAN
WIN IN SERIE A

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY JANUARY 5, 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3

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13 VIVACITY

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As farmer leaders stick to their guns, Govt says Acts won't be repealed; next talks on Jan 8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Singh Pandher of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, the Union Ministers have clearly said that the laws will not be repealed.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 The farmer leaders said they will continue with their agitation till the laws are repealed.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 between 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benefits from the three laws, enacted a few months ago, but farmers kept insisting that the legislation must be withdrawn to address their apprehensions that the new Acts would weaken the MSP and mandi system and leave them at the mercy of big corporates.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*

bajti 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 want quick withdrawal of these laws and it can be done through Ordinance when Parliament is not in session," 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 jab 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 jab 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 jabs, 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

A day 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 Nirdehak 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.

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.

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 Babulal 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".

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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) Irat Raja said.

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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."

Continued on Page 11

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 miscalculated," 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.

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CM: Traditional medicine to give UP global recognition

1,065 homeopathic, Ayurvedic MOs appointed

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the world dependent on Indian medicinal practices like Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the state would get global recognition as the new health tourism destination.

While virtually inaugurating 142 health and wellness centres from his official residence in Lucknow, the chief minister said that the Indian medicine systems had got acceptance globally during the COVID-19 pandemic as a majority practised Yoga or consumed 'kadha' to keep immunity strong.

The chief minister said he was surprised when the decision to allow ayurveda doctors perform surgeries faced criticism.

Last month, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) staged protests against a government notification allowing AYUSH streams to be trained to perform general surgical procedures, alleging the move will lead to "mixopathy".

"I was surprised to know that recently some doctors opposed the move. I pity on their intelligence. They need to be told that the first surgeon on earth was given by ayurveda," the chief minister said while distributing appointment letters among 1,065 homeopathic and ayurvedic medical officers recruited by the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission.

While distributing the appointment letters, the chief minister told the physicians that ayurveda, unani, homeopathy and naturopathy medical systems had a lot of potential in terms of treatment of various diseases.

Seeking to inculcate a sense of containment among the new recruits, the chief minister said: "Making a career in this field is not just limited to being selected for the



CM launches Ayush telemedicine service

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched the Ayush Telemedicine Service on Monday, making Uttar Pradesh the first state to launch a state-wide telemedicine service.

With this new service, the people of the state will now be able to get consultation from AYUSH experts sitting at home.

In the first phase, 384 dispen-

saries of 16 districts of the state, including Gorakhpur, Ayodhya, Lucknow, have been attached to this telemedicine service.

Any person can avail this service by registering on the website <https://ayushup-telemedicine.in/> or the Ayush Kavach-Covid app.

After the registration process, the patient will have to make an appointment and then the consultation will be done by experts through video conferencing /tele-

conferencing at the given time.

Also, people who are not so tech-savvy can go to the nearest AYUSH hospital and get consultation.

Speaking in the programme, AYUSH Minister Dharam Singh Saini said, "The innovative efforts of Ayush Kadha and Aayush Kavach-Covid during the COVID-19 pandemic protected the lives of crores of people. Now the appointment of 1,065 physicians, Ayush

Telemedicine Service and Yoga and Wellness Centre will help in providing timely, comfortable quality medical care to the people of Uttar Pradesh.

It is worth mentioning that the programme was attended by Additional Chief Secretary (AYUSH) Prashant Trivedi, Special Secretary Rajkamal Yadav, Secretary to the CM, Alok Kumar, Special Secretary Surendra Singh and other officials.

gilyo etc., have proved to be life-giving for us. We need to understand their importance and make it a path of the future," he said.

Talking about 142 yoga and wellness centres set up in various districts of the state, the chief minister said that these centres would

new research to find different medicinal properties of plants," he said.

"The Dadi Ke Nuskhe which were ignored as archaic, today in the COVID-19 period, have become the safeguard for our health. The same kadha (decoction), asafoetida, turmeric, ginger, black pepper, basil,

new research to find different medicinal properties of plants," he said.

"The Dadi Ke Nuskhe which were ignored as archaic, today in the COVID-19 period, have become the safeguard for our health. The same kadha (decoction), asafoetida, turmeric, ginger, black pepper, basil,

Not questioning competence of Indian scientists: Akhilesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After drawing flak for his controversial remark on Covid vaccine by calling it a 'BJP vaccine', Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday clarified that he did not want to raise questions on the competence and ability of the Indian scientists and their hard work but wanted to know how much time it would take for the vaccine take to reach the poor.

Akhilesh Yadav, however, reiterated that "people do not trust BJP's vaccine".

"All I want to know is when will the vaccine reach the poor people, one year, two years or three years? We are not raising questions on our scientists and their hard work. The BJP is only doing event management and projecting it as a big achievement of the government," the SP chief said.

He said the chief minister of Haryana could reveal which vaccine he was administered as his condition had deteriorated and he was rushed to a private hospital.

Akhilesh Yadav alleged that the business community in the country was being exploited by the ruling party.

"The businessmen of the nation are the worst-affected



"All I want to know is when will the vaccine reach the poor people, one year, two years or three years? We are not raising questions on our scientists and their hard work. The BJP is only doing event management and projecting it as a big achievement of the government"

due to the pandemic and now they are being looted. There were many incidents where businessmen were looted and murdered but nothing concrete has been done by the government for their security. When our party comes to power we will maintain data of all the businessmen and take required measures for

their well-being," he said.

Attacking the BJP government over the Muradnagar mishap where 25 people were killed after the roof of a shelter at a cremation ground collapsed on Sunday, Akhilesh Yadav said that at least Rs 50 lakh ex gratia should be given to the kin of the deceased.

UP Day celebrations to showcase a self-reliant Uttar Pradesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The three-day-long state-wide Uttar Pradesh Day celebrations from January 24 to 26 will showcase the 'Self-reliant Uttar Pradesh'.

The celebrations will be dedicated to those who have made the people of UP proud by their fighting spirit, unique thought-process and resilience in character.



This day is celebrated every year on January 24 to mark the foundation day of UP.

"This celebration will belong to every citizen of the state and should have mass participation. The way Uttar Pradesh has taken shape over the last over three-and-half years by accepting every challenge as a new opportunity and emerged as a self-reliant state is something to be shown to all during this celebration," Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said while reviewing the preparations for the event here on Sunday evening.

He said that the state government would bestow Uttar Pradesh Gaurav Samman on all those who had added to the pride of the state by their sheer grit and dedication towards self-reliance, be it women of self-help groups (SHGs) or the progressive farmers or the artisans who scripted new sagas of success by their skills. The CM directed officials to ensure that the local talents were encouraged in various variety programmes ranging from local ethos, folk music and culture, that would take place across the state.

The Shilp Mela and other exhibitions will showcase the public welfare schemes of the government, the ODOP (One District, One Product) related events, the tool kits distribution under Vishwakarma Samman besides displaying the journey of Sri Ram and inspiring stories from Mahabharat.

Band display by acid victim women, staging of Shabri-Ram context of Ramayan and the acts related to historical and mythological characters like Sita, Draupadi, Jhalkari Bai, Uda Devi etc. by Kinnar artistes will be the highlights of the celebrations which will also have a display of Ram Mandir model, the dramatisation of freedom struggle focused around Meerut and exhibition on Vishwa Yatra of Lord Ram.

<div>  ARYAVART BANK Regional Office, Mirzapur </div> <div>  Possession Notice (For Immovable Property) </div>				
Where as The undersigned being the authorized Officer of Aryavart Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) & 13 (12) read with Rule 8 & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice calling upon the borrower (detailed below) to repay the amount mentioned in the Demand Notice within 60 days from the date of the receipt of the said notice.				
The Borrower having failed to repay the amount notice is hereby given to the borrower and public in general that the undersigned has taken the possession of the properties detailed herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him under section 13 (4) of the said act read with Rule 8 & 9 of the said rules.				
The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with property and any dealing with property will be subject to the charge of Aryavart Bank, Various Branches for respectively for an amount plus interest and other charges there on as mentioned above.				
Sl. No.	Name of Branch / Borrower Name & Address	Name of Guarantor & Address	Description of movable & Immovable Property	Outstanding Amount Notice Date Possession Date
1	Branch : Main Branch Borrower- Shri Ramesh Kumar S/o Shri Sheelta Prasad Gupta, Address - Vill. & Post-Chatahaa, Tappa-84, Pargana. Kantit, Tehsil - Sadar, Distt. Mirzapur.	Shri Rakesh Kumar Gupta S/o Shri Sheelta Prasad Gupta, Address-Vill. & Post-Chatahaa, Tappa-84, Pargana. Kantit, Tehsil - Sadar, Distt. Mirzapur.	Details of Property - Shri Rakesh Kumar Gupta and Shri Ramesh Kumar Gupta S/o Shri Sheelta Prasad Gupta, Address - Vill. & Post-Chatahaa, Tappa-84, Pargana. Kantit, Tehsil-Sadar, Distt. Mirzapur. Land Situated- Mauza Baraundha Andar, Tappa-84, Pargana-Kantit, Tehsil-Sadar, Distt. Mirzapur. Measurement- H. No. 1204 A, Ward No. 10, Deed No. 2207 Dated : 19.04.2003, East To west-88 feet, North To South-26 feet 06 inch. Total Area: 2332 Sq. Ft. i.e., 216.72 Sq. mtr. Boundry : East - Abaadi Land, Manoj (1st Party/ Seller) West - Road, North - Abaadi Land, Kailash and Deepchand South - Abaadi land, (First Party).	Rs. 13,00,529.00 + Interest+Other Charges 24.09.2020 30.12.2020
2	Branch-Mukeri Bazar Borrower- Smt. Shail Devi W/o Shri Ramesh Kumar Vishwakarma, Address-Vill.-Puri Katra, Lal Diggi, distt.Mirzapur	Shri Ramesh Kumar Vishwakara S/o Shri Ramcharan Vishwakarma, Address-Lions School Road, Lal Diggi, Distt. Mirzapur Shri Abdul Mannan S/o Shri Ala Ullah, Address - Devpurwa, Lal Diggi, Distt. Mirzapur.	Details of Property - Shail Devi W/o Shri Ramesh Kumar Vishwakarma, Address-Vill. Puri Katra, Lal Diggi, Distt. Mirzapur. Land Situated- H. No. 821, Ward No. 3, Mohalla - Puri Katra, Distt. - Mirzapur. Measurement- East To West - 20 feet, North To South-17 feet. Total Area-340 Sq.Ft., i.e., 63.20 Sq. mtr. Boundry East - Open land after well, West - Portion of House of Rajendra Singh, North - Portion of House of Shail Devi W/o Late Ravindra Nath Singh, South - Gali.	Rs. 4,90,102.00 + Interest+Other Charges 17.08.2019 30.12.2020
3	Branch - Robertsganj Borrower- Shri Deepak Kumar Phoolay S/o Indradev Prasad, Address - Vill. & Post - Akkhor, Pargana - Vijaygarh, Tehsil - Robertsganj, Distt. Sonbhadra - 231216 Shri Sushil Kumar S/o Ram Sahai, Address. Vill & Post Akkhor, Pargana - Vijaygarh, Tehsil - Robertsganj, Distt. - Sonbhadra - 231216.	Smt. Kaushalya Devi W/o Shri Indradev Prasad, Address - Vill. & Post - Akkhor, Pargana - Vijaygarh, Tehsil - Robertsganj, Distt. Sonbhadra - 231216 Shri Sushil Kumar S/o Ram Sahai, Address. Vill & Post Akkhor, Pargana - Vijaygarh, Tehsil - Robertsganj, Distt. - Sonbhadra - 231216.	Details of Property - Smt. Kaushalya Devi W/o Indradev Prasad, Address-Vill. & Post Akkhor, Pargana-Vijaygarh, Tehsil - Robertsganj, Distt. - Sonbhadra. Secured Property Situated - Vill. & Post-Akkhor, Pargana - Vijaygarh, Tehsil - Robertsganj, Distt. - Sonbhadra. Measurement- Araazi No. 140, Deed No. 7204, Dated 04.09.2014. Total Area 0760 hect., 8177.60 Sq. Ft. i.e., 760 sq mtr. Boundry East - House, Anant Prasad, West - Land, Imariti Devi North - Road (Robertsganj to Pannuganj), South - Rest Land (Same Araazi).	Rs. 12,48,137.00+ Interest+Other Charges 30.09.2020 02.01.2021
Date : 04.01.2021				Authorized Officer



NOTICE

I, Sumit Kumar Yadav brother of No. 8039656H PNR Amit Kumar Yadav have changed my name from Sumit Kumar Yadav to Sumit Yadav by an affidavit notarised at Azamgarh, Date- 29th December 2020.

सूचना

सर्व सम्पत्तियों को सूचित किया जाता है की राखी राजीव कुमार यादव ने अपना नाम बदलकर राजीव कुमार कर दिया है। मीडिया में मुझे समेत अभिलेखी/दस्तावेजी में राजीव कुमार के नाम से जाना यह पहचाना जाए। राजीव कुमार पुत्र श्री गोपीनाथ R/o कस संख्या-56 बी, A ब्लॉक, दादरखोला, विधाक निवार, लखनऊ।

CITYBRIEFS

RECRUITMENT RALLY

The second batch of women in the Soldier category is being recruited to the Indian Army. A recruitment rally for enrollment of Women Military Police (Soldier General Duty) in Indian Army for all districts of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand region is being organised by the Recruiting Office Headquarters in Lucknow at the AMC Centre and College Stadium from Jan 18 to 30. As many as 5,898 female candidates from all districts of Uttar Pradesh Uttarakhand region are expected to attend the recruitment process. Detailed information regarding eligibility criteria, qualification, do's & don'ts and series of tests to be conducted has already been furnished in the notification dated July 27, 2020. Candidates have been advised to beware of touts, frauds and avoid use of drugs.

GOLD MEDAL

Divyansh Anand, a class VI student of City Montessori School, Rajajipuram Campus I, won the gold medal at a state-level abacus competition, which was organised under the aegis of educational institute Brainbrain. Students of several noted schools participated in the contest to showcase their analytical skills but Divyansh opted for various abacus tricks to solve mathematical problems and emerged victorious. He was awarded the gold medal and a certificate of merit.

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Yogi: Maintain effective Covid treatment, protection systems

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Directing officials to conduct Covid vaccination work as per the guidelines of the Government of India, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the dry run across the state on Tuesday should be taken earnestly as the exercise would help take up actual vaccination smoothly and in an organised manner.

Presiding over a high-level unlock review meeting at his official residence here on Monday, the chief minister said that starting from the first phase, the vaccination should be taken up as per the Centre's guidelines.

He said that all the preparatory work regarding the vaccination drive was in progress in the districts and it should be reviewed properly. He stressed on safe storage of the vaccine, maintenance of cold chain and smooth transportation.

Further instructing officials to conduct Covid tests to the full capacity, the chief minister asked them to ensure that 1.5 lakh tests were conducted daily.

He also put emphasis on the effective mechanism of contact tracing and surveillance systems.

Reiterating that the Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCC) should remain active at district level, the chief minister said that all the district magistrates and chief medical officers should continue to hold their morning meetings in Covid hospital and the evening meetings at the ICCC.

The chief minister said that effective treatment and protection systems should be maintained with all the precautions in place. He said that awareness about social distancing and use of masks for protection from coronavirus infection should be created

Lok Mangal Diwas to restart today

Lucknow (PNS): Lucknow Municipal Corporation will restart Lok Mangal Diwas from Tuesday. Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia and Municipal Commissioner Ajay Kumar Dwivedi will be present at the LMC headquarters to resolve the problems of people living in zone-1 and zone-2.

Lok Mangal Diwas was started by the mayor in a bid to resolve the problems of people regarding hygiene, cleanliness, water supply, sewer, street lights and stray animals. There is a direct interface between the officials and general public. It was stopped owing to the Covid lockdown.

The mayor said Lok Mangal Diwas would be held on every Tuesday from 10 am to 2 pm. On second Tuesdays, it will be held for problems of zones 3 & 4, on third Tuesday for zones 5 & 6 and on fourth Tuesdays for zones 7 & 8.

Bodies of boy, girl found hanging

Lucknow (PNS): In a suspected case of honour killing, the bodies of a boy and a girl were found hanging from a tree in Budaun on Monday morning.

Both were missing since Sunday evening and the local police claimed that they were probably in love but due to objection of their families to their affair, they preferred to commit suicide together.

Both the bodies were sent for post-mortem and further investigations were on.

Reports said that 18-year-old Ratiram, hailing from Jirauli village under Ujhani Kotwali station of Budaun, was in love with 17-year-old Preeti, residing in the same locality.

Both belonged to the same caste but as they both were also distant relatives, their families were against their affair and had warned both of dire consequences if they continued with their affair. On Monday morning, the local villagers found Ratiram and Preeti hanging from a tree.

After getting information, the police reached the spot and brought down the bodies from the tree and sent them for autopsy. According to sources, during questioning, the rela-

Ballia CMO succumbs to Covid-19 at SGPGI

4 test positive to new virus strain in Meerut

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Ballia CMO Dr Jitendra Pal succumbed to Covid-19 at SGPGI on Monday morning. He was 59 years old. SGPGI spokesperson said he had tested positive for Covid-19 on December 26 last year.

"As his condition deteriorated and he developed severe breathlessness, he was shifted to the Rajdhani Covid Hospital at SGPGI from Ballia on December 29 morning. He was also suffering from diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. Right after his admission to the hospital, he was given oxygen through a BiPAP machine. However, his condition continued to deteriorate and he was put on full mechanical ventilation on January 2 but he succumbed this morning," she said.

On Monday, 162 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow while 214 patients recovered. There are 2,509

through various modes of communication, including public address systems.

He also asked the officials to maintain proper arrangements in the Covid hospitals.

Those present in the meeting included Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh, Chief Secretary RK. Tiwari, Infrastructure and Industrial Development Commissioner Alok Tandon, Agriculture Production Commissioner Alok Sinha, Additional Chief

active cases in the district. The fresh cases included 14 each from Gomtinagar & Ashiyana, 15 from Alambagh, 11 from Jankipuram, and 10 each from Chowk & Rae Bareilly road. Across the state, 714 persons tested positive, including 29 in Kanpur, 19 in Ghaziabad, 15 in Gautam Buddh Nagar, 44 in Varanasi and 29 in Meerut. There were 10 deaths in the state, including two each in Lucknow, Varanasi & Mathura, and one each in Prayagraj, Pratapgarh, Ghazipur & Rae Bareilly.

Meanwhile, four persons tested positive for the new strain of coronavirus in Meerut on Monday, taking the UP tally to six. The new virus strain cases include five in Meerut and one in Gautam Buddh Nagar.

A 2-year-old girl from Meerut and a 33-year-old woman from Gautam Buddh Nagar had tested positive a few days back. A senior health official said that the fresh cases in Meerut include parents of the 2-year-old girl and two male relatives who visited the family and living there. These two are a father-son duo.

Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi, Director General of Police Hitesh C Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (MSME and Information) Navneet Sehgal, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Sanjiv Mittal, Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue) Renuka Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary to CM, SP Goyal, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad, Additional Chief Secretary (Medical

"Post the detection, we are carrying out further contact tracing and taking effective measures to contain the virus," the health official said.

Meanwhile, from Monday onwards, KGMU started charging for RT-PCR and TruNat tests for detection of Covid. These tests were done free of cost till now. Spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh said that RT-PCR test charges would be Rs 600 for the normal category and Rs 300 for the subsidised category while TruNat test would cost Rs 1,500. However, spokesperson of Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences Dr Shrikesh Singh said the RT-PCR tests were free for symptomatic patients but it was a paid facility for all others, including attendants of the patients.

"Those who report at the fever clinic with symptoms are tested (RT-PCR) free of cost while others pay Rs 600 for the same," he said. He added that the newly installed oxygen tank at their Covid hospital would be inaugurated by Medical Education Minister Suresh Khanna on January 6.

Education) Dr Rajneesh Dube, Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture) Devesh Chaturvedi, Additional Chief Secretary (Panchayati Raj and Rural Development) Manoj Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary to CM & Information Sanjay Prasad, Principal Secretary (Animal Husbandry) Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary to CM, Alok Kumar, Director Information Shishir and other officials.

Brick kiln owner shoots self

Lucknow (PNS): A 40-year-old brick kiln owner reportedly shot himself in his car outside his house in Chinhat on Monday. Police claimed that he shot himself dead with his licenced revolver. The body was sent for autopsy while further investigation was underway.

The deceased was identified as Shivaraj Yadav of Khandak village under Goyal post office area in Chinhat. His father Harinam Singh was the gram pradhan and also a Bharatiya Kisan Union leader while his nephew Deep Raj Yadav is a Samajwadi Party leader. Shivaraj was sitting in his car outside his house. Around 9.05 am, the family heard a gunshot and rushed to the scene, but only to find Shivaraj in pool of blood in the car. His driver Sarvesh also reached the scene and Shivaraj was rushed to a hospital but he died on the way. His brother Deshraj Yadav said Shivaraj died when they reached Baba Kuti locality in the area. He said Shivaraj shot himself from his licenced revolver.

Police endorsed the family's claim but failed to explain the reason. The incident came as a shock to many villagers as they did not find any reason why Shivaraj ended his life.

Meanwhile, a 36-year-old farmer was killed in a mishap at Ring Road under Thakurganj police station area on Monday. The deceased was identified as Munne Miyan of Hardoi. He, along with his friend Pappu (also a native of Hardoi), was coming to Buddhewar crossing to meet Pappu's brother.

When they reached near a hospital on Dubagga road, a speeding truck knocked the bike. Due to heavy impact, Munne Miyan died on the spot while Pappu sustained injuries. Both were taken to hospital where Munne Miyan was declared brought dead.

Police said the errant truck driver fled the scene soon after. The police said they were scanning CCTV footage to identify the truck and its driver.

Lucknow most polluted on second consecutive day

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow remained the most polluted city in the country on the second consecutive day on Monday with an AQI of 378. On January 3, the city's AQI was 408. Head of the Environment Division of Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (IITR) Dr GC Kisku said increased traffic on roads and weather conditions are causing the pollution. "Bonfires, burning of coal and wood by people to keep themselves warm are adding to the pollution," the scientist said.

He pointed out that about 40-60 % air pollution of the city is linked to vehicular emission. "The city has become denser with traffic congestion and increased vehicular emission which impacts the health of public, mainly drivers, commuters and individuals living near roads," he said.

"If we look at the fuel consumption of Lucknow, the sales of petrol and diesel were 2,32,383 kilolitres and 2,13,315 kilolitres, respectively, as on March 31 last year. It is observed that petrol sale has increased by 3.06% whereas that of diesel has decreased by

3%. In Lucknow, there are nine CNG filling stations and the consumption of CNG last year was 4,23,59,025 kg, which was 9.96% less than the previous year. Increased diesel and petrol consumption has led to the increase in air pollution levels in the city. The continuous emission of a variety of pollutants from hundreds of point and non-point fugitive sources — either unidentified or considered to be minor sources — are constantly deteriorating urban air quality and adversely affecting human health," he explained.

The scientist said that the higher levels of air pollutants containing metals like cadmium, nickel, lead and metalloid have adverse effects on human and environmental health. "Air pollution creates a series of significant health problems, including premature death, aggravated asthma, acute respiratory symptoms and decreased lung function in the form of shortness of breath and chronic bronchitis," he added.

Meanwhile, Lucknow witnessed overcast skies with fog in the morning and light rains in the evening. On Monday,

Lucknow recorded the maximum temperature at 21.5 degree Celsius and the minimum at 14.6 degree Celsius.

MeT department officials said the forecast for Lucknow on Tuesday is partly cloudy skies while the maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be around 23 degree Celsius and 14 degree Celsius, respectively.

There is forecast of rains and thunderstorm at isolated places over the state while there is warning of thunderstorm accompanied by lightning and hailstorm at isolated places over western UP. Dense to very dense fog is expected at isolated places over western UP.

Light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorm and lightning is likely in several districts such as Saharanpur, Shamli, Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Hapur, Noida, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Mathura, Hathras, Etah, Agra, Firozabad, Bijnor, Amroha, Moradabad, Rampur, Sambhal, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Budaun, Kasganj, Farrukhabad and adjoining areas.

CMO asked to make micro-plan to curb vector-borne diseases

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash directed CMO Dr Sanjay Bhatnagar to prepare a micro-plan for dengue and other vector-borne diseases as it is a big challenge and would continue to remain so in the coming days. The DM said this on Monday while felicitating officials, employees and members of social and civil organisations who contributed towards effective control of dengue, malaria and other

vector-borne diseases in the district. Prakash said they face the problem of vector-borne diseases every year and an effective exercise is not possible without better community partnership.

"Community partnership is very important to make anything successful because we are working for people and have to save those facing the threat of the disease. If people from amongst the general public team up with the

administration, the effect of the exercise multiplies, and it was because of this we worked along with social organisations, civil defence volunteers and members of trade organisations to curb the spread of dengue and malaria," he added. The DM said these people carried out the immensely challenging job of moving through the lanes and bylanes of the city while carrying fogging machines on their backs.

3-day bird festival from Jan 21

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Institute of Wildlife, Lucknow University, is organising a 3-day bird festival from January 21. Director Amita Kanaujia said the aim is to promote bird identification and bird tourism in the region. The festival will be both in offline and online modes.

"There will be bird sightings by the students and workshops witnessing the participation of experts. While field visits will be physical, the workshops will be online. There will be bird sightings on the Lucknow University campus on the first day while at Kukrail Reserve Forest on the second day and at Sandila Bird Sanctuary in Hardoi on the third day," Kanaujia said.

Experts will talk about bird identification and bird photography while students will apply this in the field.

Meanwhile, the vulture census will be held in the state on January 15. "We have already held workshops in this regard for the Forest department and given them books for identification of the vultures. The census will be a one-day exercise," Kanaujia said.

Chief secy directive to redress grievances of industries, entrepreneurs on priority

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has issued directives that in the New Year, the decisions taken for resolution of industry related issues in the meetings should be implemented in a time-bound manner and the officers of the departments concerned should come well-prepared in the meetings.

The government has also directed the officials to redress the grievances of the entrepreneurs and industries on priority. UP Chief Secretary RK Tiwari on Monday presided over a high-level meeting of Invest UP regarding the resolution of pending issues of the various industrial units across the state. The chief secretary directed the Gorakhpur Industrial Development Authority (GIDA) to take necessary action by the end of this month to issue a new policy for

rationalisation of the maintenance charges for the plots larger than 50 acres (bulk land).

These directions were issued to the chief executive officer of GIDA to resolve the issue of Ankur Udyog Ltd, Gorakhpur, as a result of which many units operating in GIDA will be benefited.

In the issue related to mandi fee waiver of M/s JRG Foods, Amroha, Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture) Devesh Chaturvedi informed the chief secretary that provision for reduction in the rate of mandi fee had been abolished, hence, now under the Industrial Investment and Employment Promotion Policy-2017 all eligible units would get full exemption in mandi fee for five years.

On the issue of M/s Sadhari Shakti Pvt. Ltd., Fatehpur regarding pending electricity bill of the old unit, it was decided that the out-

UP CHIEF SECRETARY RK TIWARI ON MONDAY PRESIDED OVER A HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF INVEST UP REGARDING THE RESOLUTION OF PENDING ISSUES OF THE VARIOUS INDUSTRIAL UNITS ACROSS THE STATE

standing power dues on the defaulter unit, purchased in auction under various laws and rules or by the order of district magistrate, should be recovered from the old unit and related financial institution and not from the purchaser unit.

In this regard, the chief secretary directed that a government order be issued to clearly define all liabilities of the

purchaser before the sale or transfer of the old unit.

Additional Chief Secretary (Energy) Arvind Kumar informed the chief secretary that the list of defaulters of the power dues had been made available on an online portal, so the auctioneer or selling entity could get the information of the pending dues on the old unit before the auction.

In the meeting, seven cases related to departments of Infrastructure and Industrial Development, Energy, Housing, Stamp and Registration, Agricultural Marketing, Revenue, Urban Development, Gorakhpur Industrial Development Authority and UP State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) were discussed and five issues were resolved. Instructions were given to the departments concerned for quick disposal of the remaining two cases.

Mayawati demands probe into Muradnagar incident

Lucknow (PNS): Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati has expressed grief over the death of 25 people after part of a roof of a shelter on cremation ground collapsed on them when they assembled for attending the last rites of a person in Muradnagar in Ghaziabad district on Sunday.

Mayawati demanded proper and timely investigation into the incident.

Mayawati said on Twitter, "Nearly two dozen people in Uttar Pradesh died due to the collapse of the roof of the cremation ground in Muradnagar area of Ghaziabad district which is extremely painful and disturbing. I have full sympathy towards the families of the deceased victims and may God give them the strength to bear this loss."

Taking to Twitter, Mayawati said, "Uttar Pradesh government should investigate this incident properly, timely and ensure strict punishment to its culprits. Do not save anyone and provide appropriate financial help to the victims' families, this is the demand of the BSP?"

Uttar Pradesh Congress president Ajay Kumar Lallu also condemned the incident, saying it exposed corruption in the government departments.

"Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is making tall claims of zero tolerance towards corruption but in reality corruption is rampant in all the government departments and the Muradnagar incident is a glaring example of the large-scale swindling of government money that claimed over two dozen lives," Lallu said.

Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh demanded that a case of murder be registered in the Muradnagar incident.

Singh said the incident was not a mishap but it was a "murder" caused by the corrupt practices of officials who got the shelter constructed.

He demanded compensation of Rs 1 crore each to the families of the deceased persons and Rs 10-15 lakh each to those injured in the incident.

Singh said the incident should be probed by a high-level committee instead of a Special Investigation Team.



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Possession Notice

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon the borrower & guarantor to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being with in 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers/guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with rule 8 & 9 of the said rules.

The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the first charge of Bank of Baroda for amount & interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of 13 of the act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Mortgage Property and O/S Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand & Possession Notice Date

Borrower : M/s Shree Om Traders, Proprietor : Shri Dileep Kumar Gupta S/o Shri Jai Chand Gupta, Address : 54/20, Flat No. 204, Chaturbhuj Gali, Nayaganj, Kanpur. **Guarantor :** Smt. Meera Gupta W/o Shri Dileep Kumar Gupta, R/o : 54/20, Flat No. 204, Chaturbhuj Gali, Nayaganj, Kanpur & Shri Prem Shaker Pandey S/o Shri Om Prakash Pandey, R/o : 96/6, Chunniganj, Kanpur. **Demand Notice Date :** 18-06-2019 • **Date of Constructive Possession :** 31.12.2020

Description of Mortgage Immovable Property : Residential Property, Flat No. 204 at 2nd Floor in Premises No. 54/20 at Siddhivinayak Apartment, Chaturbhuj Gali, Nayaganj, Kanpur Nagar in the of Smt. Meera Gupta W/o Shri Dileep Kumar Gupta, **Area :** 76.52 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded-North :** Flt No. 203, South : Premises No. 54/21, East : OTS, West : Common Passage & Staircase

O/S Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 29,93,129.00 + Intt. + Others Charges

Note : 13(4) Dated 27-08-2019 & 10-07-2020 will be treated like cancelled.

Date : 05-01-2021

Place : Kanpur

Authorised Officer

Governor appeals to entrepreneurs to adopt TB-affected children

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Governor Anandiben Patel appealed to the Banarasi saree and Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) entrepreneurs to support the society by adopting tuberculosis (TB)-affected children and Anganwadi centres, specifically emphasising ‘no one was invited to cooperate during the corona pandemic, but the people themselves came forward and supported the society at all levels due to our culture which was seen by the whole world and we were also appreciated for the same.’ She was addressing the entrepreneurs on the second day of her three-day visit here on Monday.

Inspiring the entrepreneurs to fulfill the needs of the people, she said that it is social responsibility of all of us to support the society as the children are the future of the country. ‘When the children are malnourished, how will the future be made,’ she asked, adding that the government is making a sincere effort to improve the living standard of the people on a large-scale in every field but in this task, entrepreneurs have to come forward and discharge their social responsibility. ‘When the matter of construction of toilets under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan came to the fore, many NGOs came forward and today 100 per cent toilets have been constructed. Otherwise, it would have taken many more years to achieve the goal,’ said Anandiben.



Governor Anandiben Patel addressing entrepreneurs in Varanasi on Monday

Pioneer

According to her, when the UN had declared to make the world free from TB by 2030, Prime Minister Narendra Modi went ahead taking pledge to make India TB-free by 2025 in view to save the life of a large number of people. ‘With the help of the existing medical system and people, by 2025 India will be TB free,’ she expressed confidence, asking the entrepreneurs to contact District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma for providing their support and nutrient food to the TB-affected children. ‘If the children suffering from TB continue to receive medicines and nutritious food on time,

then they will be cured fully within next six months.

Anandiben said that TB-affected children should not be confined to their homes but they should also be sent to schools so their educational activities continue. ‘20 per cent of country’s TB-affected children are in UP and if such patients are taken to the hospitals on time and properly cared of, then they will be fully cured within the next five to six months,’ she said, adding that the state government has launched a campaign to search TB patients from door-to-door.

UP Minister of State for Small and Micro Industries,

Chaudhary Udaybhan Singh also appealed to the entrepreneurs to adopt TB-affected children and Anganwadi centres. DM expressed confidence that the inspiration of the Governor would definitely prove to be a milestone in the direction of making Banaras a humanitarian city. During the meeting, the entrepreneurs assured the Governor to give their full support in the campaign. Sarvesh Srivastava, a saree trader, assured that 10 per cent of his income to be made available to TB-affected children and Anganwadi centres. Several senior officers and entrepreneurs were also present.

Anganwadi programme inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Governor Anandiben Patel inaugurated the three-day Anganwadi training programme at Institute of Science, Banaras Hindu University (IS-BHU) being organised under the joint auspices of district administration and Vidya Bharati here on Monday. In her address, she hailed the New Education Policy (NEP), 2020 saying that in this policy, the beginning education is a part of Anganwadi. ‘For the better future, the tiny tots should be enhanced with sacramental

education. As one learns quickly in one’s mother tongue, it is included in the NEP. The child learns 80% of what is taught to the initial 8 years and gets into the habit. Therefore, elementary education is very important,’ she said.

When children come to Anganwadi, they react what they have learnt at their homes so at Anganwadi centres, they should be helped to overcome their shortcomings and learn good culture and behaviour, she said asked the Anganwadi centre to make them as observatories as there is no dearth of resources. She suggested that

the children of Anganwadi be given a tour not in the village itself but also in panchayat buildings, post offices, rural markets etc. should be shown. She said that the children should be taught about knowledge of language, mathematics, science, colours, numbers through games, toys, exhibition etc apart from narrating their stories about the environment, joint family, national love, good learning in an interesting way and making them participate in listening, asking and speaking of children. She also shared her experiences taken for the improvement of Anganwadi

centre during her government in Gujarat.

UP Minister Swati Singh, who was present at the programme, welcomed the Governor. In his address, she said that this training programme of Anganwadi with Vidya Bharati is being done with the inspiration of the Governor. Appreciating the work of Anganwadi in Sewapuri block, she said that it is becoming exemplary for the entire state. On the occasion, office-bearers of Vidya Bharati and departmental officers apart from about 350 Anganwadi workers were also present.

47 new Covid cases in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 47 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district on Monday, increasing the total number to 21,387. The day also saw one more death, increasing the toll to 365. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 41 and all of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 17,657. As no patient has been discharged from any hospital, the number has remained at 2,926. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 20,583, leaving 439 active cases. The recovery rate is 96.24 per cent while the mortality rate is 1.70 per cent.

In the first report of the day, 32 positive patients were found out of 2,665 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 5,28,524 and the results of 3,672 are awaited. Out of them, 5,07,152 were negative, while 21,372 positive. The total number of samples collected was 5,54,459. Earlier, two males aged 75 and 65 from Sigra and Taktakpur respectively succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU). With

Increase natural immunity in children to face new coronavirus strain

VARANASI (PNS): New coronavirus strain is dangerous and it may affect children more. So, instead of being in panic and avoiding sending their wards to schools, the parents are required to enhance their innate immunity i.e. natural immunity. As, everything depends upon your immunity and if the natural immunity is good none could face any problem or face mild problems.

New strain of coronavirus appeared in the whole globe and India is also one of them. It is dangerous and may affect children more so parents are in a state of dilemma whether they send their wards to school or not but it is not true we have to increase our innate immunity i.e. natural immunity as everything depends upon your immunity if your natural immunity is good you face no problem or face mild problem, said the eminent hematologist and Director of Kashi Medicare Dr Manoj Kumar Srivastava.

Geriatric age group i.e. age more than 65 have to take extra precautions and to be more cautious and alert. In the children, there is

Thymus gland which is responsible for immunity, Dr Srivastava said adding, remember, no drug can enhance immunity in a day or week and so, for proper immunity, we have to do regular exercise, yoga, meditation and jogging. Protein diet, hydration and proper sleep may enhance the immunity, he said further.

Regarding vaccine, he said, which vaccine is going to be effective is not a matter of debate and discussion as the protection rate of any vaccine is not more than 90 per cent, he said adding, remember, along with proper vaccination, the heard immunity is also very important if 80 per cent of our population affected with coronavirus than naturally coronavirus goes from the community or nation but still there is time to develop heard immunity up to 80 per cent. Coronavirus are dangerous in 3 to 8 days so we have to monitor our oxygen level regularly if we are affected with COVID-19 and awareness is the key and right answer till that we have to follow the norms of SMS i.e. social distancing, mask and sanitisation, he said further.

the addition of three new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,652 including 185 red zones. One green zone has been converted into a red zone again. There are 2,467 green zones with five new ones.

Meanwhile, mass / group

corona antigen tests continued and all the 105 tests were found negative at SSPG Hospital Kabirchaura apart from 85 at District Women’s Hospital, 22 at CHC Shivpur, 49 at Vivekanand Hospital Bhelupur, 152 at LBS Hospital Ramnagar and 145 at SSH

BHU. Apart from this, all the 37 tests at Varanasi Junction (Cantt) railway station and 25 at Manduadih were also found negative. Along with this, samples of 31 from Vivekanand, 133 from LBS Hospital and 132 from SSH-BHU have been sent for RTPCR investigation.

Pledge not to use Chinese manjha

VARANASI (PNS): Schoolchildren on Monday took a pledge not to use Chinese manjha while flying the kites and also decided to make others aware about the harm from this. Meanwhile, the district administration imposed a restriction on its sale and directed the police to take action against those to be found engaged in its sale.

Under a programme organised by the social organ-

isation Subah-e-Banares at Shree Vallabh Vidyapith Girls Inter College in Bhaironath here, the girls took a pledge that they would not use Chinese manjha while flying the kites and also make others aware about the harm from it. They decided to boycott the Chinese manjha.

The Chinese manjha is cheaper than local manjha and thus the kites lovers prefer to former while flying the kites

but it is harmful as it slit the throat and sometimes proves deadly, the members of club said adding, this Chinese thread (used to fly the kites) had claimed the lives of many in past.

This is a killer thread and the court has also imposed a restriction on its selling but despite this, it is being sold in the market openly, they said and demanded the district administration to take strict

action against those indulged in selling this. Meanwhile, the District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma has also imposed a restriction on its selling and directed the police to ascertain the action against those to be found engaged in selling this illegally. Among those present on the occasion were Principal of college Dr Mukta Pandey, Mukesh Jaiswal, Vijay Kapoor, Nand Kumar Topi Wale and Anil Keshari.

39 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

As many as 4,416 people were tested for COVID-19 in the district. And of them, the report of 39 people came positive in 24 hours. About 50 people beat the infection on the same day. One infected died during treatment. According to CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai, out of the 50 people who have overcome the infection, eight people were discharged from Covid hospitals. At the same time, 42 people completed home isolation. So far 20,782 people have been healthy by staying in home isolation.

The prevalence of corona infection in the district is decreasing. On Sunday, the number of active patients has come down to 464, the same figures which stood six months ago. At the same time, the number of people who lost their lives from Corona has increased to 378. At present, 42 Covid infected patients are admitted to L3 SRN Hospital, 16 in Beli Hospital, nine in United Medicity and four in Kalindipuram Covid Care Centre.

Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai said that the infected included a primary school teacher in Handia and inter college teacher at Rasulabad. The Covid report has come positive for many people, including a constable of RPF Prayagraj, a home guard posted at Handia police station, an assistant in the Georgetown-based Cooperative department.

Covid vaccination dry run today

ALLAHABAD (PNS): The Health department has completed the preparation for administration of Covid vaccine. For this, there will be a dry run on January 5. Six hospitals in the district have been prepared for this purpose. These will have mock-drills for vaccination. However, the vaccine will be given only to those people who are completely healthy. If a person is COVID-19 positive, then he/she will also not be given the vaccine. This vaccine will not be given to any person suffering from any other disease.

Nodal Officer for Vaccination, Dr Rahul Singh said that six hospitals in the district have been prepared for mock-drill of vaccination. These include the Government Hospital at Jasra, Pratappur, Kotwa, along with the Medical College, Colvin and Jeevan Jyoti Hospitals in the

urban area. Three chambers each have been prepared at all these places. The first chamber will be designed as a waiting form. In this, people coming for vaccination will be seated for a while. Vaccine will be installed in the second chamber. After giving the dose of medicine in the third chamber, the person concerned will be observed for 30 minutes. Dr Rahul Singh, the Nodal for Vaccination, said that when the vaccination starts, two doses will be given to each person. One dose will be 0.5 ml. The second dose will be given 28 days after the first dose is given. Every person will also be monitored to see if there are any adverse effects of the drug. This dose is to be given only to health workers in the first phase. In that too, the priority will be given to those Corona warriors who are battling the risk of infection first of all.

Meanwhile, the Corona infection has knocked in the Magh Mela area, but preparations of the Health department are still incomplete. Covid testing centres and general hospitals have not been established here. The first bathing of the fair will take place on January 14 on Makar Sankranti, but no complete arrangements could be made for the corona examination and treatment of devotees in the fair area. The risk of infection has increased after the Covid report of five homeguards of the Mela Police Line arrived positive. In such a situation, it is currently difficult to follow the Corona Protocol and the mandate in the fair area.

On Sunday, Health department teams conducted a Covid

check of jawans and homeguards in the Police Line located in Magh Mela area. There was a stir when the report of five homeguards came positive. The order of the Corona testing will continue in the Police Line. Devotees will start coming to Magh Mela area from far flung areas right from Purnima. A large number of people including devotees, Kalpavasis will visit the Mela area.

According to the government’s guide line, the Covid testing report has to be shown before entering the fair area. The Mela administration had said to make Covid Hospital and Testing Centre in every sector, but this has not been done at the moment. The responsibility of testing, setting up of hospitals in the fair area

and following the Covid protocol, has been entrusted to the Health department, but hospitals have not been prepared in any sector.

The truth is that even a general hospital to be set up in the fair area has not been prepared yet. The construction of toilets near all the roads and ghats of the fair area is incomplete. Whereas three days ago, Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya instructed the officials concerned for getting toilets cleaned and establishment of hospitals in the fair area along with prevention of infection. At present, the Health department is very backward in completing the preparations in the Mela area. This may become a major cause of chaos in the fair in days to come.

NCR GM reviews safety measures in train operation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

General Manager North Central and North Eastern Railway Vinay Kumar Tripathi reviewed position of safety in train operation, infrastructure development, human resource development and expenditure control measures on North Central Railway. This first review meeting by GM Tripathi at NCR HQ Subedarganj was attended by PHODs of NCR and DRMs from Prayagraj, Jhansi and Agra divisions while other officers attended the meeting through video conferencing.

VK Tripathi working as GM NER since October 27, 2020 has taken over the additional charge of the post of General Manager, North Central Railway on the very first day of the year 2021. Tripathi has a very rich experience of over three decades in Railway electrical engineering and important general administration assignments on different zonal Railways and Railway Board and has worked as DRM Allahabad (Now Prayagraj) in 2014-2016.

The GM stressed that safety in train operation will remain the first and foremost priority for North Central Railway. He said that well laid out systems for maintenance and operation of Railways are available and compliance at all level without any exception shall have to be ensured. He further emphasised on quality of field and technical inspections for supervisors and officers for safe and efficient train running.

Tripathi also reviewed works related to 160 kmph speed raising on New Delhi-



General Manager North Central and North Eastern Railway Vinay Kumar Tripathi

Howrah and New Delhi-Mumbai Trunk routes over North Central Railway. He emphasised on need of comprehensive and integrated approach in planning for traffic block so as optimum work output is achieved with minimal effect on train running during execution of this important work. He also reviewed other important works for mobility improvement, increase in loading, passenger amenities and facilities for differently abled persons in stations and trains.

Reviewing financial performance of NCR, Tripathi said that while effort shall be on increasing freight and passenger revenue, we also need to critically review expenditure to achieve economy. He stressed on development of inhouse skill set for maintenance of latest technological systems and equipment adopted on Railways.

On the front of Human resource development the GM instructed that all promotions,

departmental selection must be completed on time and specific schedule for each activity must be drawn out in advance. He also emphasised on seamless and complete implementation of IT application like HRMS etc. on HQ and the three divisions to ensure that full benefits of fast, paperless and transparent working are passed on to Railway men and women of North Central Railway. VK Tripathi also instructed that all preparatory works for safe, comfortable and efficient handling of pilgrims during Magh Mela- 2021 must be completed on time and instructed for organising a specific review meeting for Magh Mela works.

COMMENDABLE JOB: Personnel department of North Central Railway, Prayagraj division have done a commendable job under the guidance of the Divisional Railway Manager Mohit Chandra and Senior Divisional Personnel Officer Rajesh Kuma Sharma in the months of November and

December 2020. Keeping in mind the present time of COVID-19 and following all the guidelines related to COVID-19, the Personnel department of Prayagraj division has various tasks related to the employees like pass, PTO, promotion, benefit of MACP. The tasks like recruitment, retirement and redressal of employees’ complaints were completed. In this regard, Senior Divisional Personnel Officer said that in the last two months November and December 2020, more than 1900 employees of various departments of Prayagraj division were given promotion and more than 165 employees were given financial benefit under MACP by the Personnel department. In the panel received from Railway Recruitment Board and Railway Recruitment Cell, along with the training, posting etc. of 146 and 77 employees respectively, 12 employees were also appointed on compassionate basis. Along with the above, all the forms related to retirement to the retiring employees, from preparation to payment to the employee, are done within the stipulated time frame, so that all the benefits to the employees concerned are given at the appropriate time. In this series, payment of more than 29 crores was provided to 107 employees retiring in the month of November and December 2020. Along with all these tasks, more than 190 complaints received by the Department of Personnel from railwaymen / retired railwaymen and more than 190 complaints received from running staff were also resolved in the last two months.

Building of Aslam demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Yet another close associate of mafia don Atique Ahmed was targeted on Monday by the Prayagraj Development Authority. JCB machines of the PDA demolished a huge building of Aslam alias Mantri in Chakia area under the Dhoomanganj police station under the anti-mafia drive launched by the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Aslam is a close associate of Atique Ahmed and is engaged in a good number of property deals for the mafia don.

Officials are looking into files to trace out properties of Atique Ahmed and his gang men in Prayagraj, Kaushambi, Pratapgarh and many other districts of the state.

One such demolition had taken place a day earlier in



Sitapur district.

The PDA bulldozers reached Dhoomanganj in the morning, and they moved towards Chakia when ade-

quate police force arrived on the scene.

The officials led the team and gave some time to the residents for removing their

belongings. After a couple of hours and machines were pressed at work and they pulled down the building within an hour.

Shekhar inspects progress of multi-sports stadium complex

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar along with Kanpur Development Authority vice chairman inspected the ongoing work of multi-sports stadium complex at the Shatabdi Nagar project in Panki on Monday.

He directed the KDA VC to ensure that the entire project was completed within the next six months and also make sure that the sports facilities became functional latest by October 2021.

The divisional commissioner also directed the KDA VC to get quality control check for all construction works by the KDA team along with RITES team latest by the end of January, 2021 and submit the report to the commissionerate. He also asked the KDA VC to prepare a draft for third party concurrent quality audit for all the works totalling more than ₹ 10 crore and to present the proposal in the next KDA Board meeting.

The divisional commissioner stressed on proper planning for the best possible management and running of all sports facilities.

He directed the KDA to also take into confidence various sports associations of the state like UP Football Association, UP Hockey Association, UP Badminton Association etc. for takeover and management of respective facilities.

He extended an option that the KDA can also plan to



Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar, inspects the blue print of the stadium at Shatabdi Nagar Project on Monday. Pioneer

take expression of interest (EoI) for taking over and running this facility.

Shekhar said as it was a big project of the KDA, thus emphasis had to be laid on ensuring completion of the project on time and without any compromise on quality. He said that the benefits should also reach the people.

The divisional commissioner said this area had more than 17,000 housing complexes and lakhs of people were likely to be rehabilitated in the near future. He said the sports complex along with the com-

mercial facilities were very essential and much awaited for the place.

He said the entire cost of the project was around ₹31 crore and it was started in the year 2017. He said at present the physical progress of the project was around 65 per cent and the project was delayed by almost eight months because of Covid lockdown.

He said the total area of the project was around 27,000 square metre and the project comprised sports facilities like hockey, football, athletics and a special 200-metre sprint

track, indoor badminton, tennis, courts table tennis hall etc.

Shekhar said the stadium would have a seating capacity of 2,000 persons and to make the entire project feasible and commercially viable, this project had a commercial complex along with 52 shops around the stadium periphery.

He said the RITES was the third party quality check agency and was checking the quality of the work frequently.

The divisional commissioner was accompanied by the KDA chief engineer and the RITES team.

CMO: All preparations in place for Covid vaccination dry run

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra, on Monday, said all preparations for the COVID-19 vaccination dry run were in place.

He said the dry run was in fact a testing process to cross-check the vaccination exercise and remove any possible failure so that the drive ran smoothly without any hitch..

The CMO said the dry run was intended on 150 persons and at each vaccination centre two session sites had been made which were bifurcated into two sections. He said in each section 25 persons would

take entry and thus 50 persons would be accommodated and these session sites had five-member teams.

He said four centres had been set up which would look into 'disaster management' if the need arose.

The CMO said fully equipped ambulances were being kept in waiting and bio medical waste disposal squad would also be ready.

He said the people were quite confused over the dry run of the vaccination drive and said that it was in fact a drill ahead of the actual rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

He said the aim of the entire dry run was to assess operational feasibility, test the linkages between planning and implementation, identify the challenges and guide the way forward prior to actual implementation.

The CMO said the dry run would entail testing in at least three session sites. He said in the proposed drill, the medical officer in charge would identify 25 test beneficiaries.

He said the session set-up would have separate entry and exit in a 'three-room set-up' with space outside for the purpose of generating awareness along with fully trained vacci-

nation teams.

He allayed all apprehensions related to the COVID-19 vaccine and said that it need to be taken by every person, especially the members of the Muslim community, as the vaccine was meant to protect a person from the novel coronavirus which had taken a huge toll across the world.

The CMO said the vaccine was much awaited and now when it was available, people need to volunteer themselves to keep themselves safe from COVID-19. He said as a safety measure, police pickets had been stationed at the centres to handle any eventuality.

World Braille Day observed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

World Braille Day was observed on Monday to raise awareness about the importance of braille as a means of communication in the full realisation of the human rights for visually impaired people.

Shockingly, over four per cent of the total global sight impaired population of 45 million lives in Uttar Pradesh, according to state Health department data and cataract and refractive errors are the common causes of blindness in UP.

This was stated by Rotary

Club Metro Vishal (West) president Preeti Agarwal while addressing a function at the School for Blind on P Road on Monday.

She said braille was a language that was used to represent letters, numbers, punctuation marks and even entire words. She said the pattern of raised dots called Braille could be read with the touch of the fingers by those who were visually impaired.

She said it was a matter of great concern that a big number of people were still ignorant to braille and the School for Visually Impaired was doing yeoman service in making them literate. She said the club

every year donated equipment to such school to promote education in a big way.

She said there were special trainers who promoted the cognitive abilities and foundational concepts and taught the art to feel finger sensitivity and fine motor coordination to maintain sustained touch and systematically track across the paper. She said the club had adopted umpteen schools for blind and was promoting education in a big way.

She said it was important to teach correct finger and hand use when instructing a student in braille. She said different students would use different types of hand movement patterns to

read braille but the most efficient pattern was to use a scissors type pattern, moving both hands together. She said the left hand read to the middle of the line, then the right hand took over and read to the end of the line while the left hand returned to the next line and began to read independently of the right.

She appealed to special trainers to ensure they volunteered to teach these sight impaired children and ensure they became literate and self-dependent.

Others present were Veena Mathur, Sadhna Gupta, Jaya Gautam, Reena Agarwal and many more.

IIT-Kanpur sets up Yadupati Singhania Memorial Chair

KANPUR (PNS): The Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur has announced the establishment of a new Endowed Chair, the Yadupati Singhania Memorial Chair. This is a unique gesture by one of India's largest conglomerates that started with the first textile mill set up by an Indian entrepreneur in Kanpur in 1921. A memorandum of understanding in this regard was signed by IIT-K, represented by its Director Prof Abhay Karandikar, and JK Cotton Ltd. represented by Director of JK Organisation Abhishek Singhania.

The Chair has been instituted in the name of late Yadupati Singhania, past chairman and managing director of JK Cotton Ltd. and an alumnus of the institute, who passed away in August last year.

The Chair, supported with a generous endowment from JK Cotton Ltd., aims to promote research in cutting-edge technology in engineering sciences for the improvement of life on earth.

IIT-K Director Prof Abhay Karandikar said, "The endowment is a sign of the support that our institute gets from its alumni. Shri Yadupati

Singhania was a respected member of our community and a philanthropist who was always willing to help. His contribution and guidance to his alma mater were always a source of great support. His passing away this year left a gap that will be difficult to fill. I am grateful to the Singhania family for this initiative, which will help to not only keep his memory alive but also his ideas of contributing to the betterment of the planet through research and innovation in the engineering sciences."

Late Yadupati Singhania was not only an alumnus of

IIT-K but also had a keen interest in the propagation of sciences and the advent of new technologies. He was conferred the Distinguished Alumnus Award by IIT-K in 2015 for his exemplary contribution in the field of entrepreneurship and founding and revolutionising the white cement industry in the country. He was also instrumental in restarting operations through his relentless efforts to ensure the mill reopened in 2009 after an interval of 20 years, a step that ensured added employment and furthered Kanpur city's development.

33 more test positive in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said 33 more people tested positive of coronavirus infection in Kanpur Nagar during the past 24 hours.

With this, the tally of confirmed coronavirus infections detected in the city reached 32,397 on Monday evening.

The CMO said 14 COVID-19 patients were discharged. He said one COVID-19 death was reported in the city during the past 24 hours.

Dr Mishra said 403 active cases were undergoing treatment in the city at present. He said 3967 samples were taken in the city on Monday for testing.

Kanpur mega leather cluster to generate 1lakh jobs

KANPUR (PNS): The mega leather cluster to be set up in Ramaipur here will provide direct and indirect employment to over one lakh people.

The project has received green signal from the Central government.

This ₹800 crore project would be set up on 235 acre land and have 200 units of tannery owners and exporters.

The detailed project report would be sent to the Central government by February 15.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will inaugurate this mega project.

Director of Mega Leather Cluster Development (UP) Limited (set up by UP State Industrial Development Authority under Special Purpose Vehicle), Ashraf Rizwan, said the project would help in stopping the migration of workers and increasing the export of leather products.

The Union Commerce Ministry will extend a financial assistance of ₹125 crore to carry out infrastructural development while ₹200 crore will be funded by the National Mission for Clean Ganga for installation of the common effluent treatment plant.

The state government will pay ₹50 crore for setting up a common facility centre under the One District, One Product (ODOP) Scheme.

Rizwan said there was no problem in starting the developmental works before March.

With this colossal venture, UP will also be the first state in India to establish a leather park.

The park will be equipped with a effluent treatment plant to curb pollution in the Ganges due to the manufacture of leather products and the authorities will also make special arrangements to maintain cleanliness in and around the leather park.

Love-sick couple found hanging from tree

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A love-sick couple were found hanging from a tree in Alaulapur village in Billhaur Kotwali police area on Monday morning.

Vikas (22), son of Kamal of Aurangpur Sambhi village under Alaulapur block, was engaged in agricultural work and was a tractor driver. Villagers disclosed that for the past two years, he had an affair with a local girl.

On Monday morning, when the villagers were going to their fields, they found the couple hanging from a mango tree.

The kin of the deceased remained tight-lipped during questioning by the police.

Inspector Prayag Narain Bajpai said the family members of the kin denied any enmity between them.

Being aware of her affair, the kin of the girl were also searching a groom for her marriage.

Bajpai said further action would be taken after the autopsy report came.

CIL enables life certificate through Jeevan Pramaan

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Retired employees of CIL and its subsidiary companies who have been paid pension for at least one month can now submit their life certificate online through Jeevan Pramaan application by visiting the nearest Citizen Service Centre (CSC) or banks which have such facility. Jeevan Pramaan is a biometrically-

enabled digital service for generating the Digital Life Certificate of retired employees. Coal India Limited has got on board the Jeevan Pramaan portal of Government of India. This facility is available to retired employees and their spouses. It was inaugurated by Chairman, CIL, Pramod Agrawal, in the presence of its functional directors. The CPRMSE beneficiaries need to

carry their Aadhar number and a mobile registered with Aadhar for authentication through OTP. The certificate is generated after the fingerprint is captured by an Aadhar-enabled biometric device. This facility, if availed, will enable submission of a life certificate of CPRMSE beneficiaries in paperless mode. One can locate the nearest citizen centre at <https://locator.csccloud.in>

Patron/NERSA XI, GM Women's XI win

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Under the aegis of the North Eastern Railway Sports Association (NERSA), in a friendly match played at Syed Modi Railway Stadium of NER here on Sunday the Patron/NERSA XI defeated President/NERWWO XI by seven wickets. On the other hand, in a neck and neck fight GM Women's XI won the match by defeating the AGM Women XI by one run. The friendly match was inaugurated by General Manager of NER and patron of NERSA Vinay Kumar Tripathi.

Batting first after winning the toss, President/NERWWO XI scored 149 runs for six wickets in stipulated 20 overs. On its behalf Amit Agarwal scored 20 runs off 22 balls, VP Awasthi who hit five boundaries and a towering six contributed 33 runs off 26 balls, Yogesh Mohan hit five times to the ropes and two towering sixes off 20 deliveries scored 37 runs, Amitabh Ojha made 10 runs, Pankaj Kumar Singh with the help of two fours made 12 runs in eight balls while AK Mishra scored seven runs. On the other hand, chasing the target Patron/NERSA XI won the match by scoring 150 for three wickets in 17 overs. On behalf of Patron/NERSA XI captain Vinay Kumar Tripathi scored 23 runs with the help of three fours and remained not out while DK Khare scored 23 with the help of four boundaries and remained not out. Atul Srivastava scored 24 runs with the help of four boundaries, VS Dohare made 34 runs by hitting four boundaries while SP Singh scored 19 runs. Of President/NERWWO XI Jai Prakash took two wickets while VP Awasthi one.



Besides the GM Women's XI Captain Meena Tripathi bagged the 'Woman of the Match' Award on the occasion for her outstanding batting and fielding. Earlier captain of GM Women's XI Meena Tripathi won the toss and invited AGM Women's XI for batting. In this friendly match of five overs Captain Vidhi Agarwal batting on behalf of AGM Women's XI contributed brilliant six runs. On behalf of this team Chitra and Geeta scored one run each. The AGM XI scored 12 runs in five

overs. Madhumalati and Chitra were run out owing to brilliant fielding by captain Meena Tripathi on behalf of GM Women's XI. VS Dohre bagged the Man of the Match award, Jaiprakash got it for being the best bowler and Yogesh Mohan for being best batsman. GM Women's XI won the match by scoring 13 runs in just three overs without losing any wicket. On behalf of GM Women's XI Captain Meena Tripathi scored excellent five runs. Shweta contributed seven runs to make the team victorious. Prominent among those present on the occasion were General Manager and patron of NERSA, Vinay Kumar Tripathi, Additional General Manager (AGM) Amit Kumar Agarwal, members of the North Eastern Railway Women Welfare Organisation (NERWWO), principal heads of department, president of NERSA, Yogesh Mohan, vice-president SK Mishra, general secretary Pankaj Kumar Singh, cricket secretary DK Khare, joint general secretary RP Chand besides Railway officials, employees and sports enthusiasts.

Rajbhasha Committee meeting held

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

At NTPC's Rihand station under the aegis of the Rajbhasha section of the Human Resource Department (HRD) the quarterly meeting of the Rajbhasha Implementation Committee was organised online recently on account of Covid-19. The meeting was inaugurated by Chief Manager (O&M) KN Reddy who was the chief guest on the occasion. Through his address the chief guest urged everyone present during the

meeting to make use maximum of Hindi language in their office work. They should use Hindi language in common parlance as well, the Chief Manager said. He further added that Hindi language was simple in speaking and easy to write. Senior Manager (Human Resources) Neeraj Kumar, who who was conducting the meeting organised for the promotion of Hindi, presented before the people the works done during the past months for the development of Hindi. He said that Hindi was the language of

culture. In today's era Hindi has made a definite place in social and political fields etc. Therefore, all of us should be proud of it and do our office work in Hindi language. At the same time, for further promoting Hindi he also held a discussion with the people participating in the meeting.

The meeting was coordinated by Shiksha Gupta. Among those who attended the meeting comprised Additional General Manager (HR) SVD Ravi Kumar, heads of departments and others

Masks distributed among people

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBAHDRA

NTPC Vindhyachal under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic handed over as many as 1,000 three-layered masks to the associate institution, Rajmata Singrauli Late Chun Kumari Seva Sansthan (NGO), for their distribution in the surrounding villages of the project. The distribution programme was inaugurated recently in Bilouji village. As many as 98 masks were distributed among the people on the occasion in which NTPC's Additional General Manager (Human Resources), Snehashish Bhattacharya, Deputy General Manager (HR) Abhishek Mehra along with associate members of the said NGO besides beneficiaries were present. The distribution of the remaining masks will be done in



collaboration with the Rajmata Singrauli Late Chun Kumari Seva Sansthan, in Khutar, Tiara, Urti, Budhela, Dheki, Podi, Naugai, Kachni and Naugarh villages respectively by January 10. The NTPC Vindhyachal is committed to doing social works. In this sequence the main objective of distribution of masks is to protect the residents around the project premises from the pandemic and to make people there aware. In his inaugural address during the mask distribution programme, Snehashish Bhattacharya stressed on strictly following the guidelines issued by the government to prevent coronavirus, staying alert and healthy. He said that we will defeat Corona together. The beneficiaries looked happy after receiving face masks and expressed their gratitude to the NTPC.

ADRM inaugurates exhibition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In Premchand auditorium hall of Divisional Railway Manager's office of Varanasi Division, North Eastern Railway (NER), Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM-Infra) Praveen Kumar on Sunday inaugurated the Vendor Development Exhibition organised by the Mechanical, Signal, Stores and Electric Traction departments for display of safety related and important materials. On the occasion the ADRM said the objective of this exhibition was based on the instructions of Government of India's 'Make in India' and 'Ease of Doing Business' while increasing the number of authorised vendors in Indian Railways ensure maximum development in this area. In this exhibition a special attempt to display the equipment in proper specifications with drawings is that these safety devices are supplied for railway operations and all items are limited to only one or two vendors. Whereas through the exhibition, local markets and vendors are being motivated to supply such items, he said. With



Senior Divisional Materials Manager (DMM) AK Jaiswal, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (SDME-Carriage & Wagon) SP Srivastava, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (SDME-Operations & Fuel) Alok Kesharwani, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (SDEE)/Traction Pakanj Kesharwani, Divisional Signal and Telecom Engineer (DSTE) Ashish Kumar Srivastava and senior supervisors of Varanasi division were present. While interacting with local vendors on the occasion the ADRM said that the objective of the exhibition which was organised in the divisional office here was Self-reliant India, Vocal for Local and to connect local industries with the mainstream of development.

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 company 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 Sonear 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 Sonear 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/Sonear.

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 2011 unused and untested,

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

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 nation-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 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

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.

"India is in the forefront of

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

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

Those who fall under priority groups should get preference in vaccination: Chouhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday said he will not get the vaccine administered, saying those who fall under the priority groups should get the preference. It is, however, not clear whether the top rung Government leaders, including the Prime Minister, will be administered the anti-Coronavirus vaccine in the first phase or not.

Heads of many countries have been the first to take Coronavirus vaccines to instil confidence in the public of their respective countries. "I have decided that I will not get vaccinated for now. First it should be administered to others. My turn should come afterwards. We have to work to ensure that priority groups are administered with the vaccine," Chouhan said.

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."

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.

Panjab Univ students seek enquiry into police atrocities on farmers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Thirty-five students of Panjab 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 confiscated

only if a person is convicted under the Act.

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.confiscated only if a person is convicted under the Act. A bench of Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices AS 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.

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 need 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

altogether 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 sportspersons — 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 commissions 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 Jayalitha’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 “#WorstPrimeMinister” 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.)

SOUNDBITE

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 imbroglio 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 the 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



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 subsisting 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 Cairns 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 "arbitrary 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



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

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.)

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, spurting 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 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, tech, oil and gas, auto, industrials and telecom indices rallied up to 5.34 per cent, while bankex 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 and 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. Foreign institutional investors purchased shares worth Rs 506.21 crore on a net basis on Friday, according to provisional exchange data.

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.

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 intra-day 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.

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

IAN S ■ 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 notched 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, the country's central bank, "summoned Ant Group for regulatory talks, announcing a sweeping plan for the fintech firm to 'rectify' its regulatory violations".

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 mar-

keting year runs from October to September. Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said in a statement that mills produced 110.22 lakh tonne of sugar dur-

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.

Terming 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".

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	14104.35	14147.95	13953.75	14132.90	114.4	
TATASTEEL	649	699	664.65	696.9	53.8	
HINDALCO	240.9	258	239.55	254.8	16.45	
EICHERMOT	2591.00	2670.00	2580.00	2653.00	110.3	
ONGC	94.05	97.3	93.7	97	3.8	
TCS	2950.00	3050.75	2940.95	3042.70	114.45	
BPCL	384.9	396.8	384.1	396.2	14.25	
JSWSTEEL	392	405.1	391.5	406.3	13.95	
GAIL	124.8	128.45	124.65	128.05	4.4	
GRSILCH	937.15	967	937.15	963	29.6	
HCLTECH	959	984.7	952.65	978.3	27.8	
HDFCLIFE	680.35	697.6	680.35	696.4	18	
IOC	92	94.05	92	93.9	2.4	
TECHM	980.6	1005.00	975	1003.00	25.05	
TATAMOTORS	191.8	199	188.75	191.5	4.65	
M&M	735	751	722.25	749	16.55	
WIPRO	390	397.95	387.8	396.7	8.6	
SIFY	900	917	894.5	915.15	19.75	
INFY	1269.00	1290.00	1261.15	1288.00	27.55	
HINDUNILVR	2405.00	2430.00	2400.70	2427.15	39.6	
COALINDIA	136.85	137.75	135.8	137.35	2	
IT	1305.00	1322.55	1302.00	1315.55	18.55	
SUNPHARMA	600	609.45	595.2	604.85	4.85	
RAIJAHNCO	3490.00	3528.00	3465.00	3519.00	33.75	
ULTRACEMCO	4736.95	5386.85	5292.05	5335.05	46.15	
UPL	47.34	47.5	46.665	47.32	3.9	
ICICIBANK	532.3	535	524.3	531.7	4.2	
SBIN	281.85	283.9	277.75	281.1	1.7	
CIPLA	831	837.3	826.55	831.5	4.9	
SHREECEM	24140.00	24225.00	23862.00	24089.00	138.7	
DRREDDY	5260.00	5308.35	5241.35	5268.60	47.25	
BAJAJFINSV	8940.00	9065.00	8841.75	8915.00	22.55	
HDFC	2576.90	2592.35	2533.15	2579.00	10.25	
DIVISLAB	3853.00	3914.95	3849.00	3863.80	14.75	
BHARTIARTL	517	520.5	511.6	517.05	1.9	
AXISBANK	627.8	633	621.3	625.75	1.95	
RELIANCE	1995.10	1998.90	1988.00	1990.25	2.75	
ITC	214	216	212.1	219.9	0.05	
MARUTI	7759.00	7755.20	7642.60	7691.05	-0.25	
BRITANNIA	3380.00	3393.90	3357.00	3367.00	-0.8	
NTPC	99.75	100	98.5	98.95	-0.2	
HDFCBANK	1438.00	1438.00	1399.00	1422.25	-2.8	
INDIANDBK	910	914	887.45	897.7	-2.45	
NESTLEIND	18495.00	18630.00	18329.75	18396.55	-54.15	
POWERGRID	190	190.4	188	188.35	-1.15	
TITAN	1566.00	1567.00	1538.00	1549.10	-9.5	
ASIANPAINT	2781.10	2791.10	2745.00	2754.00	-21.55	
ADANIEXPORTS	507	510.9	495.2	498.1	-5.75	
BAJFINANCE	5324.00	5324.00	5196.20	5217.10	-63.05	
KOTAKBANK	2004.00	2005.95	1955.00	1970.00	-24.05	
HEROMOTOCO	3112.00	3123.95	3037.25	3052.00	-30.65	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	32998.95	33347.85	32805.30	33281.65	515.7	
NMDC	118.05	123.15	117.5	123.1	6.75	
LTI	3729.90	3909.90	3709.45	3888.95	189.65	
AUROPHARMA	936.1	979	926.65	967.5	39.75	
SBICARD	853.8	897	853.8	889.8	36.05	
OFSS	3235.05	3410.00	3250.20	3372.05	129.2	
MAT	2880.00	2949.00	2805.00	2895.20	106.1	
PF	116	119.15	115.5	118.75	3.7	
MUTHOOTFIN	1222.90	1263.00	1220.00	1246.85	33.5	
GODREJCP	740.1	760	734.25	758.95	20	
MARICO	406.95	419.8	406.95	417	10.9	
INDUSTOWER	239.95	242.4	237.05	241.6	6.15	
PNB	35.4	35.75	34.25	35.7	0.9	
CONCOR	405.9	418.75	403.7	413.7	10.3	
LUPIN	1009.80	1030.35	1000.65	1026.00	25.1	
BOSCHLTD	13102.00	13732.25	13108.30	13285.00	298.95	
DLF	239.85	245	233.2	243.45	5.1	
BANKBARODA	65.1	66.3	64.3	65.85	1.35	
HINDZINC	241	245.85	240.5	244	4.95	
INDIGO	1722.00	1751.00	1718.15	1746.00	32.5	
ICICIGI	1529.00	1554.90	1524.00	1546.50	27.3	
NAUKRI	4760.25	4832.00	4737.55	4836.60	81.9	
CADILAH	494	494	479.1	486.5	8.1	
DABUR	537	544	532.4	542.8	8.6	
ADANTRANS	437.25	445.45	435.1	441	6.75	
BERGEPAINT	766	779.85	765.3	778.7	11.65	
ICICIPRULI	500.2	505.95	494.5	505.5	6.8	
ADANIGREEN	1088.40	1090.00	1071.20	1080.10	14.15	
PETRONET	252.2	253.1	248.75	253	3.15	
HAVELLS	910.55	923.3	909.25	920.35	10.45	
ACC	1634.00	1649.00	1628.00	1643.65	17.55	
AMBUJACEM	252.9	253.8	250	253.3	2.45	
HDFCAML	3015.95	3033.70	2970.40	3024.35	26.3	
PIDILITIND	1774.50	1837.25	1765.10	1786.00	15.2	
GICRE	141.8	143	140.7	141.4	1.2	
MOTHERSUNI	165.5	167.9	163.25	165.5	1.4	
BAJAJHLDNG	13199.55	1352.50	13120.35	13142.25	23.1	
HINDPETRO	222	223.65	218.6	222.8	1.55	
TATACONSUM	606.95	606.95	597.5	605.4	3.9	
ALKEM	2984.00	2984.00	2945.00	2963.90	12.25	
MCDOWELLN	581	590.75	581	583.85	2.95	
BIOCON	468	469.8	464.45	466.95	1.2	
TORNTPHARM	2817.65	2823.50	2780.50	2799.50	4.45	
UPL	510.95	513.9	505.05	507.2	0.05	
COALP	1186.00	1195.00	1174.70	1183.15	0	
PGHH	11175.00	11175.00	10960.00	11007.00	-5.4	
PEL	1486.05	1494.80	1452.20	1479.00	-13.5	
SIEMENS	1604.90	1617.35	1585.30	1597.00	-4.55	
ABBINDIA	15793.75	15862.90	15630.90	15698.90	-47.1	
BANDHANBNK	404	404.4	395	397.1	-3.1	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	BUFOOD	2814.65	2815	2742	2748
IDEA	11.89	12.15	11.44	11.92	NCC	1621.64	1648.5	1625.4	1639.35
TATASTEEL	646.55	699.45	646.55	692.75	NOCIL	1621.5	163.7	149	160.45
RELIANCE	1988.55	1997.9	1967.9	1990.65	SIEMENS	1601.6	162.12	1585.25	1596.95
SAIL	75.65	80.05	75.5	79.3	ADANIGREEN	1086	1088	1069.95	1081.55
TCS	2950	3050	2942	3039.25	BIOCON	468	469	464.7	467.65
ASHOKLEY	99.6	105.8	99.6	104.15	HFCL	26.2	27.75	25.6	26.35
BAJFINANCE	5315.15	5320.25	5196	5216.3	BCHSLTD	12960.15	13358.5	12960.15	13332.95
TATAMOTORS	192	193	188.8	191.2	DAMUR	537.95	544	532.95	543.35
ICICIBANK	531.3	535	524.05	531.65	LEMONTREE	42.95	45.35	41.9	44.7
BHEL	39.45	40.85	38.75	40.65	CONCOR	403.3	418	403.3	413
ITC	213.95	216	212	213.4	TATACHEM	483.9	494.3	482.35	489.25
PNB	35.3	35.75	34.25	35.55	RAJESHSEXPO	486	487	485	488
ONGC	94	97.3	93.9	96.95	NTPC	98.49	99.95	98.5	98.95
INFY	1271.75	1290.35	1261.5	1288.55	COLPAL	1580	1585	1563	1576.1
RBLBANK	234	240.75	231.7	239.6	COFORGE	2702	2865	2702	2848
BEL	129.2	132.25	126.95	131.5	NHPC	23.35	24.75	23.15	24.4
SBIN	281.2	283.85	277.95	281.05	JUSTDIAL	648.55	677.7	648.2	669.25
SUZLON	7.21	7.21	6.9	7.2	IDBI	32.65	32.85	31.8	32
JINDALSTEL	273.7	289.3	272.75	287.65	BALKRISIND	1660	1680	1617.5	1670.55
HDFC	2580	2591.35	2533.55	2579.35	COALINDIA	136.55	137.7	135.8	137.25
AUROPHARMA	932.05	969.3	926.65	965.55	GODREJPROP	1430.3	1442.95	1400.25	1406.25
EICHERMOT	2583.5	2674.35	2581.25	2656.65	SWOLAR	264.1	279.5	256.9	270.95
KOTAKBANK	1995.35	2005	1955.35	1965.85	HINDPETRO*	223	223.55	218.75	222.25
PVR	1372	1405	1330.15	1398.85	ADANIPOWER	50.85	50.85	49.9	50.25
HDFCBANK	1437.35	1438.95	1399	1416.15	MOTHERSUMI	165	167.9	163.4	165.05
MARUTI	7730	7751	7643.6	7699.5	SRF	5700	5738.05	5620.05	5682.25
BPCL	384	396.7	384	393.5	BRATERN	541.05	553.7	534.5	552.25
MUTHOOTFIN	1221.75	1262.5	1219.25	1243.5	HDFCAMC	3021.55	3032.4	2974.55	3024.95
ZEE	225.9	228	216.1	219.05	GRIVASCOT	90.3	96.8	89.95	96.35
LAXMIMACH	4754.7	4754.7	4655	4683.6	IDFC	38.2	38.85	36.65	36.95
SUNPHARMA	599	609.6	595.05	604.5	SPARC	198.9	206.7	195.15	203.95
VEDL	161.9	171.6	161.2	170.25	NESTLEIND	18450	18572.4	18324.5	18388.25
HEROMOTOCO	3102	3139.05	3036.5	3044	PHILIPCARB	17.2	182.7	176	179.95
FEDERALBNK	69	71.35	68.8	70.55	UNIONBANK	32.4	32.7	32.1	32.45
AXISBANK	625	633	621.35	624.85	TATACONSUM	605	606.8	597.55	603.85
WIPRO	390	397.95	387.75	396.3	INDIANJNM	182	183.6	174.95	176.35
CADILAC	492.25	492.95	479.35	486.15	GMDCLTD	55.95	59	55.6	58.55
DEEPAKNI	1020	1042	987	1034.2	COMROMANDEL	82.58	82.58	80.7	821.55
TINDIA	805	806.1	795.6	802	JSL	76.5	84.65	76.5	83.75
LT	1308.1	1322.6	1302.35	1314.15	AMBUJACEM	252	253.58	250.1	252.75
BAJAJFINSV	8949.8	9060.4	8840	8902.4	JUBILANT	854.5	891.95	846.1	884.95
CANBK	134	135.9	130.45	134	SLTTECH	184	197.95	184	195.85
LUPIN	1008.5	1029.8	1000.9	1026.8	BLISSGVS	202.65	206.3	198.4	200.95
BANKBARODA	65.25	66.25	64.35	65.8	HAWKINCOOK	60.95	61.65	59.90	61.15
IRUCT	1460	1465.95	1443.6	1451.15	TATAELXSI	1898	1900	1867.65	1879.25
INDUSHGFIN	222.2	225.95	216.6	220.75	IBREALTY	80.5	81.75	79	80.85
M&M	733	750.7	727.35	748.9	JKPAPER	114.05	123.3	113.2	122.25
TRIDENT	11.3	12.87	11.14	12.87	UPL	470	474.95	466.9	472.35
BHARTIARTL	516.6	520.4	511.75	517.15					
IDFCFIRSTB	37.8	39.1	37.65	38.55					
DMART	2808	2949	2804	2902.85					
INDUSINDBK	908	914.1	887.8	897.55					
ESCORTS	1307	1317	1282.55	1312.15					
DLF	238.25	245	233.3	244.3					
HINDALCO	240.1	256	239.7	254.05					
JSWSTEEL	391	405	391	403.1					
HINDUNILVR	2398.4	2430	2398.1	2426.5					
TATAPOWER	77.6	79.6	77.6	79.25					
CHOLAFIN	414.45	446.05	414.45	443.25					
CHOLAHLDNG	575	589.85	565	582.5					
IGL	509	513.55	505.05	506.55					
IOC	91.7	94	91.7	93.8					
MRF	76580	78859.45	75900.05	78416.2					
NMDC	118	123.25	117.65	122.35					
INDIAMART	7198	7490.15	7178.05	7290.4					
SBICARD	853	896.68	853	888.35	MANAPPURAM	169.9	172.6	168.85	172.05
GAIL	125	128.5	124.85	128	PETRONET	251.9	253	248.8	252.25
ADANIPORTS	505.55	510.8	495.5	498.85	HAVELLS	914.9	922.75	909.5	920.95
BANDHANBNK	406.85	406.85	395	396.85	PFCE	116.45	119.15	115.45	118.75
NCC	61.1	64.1	61.1	63.85	SPIJET	96.1	97.15	94.5	95.95
SUNTV	478.8	491.75	474.5	495.45	MFSL	688	697	680.15	689.15
HCLTECH	956.6	984.05	952.35	979.55	MMTC	30.15	30.9	29.5	30
ALKYLAMINE	3920	4625.6	3880	4450.9	PIIND	2278.2	2299	2252.5	2258.15
PEL	1480	1494.35	1452.75	1477.75	TVSTMOTOR	497	499.05	487.8	495.65
ADANIENT	490.85	502.6	487	494.5	SBILIFE	920	917	894.55	912.55
SUMICHEM	312.7	338.4	311.2	326.5	SOUTHBANK	9.01	9.63	9.14	9.53
M&MFIN	180	185.7	180	185.4	INTELEISUR	290	306	289	304.15
ASTRAZEN	4844	4900	4603.65	4657.3	FRETAILX	77.7	79.4	77.45	77.75
ASIANPAINT	2784.4	2790	2745.2	2754.8	CENTURYTEX	415	422.2	403	417.15
GRASIM	940	966.35	938.35	963.2	FLS	100.45	102.9	99	101.4
NATOCAPHARM	978	978	960.85	967.9	BATAINDIA	1574.5	1602.65	1566.8	1594.45
MCX	1750	1793.1	1746.15	1783.8	MPHASIS	1558	1558	1506.05	1517.65
BRITANNIA	3575	3595.45	3536.05	3554.2	GODFRYPHLP	987	994.5	978	985.15
SRTTRANSFIN	1085	1089.3	1064	1076.3	NAUKRI	4797.95	4855	4740.3	4843.15
LICHSGFIN	381	384.65	376.8	381.7	HSCL	45.2	45.9	44.1	45.45
CUMMINSIND	582.1	614	582.1	608.9	GRAPHITE	310	319	306.8	317.1
DISVLISAB	3892	3931	3849.7	3862.48	VOLITAS	830	848.75	830	845.95
ITI	3705.05	3907.9	3705.05	3845.8	HEG	947	968.35	939.25	962.05
L&FTH	98	98.3	95.75	97.45	GALAXYSURF	204	216.7	200.75	213.35
GLENMARK	505	519.25	503.8	514.5	GRMFINRA	27.1	27.25	26.2	27.05
DRREDDY	5285	5306.4	5240.4	5271.15	ICEATIG	1096	1142.0	1090.5	1133.55
RAIN	145.9	149.5	143.65	146.75	CICTI	1527.2	1554.35	1524.8	1550.95
NATIONALUM	45	47.45	45	47.15	ZYDUSWELL	2010	2217.55	2085.95	2156.15
HDFCLIFE	682	697.45	680.75	695.9	POLSCAB	1041	1062	1041	1058.45
BEML	1050	1050	996.75	1007.9	RECLTD	135.9	137.55	134.2	137.35
CIPLA	829.2	837	826.9	832.25	APOLLPHOSP	2408.15	2447	2397.9	2409.95
APOLLTORYE	182	189.65	180.9	188.6	GSFC	78	82.2	76.95	81.55
TECHM	984.9	1005.25	975.2	1001.6	VBL	914.35	965.85	907.95	954.85
MARICO	406.7	419.25	406.7	416.95	RVNL	24.05	24.2	23.6	24.05
AMARAJABAT	927	971	924.05	965.5	RAMCOCEM	795	804.5	789.65	799.95
TITAN	1562	1566	1538.25	1550.55	PAGEIND	28263.45	28679.6	28256.6	28517.1
ULTRACEMCO	5364.7	5386	5295	5326.8	BOMDYEING	79	80	76.85	78.85
STAR	897	947.8	878.75	937.95	DCBBANK	120.35	124.2	120.35	122.75
EXIDEIND	191.6	197.65	190.9	196.35	TAKE	58.1	59.45	56.1	58.05
MINDTREE	1698	1698.95	1658.8	1661.8	KEC	370	386	372.1	379.65
BAJAJ-AUTO	3480	3527.4	3463.45	3521.75	TORNTPHARM	2811	2822.2	2779.55	2764.15
INDIGO	1716.35	1750	1716.35	1743.15	ABCAPALIT	90.4	91.4	88.3	89.35
WOCKPHARMA	549	558	518.65	522.7	AMBER	2421	2435.4	2384.9	2397.75

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 he 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 Rabiei 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. **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 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

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. **PTI**

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. **AFP**

FROM PAGE 1

NO HEADWAY IN GOVT-FARMERS TALKS

“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.

COVISHIELD JAB TO COST GOVT ₹219-292/SHOT

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.

BHARAT BIOTECH SLAMS CRITICS FOR RAISING DOUBT ON COVAXIN’S EFFICACY

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 market, 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 effect.

GZB CREMATORIUM ROOF CAVE-IN: 3 CIVIC OFFICIALS ARRESTED

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.

Dr 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.

HP BECOMES 4TH STATES TO BE HIT BY BIRD FLU

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.

ED CHARGESHEETS EX-IAS OFFICER FOR MONEY LAUNDERING

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 Babulal 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 Babulal Agrawal and others. These FIRs were registered under Indian Penal Code Sections relating to criminal conspiracy, cheating, imperson-

ation, forgery and using forged documents as genuine also violations under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

ROW OVER TRUMP’S PHONE CALL TO GEORGIA POLL CHIEF TO ‘FIND’ VOTES ...

“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.

INDIA’S S-400 DEAL MAY TRIGGER US SANCTIONS

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.

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.

Jack Ma missing after conflict with Govt

“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.

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 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 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.

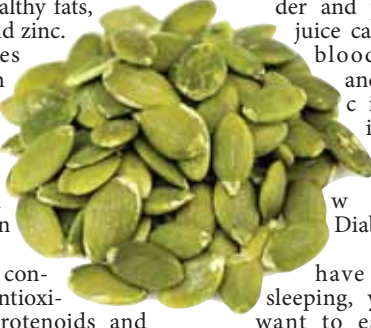
- Consult your doctor if you have any of heart attack symptoms without delay.

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 play-dates 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 metal 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 Slazer

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.



‘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 Shikun 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*.



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?

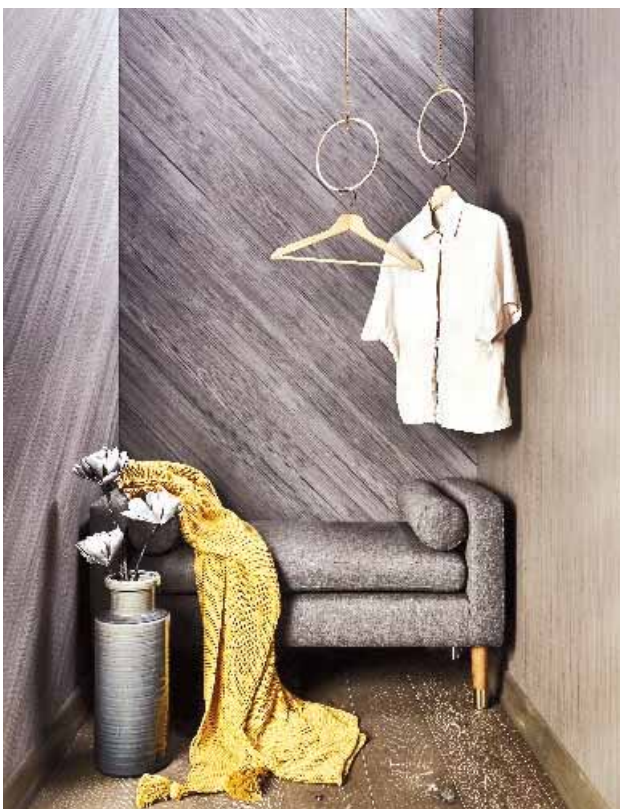
Read on to explore newer ways of designing your abode that speaks the language of positivity, hopefulness, vibrancy and safety.

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 wood-veneer 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 – antiviral, 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.

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 Bapu, 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 followed 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.

If I were to lay my bets on the grand opening, it would be on *Sooryavanshi*. The reason being it is directed by the best entertainer of the present era, Rohit Shetty, and it also stars two of the best action heroes of our time, Akshay Kumar and Ajay Devgn along with Ranveer Singh. What is more, Shetty is known to add an element of comic

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'll 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 ourself," 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 hope-fully 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 reject reports of India seeking change of venue for Brisbane Test

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.

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.

SCG crowd capacity limited to 25%

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The crowd limit for the third Test between India and Australia, beginning here on 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

Team India, support staff -ve in latest Covid-19 tests

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.

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."



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 de Kock off successive deliveries. It was the third successive nought 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.

2nd Test, Day 3
Live from 1:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1

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 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 midwick-et, 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 toppled 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, Mughaha 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.

"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."



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.

BARCELONA 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.