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LUCKNOW, THURSDAY JANUARY 7, 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3



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12 VIVACITY

R-Day tractor rally rehearsal today 12 bird flu epicentres in 5 States identified

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Farmers protesting against the three farm laws at Delhi borders for around 40 days are fully prepared to take out a tractor rally on Thursday. However, the inclement weather, because of which they had deferred their tractor rally by a day, has continued unabated.

Even as their talks with the Government have failed to resolve the issues, the farmer unions on Wednesday said scores of farmers are gathering at borders for the tractor rallies on January 7. The farmers said the Thursday tractor rally is a rehearsal for the Republic day show.

Meanwhile, All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) has urged farmers to take out tractor parades in all districts of the country on January 26.

Several rural women in Haryana's Jind district are receiving training to drive tractors for taking part in a "tractor parade" in the national Capital on January 26 against the three new farm laws.

Women hailing from three villages — Safa Kheri, Khatkar, Pallwan — in Jind are learning to steer the tractor wheel.

Sikim Nain Sheokant, president of Jind-based Kisan Ekta Mahila Manch, said though some of the women can drive tractors in the fields for farm operations, they do not have experience of road driving.

"We want women to drive tractors on highway on January 26 without any help," she said. Sheokant said several villagers were also helping them out by offering their tractors and providing them required training.

Women are undergoing training at a toll plaza on Jind-Patiala National Highway for handling tractor-trolleys on road. The protesting farmers have declared toll plazas "free". "We are getting the training for driving a tractor for par-

Rural women in Haryana receive training to drive tractors in Jan 26 'tractor parade' in national Capital

icipating in the tractor parade," said a woman who has been receiving the lesson.

She feels the new farm laws are not in the interest of the farming community.

"Several other protests also have begun in support of the farmers' demand. A sit-in has begun with more than 500 tractors marching into Baraut area of Baghpat district. In Chennai, a massive dharna was held and tribal protests are planned in Odisha," AIKSCC stated.

The body blamed the Central Government for not being serious about talks and solving farmers' problems. "In the 7th round talks held till now, we have stated we want repeal and nothing else. The Government too has understood that the demand is for repeal" and said it will have to undertake 'further consultation'. Yet, several Ministers and BJP leaders are putting a spanner in the wheels," they said.

"Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar had announced he will be talking to other farmer unions who support the laws. Already this exercise to manufacture support has been undertaken and has achieved very poor response. Taking cue from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP leaders from MP and Punjab have said demands are unjustified," they said.

"While Nitin Gadkari targeted the need to improve food production and feed India's largely hungry population, he attacked MSP, saying it is higher than market rate, even when the Government says MSP will continue. Ministers should know that India is host to 33 per cent of the world's hungry population," said the AIKSCC.

Continued on Page 11



Farmers on a tractor raise slogans during their ongoing protest against farm reform laws at Singhu Border in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

No improvement on ground, SC says, posts matter for Jan 11

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After suggesting the Centre on December 17 to put on hold the three controversial farm laws and form a panel to go into the issues raised by protesting farmers, the Supreme Court on Monday noted that there has been no "improvement on ground" and posted the matter for hearing on January 11.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde said the intention of the court is to encourage and facil-

itate talks between farmers and the Government. To this, Attorney General KK Venugopal informed the Bench that "there are chances of the parties coming to some sort of an understanding".

"We understand the situation and encourage consultation. We can adjourn the matters on Monday if you submit the same due to the ongoing consultation process," the Bench said. The Bench was hearing a petition filed by advocate Manohar Lal Sharma challenging the validity of the

three farm laws.

The court also issued notice to the Government on a separate petition filed by advocate Sharma, challenging the Third Constitutional Amendment of 1954 which included Entry 33, concerning food and essential commodities, in the Concurrent List.

"This is one of Sharma's startling petitions... He says you [Government] have been committing illegalities since 1954," Bobde told Venugopal in a lighter vein.

Continued on Page 11

Nirbhaya revisited in Budaun: 50-yr-old gangraped, killed

Prime accused priest on run, 2 accomplices arrested, Yogi orders sternest action

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a stark reminder of the Delhi's 2012 Nirbhaya case, a 50-year-old anganwadi worker was gangraped and murdered allegedly by a priest and his two accomplices in Budaun district of Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday.

While the priest is on the run, his two accomplices were arrested on Tuesday night after the post-mortem report confirmed rape, police said on Wednesday, adding the woman's leg and a rib bone too were found fractured and there were injuries in her private parts.

The incident, which triggered an uproar in political circles, took place on Sunday and the matter came to light that night when the priest and his accomplices took the body to the victim's home, saying it was found in a dry well in the temple premises.



District Magistrate Kumar Prashant (blue coat) and SSP Sankalp Sharma visit the victim's village in Budaun district on Wednesday

PTI

Taking cognisance of the incident, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered "strongest possible action" in the case even as Opposition parties attacked his Government, terming the incident "horrific" and "shame-

ful". The CM has directed the ADG Bareilly zone to report back to the Government on the incident and action taken against the accused. The CM has also said that STF would be assisting the district police in the investigation.

The National Commission for Women too took note of the incident and decided to send a team of its members to probe the incident.

About the incident, Budaun's Senior Superintendent of Police Sankalp Sharma said, "The post-mortem report confirms rape and there are injuries in her private parts and a fracture in the leg".

She suffered a rib fracture too, he added, citing the autopsy report.

The SSP said the station house officer (SHO) of Ughaiti police station has been suspended for "delay in informing higher authorities, laxity in taking action, dereliction of duty and failure in taking speedy action". Four teams have been formed to nab the priest, the SSP said.

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Petrol price reaches all-time high after oil firms hike rates after month-long hiatus

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol price on Wednesday neared all-time high after state-owned fuel retailers hiked rates after a nearly month-long hiatus.

Petrol price was raised by 26 paise per litre and diesel by 25 paise a litre, according to a price notification from oil marketing companies.

After this increase, petrol in Delhi climbed to ₹83.97 per litre from ₹83.71 previously. Diesel rates rose to ₹74.12 per litre from ₹73.87. In Mumbai, diesel touched an all-time high of ₹80.78.

This is the first price revision in nearly a month and rates are now near an all-time high. Highest ever rate of ₹84 a litre for petrol in Delhi was touched on October 4, 2018. Diesel too had scaled to an all-time high of ₹75.45 a litre on October 4, 2018. On that day, the Government cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹1.50 per litre in a bid to ease inflationary pressure and boost consumer confidence.

Continued on Page 11

4 workers killed, 6 injured in Rourkela Steel Plant gas leak

Kin of deceased to get jobs; two senior officials suspended; probe ordered

PNS ■ ROURKELA

At least four workers were killed and six others seriously injured following leakage of carbon monoxide gas at the Coal Chemicals Department of Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) on Wednesday morning.

While six of the victims were taken to the RSP dispensary, four workers, identified as Ganesh Chandra Paila (55), Rabindra Sahu (59), Abhimanyu Sah (33) and Brahmananda Panda (51), were admitted to the ICU of the Ispat General Hospital (IGH) where they died while undergoing treatment.

Hours after the incident, the RSP authorities suspended two senior officials, Deputy General

Manager Gopabandhu Barik of EMD Department and DGM Nabendu Das of CCD



Mechanical Department for their alleged negligence. Also, the authorities decided to provide job to one family member of each deceased.

While opening flange bolts of the gas line of the gas mixing tank at the site A of the plant, some entrapped gas gushed out affecting four workers of the contract firm, Star Construction, critically.

Meanwhile, a high-level committee has been formed to enquire into the cause of the accident. The plant is functioning normally, informed

official sources.

Rourkela Ispat Karkhana Karmachari Sangh president Himanshu Sekhar Bal demanded adequate compensation to the families of the deceased and injured.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in a tweet said, "Deeply saddened to know about the tragic loss of lives in the gas leak incident at Rourkela Steel Plant. My thoughts and prayers are with bereaved families in the hour of grief and pray for the speedy recovery of those who are hospitalised."

Continued on Page 11

CAPSULE

POLLS FOR 12 UP MLC SEATS ON JANUARY 28

Lucknow: The Election Commission of India on Wednesday declared the poll schedule for 12 legislative council seats in Uttar Pradesh getting vacant on January 28. The term of 12 MLCs is coming to an end on January 30.

DELHI'S AIR QUALITY TURNS POOR

New Delhi: Delhi's air quality turned "poor" on Wednesday due to unfavourable meteorological conditions, weather department officials said.

Democrats near majority in US Senate

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Democrat Rev Raphael Warnock on Wednesday secured a crucial win in the senatorial race, becoming the first Black senator from Georgia and bringing his party within the reach of a majority in the US Senate ahead of President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration.

Multiple news outlets on Wednesday morning projected 51-year-old Warnock, a senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, winner against Republican Senator

Kelly Loeffler in the Georgia Senate runoff.

He is the first African-American to represent Georgia in the US Senate. He is also the first Democrat to win the Senate race from Georgia in 20 years. The control of the Senate now boils down to the other Senate runoff from Georgia wherein Republican incumbent Senator David Perdue is trailing against Democrat Jon Ossoff, when reports last came in. The special elections were held on Tuesday.

Both President Donald Trump and President-elect Joe

Biden had campaigned for their respective candidates.

The 100-member Senate now has 50 seats for the Republican Party and 49 to the Democrats. The result of the Perdue vs Ossoff is yet to be called in.

In the event of both Republicans and the Democrats having 50 seats in the Senate, Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris is in her capacity as the Vice Chairman, who presides over the Senate meetings, would cast the crucial vote in favour of the Democrats.

Shapoorji Pallonji emerges as lowest bidder for Central Vista project

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shapoorji Pallonji and SCompany Limited has emerged as the lowest bidder for the Central Vista Avenue/Rajpath redevelopment project quoting ₹477.08 crore, which is 4.99 per cent less than the estimated cost.

Tata Projects quoted the second-lowest bid amount of ₹488.78 crore.

Continued on Page 11

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 1,03,95,221

DEATHS: 1,50,364

RECOVERED:

1,00,15,123

ACTIVE: 2,25,454



STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	19,54,553	49,825	18,52,759
Karnataka	9,24,137	12,124	9,02,817
Andhra Pradesh	8,83,876	7,125	8,73,855
Tamil Nadu	8,23,181	12,188	8,03,328
Kerala	7,90,883	3,210	7,22,421
Delhi	6,28,352	10,625	6,13,246
Uttar Pradesh	5,89,611	8,433	5,68,892
West Bengal	5,57,252	9,863	5,38,521
Odisha	3,30,921	1,940	3,27,008
Rajasthan	3,11,111	2,723	3,00,690
Telangana	2,88,410	1,556	2,81,872
Chhattisgarh	2,85,586	3,447	2,73,030
Haryana	2,63,887	2,934	2,58,281
Bihar	2,55,097	1,420	2,49,520
Gujarat	2,49,246	4,329	2,36,423
Madhya Pradesh	2,46,048	3,670	2,33,862

CM Yogi reiterates resolve to double income of farmers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday reiterated his government's resolve to double the income of farmers. He launched an initiative called 'Kisan Kalyan Mission', dedicated to the farmers' welfare and growth.

Kick-starting the programme from Dadupur village in Sarojininagar block of Lucknow, the CM hit out at the previous governments for being apathetic to the problems of farmers and listed a slew of pro-farmer schemes implemented by the Central and UP government for overall welfare of the farmers.

Regretting that lakhs of farmers lost their lives from 2004 to 2014 in the country due to the callous attitude of the previous dispensations, the CM said: "Lakhs of farmers committed suicide between 2004 and 2014 because no one was there to take care of them. After our government came to power, the farmers are using new farm technologies and are on the path to progress."

"*Atmahatya se aamdani* (from suicide to income) has been the motto of the Uttar Pradesh government for the farmers and it is being manifested by scores of schemes for them," he said, adding: "Had the growth in farm sector taken place in the last 70 years, the Modi government would not have required to take up the task of doubling the income of farmers in the last six years."

Invoking the 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan' slogan, the CM said the farmers remained marginalised owing to the politically-motivated approach of the previous governments, mainly of Congress.

"The farmers have got the benefits of Prime Minister



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launching the Kisan Kalyan Mission on Wednesday

Pioneer

Narendra Modi's policies and schemes. Modi worked for the welfare of farmers and introduced PM Crop Insurance policy, wherein farmers can easily apply for the damages caused by animals and get insurance cover," Yogi said.

The CM said it was to the credit of Modi that he implemented recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission after coming to power. "Every year, a sum of Rs 6,000 is being sent into the accounts of 2.30 crore farmers of UP and the smile on the faces of farmers tells the story of India's prosperity," he said while asserting that both the Centre and UP government are committed to doing their best for farmers.

He pointed out that in 2017, the first Cabinet decision was taken to waive farm loans to the tune of Rs 36,000 crore, benefitting about 86 lakh farmers. Complimenting the Jal Shakti department for taking

forward the pro-farmer agenda of the government, he said the government is working on other major programmes for the benefit of farmers.

"When our farmers are happy, the country will be happy. The goal is to make farmers aware of the government's plans related to farming, animal husbandry and agriculture. In this sequence, farmers' welfare centres are being run by our government to provide all facilities to farmers at one place," he explained.

Hitting out at the opposition, Yogi said: "When the country is making rapid progress, many people do not like it. This is the first time when vaccination programmes are being run for diseases like brucellosis of the cattle. As many as 2,35,00,000 farmers of UP are getting the benefits of PM Krishi Samman Yojana even as many states do not have such a big population."

Laying emphasis on proper marketing mechanism of farm produce, he said: "If the godowns are built at village panchayat level, the crops can easily reach the market on time."

Summing up with a word of advice for the farmers, the CM said: "Ignore the misleading and misinformation campaign by some elements in furtherance to their ulterior political interests."

Under the 'Kisan Kalyan Mission', various programmes have been organised for the well-being of farmers, such as exhibitions of agriculture and associate sectors, including the products of livelihood missions and MSME sector units Meetings on a regular basis will be organised for the farmers in which scientists, progressive farmers, and workers associated with the Agriculture department will explain scientific farming. They will also provide

information about the schemes of the government. Also, farmers will be benefitted from various schemes of the agriculture department.

Under this programme, the UP government also felicitated 100 progressive farmers from all 75 districts of the state. The Agriculture department selected these farmers as role models for local farmers from every district who will inspire the local farmers by sharing their success stories. Their databases will also be prepared by the government. On Wednesday, the 'Kisan Kalyan Mission' programme was organised in 303 out of 825 blocks. The programme in 303 and 219 blocks is scheduled to be held on January 13 and 21 respectively. Under this mission, farmers of every block will be given the benefit of 'Krishak Uphar Yojana'. The programme will conclude on the occasion of 'UP Diwas', January 24.

Corruption tarnishes image of government: Governor

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Voicing concern over corruption, Governor of Uttar Pradesh Anandiben Patel said it tarnishes the image of the government. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure quality work, the governor said while talking to *The Pioneer* here on Wednesday. In a freewheeling interview, she talked about various issues ranging from empowerment of women to child education and from giving human touch to various government decisions like adopting TB-inflicted children to the government's performance. She commended Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for improving law and order but had a word of caution for corruption in government functioning. Following are the excerpt of the interview:

As a governor, how do you see UP?

When I was in Gujarat, we used to see leaders of UP wielding guns. It was something new for us and we used to think why it is so because in Gujarat, we used to roam freely without any fear. When I came here, I realised that law and order was a big issue. Even elected representatives acted like criminals. Sometimes they even grabbed someone's land or house, and there was no one to raise a finger.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has brought a change. He is strict and it was needed because there is a feeling in UP that the powerful can commit crime and go scot-free. A message should go across that MLAs and MPs are equally guilty if they commit a crime, and the CM has been able to convey this message effectively.

Government has expedited development but must ensure quality work. Corruption sullies the image of the government. In the Muradnagar incident, the construction cost went up from Rs 42 lakh to Rs 65 lakh and the contractor even paid Rs 16 lakh as bribe. Stern action should be taken against such contractors and officers. The CM has ordered recovery from such officers and this is a good decision.

Is Gujarat model in UP possible?

All the projects of a state cannot be replicated in another state, as every state has different social and geographical dynamics. But the scheme of making fertilisers and medicines from cow dung, which has been very successful in Gujarat, can be replicated in

‘I cook my own food’



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Yes, I cook my food myself, said Governor Anandiben Patel. "One should not be surprised because when I was the chief minister of Gujarat, I used to cook my food there as well," she said.

"*Mahila hain to kitchen mein jaana chahiye* (a woman should always go to kitchen)," she said, adding: "Generally I cook my own food but when I get late, I prepare roti

and daal but get subzi and rice from the Raj Bhawan kitchen."

"In Gujarat, during rains we eat *pakora*, which is called *bhajia* there. Here too, I cook pakoras during rains and even send some to my officers if they are willing to savour them," the governor said. "Even when I go to Gujarat, I go to the kitchen. My daughter-in-law asks me to relax but I help her by chopping vegetables," she said.

UP. Kanha Upvan has prepared a project under Gujarat model and will be started in UP as a pilot project. It will help in cleaning the villages and generating employment at the village level.

How do you see family touch to Raj Bhawan?

When I came to UP, I found the employees of Raj Bhawan a neglected lot. The kitchen used to be dirty. Being a woman, I wanted it to be clean. There was no communication among the employees with officers. I took the initiative and met family members and heard their complaints. They even told me about leaking toilet roofs. I called the officers and initiated repair work. I threw open the campus ground for children so that they could play there. I also purchased sports equipment. Now, the children of our staff and security personnel play together. I believe the Raj Bhawan compound is a village and we should have activity in this village. You cannot close the door and prevent interaction among people.

How to give a human face to the gubernatorial post?

If you want to bring a positive change in society, educate

the children. If you want prosperity, provide quality education. Children inculcate good habits in primary schools. Catch them young and give them good education because educated children do not take part in illegal activities. When I came to UP, I heard about TB cases. I decided that employees of Raj Bhawan should adopt a TB-inflicted child. This scheme has clicked. Besides, I believe reading habits should be inculcated in children. We initiated the project in which over 9-10 lakh children participated.

What is the importance of improvement in education?

During the previous governments, the education was probably handed over to those with no vision. They did not set up infrastructure. How can you expect a government to build huge infrastructure in three years? However, the Yogi government has taken up the cudgels and is now setting up universities one after another. Education should not be privatised and government should run the education system. The universities have problems as they have hundreds of affiliated colleges under them. They are facing financial burden and the government should support them.

6 Rohingyas in ATS net for illegal stay, terror funding

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) of the Uttar Pradesh Police conducted raids at several places across the state on Wednesday to nab Rohingya Muslims, said to be staying illegally and allegedly involved in terror funding.

Around six accused were rounded up during the raids conducted in Khalilabad in Sant Kabir Nagar, Basti, Aligarh and other districts. Last week too, a raid was conducted at a shop in Gorakhpur after the owner's involvement in terror funding surfaced.

According to sources, a junior engineer was taken into custody in Khalilabad and the ATS sleuths recov-

ered forged documents and other indiscriminate things from those detained. It was alleged that the JE used to make fake passports and three of his associates (Rohingya Muslims) were nabbed. The sleuths also tracked financial transactions to the tune of Rs 1.5 crore to the bank account of the JE in question. The JE was identified as Azizul Haq aka Azziullah from Bhakhira Chamarsan in Sant Kabir Nagar. He originally hails from Myanmar. He managed fake passports and brought his mother, sister and two brothers to India in 2017.

Earlier in March 2018, the ATS sleuths had arrested ten persons for their alleged links with Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and involvement in terror

funding.

"Ten persons were arrested from Gorakhpur, Lucknow, Pratapgarh and Rivan (MP) by the ATS. They were involved in terror funding on Pakistan's directives," the then ATS IG Asim Arun told reporters. Those arrested were identified as Naseem Ahmad, Naeem Arshad, Sanjay Saroj, Niraj Mishra, Sahil Masih, Uma Pratap Singh, Mukesh Prasad, Nikhil Rai alias Musharrar Ansari, Ankur Rai and Dayanand Yadav.

"A member of LeT used to remain in contact with them and ask them to open bank accounts with fake names and direct them as to how much money is to be transferred to which account. Indian agents used to get 10%

to 20% commission for that. Till now, transactions to the tune of over Rs 1 crore have come to the fore," he said. He claimed that the arrested persons had links with the LeT and some of them even knew what was happening.

"Some them clearly knew what they were doing while some considered it as a lottery fraud," the officer said, adding that a detailed probe was on and more arrests were likely. The role of the bank staff would also be probed, he said.

ATM cards, Rs 42 lakh in cash, POS machines, magnetic card readers, three laptops, passbooks of different banks, a country-made pistol and cartridges were recovered from the possession of the accused, he said.

Opposition hits out at UP govt over Budaun incident

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Opposition parties attacked the UP government and termed the Budaun incident as horrific and shameful. The Congress compared it to the 2012 Nirbhaya incident of Delhi. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra hit out at the Yogi Adityanath government, alleging that there was something wrong in the intentions of the administration on the issue of women's security. Tagging a media report, Gandhi tweeted: "In Hathras, the government administration did not give an ear to the pleas of people. The government saved the officials and suppressed the voices of the victims."

"In Budaun, the police station officer did not listen to the one pleading and did not even examine the place of the incident. There is something wrong in the UP government's intentions on women's security," she added. The UP Congress also came down heavily on the government and said that 'Mission Shakti' has failed. The party asked Adityanath to apologise to the women of UP for betraying them in the name of Mission Shakti.

Congress state president Ajay Kumar Lallu termed the incident as horrific and shameful for humanity. "How many more Nirbhayas? How much more of this monstrosity? When will the Adityanath government wake up? Where are our awakened journalists?" the party spokesman said in a tweet in Hindi.

Taking to Twitter, the Samajwadi



NOTICE

Be it known to all that in my husband service record my name mentioned by mistake Neha Hadiya But correct name is Neha Kishor Vala. This is to be corrected in record as Neha Kishor Vala W/o Vala Kishor Kumar, Narasheethal Service No. 17037625L, Rank - CFN (Tech OPTO) Command Hospital (C.C.) Lucknow.

NOTICE

I want to inform to all General Public that my Highschool was from ICSE Board in year 2014 and my name was mentioned as Sumit Kumar Dubey on the marksheet migration certificate and pass certificate that is wrong by mistake the correct name is Sumit Dubey on my all other documents. I should be known as Sumit Dubey. Candidate - Sumit Dubey S/o Manoj Kumar Dubey, House No. 2222 Vivek Nagar, Sultanpur.

NOTICE

Chandra Kala Agrawal W/o Late Shabbho Nath Agrawal, 21, Kamla Nehru road, Allahabad 211002 my original lease deed and sale deed of flat No. 3, block No. 1 MIG housing scheme, M.G. marg, Nagar Nigam No 108/21A/3, M.G. Marg, Allahabad 211001 is lost some where on the way during going to Bank of India , Sulemsarai, Allahabad for Handover to Bank on Dt. 23.07.20

SCHOOLSCAN

ADMISSION OFFER

Eklavya Agarwal, a student of City Montessori School, Station Road Campus, has been offered a scholarship of US\$ 1,63,000 by the Drexel University for pursuing higher studies. This scholarship is for the entire study period of four years.

USA's Knox College, Temple University, Arizona State University and Georgia State University have also invited him for higher studies.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, MINISTRY OF RAILWAY RESEARCH DESIGNS & STANDARDS ORGANISATION

Manak Nagar, Lucnow-11.

Notice for inviting E-Tender

For and on behalf of president of Union of India, The Town Engineer RDSO, Lucknow invites open E-tender (online) for the following work: -

S. No.	Open tender No. & Name of work	Approx. Cost (Rs.)	Cost of Tender Document (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Completion Period	Date of closing/opening
	Tender Notice No. WKS-1120E-TEN- 06.01.2021 Maintenance of lawn & Hedge including other horticulture works in Sector A of RDSO colony.	1183467.64	0.00	23700.00	36 (Thirty-six) months	28.01.2021

Details of above e-tender are available on web site. (www.ireps.gov.in). Tenderers can submit their bids on **28.01.2021** up to 15.00 hrs. The above E-tender will be open on same day at 15.00 hrs. in the office of the Town Engineer, RDSO. Manak Nagar, Lucknow.

Town Engineer, RDSO, Lucknow.
For and on behalf of the President of union of India

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Vaccination: Final rehearsal on Jan 11

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The final dry run for the Covid-19 vaccination will be carried out across the state on January 11, a couple of days away from the launch of launch of actual vaccination on the occasion of Makar Sankranti. The final dry run will be held across the state at around 1,500 vaccination centres where the first lot of beneficiaries will be administered the vaccine in the first phase. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, while directing the officials to examine the entire process during the final dry run, said that the Health department, after completing the data of the first priority group, should now begin feeding of the data for the second target group. The Health department will be starting on January 10 Mukhyamantri Arogya Mela at all the CHCs in the state.

Yogi said effective management of prevention and treatment of Covid-19 should be maintained and it should also be ensured that medicine, medical equipment and back-up of oxygen are available in abundance in the Covid hospitals. Testing work should also be carried out with full capacity, he added. "Contact tracing and surveillance play an important role in breaking the chain of Covid-19 infection and should be carried out with full steam. People should be continuously made aware about prevention from Covid-19 and for this, various publicity mediums and public address systems should be used comprehensively," he said.

The CM said that 'Mukhya Mantri Arogya Melas' will be



organised again from January 10 at the rural and urban primary health centres. People should be made aware about prevention from Covid-19 at these melas and eligible persons also be provided Ayushman Bharat scheme cards, Yogi said. The CM also issued directions for completion of all the arrangements for the mela on time. On Tuesday, the second Covid vaccination dry run was successfully held in all the districts. Meanwhile, the number of positive Covid patients in the state came down to 11,939 on Wednesday and it was after six months that the number of positive cases came down to the 12,000-mark. The recovery rate in the state has further increased to 96.55 per cent, with 5,69,959 patients recovered

from the virus in the state so far. A total of 8,441 patients have died so far. In Lucknow, 118 persons tested positive for coronavirus on Wednesday while 187 patients recovered, taking the number of recoveries to 75,777. Lucknow's death toll stands at 1,121 while there are 2,418 active cases in the district. The fresh cases included 13 from Rae Bareilly road, 12 from Chowk, 11 from Gomtinagar and 10 from Indiranagar. Immunisation officer MK Singh said that in Lucknow, they are preparing a micro-plan for vaccination. The first dry run on January 2 was conducted at 12 hospitals while the second at six hospitals, including CHCs. A senior health official said the dry runs focused on

better coordination as the vaccines are brought by police. Arrangements were made for the number of vehicles required, route chart, names of the drivers and their mobile numbers, physical verification of cold chain points, presence of guards at the cold chains, and contact numbers of those allowed to enter the cold chain points. The Covid cases have gone down immensely in the district and there are no cluster areas as of now, the official said. Indiranagar, Gomtinagar, Aliganj, Chinhat and Sarojininar have seen a drop in the number of cases lately. Member of KGMU's Covid task force Dr Surya Kant Tripathi said they are getting queries from people regarding vaccination. "Even as the wait

for the guidelines continues, it is likely that pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and children will not be administered vaccine because in all the clinical trials across the world and in India, pregnant women or children were not included," he pointed out. However, he said those who have already been infected by the coronavirus are eligible candidates for the vaccine. "Once a patient recovers, the antibody titre finishes after three months and hence it is important to get vaccinated," he said. Dr Tripathi said that two weeks after the second dose of vaccination, one develops a sufficient titre of antibodies. "If you get vaccinated and do not follow social distancing and wear mask, you can easily catch the infection and spread it too. People have to understand that getting vaccinated does not mean precautions should be avoided," he said.

Meanwhile, head of Microbiology department, KGMU, Dr Amita Jain said their lab has crossed the 10-lakh mark in terms of the number of samples tested for coronavirus infection. The testing of samples began in March last year. Genome sequencing will also be done in the wake of the new strain of coronavirus which was first detected in the UK. "The genome sequencing may begin by end of this month," Dr Jain said. Genome sequencing is being carried out across the world, with scientists also putting this information in public domain so that comparisons can be made in different countries. The UK strain in particular has raised the importance of genome sequencing.

Former block pramukh of Mau sprayed with bullets

PNS ■ LUCKNOW



In a suspected case of gang war, three unidentified miscreants opened a burst of fire on a former block pramukh of Mau and his companion who were travelling in an SUV at Kathauta crossing under Vibhuti Khand police station area on Wednesday night. A delivery boy of Zomato also suffered injuries in the incident. The deceased was identified as Ajeet Singh aka Ajeet Langda of Mau while his aide was Mohar Singh. The Zomato delivery boy was identified as Akash. Commissioner of Police DK Thakur said the incident took place between 8:30 pm and 8:45 pm. There were three miscreants on a motorcycle. "The exact number of shots fired is yet to be estimated. It is believed that the assailants shot 25-30 rounds using pro-

hibited bore pistols. The police recovered 9mm cartridges from the scene. Ajeet and his aide may have been attacked by their friends-turned-foes over some monetary dispute or for supremacy," Thakur said. He said Ajeet was named in more than 15 cases and he was externed from Mau on December 31 by the district administration. "Ajeet has five murder cases registered against in his name," Thakur said. He refused to comment on reports that Ajeet was an eyewitness in a case and he was shot dead over that. "We are finding details regarding his

enmity with people in Mau and neighbouring districts. A team has been formed to crack the case. Mohar Singh is said to be out of danger and he is being quizzed," he said. Police teams were scanning CCTV footage to get the sequence of events. The area wore a deserted look and police did not find any person when they reached there for investigation. The CP himself reached the place to oversee the investigation and he sought details from his subordinates. While the police were tight-lipped, sources said it was a gang war between two mafia groups in eastern UP. They said Ajeet was in support of one of the groups and it cost him his life. "The police talked to criminals lodged in the jail at present and others to get a clue about the miscreants, but failed to get any vital clue," the sources said.

3 hurt as security guard's gun goes off

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three persons suffered pellet injuries after the handgun of a security guard went off in Aminabad on Wednesday evening. Police detained the security guard and the cash van driver for negligence. More sections of IPC will be added if any unlawful act on the part of the detainees is ascertained during investigation. The injured were admitted to a hospital where they were said to be out of danger. The victims were identified as Abdul Haq of Sarojininar, Rishabh Kumar of Alambagh and Mohammed

Khaliq of Wazirganj. As per reports, a cash van hired by a bank taking cash to Aminabad got stuck in traffic jam near Bombay Furniture on Latouche road around 4 pm. After waiting for some time, the security guard, identified as Radheshyam of Ambedkarnagar, got down from the cash van with his licensed handgun around his shoulder. When he was getting down, the handgun fell off his shoulders. Since the handgun was loaded, it went off and the pellets hit three commuters who were behind Radheshyam. Chaos erupted soon after

and there was a stampede-like situation on the road. Shop-owners said they were initially under the impression that someone had attacked the cash van for loot. "The commuters started running helter-skelter and scattered all over the road in the process. Several of the shop-owners downed the shutters in fear and the road wore a deserted look. After a while, huge police force reached the scene," the shop-owners said. A police spokesman said the cash van driver and security guard had been detained and were being interrogated.



Lieutenant General Sandip Mukherji assumed the charge as Commandant of Army Medical Corps (AMC) Centre and College and Officer-in-Charge of AMC Records on January 4. Prior to that, he was posted at the Western Air Command Headquarters as principal medical officer. Lt Gen Mukherji laid a wreath at the cenotaph on Tuesday to pay homage to soldiers who laid down their lives in the service of nation. Lt Gen Mukherji was commissioned into the Army Medical Corps on December 17, 1983. He acquired MBBS degree as well as MD (PSM) degree from the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune. He has served in various administrative and professional appointments of armed forces in his long and illustrious career.

BIRD FLU SCARE

Animal Husbandry dept issues instructions

Lucknow (PNS): The Animal Husbandry department has issued instructions regarding bird flu in the wake of an alert sounded by the state government. Additional director of the department AK Srivastava said there has been no case in UP so far. He said that at the district level, the chief development officers have been asked to form a task force and be prepared. "They should remain alert and if any dead bird is found, samples should be sent to the High Security Lab in Bhopal. They have been asked to identify poultry farms in their respective districts and carry out random sampling of healthy birds for effective surveillance. We have started sending samples of healthy birds from the state and instructions have been issued to send at least 20 random samples of birds for testing to Bhopal," he said. Srivastava said they have established a control room at the directorate at the state capital for effective management. He said people should not panic and but remain alert and if any bird dies, it should be reported to the control room so that the disease or the potential of disease could be checked at that point. "If birds die in large numbers, should be reported to the control room of the Animal Husbandry department," he said. He added that people should eat meat after boiling it because the virus dies at high temperature.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath called on President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on Wednesday

BBAU professor gets mega project

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Department of Science and Technology under the Ministry of Science and Technology has sanctioned a mega project called 'Science Technology and Innovation (STI) Hub in North India' to Prof Naveen Kumar Arora, head of the department of Environmental Science, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, for remediation of saline soil and resolution of other agriculture-based fundamental problems in villages of UP, six villages of Uttarakhand and six villages of Himachal Pradesh. BBAU spokesperson Rachna Gangwar said that

Prof Arora is the principal investigator of the project and will lead the other three regional partners for the smooth running of the project and to deliver desired outputs in the villages. Prof Arora's team has beneficial and unique bacterial strains that are capable of transforming soil from saline to fertile through biological interventions. He has already gained remarkable success in turning barren soil into fertile through the use of developed biofertilisers. Since 2014, he and his team are applying their developed biofertilisers in some of the villages for enhancing the productivity of saline soil and its results have

been commendable. The land was reclaimed through biological means and now the farmers are doing cultivation of even salt sensitive crops in these regions. This developed biofertiliser showed very good results in restoration of the productivity of saline soil in comparison to any other synthetic chemicals. The results of this biofertiliser are well visible and several research papers have been published by the Prof Arora's team. She said that this made a base for the proposed project and received funding from the Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi. This project will also help in increasing farmers' income

and through development of entrepreneurs and start-ups. The focus of the project is to develop biological tools and provide its benefits to the farmers, especially the SC/ST community, through regular awareness and training programmes in selected regions of three states as they lack proper resources and modern scientific, technological interventions. Gangwar said that the objectives of the project include monitoring and assessment of soil and water samples from the selected regions and to provide awareness and solution of problems to local population for soil and water conservation.

Moderate rains in western UP, light showers in eastern parts

Lucknow: Moderate rains along with thundershowers were observed at isolated places over western Uttar Pradesh while very light rains and thundershowers occurred at some places in the state's eastern parts on Wednesday, the Met department said. State capital Lucknow

recorded a minimum temperature of 12.7 degrees Celsius, while Allahabad recorded 14.6 degrees Celsius. The lowest minimum temperature in the state was 6.2 degrees Celsius recorded in Etawah and Banda. Dense to very dense fog is very likely to occur in the morning at isolated

places over eastern UP on Thursday. Rain/thunderstorms are very likely at isolated places over western UP and the weather is most likely to remain dry over eastern UP on January 8. For January 9, the weather is most likely to remain dry over the state. PTI

Man mowed down by train

Lucknow (PNS): A 31-year-old Hardoi native died after he being hit by a train between Malhaur and Dilkusha railway stations on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday in Gomtinagar Vistar police station area. The police said the victim was identified as Sarvendra Kumar of Beniganj in Hardoi. He was staying in Vinit Khand locality. The police said that the identity of the victim was ascertained on the basis of an identity card. "We contacted his family and informed them of the incident," police said. Meanwhile, four people, including two children, died and five were injured when a truck collided with their car and overturned on it in Hathras on Tuesday. Nine people from Alwar in Rajasthan were heading towards Kasganj to take a dip in the Ganga.

Carpet exporter facing rape case surrenders before court, held

Bhadohi: A Bhadohi-based carpet exporter, facing the allegations of sexually exploiting a 30-year-old woman for around eight years on the pretext of marrying her, surrendered before a court here and was sent to jail, police said on Wednesday. A non-bailable warrant had been issued against the trader on January 2 following which he surrendered before the chief judicial magistrate on Tuesday after coming to know of it, Bhadohi's Superintendent of Police Ram Badan Singh said on Wednesday. The court remanded him in 14-day judicial custody, he said. The case against the trader was lodged at Aurai police station on April 28, 2019 on the complaint of woman, a



school teacher, he said. The woman had said she knew the trader since 2011 and had got intimate with him following his promise to marry her. She said the trader established physical relationship with her on the pretext of marriage and raped her repeatedly for nearly eight years without actually marrying her, the SP said. During the period, she twice became

pregnant, but the accused got her pregnancy terminated after administering some intoxicating substance to her, he said. In her complaint, the woman had also said the trader had entered her home on April 22, 2019 and threatened her family members with dire consequences if they do not stay silent on the issue of his relationship with her, the SP said. "A case was registered against the trader under various sections of the IPC. The accused had been absconding since then and was able to secure an interim bail from the Allahabad High Court which was later quashed after the woman challenged it," the SP said. Efforts were on by the police to arrest him, the SP said. PTI

Blankets given to poor by LSWA

Lucknow (PNS): Liquor Sellers' Welfare Association (LSWA) distributed blankets and masks free of cost among 500 poor and needy persons in a function held at Hanuman Setu on Wednesday. Joint secretary of the association Anil Kumar, ADM (Disaster) Vipin Kumar, ADM (East) KP Singh and Deputy Commissioner (Excise) Jinendra Kumar handed over the blankets to beneficiaries. District excise officer Vinesh Kumar Sharma, traders' leader Sandeep Bansal and excise inspectors also took part in the programme. General Secretary of the association KL Maurya said the program was held with an aim to help the poor brave the chilly weather conditions. He said the association would organise similar functions at KGMU Trauma Centre, Civil hospital and Charbagh.

SBI STATE BANK OF INDIA				
Branch- Barail, Distt.-Barabanki				
POSSESSION NOTICE (for immovable property under Rule 8(1))				
Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized officer of the State Bank Of India 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. The Bank issued demand notice on the date mentioned against account and stated hereinafter calling upon them to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of said notice. The Borrowers/Guarantors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower's/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 of the said Rule on the dates mentioned against each account.				
The Borrower's/Guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to be deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of State Bank of India for the amounts and interest thereon.				
The Borrower's/Guarantors attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.				
Detail of Properties where possession had been taken are as follows:-				
Name & Address of the Borrowers/A/c No.	Description of the Immovable Property Mortgaged	Outstanding Amount	Date of Demand Notice	
Borrower: Shrimati Jayanti Shukla W/o Shri Jagat Narain Shukla, Shri Satendra Prakash Narain Shukla, Shri Satendra Prakash Shukla S/o Shri Jagat Narain Shukla, Shri Somendra Prashant Shukla S/o Shri Jagat Narain Shukla R/o Plot No 74, Kedar Vihar Gaushala Road, Balaganj, Lucknow	In the name of Shrimati Jayanti Shukla W/o Shri Shukla S/o Shri Jagat Narain Shukla, Shri Satendra Prakash Narain Shukla, Shri Somendra Prashant Shukla S/o Shri Jagat Narain Shukla R/o Plot No 74, Kedar Vihar Gaushala Road, Balaganj, Lucknow	Rs. 18,85,226/- together with further interest, incidental expenses, cost, etc.	17.07.2018	04.01.2021
All the part and parcel of the property consisting of Land at Ward Balaganj, Plot No. 74, Bahi No.1, Zild No. 4137, Page 77 to 110, Si No. 5178, Area-139.40 Sq.mt./1500 Sq.ft., having boundaries as under: East: 20 feet Road, West: Plot no 97, North: Plot no 73, South: Plot no 75				
Date: 07.01.2021	Place: Barabanki	Authorised Officer, State Bank of India		

Governor stresses on making farm tech reach fields from labs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Governor and Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) Anandiben Patel on Wednesday emphasised on getting agricultural technology and education reached to field from laboratories and exhorted the students of agriculture science to benefit the farmers with these. Meanwhile, while making an inspection of the central jail the Governor directed the jail superintendent to make arrangement of two e-rickshaws to take the incapable and old-aged jail inmates to the jail gate from the barracks.

Inaugurating the Faculty of Agriculture Science & Technology on Bhairav Talab campus of MGKV in Ganagapur here, the Governor said, there is need to get the agriculture technology and education developed in universities and research institutes reached to fields from the laboratories and the students of the faculty should benefit with these to villagers and farmers. A total of 10 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) are being run in the district which is a constructive initiative to uplift the status of farmers and the campus should lead in constituting this organisation here and the students should establish contact with the farmers



Governor Anandiben Patel addressing at Bhairav Talab campus of MGKV in Varanasi on Wednesday

Pioneer

and have dialogue with them regarding the use of latest technology in producing the food-grains, she said.

Gandhi was in favour of rural development as the progress of villages will pave a way to develop the nation, the Governor said emphasising on imparting knowledge of new technologies to small farmers. The fields of agriculture and animal husbandry generate the maximum employment, she said and laying an emphasis on organic farming and added, the foodgrains produced by using the fertilisers and chemical causes the cancer and other deadly diseases. There was use of compost urea about 25-30 years ago but at present, the farmers are taking interest in

organic farming as it incurs low cost and gives better production after one-two years, she said adding, the burning of stubble causes pollution and thus the government has imparted technique to farmers to make compost from it. The drip irrigation is a better method of irrigation and the government also provides grants for it, she said adding, it is now a good news that the girls are also coming forward in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry which is a positive indication.

The pond is very useful with heritage and it should not be turned into a place of dumping the garbage. There is a need of pure air, water and thought for the life and the govern-

ments at Centre and in the state are running schemes to provide pure drinking water at each house, she said adding, the gram pradhan should lead the activities related to development works, social works and ensure the participation of villagers in these works for the development of village. The education and health of girls should be the priority of each family and the various schemes being run by the government have enhanced the respect of women. Now the women have become confident and self-reliant financially, she said and added, the girls are coming forward in each and every field which is a good sign of empowering India. Earlier, the V-C of MGKV Prof TN Singh welcomed the Governor with angvastram and memento.

Meanwhile, the Governor visited the central jail and garlanded the statue of great martyr Chandra Shekhar Azad. When she got information from the jail superintendent that the incapable and old-aged jail inmates are brought to the jail gate from barracks on foot, the Governor directed him to make arrangements for two e-rickshaws in jail to take them to the gate. She met the jail inmates and also inspected the cow shelter besides observing the products made by them.

Govindacharya receives Malviya award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Eminent thinker KN Govindacharya received the Bharat Ratna Mahamana Madan Mohan Malviya Smriti Samman-2020 at a function held at conference hall of Vedic Science Centre, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) under the auspices of BHU unit of Mahamana Malviya Mission here on Wednesday. Eminent social worker and propagator of Swadeshi Govindacharya was the chief guest of the function organised under Mahamana Malviya Jayanti celebrations.

Speaking on the occasion, Govindacharya narrated several interesting events of the life of Malviyaji saying that he was a person who had impressed a large number of people through his acts and



KN Govindacharya receiving Malviya Memorial Award at BHU in Varanasi on Wednesday

Pioneer

behaviour. According to him, by laying the foundation stone of BHU, Malviyaji had started renaissance of Indian culture and he had created awareness among the people

through popularising education. He was a great politician, spokesman of Sanatan knowledge and tradition, social workers, advocate and journalist.

Presiding over the function, Chancellor of BHU Justice (retired) Girdhar Malviya said that by giving this honours to Govindacharya the organisation has given a constructive message to the society and expressed hope that in the future also the organisation would give the award to such great personalities.

In the beginning, unit secretary Dr Prabhakar Upadhyay welcomed the guest and introduced the chief guest. The appreciation letters in Hindi and Sanskrit were read by Dr Madhavi Tiwari and Prof Upendra Kumar Tripathi. The award carries angvastram and cheque of ₹51,000. The function was also attended by dozens of senior professors and others of BHU.

51 new Covid cases in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 51 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district on Wednesday, increasing the total number to 21,469. The day also saw one more death, increasing the toll to 366. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 46 and all of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 17,748. As no person has been discharged from

any of the hospital, the number remained at 2,931. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 20,679, leaving 424 active cases. The recovery rate is 96.32 per cent, while the mortality rate is 1.70 per cent.

In the first report of the day, 35 positive patients were found out of 2,698 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 5,34,277 and the results of 3,199 are awaited. Out of them, 5,12,824

were negative, while 21,453 were positive. The total number of samples collected was 5,60,749. With the addition of two new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,655 including 181 red zones. Two green zones have been converted into the red zones again. There are 2,474 green zones with seven new ones. Meanwhile, mass / group corona antigen tests continued and all the 116 tests were found negative at SSPG

Hospital Kabirchaura apart from 90 at District Women's Hospital, 31at CHC Shipur, 62 at Vivekanand Hospital Bhelupur, 235 at LBS Hospital Ramnagar and 95 at SSH BHU. Apart from this, all the 47 tests at Varanasi Junction (Cantt) railway station and 31 at Manduadih were also found negative. Along with this, samples of 112 from SSPG, 29 from Vivekanand and 201 from LBS Hospital have been sent for RTPCR investigation.

Kisan Kalyan Mission launched

VARANASI (PNS): In response to the call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to double the income of farmers, Kisan Kalyan Mission was formally launched in only two development blocks of the district on Wednesday. The programme will continue till January 21. District president of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Hansraj Vishwakarma inaugurated Kisan Mela, seminar and exhibition at Chandpur under Kashi Vidyapeeth development block (Rohania assembly constituency).

Speaking on the occasion, he said that both the central and state governments are determined to double the income of the farmers. Praising Yogi government, he said that after coming to power in 2017, the first decision taken by the Cabinet was waiving loan of farmers upto ₹ 1 lakh and loans worth ₹36,000 crore of 86 lakh small marginal farmers in the state were waived off. He also hailed the PM's decision to check black-marketing by selling Neem-coated urea. According to him, prior to the Yogi government only 10 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of wheat

was purchased by the earlier government but during the present government, 46 lakh MT and 52 lakh MT of wheat was purchased during the first two years respectively. There was also a record purchase of paddy apart from paying ₹ 112,000 crore including dues of ₹ 12,000 crore of previous governments to sugarcane growers. Not only this, during the previous government 11 and 19 sugar mills were closed down respectively but since Yogi came to power 18 sugar mills were either made operational or strengthened their capacity. At Kisan Mela, Agriculture department provided assistance for solar pumps to the farmers including Dwarka Prasad (Misirpur), Hira Lal (Korauta), Subhash (Ramna), Shyam Dhani and Radhani (both of Mudhadevi), Shiv Kumar (Saraidagari), Umashankar Singh (Kuruhua). Similarly, Munna Lal and Subhavati Devi of Ramsipur, Kamal Patel (Lakhmipur), Jagannata (Lakhmipur), Ashish Rai (Korauta) and Pradeep Kumar and Lal Bahadur of Ramsipur, were provided grants by the

Horticulture department for onion seed production. Besides, grant money was made available to Siyaram and Vijay Shankar of Kuruhua for turmeric production.

UBI HOLDS PROGRAMMES: Under its Digital India Campaign 'Main Bhi Digital', the Union Bank of India (UBI) organised programmes at its branches and regional office in Mau. During the programmes, the bank officers linked the beneficiaries of PM Swa-Nidhi Yojana with digital platforms and the QR Code was distributed among 375 beneficiaries of this scheme. The beneficiaries were also motivated for the digital transaction. It is noted here that the buyers can make cashless payment by scanning QR Code of sellers through UPI App available in mobile phones. The regional head of the bank Sunil Kumar said, there are wide possibilities of digital transaction in India and it can be properly used in the rural areas and digital revolution can also be brought at national level by this and added, the challenges in digital transaction can also be faced. This is like a

blessing for the poor and it will also help in taking the economy of the country to cashless and also the risk in the transaction of cash could also be lowered, he said, appealing to the people to use it. The Digital India campaign is run by the Government of India and it will help in checking the corruption and also enhance work skill through transparency, he said adding, there is immense possibilities of Digital India in rural areas as the new employment can be generated and the new India could be developed with the use of e-literacy.

SMS, INDONESIA VARSITY SIGN MOU: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between School of Management Sciences (SMS), Varanasi and Al Asyariah Mandar University, Indonesia on international collaboration and cooperation in academic and research related activities. This MoU was signed by the SMS Director Prof PN Jha and Dean Prof Raj Kumar Singh, Rector of Al Asyariah Mandar University Prof Hj Chuduriyah Sahabuddin and Director Prof Muthmainnah.

Covid vaccination rehearsed on 138 health workers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Covid vaccination was rehearsed on 138 health workers on Wednesday under dry run drive. The process was completed in three stages according to the COVID vaccination protocol. Ten people were tested after being vaccinated. During this, doctors were also present with trained staff. About 150 health workers were called at six centres in the district for the drive although 12 workers could not come due to some reasons.

Three centres have been selected in the urban areas of the district and three in the rural areas for the drive of Covid vaccination. Here the mock drill of vaccination was to be done from 10 to 4 o'clock, though the rehearsal ended at 2 o'clock at each centre. Information of the employees who did not attend it is being collected.

During the drive of Covid vaccination, a woman medical worker at Moti Lal Nehru Medical College in the urban area, Superintendent Dr Sushma Srivastava at Colvin, Dr Vandana, Director at Jeevan Jyoti Hospital, was the first beneficiary of the trial vaccination. In the rural areas, superintendents during mock drills in Kotwa, Jasra and Pratappur became the first vaccine beneficiaries.

The microplan of the cold chain was effective in trans-



porting the Covid vaccine to safe centres during the drive by the Health department. Vaccines were transported from cold vans to box centres before 10 o'clock. Dr Mahananda Yadav at MLN Medical College Immunisation Centre, Dr Rahul Singh, Nodal Officer at Geneva Jyoti Hospital, Superintendent Dr Sushma Srivastava at Colvin Hospital, ACOMO Dr Tirath Lal at Kotwa, ACOMO Dr Ashok Kumar at Pratappur and ACOMO at Jasra Dr BN Singh kept monitoring throughout the time.

Arrangements were made in three chambers under the

Vaccination Protocol at all the centres selected for Covid dry run. Verifiers in the first chamber with police personnel, vaccinators with assistants in the second, then teams in the presence of doctors with health equipment, oxygen, medicines were placed in the third chamber for supervising monitoring. Three in Colvin, two in Jeevan Jyoti, one in Jasra, three in Pratappur, one each at MLN and other centres were screened for vaccine after effects and rehearsal of treatment. Nodal Officer Dr Rahul informed that after the vaccine, treatment has been arranged in case of symptoms like dizzi-

ness, rashes, itching, fever.

During the dry run, CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai, Nodal Officer for Covid vaccination Dr Rahul Singh visited the vaccination centres set up in selected hospitals in urban areas and reviewed the preparations. According to CMO Dr Rai, reports of every centre have come.

The challenge is to bring the beneficiaries to the vaccination centre. CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai said that 'We are ready for the first phase of Covid vaccination. Instructions have been given to rectify the problems where they cropped up during the dry run.'

39 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The reduced speed of corona infection spread is relieving. At the same time, the number of healthy people has decreased once again. On Tuesday, a screening of 6,144 people was conducted in the district and of them, the report of 39 people, including an ADJ, came positive in 24 hours. About 31 people beat corona. One infected died during treatment.

According to CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai, the scope of testing has been extended to identify the infected. Covid testing work has been started in the Magh Mela area. A total of 39 new cases of infection reported in 24 hours. Home isolation of 25 people was completed among 31 people



who beat corona. Six people were discharged from Covid hospitals.

A total of 714 patients are admitted in Covid hospitals of the district, out of which the maximum 44 patients are undergoing treatment at L3 Covid Hospital SRN. With the death of one infected on Tuesday, the figure of those who lost their lives to corona infection has reached 380. There are now only 443 active cases in the district.

The Covid testing report of three police personnel including the head wireless operator in the Magh Mela Police Lines has come positive. According to the Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, among the infected are a CRPF constable, Railway reservation supervisor and others.

CPCB collects samples of Ganga & Yamuna water

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Prayagraj's month long Magh Mela is soon going to be set up in Sangam area. Despite the coronavirus infection period, it is estimated that millions of people will come from all over the country to take a dip in the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati. In such a situation, the Central Pollution Control Board

(CPCB) is testing the waters of the Ganga and Yamuna. The team inspected two ghats of the Ganga and a ghat in the Yamuna and collected samples. Examination of these samples will show how much purity is in the water. After this, there will be an effort to provide clean water to the devotees who come to bathe during the Magh Mela. Regional Officer of Pollution Control Board

Pradeep Vishwakarma said that the water quality of the rivers is being tested regarding the Magh Mela. Samples taken from the waters of the Ganga and Yamuna will be sent for testing. At the same time, another team is also testing the drains and sewerage of the city. They said that till now the drains have been found to be in compliance with the standard. During this, Dr RB Singh,

Shivam Singh, Ramjash etc were present in the team.

The Central Pollution Control Board is eyeing the city's 18 drains and seven STPs. The team of Central Pollution Control Board is monitoring them regarding the Magh Mela. Dr RB Singh, scientist of the Central Pollution Control Board, said that the water quality of the rivers is being tested regarding the Magh Mela.

SSP suspends two sub-inspectors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The Prayagraj SSP Sarva Shreshtha Tripathi turned tough against two sub-inspectors and placed them under suspension for dereliction of duty. The suspended sub-inspectors are Vinay Vikram Singh, incharge of Khuldabad Sabzi Mandi police outpost, and Rajol Nagar of Dhoomanganj police station.

The SSP found them guilty of not investigating cases properly and unnecessarily delaying investigations. **ROBBERS DEPRIVE SALESMAN OF CASH:** In the trans-Ganga area of Kaundhiyara, three Apache-borne robbers deprived a petrol pump salesman of ₹32,000 at pistol point at 11 pm on Tuesday. The criminals also shot at and injured one Abdullah near girls school in Makunpur Bazar Kaundhiyara within half an hour. The miscreants first reached petrol pump on their Apache and asked the salesman Vivek Pal to fill petrol worth ₹100. When the salesman asked for money, they whipped out a pistol and

snatched away the bag containing ₹32,000 in cash and his mobile phone. The police reached the spot and started investigation, but they had to rush to girls school on receiving the information that some mobile-borne criminals had fired at Abdullah, 30 of Patti. The miscreants made a successful escape from the scene, while Abdullah was first taken to a nearby hospital, from where he was referred to the SRN Hospital of Motilal Nehru Medical College, Prayagraj.

CRUDE BOMBS LOBBED ON SHOPOWNER: Crude bombs were lobbed on a sweet shop near GT-Jawahar crossing under the Daraganj police station on Tuesday night aiming the shopowner Vishal, son of Rajendra Prasad Vaish of Alopihagh. One of the three bombs exploded, but no serious damage was done. The police reached the spot and defused the other two bombs.

It is learnt that Prince Mishra and Rohan Mishra had visited the sweet shop, but refused to make payment after enjoying refreshment. When

the shopowner Vishal asked for the payment, they threatened him and disappeared from the scene. On Tuesday night three bombs were lobbed on that sweet shop from the flyover top at 11.30 pm. The police reached the spot and registered an FIR against Prince and Rohan Mishra.

BASNA CULVERT COLLAPSES: Damaged bridges and accidents have created traffic problems in Prayagraj. The Phaphamau bridge on Prayagraj-Lucknow highway, which had developed a snag a couple of days back was repaired but immediately after that the Basna culvert collapsed and traffic came to stand still in that area of trans-Ganga segment.

To ease traffic problem, the police diverted traffic towards Shastri bridge which connects Prayagraj from Varanasi. The vehicles had to take extra round of several kilometres owing to this diversion. Adding fuel to fire a huge trailer truck overturned on the Shastri bridge on Wednesday blocking traffic flow.

Officials are of the view

that the Phaphamau bridge has been repaired, while the Basna bridge is being widened, so Phaphamau will face traffic problem till a bypass is not constructed. Work is on to construct a bypass there. Traffic is being regulated at Shastri bridge, and cranes have been pressed to remove the trailer truck from the bridge.

RAIL MADAD: The passengers can overcome their apprehensions by using an app 'Rail Madad' before traveling. Complaints related to trains and stations can be lodged through this app. It also provides a platform for making suggestions for improving passenger and freight services.

In fact, in the last two months between September 5 and January 4, 121 pairs of initial and other special trains running in NCR region have been amended. For this, along with the publication of news, system-generated SMS is also being sent to the passengers at the revised time. Before traveling on any particular train, it is being suggested to use a single and comprehensive portal 'Rail Madad'.



Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar, holding a meeting with NTPC officials on Bilhaur solar project on Wednesday

Pioneer

DC directs NTPC, admn officials to resolve pending issues in 15 days

Shekhar visits Bilhaur solar power plant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar while visiting the Bilhaur solar power plant directed the NTPC and district administration officials to ensure the pending few small issues of land acquisition and compensation resolved in the next 15 days. He also directed that one land exchange of the gram sabha was also pending at the administration level and directed the ADM LA to get it cleared within the next one week.

He said Uttar Pradesh was taking lead in generation of

clean energy and making the energy future secure and said the 225 MW worth ₹1100 crore, spread on 1125 acre land Bilhaur solar power plant was one example of such a mega project. He said the project was executed by UPNEDA and the project was awarded to NTPC by global bidding. He said the project was being implemented as separate units and the first was 140 MW plant which was awarded to NTPC in November 2018 which was likely to be completed by January-end. He said the second was awarded to NTPC in March 2019 which will be completed by March 2021.

Shekhar said this solar plant was largest in north India and the project cost was around ₹1,100 crore (around ₹5 crore per MW solar power). He said it was spread across four villages of Bilhaur Tehsil. He added that the clean and green energy will boost the power supply scenario in the region. He also directed NTPC officials and SDM Bilhaur to identify works of public importance in these four villages and then to get it done under CSR by NTPC in the next 6 months period.

The DC directed them to give priority to public works like community toilet in the vil-

lages, solar street lights, clean drinking water supply in schools, renovation of schools under Kayakalp project, hand-pumps at public places, SMART classes etc.

He also directed NTPC officials to give priority to local people in allotment of works of unskilled and semi skilled nature through service provider so that the local people were benefited by the project. He also directed them to chalk out the plans accordingly.

Later Shekhar distributed blankets to 50 needy people of the area under CSR activities of NTPC.

DC holds road safety panel meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar while chairing the Divisional Road Safety Committee meeting at his camp office on Wednesday said in order to make movement on road safe the government was committed to ensure innovative methods to bring down the accident rate in and around the division. He said the officials concerned need to ensure that whatever improvement and safety measures had been taken at the black spots (accident-prone areas) should be surveyed, photographed and its reports be submitted at the Commissionerate by January 20, 2021.

He said the major cause of concern was the unauthorised cuts on the highways of NHAI and National Highways and directed that they be surveyed properly and its report be submitted within seven days and also directed the officials of the NHAI to ensure that they should present valid documents as proof that these illegal cuts on highways had been closed in the right earnest. He also directed that on at least five km distance on highways 1033 Hoardings should be set up for quick help. Shekhar directed that at the toll plazas on the highways there should be proper medical facilities to attend to trauma cases and ensure there were ambulances equipped with oxygen and other life sav-

ing equipment. He said these facilities need to be cross checked by other officials as well. He also directed that there should be other essential facilities at the toll plaza. He directed that in case of an accident help and ambulance should reach the spot between 10 and 15 minutes at the most.

He said all the PHCs should be identified so that they are kept ready with essential to carry the injured to the centre for immediate treatment. He said at sudden cuts and narrow culvert, etc reflector boards of the particular signs be put up and ensure strictest action against all the overloaded vehicles especially commercial vehicles. He said another way to reduce road

accidents was proper road repair and upkeep of the roads. He said stray cattle should be trapped and kept in shelter homes and this should be taken care of by the Kanpur Municipal Commissioner.

The DC directed that strict fitness of school buses be carried out and said fine and action be taken against four-wheelers which did not use seat belts and two-wheeler riders who failed to put on helmets. He said on all such roads where there were encroachments they should be removed and sign boards be put up. Prominent who took part in the meeting were KMC, Akshay Tripathi, Secretary KDA, SN Singh, RTO Sanjay Singh and Rakesh Singh.

ICAI to hold blood donation camp

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Central Indian Regional Council (Institute of Chartered Accountants of India) as part of its social responsibility and keeping in view need for blood specially in the pandemic period decided to hold a mega blood donation camp on January 14, 2021. The blood donation camps will be held in 47 branches, 23 chapters spread over 101 places in seven states of the country. The mega blood donation camp had kept a target of 10,000 units of blood and students and along with members in all the seven states will make combined effort to meet the set target.

Addressing the presspersons at ICAI centre, the president and CA Devendra Kumar Somani said the mega blood donation camp will be inaugurated by the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla along with AK Gupta and NN Jambosaria. He said all local MPs, MLAs, ministers will be participating in the blood donation camp to make it successful. He said rallies were being taken out to spread awareness among the masses regarding blood donation camp and the need to donate blood. He said it was held at NOIDA on January 4, Lucknow on January 5 and in Kanpur on January 6. He said



The members of CIRCA (ICAI) Kanpur Chapter addressing presspersons on Wednesday at Lakhanpur.

Pioneer

in Ranchi will be held on January 7 and Raipur on January 8 and in Indore on January 9.

Addressing the presspersons noted chartered accountant and vice-president, Abhishak Pandey (Abhishak) said donating blood was a noble cause and a selfless act which helped save lives. He said giving blood to someone in need was a gift, and just as important as donating organs since it's like offering someone a chance at life. He said it was a myth that blood donation was harmful for their body. He said blood donation refreshed the human system as one donated blood the cell count went down which led to new cell regeneration and this was certainly a healthy process. He said it was the bounden duty of every health person to ensure

that one donated at least once in a year.

CSJMU TO HOLD FDP: The Vice-Chancellor of the Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University, Kanpur, Prof Neelima Gupta, addressing an academic meeting on Tuesday said the varsity had decided to hold a special 15 days Faculty Development Programme to impart training to the teachers in view of the changed pattern of vocational and professional courses at the graduate and postgraduate level.

She in view of the drastic changes in the courses and the pattern on imparting education it engendered the need to give special training to the existing teachers. The courses like BTech, MBA, MCA and Hotel Management has undergone a sea change. He said not only this the affiliated colleges fac-

ulty will also be provided similar training later. She said the varsity runs over 24 professional courses and over 5,000 students had been enrolled to these courses.

She said the new courses will have additional chapter for both first and second year terms and thus necessary arrangements had been made in this direction. She said the university has also invited suggestions from the faculty and added that for the new Academic Council soon a sanction will be received. She said during the lockdown and unlock period virtual sessions had been conducted and once the teachers were trained that new courses will be taught at the new model.

The V-C said apart from this the varsity was planning to modify and improved course at the graduate level. She said topics related to skill development will be linked to the BA, BSc and BCom.

She said the faculty development was a mandatory programme and each member had to mandatorily undergo the training.

She said in the New Education Policy more changes had been recommended and thus higher education was about to go in for drastic changes and to bring it at par with the West.

23 more test positive in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said 23 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 32,457 on Wednesday evening.

The CMO said 8 COVID-19 patients were discharged. He said one COVID-19 death was reported in the city during the past 24 hours.

Dr Mishra said 398 active cases were undergoing treatment in the city at present. He said 3670 samples were taken in the city on Wednesday for testing.

Shop burgled

KANPUR (PNS): Thieves may not be afraid of police but they appear to have lot of fear of coronavirus. On Tuesday night, they committed theft in a shop in Avas Vikas-3 under the Kalyanpur police station by wearing PPE kits. Scooty-borne thieves stole cash and goods worth lakhs of rupees by dismantling the shutter of 'Home Hub' and escaped. During investigations, police found them arriving on scooty and committing theft in PPE kit in the CCTV footage. Deepak Tripathi of Avas Vikas-3, Kalyanpur, runs his shop 'Home Hub' near his house. Late on Tuesday night, two scooty-borne thieves wearing PPE kits broke into his shop and remained there for about 20 minutes. They removed around ₹1.50 lakh cash from the counter and other essential items from there. Employees opened the shop on Wednesday morning and informed Deepak Tripathi about the incident. Station Head Officer Ajay Seth on the basis of CCTV footage, efforts were on to nab the scooty-borne thieves. He claimed to soon arrest them. It was surprising that the shop is situated on Panki-Kalyanpur road hardly 500 metres away from Avas Vikas-3 police outpost. Earlier on December 27 night, the house of a bankman Ankur Bharti was also burgled in Ambedkarapuram when he had gone to Agra with family members to meet his relative. Miscreants had taken away cash and goods worth around ₹5 lakh from there. Police were yet to workout the case.

Felicitation ceremony

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The acting Director of Dr Virendra Swarup Educational Foundation, Dr Arpit Awasthi addressing the felicitation ceremony on Wednesday said the group of institutions had carved a niche for itself in field of quality studies. He said students of this group had not only excelled and become successful in India but even abroad as well. He extended his wishes to the outstanding students for their future endeavours. The toppers were given medals and certificates of merit.

The toppers felicitated were Ashish Pathak, Priyanshi Dixit, Nishita Bhagwani, Keerti, Ritima Katiyar, Shubham Sisaudia, Poorvi Sharma, Sonali Gupta, Kirti Agarwal, Nandini Aditya Dwivedi, Sakshi Kapoor, Anshul Agarwal, Sagar Dhawan, Priya Tiwari and Ramandeep Kaur. **FOUNDATION DAY :** The UCO Bank Regional Office, celebrated 78th Foundation Day on Wednesday. The Region Chief, TB Mehta, congratulated the staff and employees and explained the bank's vision and mission and later administered oath to the staff to ensure they would work devotedly for the bank's uplift. He said the bank was also focused on social service and was quite aware to its CSR duties. He said the bank was giving its best services to its clients. He said to fulfil the dreams of PM's Digital India the Bank had introduced Uco Pay, e-wallet, UI, Uco Mobile Banking, Uco e-banking, fee collection for its customers. He said in future also the UCO Bank will be providing the best services to the customers.

Chennai Central-Lko Jn to run from January 12

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of passengers will run the 06093 MGR Chennai Central-Lucknow Jn bi-weekly special train from January 12 to 30 every Tuesday and Saturday and 06094 Lucknow Jn-MGR Chennai Central bi-weekly special train from January 14 to February 1 every Thursday and Monday. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved category and passengers traveling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said.

The 06093 MGR Chennai Central-Lucknow Jn bi-weekly special train will every Tuesday and Saturday from January 12 to 30 depart from MGR Chennai Central at 05.15 hrs, from Sullurupeta at 06.30 hrs, from Gudur at 07.15 hrs, from Nellore at 07.45 hrs, from Kavali at 08.25 hrs, from Singarayakonda at 08.50 hrs, from Ongole at 09.15 hrs, from Chirala at 10.00 hrs, from Bapatla at 10.15 hrs, from Nidubrolu at 10.45 hrs, from Tenali at 11.40 hrs, from New Guntur at 12.25 hrs, from Vijayawada at 13.40 hrs, from Errupalem at 14.45 hrs, from

Khammam at 15.30 hrs, from Dornakal at 16.00 hrs, from Mahbubabad at 16.25 hrs, from Kesamudram at 16.45 hrs, from Warangal at 17.30 hrs, from Jammikunta at 19.00 hrs, from Peddapalli at 19.30 hrs, from Ramagundam at 19.48 hrs, from Manchiryal at 20.02 hrs, from Bellampalli at 20.30 hrs, from Sirpur Kagaznagar at 21.02 hrs, from Balharshah at 22.45 hrs, from Chandrapur at 23.05 hrs, the second day from Sewagram at 01.05 hrs, from Nagpur at 02.15 hrs, from Multai at 04.15 hrs, from Amla at 04.32 hrs, from Betul at 04.52 hrs, from Ghoradongari at 05.35 hrs, from Itarsi at 07.50 hrs, from Bhopal at 09.35 hrs, from Bina at 11.50 hrs, from Lalitpur at 12.36 hrs, from Jhansi at 14.10 hrs, from Orai at 15.25 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 18.35 hrs and reach Lucknow Jn at 20.20 hrs.

On the other hand, the 06094 Lucknow Jn-MGR Chennai Central bi-weekly special train will from January 14 to February 1, every Thursday and Monday depart from Lucknow Jn at 16.20 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 18.00 hrs, from Orai at 19.35 hrs, from Jhansi at 21.40 hrs, from Lalitpur at 23.10 hrs, the second day from Bina at 01.05 hrs, from Bhopal at 03.05 hrs, from Itarsi at 04.50 hrs, from

Ghoradongri at 05.55 hrs, from Betul at 06.43 hrs, from Amla at 07.06 hrs, from Multai at 07.25 hrs, from Nagpur at 09.50 hrs, from Sewagram at 10.53 hrs, from Chandrapur at 12.20 hrs, from Balharshah at 13.45 hrs, from Sirpur Kagaznagar at 14.30 hrs, from Bellampalli at 15.05 hrs, from Manchiryal at 15.28 hrs, from Ramagundam at 15.40 hrs, from Peddapalli at 15.55 hrs, from Jammikunta at 16.20 hrs, from Warangal at 17.10 hrs, from Kesamudram at 17.50 hrs, from Mahbubabad at 18.05 hrs, from Dornakal at 18.30 hrs, from Khammam at 18.50 hrs, from Errupalem at 19.45 hrs, from Vijayawada at 21.15 hrs, from New Guntur at 22.00 hrs, from Tenali at 22.40 hrs, from Nidubrolu at 23.05 hrs, from Bapatla at 23.25 hrs, from Chirala at 23.40 hrs, from Ongole on third day at 00.32 hrs, from Singarayakonda at 00.56 hrs, from Kavalai at 01.24 hrs, from Nellore at 02.25 hrs, from Gudur at 04.00 hrs, Nayadupeta at 04.20 hrs, Sullurupeta at 04.40 hrs and reach MGR Chennai Central at 06.50 hrs. A total of 17 coaches, including two of SLRD, five of general second class, eight of sleeper class, one of air-conditioned third and AC second each will be attached in this train.

24 cases disposed of

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

During the Sampoorn Samadhan Divas organised in the district on Tuesday, out of 363 as many as 24 cases were disposed of. At Sadar tehsil Additional District Magistrate (Land Revenue) Harishankar Yadav held the meeting in which out of 120 cases only five could be disposed of and most of them were related to land records and its measurements. In Lalganj tehsil the day was held under the presidency of sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Jang

Bahadur Yadav where out of 63 only one matter could be disposed of. The complaints were related to illegal possession despite measurements, illegal construction, irrigation etc. The SDM formed teams and directed the CO and revenue officials to visit the places and settle matters without delay. At Madihan tehsil a women tried to immolate herself. Reports said Munni Devi of Varanasi had been running from pillar to post for over a year for measurement of her land located in Balaharaa village in Madihan tehsil but to no avail. On the intervention of tehsildar

Noopur Singh the matter was taken into cognisance for proper action. ADM (F&R) UP Singh has taken action against the lekhpal and other staff who were found guilty during preliminary inquiry. In Chunar tehsil CDO and DM incharge Avinash Singh held the meeting and directed the Executive Officer (EO) Nagar Palika Chunar and revenue officials to solve the problems of the complainants. He also made available a tricycle to a Divyang, Bhaiyalal Prajapati, a resident of Peervaji Shaheed in Chunar, on the spot.

Tennis trial organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

The Government of India's miniratra company, Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), Singrauli, at the CETI Sports Complex at its headquarters held the Inter-Area Lawn Tennis Tournament trial recently. On the occasion its Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) PK Sinha, as well as company's Director (Personnel) Bimlendu Kumar, Director (Technical/ Operations) Dr Anindya Sinha, Director (Technical/Project & Planning) SS Sinha, General Manager of all areas and other officials and staff were present and participated in the games. Speaking on the occasion, CMD NCL said the company is committed to improving the quality of life of its



employees by promoting sports. He called upon all employees to include sports in their daily routine. In the trial of the Inter-Area Lawn Tennis Tournament more than 20 players from all the areas and units participated in which players selected in different age groups will be sent to the Coal India level, Inter-

Subsidiary Tournament. To further promote fitness of NCL personnel, efforts are being made to develop the sports culture in the company. Under it NCL is continuously developing its infrastructure. Significantly, NCL has modern stadium and sports complex as well as in the headquarters, Jayant and Bina areas ultramodern lawn tennis court.

Health camp benefits many

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

The NCL under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the nearby rural

areas from time to time by organising medical camps gets free health examination of local people done besides distribution of essential medicines among them. In this sequence the CSR and medical team of Nigahi area of NCL organised a free health examination and medicine distribution camp in Khatkhari gram panchayat. In it Nigahi area medical officer Dr P Paswan and his team conducted the free health examination of the villagers who had come there and gave nutritious food, vitamin B complex,



tonic of iron and calcium besides protein powder to 40 pregnant women and 25 children. Through the camp a total of 110 patients were benefited who after examination were given medicines. Those who came to the camp were advised to use face masks, wash hands with soap frequently and follow social distancing guidelines in order to protect themselves from Covid-19 infection. In

organising the camp Nigahi area's CSR and medical team as well as Anganwadi workers who came from various Anganwadi centres of Khatkhari gram panchayat extended their support.

Bhanu's effort goes in vain

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

All-round performance of 'Man of the Match' Bhanu of Electrical TRD department, who scored 54 runs and claimed three wickets, went in vain as his team lost the Inter-departmental T20 cricket match to Engineering department by 29 runs. In fourth match of the tournament being played at NER Mini Stadium here on Tuesday under the joint aegis of the Manoranjan Sansthaan and Divisional Sports Association (DSA), Varanasi Division, North Eastern Railway (NER), electing to bat first Engineering department made 187 runs losing all wickets in 19.5 overs, with Ajit contributing 35, Abhishek 32 and Vijay 31. Bhanu took three wickets while Arvind two for TRD department.

In reply, TRD team could only manage 158 runs losing eight wickets in 20 overs. Bhanu contributed 54 runs and Zafar 31. For Engineering department Subhash took four wickets.



Two arrested

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The Bansgaon police arrested two accused on charges of theft from Tulsihawa Pokhara trijunction on Tuesday. The accused were later identified as Dilip Yadav, a resident of Balua alias Gopalpur village and Vishal Sahni under Bansgaon police station, a resident of Nagar Panchayat ward No 7. Besides on clues provided by them as many as nine stolen bicycles were recovered by the police. They were produced in the court from where they were sent to jail. Meanwhile Station House Officer (SHO) of Bansgaon Jai Narayan Singh said two bicycle thieves had been arrested and sent to jail.

Work for Atmanirbhar Bharat: PM to 7 JSs

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■
NEW DELHI

Concerned over the resignation of lateral entry bureaucrats, Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducted a 'rare' direct interaction with seven Joint Secretaries (JS) who joined the Government of India after quitting private sectors 14 months ago.

Modi interacted with the officers after *The Pioneer* reported on December 16, 2020 about one of the nine Joint Secretaries resigning from the service and choosing to get back to an MNC abroad. He was a JS in the Commerce Ministry.

Sources in Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said the PM urged the officers to continue working for the country with a lot of zeal as the nation looks towards their expertise in diversified fields and which can contribute in the shaping of an



'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

One of the Joint Secretaries who participated in the interaction with Modi on December 20, however, termed the interaction as "routine". "It was a routine first interaction after the first batch completed a year in various offices of the Central Government," he stressed.

While Modi was inquisitive about the feeling, work culture and acclimatisation of the private-professionals-turned-bureaucrats, one of the JS posted on his social media profile that "the PM's energy level even after a long day in office is inspiring and infectious".

Those who interacted with Modi on that day were Amber Dubey, who left KPMG and joined Civil Aviation Ministry, Sujit Bajpayee, who left NHPS to join the Environment Ministry, Dinesh Jagdale, the erstwhile CEO of Panama Renewable Energy Group who

was posted in the New Renewable Energy Ministry, Kakoli Ghosh, who joined the agriculture ministry, Saurabh Mishra in Financial Services, Rajeev Saksena in the economic affairs department, Suman Prasad Singh in the Road Transport Ministry and Bhuhan Kumar in the Shipping Ministry.

Launched with much fanfare by the Narendra Modi Government in 2018, the lateral entry scheme for senior-level officers drawn from various professions and expertise suffered a setback when Arun Goel resigned.

Sources close to Goel said after having served for about a year at a very powerful post he called it a day due to too much of "bureaucratic grind" in the system. Modi had himself announced senior-level bureaucratic posts in several departments for people who are "talented and motivated" and "willing to contribute to nation building."

Cong appoints Gehlot, Baghel as observers for Assembly polls in States, Union Territory

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday appointed its senior leaders including Chief Ministers Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel as observers to oversee the party's election campaign management for the upcoming Assembly polls in several States and a Union Territory. Assembly elections are due to be held in the States of Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the UT of Puducherry by the middle of this year.

An official communication from the party said Congress president Sonia Gandhi has appointed the leaders as senior observers for overseeing the election campaign management and coordination in states where assembly elections are going to be held in 2021. Their appointment is with immediate effect. They will discharge their duties in close coordination with AICC general secretaries and in-charges in the respective states, the party said.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, former Goa chief minister Luizinho Faleiro and Karnataka's former deputy chief minister G Parameswara have been appointed as senior observers for the Kerala assembly polls. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the party's general secretary

Mukul Wasnik and senior leader Shakeel Ahmad Khan have been appointed as senior observers for the Assam assembly polls. For the elections in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, senior party leaders and former union ministers M Veerappa Moily and M M Pallam Raju, besides sitting cabinet minister in Maharashtra Nitin Raut have been appointed as senior observers.

For the West Bengal assembly elections, senior party leader B K Hariprasad and Alamgir Alam, besides Punjab minister Vijay Inder Singha have been appointed as observers. The party is keen to retain power in Puducherry and is seeking to wrest power back in Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Congress is in the process of finalising seat-sharing with its allies in these states, the statement said.

The Congress is also contesting the West Bengal assembly polls in alliance with the left parties and final seat-sharing arrangements are being worked out in the state, it said. The party's electoral fortunes were on the decline last year when it lost power in Madhya Pradesh after its leader Jyotiraditya Scindia and his supporting MLAs switched over to the BJP. The Congress also lost the assembly elections in Delhi and Bihar last year.

People have rejected Opp's lies, hypocrisy, says BJP after local polls' win in Karnataka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Showcasing their "success" in the Gram Panchayat polls in Karnataka, the BJP on Wednesday claimed that the people have rejected the Opposition's politics of "lies and hypocrisy" in the ongoing farmers' agitation and asserted that voters had put their faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "development politics".

Addressing a press conference here, BJP spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Chandrasekhar alleged that opposition parties have been trying to instigate groups of citizens as he referred to farmers' protest against three farm laws and also the earlier agitation against the

Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Noting that he is speaking in the context of a string of elections in Karnataka, he said the BJP has been winning them, be it assembly bypolls or MLC elections or the recent rural body polls.

This "overwhelming" mandate in favour of the BJP against some opposition parties' politics of "lies and hypocrisy" shows people's trust in the leadership of Modi and Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, he said.

People have backed the measures taken by the central government for the agriculture sector, he claimed.

The BJP leader said the Government is sincere in its talks with farmer unions to

end their protests and said commitment to farmers is an "article of faith" for the party. Over 55.4 per cent gram panchayats in the state are BJP-supported and 53 per cent members are BJP supporters, he claimed.

This result has come against the backdrop of opposition parties' "falsehoods" to mislead farmers, he said.

Since the BJP came to power at the Centre, the party has won 14 of 17 Assembly bypolls and emerged victorious in all four MLC seat elections, he said.

Over a month, the BJP has cited results in a number of elections across the country to assert that the farm laws enjoy support from a vast majority of farmers.

Muslim body moves SC, seeks to be party in pleas against State laws on religious conversion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A Muslim body moved the Supreme Court Wednesday seeking it be made a party in the batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity of controversial new laws of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand regulating religious conversions in inter-faith marriages.

The top court earlier in the day, issued notice to the two states, while agreeing to

examine the validity of their laws.

Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind in its application said that similar legislations are also being enacted or planned by various other states which also need to be declared unconstitutional.

It has said that the ordinance passed by the Uttar Pradesh government was promulgated in the backdrop of statements issued by the Chief Minister claiming that

his government was working to bring a strict law to curb incidents of "love jihad".

"That as is evident by the statements made by the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the impugned ordinance was promulgated to curb incidents of "love jihad" which is a terminology used to describe inter-religious marriages, which they allege involves the conversion of the woman - either by force or guile - to marry a Muslim man", it said.

SC shows exasperation on limitation of virtual courts' functioning



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has expressed its exasperation at the inability of the virtual court system to work satisfactorily in the apex court, saying it is becoming very difficult to continue with the proceedings in an appropriate manner.

The court also noted that there were no such problems being faced in the virtual court system in the Delhi High Court next door.

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

"We at the inception must note our exasperation at the inability of the virtual court system to work satisfactorily in the Supreme Court while there is no such problems in the Delhi High Court next door!", a bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul said in its January 5 order.

"We have been since yesterday trying to cope with the problem of disconnections, resonance of voices, even when there is single person arguing. It is difficult

The top court made these observations while hearing a plea against the December last year order passed by the Chhattisgarh HC

to understand this despite more licences stated to have been taken. The only voice we hear is the resonance of our own voices!", said the bench, also comprising justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Hrishikesh Roy.

The bench directed the secretary general of the apex court to look into the issue.

"We thus direct the secretary general to look into this issue as it is becoming very difficult to continue with proceedings in the virtual courts in an appropriate manner," the bench said.

The top court made these observations while hearing a plea against the December last year order passed by the Chhattisgarh High Court.

BJP slams Tharoor for seeking R-Day parade cancellation on Covid account

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Congress MP Shashi Tharoor sought a cancellation of the Republic Day parade in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic and British Prime Minister's decision not to visit India, BJP's national spokesperson Sambit Patra on Wednesday slammed him for making the demand.

In a sharp riposte to the Congress leader, Patra asked as to why Rahul Gandhi's foreign trips are not cancelled instead and also lambasted him for referring to Republic Day as a mere 'festivity' in his tweet.

"Mr Tharoor, Republic Day Parade is not just any 'Festivity' that it ought to be cancelled! Further Rahul cannot cancel his festivities & continues to travel to "farther



destinations often but the Congress wants Republic Day to be cancelled?", tweeted the BJP leader.

Issuing a statement on calling off the visit, the UK government had said, "The Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Modi this morning, to express his regret that he will

be unable to visit India later this month as planned. In light of the national lockdown announced last night, and the speed at which the new coronavirus variant is spreading, the Prime Minister said that it was important for him to remain in the UK so he can focus on the domestic response to the virus."

PM, Merkel hold video-teleconference; Modi briefs her on vaccine development

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a video-teleconference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday and briefed her on COVID-19 vaccine development in India, while also assuring her of the country's commitment to deploy its capacities for the benefit of the world.

A Prime Minister's Office statement said Modi appreciated the long-standing role of Chancellor Merkel in providing stable and strong leadership at the European and global stage, and thanked her for guiding the growth of the India-Germany Strategic Partnership.

The two leaders discussed key issues of mutual importance including the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, bilateral ties, regional and global issues, particularly India-EU relations.

The prime minister briefed Chancellor Merkel on the developments in India with regard to vaccine development and assured the chancellor of India's commitment

to deploy its capacities for the benefit of the world, the statement said.

"He conveyed his best wishes for early containment of the new wave of infections in Germany and other European countries," it said.

Prime Minister Modi also welcomed Germany's decision to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA), and expressed his desire to further strengthen cooperation with Germany under the platform of Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

Centre bars TN Govt from opening cinema theatres with full capacity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry on Wednesday asked Tamil Nadu Government not to allow opening of cinema theatres with full capacity and asked to keep only 50% of the seating capacity. In a direction Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) directed the state to reverse their earlier order and "immediately issue necessary order" to bring their guidelines in line with the MHA guidelines. "Government of Tamil Nadu order of permitting increase the seating capacity of Cinema/theaters/ multiplexes from existing 50% to 100% is dilution of MHA order. States and UT shall not dilute guidelines issued under DM act in any manner," MHA said in a statement.

"Govt of Tamil Nadu is requested to immediately issue necessary order to bring their

Guidelines in line with the MHA guidelines dated 28 December 2020 and inform compliance to this Ministry," the ministry further said. Home Secretary wrote to Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary to issue orders aligned to MHA guidelines, allowing multiplexes to operate outside containment zones with up to 50% occupancy. On Monday, Tamil Nadu Government had permitted to increase the seating capacity of cinemas, theatres, multiplexes from existing 50% to 100% following COVID-19 protocols. The order comes days after actors and theatre owners requested Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to allow theatres to function at their full capacity. As per the COVID-19 safety protocol, since last October, the theatres in the state were allowed to fill up only 50 per cent of their seats to ensure social distancing.

ITBP signs MoU with KVIC for supply of cotton khadi durries



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central paramilitary jawans will now use Khadi durries procured from KVIC as part of the vocal for local campaign. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC) for supplying 1,71,520 numbers of Khadi Durries for Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs).

The cotton khadi durries for CAPF jawans will be procured in a purchase order worth Rs 8.73 crore. The ITBP has become the first paramilitary force among the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) to have supplies from the KVIC.

The MoU was inked by Vinay Kumar Saxena, Chairman, KVIC and Anand Swaroop, Inspector General of ITBP. Vivek Bharadwaj, Additional Secretary, Police Modernisation, Union Home Ministry also attended the event. The ITBP had

signed an agreement with the KVIC in July last year for procurement of 1,200 quintal of mustard oil with a total financial implication of ₹1.73 crore. It was decided during a meeting held at the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) of the Directors General of the CAPFs in October, 2019 that use of Terry Khadi uniform and other items of swadeshi origin should be made available to the CAPFs. The government was celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019.

During the visit of Home Minister Amit Shah in December, 2019 to the ITBP Force headquarters here, an exhibition stall was prepared to exhibit the KVIC products.

"The ITBP had suggested that durries, blankets, towels, mustard oil, yoga kit, hospital bed sheets, pickles and similar items can be purchased for jawans of the Force through KVIC," ITBP Spokesperson Vivek Pandey said in a statement.

Dense foggy weather, poor visibility from Jan 7 to 10 in northwest India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday forecast dense foggy weather and poor visibility from January 7 to 10 in northwest India. The minimum temperatures are likely to fall by 4 to 6 degree Celsius in northwest India during the next 4-5 days. The western disturbance that was affecting northwest India has currently moved eastward, for which the effect will be mostly over western Uttar Pradesh.

"Due to abundant moisture available in lower tropospheric levels and other favourable meteorological features, dense to very dense fog is very likely in some to many pockets over plains of Northwest India in the morning hours of 07th to 10th

The western disturbance that was affecting northwest India has currently moved eastward, for which the effect will be mostly over western Uttar Pradesh

January," the IMD said. "The minimum temperatures are likely to fall by 4-6 degree Celsius over plains of Northwest India during the next 4-5 days. Cold wave conditions are likely over the plains of Northwest India during 11th-13th January," it said.

Under the influence of western disturbance from

January 2 till January 6 (today), significant rainfall occurred in plains of northwest India, due to which, there is a significant amount of moisture across the region. The ongoing spell of rainfall over southern parts of India is expected to continue at least until Saturday. Therefore, the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka are expected to keep receiving scattered to fairly widespread showers and thunderstorms.

According to IMD, a trough in low-level easterlies runs from the east-central Arabian Sea off Karnataka coast to south Madhya Maharashtra. This active easterly wave spell is set to cause scattered to fairly widespread rains, thunderstorms, and lightning over southern peninsular India during the next 4-5 days.

मह्यौचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लिमिटेड, प्रधान कार्यालय 4-ए, गोखले मार्ग, लखनऊ। निविदा प्रकाशन सूचना (ई-निविदा) अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा निर्धारित समय में आपूर्ति में सक्षम, प्रतिष्ठित निविदाकर्ताओं से निम्नलिखित सामग्री की आपूर्ति हेतु ई-टेंडरिंग के माध्यम से निविदाये आमंत्रित की जाती हैं :-

1. निविदा विशिष्ट सं० मेडको/2543/2021 (परिवर्तनीय आधार तिथि 01.12.2020)

क्र०सं० 1, सामग्री का विवरण :
Supply of : DPC Copper Wire 1.82 mm, इकाई : Kg., मात्रा : 71460, क्र०सं० 2, सामग्री का विवरण Supply of : DPC Copper Wire 3.65 mm, इकाई: Kg., मात्रा: 2592, क्र०सं० 3, सामग्री का विवरण Supply of : DPC Copper Wire 2.40 mm, इकाई Kg., मात्रा : 77300

क्र०सं० 4, सामग्री का विवरण :
Supply of : DPC Copper Wire 2.90 mm, इकाई: Kg., मात्रा: 21506

क्र०सं० 5, सामग्री का विवरण :
Supply of : DPC Copper Strip 10.25x4.0 mm., इकाई: Kg., मात्रा: 53310, क्र०सं० 6, सामग्री का विवरण : Supply of : DPC Copper Strip 10.25x4.8 mm., इकाई: Kg., मात्रा : 1824, धरोहर राशि (रु०) 16,62,000/-, निविदा प्राप्त करने की अन्तिम तिथि एवं समय : 05.02.2021, 13:00 बजे, निविदा के प्रेषण माग खोलने की तिथि एवं समय : 06.02.2021, 15:00 बजे, निविदाकर्ता द्वारा निविदित मात्रा की न्यूनतम 50 प्रतिशत मात्रा हेतु प्रस्ताव देना होगा एवं उसी अनुपात में धरोहर धनराशि जमा करनी होगी।

निविदा का शुल्क : रु० 11,800 /- निविदा शुल्क को आर०टी०जी०एस० / एन०ई०एफ०टी० के माध्यम से तथा धरोहर राशि आर०टी०जी०एस० / एन०ई०एफ०टी० या बैंक गारण्टी के माध्यम से जमा किया जाना है, जिनकी स्कैन्ड कापी निविदा प्रपत्रों के साथ ई-टेंडर वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर अपलोड करनी होगी। उक्त निविदाओं के सम्बन्ध में विस्तृत जानकारी एवं निविदा प्रपत्र उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की ई-टेंडर वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> से देखे एवं डाउनलोड किये जा सकते हैं। निविदा में संशोधन अथवा निविदा खुलने की तिथि में परिवर्तन की सूचना ई-टेंडर वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध कराई जायेगी।

अधीक्षण अभियन्ता (साओ-प्रथम) मविवि.नि.ति. 4-ए, गोखले मार्ग लखनऊ। पत्रांक-04, दिनांक 06.01.2021, मविवि०नि० ति०, हेल्पलाइन नं०: 18001800440/1912, राष्ट्रहित में बिजली बचाए, बल्ब की जगह एल०ई०डी० लगायें।

बिहार स्टेट मिल्क को-ऑपरेटिव फेडरेशन लि.
पोस्ट-बिहार मेट्रोरी कॉलेज) पटना - 800014
दूरभाष- (0612)2228953, 2224083, 2228347, 2220387 फैक्स-2224017,
ई-मेल: marketingcomfed@gmail.com

निविदा सूचना

पशु आहार कारखाना, रॉची एवं विहिया के लिए कच्चे सामग्रियों की आपूर्ति हेतु निबंधित आपूर्तिकर्ता या निर्माताओं से मुहरबंद निविदाएँ आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। नये आपूर्तिकर्ता जो इस संस्था को कच्चे सामग्रियों की आपूर्ति करना चाहते हों अपना आवेदन, पैन नम्बर एवं जी.एस.टी. नं. की छायाप्रति एवं रु. 5500/- का ड्राफ्ट (जिसमें रु. 5000/- सिक्युरिटी मनी एवं रु. 500/- रजिस्ट्रेशन हेतु है) उपरोक्त पते पर भेज कर निबंधन सी करा सकते हैं। सामग्रियों का विवरण एवं शर्तों की जानकारी के लिये निविदा प्रपत्र हमारे वेबसाइट www.sudha.coop से डाउनलोड (download) किया जा सकता है। निविदा जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि 27.01.2021 के संख्या 5.00 बजे तक है। प्राप्त निविदाएँ दिनांक 28.01.2021 को 11.00 बजे प्रातः काल उपस्थित निविदादाताओं के समक्ष इस कार्यालय में खोली जायेगी।

प्रबन्ध निदेशक

BJP churning out fake news in Bengal, instigating riots: TMC

Kolkata: The Trinamool Congress on Wednesday accused the BJP of producing fake news items and described saffron party leaders visiting West Bengal from outside the state as “tourists” who have no idea of its heritage and language.

Senior TMC MP and party spokesperson Dr Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar also charged the BJP with seeking to cling to power by “killing people, instigating riots and dividing people”. “They (BJP) are flush with cash. They have deployed some youngsters in a big building to churn out one fake news after another,” she said.

Referring to certain videos and news items being circulated on social media, Ghosh Dastidar described them as “fake news produced from the factory of the BJP”.

She alleged that the saffron party is bringing in leaders from outside the state who utter “wrong Bengali words with distorted accent. In West Bengal, the BJP has turned into a party of tourists.”

These “visitors” are ignorant of the heritage and traditions of West Bengal as they sit on the chair of icons like Rabindranath Tagore and place their own photo above that of the Nobel laureate poet in festoons, she alleged.

Ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s visit to Bolpur close to Santiniketan, which is famous as the Rabindranath Tagore’s abode for long years, in December, hoardings with his picture above that of the bard in the same frame appeared in the town causing outrage. The hoardings were later removed.

“Tagore had composed the song, ‘Amar Sonar Bangla’ (My Golden Bengal). The BJP is also promising to make a sonar

Bangla (after coming to power in the state). But these people are insulting the state and its people by distorting Bengali words by pronouncing them incorrectly.

“They have no idea about the sacrifice of thousands of Bengalis for the language. They only know how to vandalise the bust of Vidyasagar and sit on the chair used by Tagore,” Ghosh Dastidar said.

A bust of the iconic social reformer was desecrated in a college in Kolkata during Amit Shah’s roadshow in May 2019. The TMC alleged that BJP activists were behind the incident.

Shah had also visited Visva-Bharati university in December and went to the Rabindra Bhavan, a museum, and the Upasana Griha (the prayer hall) and other buildings on the campus.

There were reports on social media that Shah had sat on Tagore’s chair during the visit. However, it was not confirmed by the university authorities. Stating that several BJP leaders from outside Bengal are visiting North 24 Parganas district in which her constituency Barasat is located, Ghosh Dastidar said, “They may not be aware that a revolutionary like Titumir was born on the soil of district, they don’t know Bengal.” Syed Mir Nisar Ali, better known as Titumir, fought against the British rulers in the 19th century.

The senior TMC leader described the BJP as a comparatively young and comparatively inexperienced party “to have come to power at the Centre. “In its six years in power, the BJP has devastated the economy and circumvented the rule of law. They want to cling to power at any cost - by killing people, instigating riots, dividing

people,” she alleged.

The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh “had prevented the Trinamool Congress parliamentary party delegation from visiting Hathras to meet the family of the raped and murdered Dalit woman. One thousand police personnel stopped 3-4 MPs. Here, they can go anywhere they want. Such curbs don’t take place in Bengal,” she added.

To a question on senior CPI(M) leader Ashok Bhattacharya’s claim that BCCI President and former Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly, who recently suffered a mild heart attack, was under pressure to join politics in poll-bound West Bengal, Ghosh Dastidar said that the TMC did not exert any such pressure on him. The physician MP, however, said that stress might have contributed to cause such a situation. The economy of the country witnessed 23.9 per cent negative growth in the first quarter of the current fiscal during the BJP rule at Centre, while 43 per cent more employment opportunities were created in West Bengal during the pandemic, she said.

Ghosh Dastidar claimed that 77 lakh marginal farmers were benefitted from ‘Jal dharo jal bharo’ project in Bengal by getting job cards, pisciculture in waterbodies and cooperative fish farming. She said numerous Kisan mandis were set up to help farmers get proper price for their produce and 99 per cent of farmers got Kisan Credit Card in North 24 Parganas district. “In contrast, 45-46 farmers have died so far during the ongoing agitation on Delhi border. But the Centre is unresponsive to their demand for withdrawing the three anti-people farm bills,” she said. **PTI**

Abhishek Banerjee slaps libel notice on Supriyo

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee again slapped a libel notice on Union Minister of State Babul Supriyo for making defamatory remarks against him and has asked him to apologise within 72 hours.

This is the second such incident, as Supriyo is already contesting a previous defamation suit filed by the same petitioner. A civil court issued an injunction order against the Minister last December directing him not to use libelous language against Banerjee. The MP has threatened the Union Minister with contempt proceeding for his latest remark.

The immediate trigger for the legal action was a remark made by Supriyo who said that the alleged “Bhaipo” (nephew) being referred to by the opposition parties including the BJP leaders while referring to

corruption charges was none other than Abhishek Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The Minister had earlier accused Banerjee of benefiting from the coal and cow smuggling racket against which a CBI investigation was on saying the oft repeated word Bhaipo stood for none other than the junior Banerjee.

The CBI investigating the rackets has been after two businessmen Lala and Mishra who had alleged connection with the Trinamool Congress’ topmost echelon and who reportedly acted as a medium of money transfer in the multi-crore cow and coal scam. Properties of both the businessmen, who have gone underground, been sealed.

Meanwhile, in a related development the Chief Minister on Wednesday paid a sudden visit to the Raj Bhavan meeting Governor

Jagdeep Dhankhar for more than an hour. With no love lost between the two constitutional authorities the meeting is seen as extraordinary as it took place after a gap of about 11 months.

In fact the Governor made a circuitous attack on the State Government and the ruling party on Wednesday morning saying political violence should be shunned and Bengal should present itself as a violence free state insofar as the conduct of elections were concerned. He also criticized the way the national BJP leaders were referred to as “outsiders” by the TMC leadership in Bengal.

Elsewhere more TMC leaders continued to speak incoherently --- the latest being Rathin Chakrabarty the Mayor of Howrah.

Alleging that all was not well in the Trinamool scheme of things Chakrabarty said while reerring to the resigna-

Kerala HC sets aside acquittals in minors’ rape-murder

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

In what could be a major embarrassment to the Government of Kerala as well as the police, the Kerala High Court on Wednesday set aside the verdict of the trial court in the infamous Walayar Sex Abuse case and ordered retrial of the case.

A bench of Justices A Hariprasad and M R Anitha lambasted the Kerala Police, prosecution and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Court at Palakkad for goofing up the case through lackadaisical probe and trial.

The High Court also set aside the acquittal of all the four accused in the case. They have been asked to present themselves before the court on January 20. But Pradeep, one of the accused had committed suicide after the trial court verdict. All the accused are reportedly CPI(M) activists and associates of party leaders.

Two Dalit sisters aged 13 and nine respectively at Walayar in Palakkadu district were found dead under mysterious conditions in January and March of 2017. The autopsy had found that both the girls were victims of ‘cruel sexual abuse’.

Though there were enough hints and evidences suggesting foul play behind the deaths, the police looked the other way and did not pursue the case by applying the mind, said the verdict. The justices said the POCOS Court judges and the police needed basic training in dealing with cases like this.



Pic courtesy Twitter handle of Airport Director, Leh Airport

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After remaining grounded for four days during a fresh spell of snowfall between January 3-6, Srinagar Airport authorities on Wednesday announced the flight operations would begin from January 7 to clear the rush of stranded passengers.

The information was shared by the Srinagar Airport Authorities along with images of ongoing snow clearing operations.

Large number of tourists were stranded in different parts of Kashmir valley after a fresh spell of snowfall grounded all the incoming and outgoing flights since January 3. As the weather conditions improved partially on Wednesday the snow clearing operations were launched on war footing to clear the runway for flight

operations. The Twitter handle of Srinagar Airport posted a tweet which stated, “The Airport Authority of India executives at Srinagar Airport have been working very hard in coordination with Beacon staff and continuously monitoring the area to avoid snow accumulation in apron area keeping in view that stranded passengers may reach to their destination. “Ironically, travelers hoping to visit the cold desert region of Ladakh may have to wait a little longer.

The snow clearing operations in the newly created Union Territory of Ladakh were being done manually at an altitude of 9800 ft above sea level. This interesting piece of information was shared by the Airport Director, Leh Airport himself.

In a series of tweets, the Airport Director said, “At 9,800

ft above sea level, Leh Airport woke up to a snow covered valley. With temperatures as low as -12°C, the snow removal process from the apron of KBR Airport is done manually in extreme temperatures”. Posting a picture of an ongoing inspection visit, the Airport Director in his second tweet said, “AAI Leh officers in the process of inspecting snow removal from Leh Airport apron so that flights can be operated. Snow removal at Leh Airport is done manually presently. Talks for procurement of snow removal machines at headquarter level”.

According to the MeT department the temperature in Leh hovered around -10 degrees celsius on Wednesday. “Day’s maximum temperature would hover at -7°C, while minimum temperature is predicted to be -14°C”, the MeT department report said.

DISTT. CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD. LAKHIMPUR-KHERI					
HEAD OFFICE :- CIVIL LINES, LAKIMPUR-KHERI (U.P.)					
Ref No.- 4184/Dev/2020-21				Ref Date : 06.01.2021	
POSSESSION NOTICE FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY					
Notice is hereby given under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of Powers Conferred Under Section 13(2) and 13(12) read with Rules 8 & 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 the Authorized officer issued a Demand Notice on the dates noted against each Account as mentioned hereinafter, calling upon them to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the Amount, Notice is hereby given to the undernoted borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described here in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under sec. 13(4) of the said Act read with Rules 8 & 9 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned against each Account. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealing with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of District Co-Operative Bank Ltd, Lakhimpur Kheri for the amounts and Interests thereon mentioned against each account herein below:					
Sl. No.	Name of Branch	Name and Address of the Account Holder	Name of the Borrower/Guarantor (Owner of the Property) and address	Completo Description of the charged/Mortgaged Property	Date of the Demand Notice
					Date of Possession Notice
					Amount o/s as on date of Demand Notice
1	Main Branch Lakhimpur	Moh. Haseen Khan S/o Moh. Naseem Khan Prop. M/s Talha House Footwear court road Lakhimpur R/o House Lakhimpur, No. 4 Moh. Hidayat nagar, city Lakhimpur Tahsil & District Lakhimpur Kheri	Moh. Naseem Khan S/o Moh. Muneer Khan R/o (House No. 4 Moh. Hidayat nagar city Lakhimpur Tahsil & District Lakhimpur Kheri	Immovable Property 180 sq fit 16.73 Sq. met.) in the Name of Moh. Naseem khan S/o Moh. Muneer khan Situated at Moh. Tharbaranganj court road Tahsil Rs. District Lakhimpur kheri a Juj part of gata no. 288 to 309 min. And REGISTERED at Sub Registrar Office Lakhimpur Kheri at Book no. 1, Jild no. 1912, Page no. 117 to 132 Serial no. 174, Dated 09-01-2001 Bounded as under North-Main court road South-Rasta, East-Shop Rafiq Bano, West - Shop Moh. Naseem khan.	Date 28.08.2019 Date 13.08.2020 Rs. 1,16,801/- + Interest and other charges
2	Mandi Samiti Lakhimpur	Parmeshwar Dayal S/o Baldev Prasad Prop. Dayal Bekary Udyog R/o Moh. Rajgadh City Lakhimpur Tahsil & District Lakhimpur, Kheri	Parmeshwar Dayal S/o Baldev Prasad Prop. Dayal Bekary Udyog and Shanti Devi W/o Parmeshwar Dayal R/o Moh. Rajgadh city Lakhimpur Tahsil & District Lakhimpur Kheri	Immovable Property 2000 Sq. fit (185.87 Sq. met.) in the Name of Parmeshwar dayal S/o Baldev Prasad and Shanti devi w/o Parmeshwar dayal situated at Moh. Shiv colony city Lakhimpur Tahsil & District Lakhimpur Kheri And REGISTERED at Sub Registrar Office Lakhimpur Kheri at Book no. 1, Jild no. 2401, Page no. 375 to 416, Serial no. 703, Dated 08-01-1991 Bounded as under North - Plot no. 25, South - Sadak kachchi, East. Plot Murlidhar, West-Sadak kachchi.	Date 04.09.2019 Date 13.08.2020 Rs. 2,45,391/- + Interest and other charges
3	Nighasan	Shiv Shankar Shakya S/o Daya Ram Prop. M/s Shakya Medical Store Nighasan R/o Vill. Moh. Nighasan, Tahsil Nighasan, District - Lakhimpur, Kheri	Shiv Shankar Shakya S/o Daya Ram Prop. M/s Shakya Medical Store Nighasan R/o Vill. / Moh. Nighasan, Tahsil Nighasan, District Lakhimpur, Kheri	Immovable Property 200 Sq. fit (18.60 Sq. met.) in the Name of Shiv Shankar Shakya S/o Daya ram Situated at Vil. / Moh. Nighasan Tahsil Nighasan, District Lakhimpur Kheri And REGISTERED at Sub Registrar Office Nighasan at Book no. 1, Jild no. 2401, Page no. 375 to 416, Serial no. 703, Dated 22.01.2014 Bounded as under North-Plot Ilahi, South - House rajesh Kumar, East - House Vikreta, West-P.W.D. Road.	Date 02.09.2019 Date 13.08.2020 Rs. 2,75,099/- + Interest and other charges
4	Khamariya Pandit	Neeraj Rastogi S/o Let. Shivnath Rostogi Prop. New fine digital photo Studio khamariya bazar R/o Vili khamariya pandit Tahsil Dhaurahra Distt Lakhimpur Kheri.	Smt. Rakhi Rastogi w/o Neeraj Rastogi R/o Vill Khamariya Pandit, Tehsil - Dhaurahra District Lakhimpur kheri	Immovable Property 1320 Sq fit (122.6 Sq. met.) in the Name of Smt. Rakhi Rastogi W/o Neeraj Rastogi Situated at Village Khamariya pandit Tahsil Dhaurahra District Lakhimpur kheri And REGISTERED at Sub Registrar Office Dhaurahra at Book no. 1, Jild no. 2953, Page 199 to 212, Serial no. 9327, Dated 28-09-2013 Bounded as under North - khet vikreti smt. Sashi Awasthi, South - Plot Patni Ramdas, East - Khet Vikreti smt. Sashi Awasthi, West-Road.	Date 02.09.2019 Date 13.08.2020 Rs. 69,231/- + Interest and other charges
5	Khamariya Pandit	Uttam kumar Trivedi S/o Lalla ram Prop. M/s Trivedi Agencies Basadhiya chaurahra R/o VIII. Basadhiya chaurahra, Tahsil Dhaurahra, District Lakhimpur Kheri.	Uttam kumar Trivedi S/o Lalla ram Prop. M/s Trivedi Agencies Basadhiya chaurahra R/o VIII. Basadhiya chaurahra Tahsil Dhaurahra District Lakhimpur Kheri	Immovable Property 2200 sq. fit Date (204.4 Sq. met.) in the Name of Uttam kumar Trivedi S/o Lalla Rs ram Situated at Village Mahariya Tahsil Dhaurahra District Lakhimpur kheri And REGISTE-RED at Sub Registrar Office Dhaurahra at Book no. 1, Jild no. 2945, Page no. 17 to 34, Serial no. 8918, Dated 19-09-2013 Bounded as under North - Plot Paikarma deen, South - Plot puttu Rastogi, East-khet Kandhal, West-P.B.Road	Date 04.09.2019 Date 13.08.2020 Rs. 2,94,917/- + Interest and other charges
6	Khamariya Pandit	Sushil kumar S/o Kamlesh kumar Prop. Yadav pashu aahar R/o Village Shahbajpur H/O Basadhiya Tahsil Dhaurahra District Lakhimpur Kheri	H/o Ram devi W/o Ram Lakhan R/o Village Shahbajpur H/o Basadhiya, Tahsil Dhaurahra District Lakhimpur Kheri	Immovable Property 2400 sq. fit (224 sq. met.) in the Name of Ram devi w/o Ram Lakhan Situated at Village Basadhiya Tehsil Dhaurahra District Lakhimpur Kheri And REGISTERED at Sub Registrar Office Dhaurahra at Book no. 1, Jild no. 1814, Page no. 185 to 206, Serial no. 3296, Dated 12-06-2009 Bounded as under North-khet Shri Krashna, South - Makan Ishwardeen, East- Rasta khadanja, West-Makan Gobare	Date 02.09.2019 Date 13.08.2020 Rs. 2,70,243/- + Interest and other charges
7	Paliya Kalan	Rishi kumar Gupta S/o Laxmi Narayan gupta Prop. Niharika Treding Company Station Road Paliya kalan R/o Moh. Nagar Palika Road Paliya - kalan, Tahsil Paliya kalan, District - Lakhimpur Kheri	Rishi kumar Gupta S/o Laxmi Narayan gupta Prop. Niharika Treding Company Station Road Paliya kalan R/o Moh. Nagar Palika Road Paliya - kalan, Tahsil Paliya kalan, District - Lakhimpur Kheri	Immovable Property 400 Sq. fit (38 Sq. met.) in the Name of Rishi kumar Gupta S/o Laxml Narayan gupta Situated at Moh. Kisan Paliya kalan Tahsil Paliya kalan District Lakhimpur Kheri And REGISTE-RED at Sub Registrar Office Paliya kalan at Book no. 1, Jild no. 154, Page no. 23 to 54, Serial no. 469, Dated 20-02-2004 Bounded as under. North - Makan Laxmi Narayan Gupta, South - Nagar Palika road, East - Makan Laxmi Narayan Gupta, West - Makan Laxmi Narayan Gupta	Date 02.09.2019 Date 13.08.2020 Rs. 6,67,069/- + Interest and other charges
8	Paliya Kalan	Suneel Kumar Gupta S/o Ishwar chandra gupta Prop. Taral Fertilazers Sampurna-nagar Road Paliya kalan R/o Moh. Nagar Palika Road, Paliya kalan, Tahsil - Paliya kalan, District - Lakhimpur, kheri.	Rajeev kumar Gupta S/o Ishwar chandra gupta R/o Moh. Ahiran Pratham - Paliya kalan Tahsil - Paliya kalan District - Lakhimpur Kheri	Immovable Property 918 Sq. fit Date (85.50 Sq. met.) in the Name of Rajeev kumar Gupta S/o Ishwar Chandra Gupta Situated at Moh. kisan Second Paliya kalan Tahsil Paliya kalan, District Lakhimpur kheri And REGISTERED at Sub Registrar Office Paliya kalan at Book no. 1, Jild no. 276, Page no. 359 to 390, Serial no. 2811, Dated 13-07-2005 Bounded as under. North - Khet Shankar Lal Bajpeyi, South - Kachcha Rasta, East - Makan Babu Ram, West - Makan Umashankar	Date 02.09.2019 Date 13.08.2020 Rs. 4,86,734/- + Interest and other charges
SECRETARY / C.E.O. DISTRICT COOPERATIVE BANK LTD. LAKHIMPUR - KHERI					

China's vaccine gambit

Xi Jinping hopes that his 'Health Silk Road' can justify his refusal for a WHO-led probe into the pandemic



There is no doubt that China has been stained by its mishandling of the Wuhan contagion and the world had to pay a huge price for its wilful suppression of facts that led to the pandemic of our lifetime. And though it has been trying to buy back goodwill by supplying vaccines and medical kits to the needy and affected countries, its rigidity against the global probe into the origins of the virus is proving counter-productive. Porosity has to work both ways but China is adamant about the denial of its role in the spread of COVID-19, claiming it was as much a victim as everyone else. The problem is that the more

it tries to disown its part in exacerbating matters, the more the trust deficit piles up against its "Health Silk Route", a diplomatic initiative to heal the world and, thus, silence the critics. Now even the World Health Organisation, which came under fire for buying into China's story in the initial days of the outbreak, is "very disappointed" with it. That's because China has still not cleared the entry of a team of international experts tasked with investigating the origins of the virus. But China sees the mission as part of yet another global shaming effort and this stand-offish approach is certainly not doing anything to obviate its complicity in hiding the scale of the pandemic.

Its seemingly altruistic effort to offer test kits earlier and the vaccine now has clearly backfired. With the First World and even its allies like Turkey rejecting the faulty test kits, it had hoped to dump its vaccines on lesser developed countries. But with domestic scepticism over them and little or no information available about their safety or efficacy *vis-à-vis* Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson, even its neighbours are wary of picking them up. Besides, the conditional nature of the deals has put even ASEAN nations on the back foot, with China demanding that they withdraw support to a demand for a global probe into the origins of the virus. So, some of these nations have ended up sealing deals with the Western pharma majors. Suspected of hegemonistic designs by nations it had debt-trapped, they are even going cold on its much-touted Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), seemingly a strategic cooperation but practically an economic slavery of sorts. So China is betting big on healthcare dependence, not only to deflect the negativity against it but to boost the market for its science and bio-tech sectors. Its desperation can be gauged from the fact that its controlled media is publishing images of normal life with concerts, parties and celebrations to show how it has tamed the pandemic. But reports of cluster outbreaks demolish such planted narratives. Despite the unease of nations, China is continuing to accelerate its production line of vaccines and supplying millions of doses in lesser time than the other pharma majors so that even countries not keen on sourcing from it are bound to do so. It has already signed deals with Malaysia and the Philippines, hoping that it would prevent them from talking against Beijing's expansionist ambitions. China is cleverly using its vaccine as a bait to push its agenda. In fact, its "health first" is just an umbrella approach to spread wings across the greatest constituency it can mine for its use, the public health systems of various nations. A Hong Kong-based brokerage firm has estimated that if China can capture just 15 per cent of the market in the middle and low-income countries, it would net around \$2.8 billion in vaccine sales and command the global health economy. In fact, China's vaccine push could help it revive its infrastructure invasion in other nations, which has clearly been hit by the pandemic. It's believed that it has already got E-commerce giant Alibaba to build warehouses in Ethiopia and Dubai that will serve as vaccine distribution hubs for Africa and the Middle East. And that it is already building vaccine production facilities in countries like Brazil, Morocco and Indonesia which have participated in trials, too. But the question is will it be able to negotiate its image through such deals while being allergic to global scrutiny? For the world has seen through much of China's designs and is unlikely to be taken in by President Xi Jinping's new agenda of building a "community of common health".

Clipping an outbreak

The bird flu is no good news but India seems to be putting to good use the lessons learnt during the COVID pandemic



The new decade has not begun on a good note for India. Anyone who followed what the health experts and virologists had been predicting about the path the pandemic would take must have been mentally prepared for the fact that the Coronavirus would continue to haunt humanity at least till the winter of 2021. However, with the start of a new year and in spite of a new, mutated strain of the Coronavirus wreaking havoc which made even the British Prime Minister cancel his India visit, people had hoped to put the nightmarish experience of 2020 behind them. But now New Delhi has another, emerging worry on its hands. At least four States — Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and

Rajasthan — have reported confirmed bird flu cases. Thankfully, already in fighting mode due to the pandemic, the Government sounded an alert with speed and the health authorities have stepped up efforts to contain the spread of the flu's H5N8 strain. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu too are on their toes as thousands of ducks have died in the neighbouring Kerala. Similarly, Haryana, where over four lakh poultry birds perished at Panchkula farms in the past 10 days, and Jammu and Kashmir are alert and taking evasive action. Though there have been no reported cases of transmission to humans despite the disease being zoonotic, health authorities are not taking any chances as the avian flu's mortality rate is 30-50 per cent as against the casualty rate of COVID-19, which is pegged at 0.31 per cent. But even if the nation is able to avoid human infections, the avian flu will be a body blow to the domestic poultry and meat industry as bird flu viruses can infect both birds and animals. As it is, the poultry industry suffered the most on account of rumours during the pandemic and chicken sales in India dipped to over 50 per cent in 2020 and the prices fell by 70 per cent. The sales had started to pick up only towards the end of the year as COVID fatigue set in.

Now, the fresh outbreak will sound the death knell not just for thousands of birds; it will make it difficult for the industry to survive. We are already seeing its effects as the slaughter, sale, purchase and export of any poultry birds, fish and related products have been banned in Kangra district, marked as the epicentre of the infection in Himachal. In Kerala, around 24,000 birds, mostly ducks, were culled and more States are expected to follow suit. But one good thing is that India has learnt many vital lessons from the COVID outbreak and the Government and health authorities are now putting these to good use. As many as 12 epicentres in the affected States have been identified and the Centre has issued an advisory apart from setting up a control room in Delhi. In Indore, the health department has begun door-to-door medical check-ups of people living in areas where hundreds of crows were found dead. Such quick, coordinated and concerted action by all stakeholders, including the Centre and States, would have been unthinkable a year ago. Yes, the pandemic did ruin our economy and resulted in major socio-economic trauma but every dark cloud has a silver lining. And the bright side for India is a ramped-up healthcare infrastructure, lessons in speedy response to a health emergency, quick identification of hotspots, testing, quarantining and evasive action.

opinion08

Pakistan's sophistry

Its terror-conducive justice system, backed by the machinations of the politico-military-clergy triad, is a hoax. The country had better be prudent



BHOPINDER SINGH

Pakistan's overall criminal justice system on terrorism is a creaking sham, not just owing to the complicity of the politico-military-clergy triad but also due to the compromised nature of the two essentials of any criminal justice system, i.e. prosecution and the judiciary. Despite various Anti-Terrorism Acts (ATAs), Anti-Terrorism Courts (ATCs) and even more grandiloquent National Action Plan (NAP) — the conviction rates in terror cases in Pakistan remain abysmally low, if at all the convictions take place. The judiciary has historically been an integral part of the Pakistani establishment's machinations as exemplified in the mid-50s when Chief Justice Muhammad Munir had propounded the "doctrine of necessity" to legalise General Ayub Khan's extralegal takeover of the country by suggesting that "which is otherwise not lawful is made lawful by necessity". But the fickle nature of intrigues and inter-institutional one-upmanship can result in the judiciary taking on the politicians and Generals also — not necessarily to uphold the law but pursuant to their own institutional turf wars. A special court trying the former Pakistan Army chief and President, Pervez Musharraf, had stunningly announced for him the death penalty by majority votes (which was later overturned); and, more recently, the Pakistani Chief Justice had rejected a petitioner's last-minute withdrawal plea that had initially challenged the extension of the Pakistan Army chief's tenure. It was followed by a tense three-day drama which kept the politicians and the Generals on the tenterhooks. The wheels-within-wheels of manipulation and vested interests by all the competing arms of governance have ensured the perpetuation of the rot that facilitates "terror nurseries".

Pakistan is precariously poised to potentially get "blacklisted" for supporting and financing terror and is under constant review by the watchdog agency, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). But a few weeks ago, the Sindh High Court had set aside the provincial Government's detention orders pertaining to the four terrorists held for the abduction and gruesome murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl. The horrifying case of the journalist's decapitation had shocked the conscience of the international community but the provincial court declared it "null and void" and not warranting "any sort of detention". The acting Attorney-General of the US, Jeffrey Rosen, indignantly



remarked that the "separate judicial rulings reversing conviction and ordering release are an affront to terrorism victims everywhere", and the family of the journalist called it a "travesty of justice". For its part, India is well versed with the Pakistani judicial system as a similar fate was bestowed upon the likes of Hafiz Saeed, Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi and the other masterminds of the Mumbai 26/11 carnage who are often "detained", "kept under house arrest" and even "sentenced" to appease the international community and keep the FATF proceedings from reaching harsh and punitive action, but are able to indulge in their nefarious activities nonetheless.

Intelligence sources had named the terror and Sunni-supremacist organisation, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, as being one of the key participants in the Daniel Pearl murder case. The dilly-dallying, obsequiousness and the long rope afforded by the courts to such organisations ensure that they continue to thrive irrespective of their crimes. The complicated history of the Pakistani military and its intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), in nurturing and supporting such outfits from time to time has always ensured that there are crucial "contacts" and "sympathisers" within the military and the additional pusillanimity by other levers like the judiciary, completely enfeebling the anti-terror commitments that exist only in name. Unsurprisingly, last week, the

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same Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and ISIL (ISIS) cadres were said to have killed 11 Hazara Shia coal miners after abducting them, tying up their hands and shooting them in cold blood — another statistic was added to Pakistan's bloody societal violence that is unmatched in its brutality, and apparent acquiescence and leniency from the Government's side, at the same time.

To add insult to injury in the lamentable circus that besets Pakistan, Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari inconceivably said: "India-funded terrorists in Balochistan are getting more desperate as development comes to the province!" The reality of the supposed "development" in the region barely masks the fact that the persecuted Shia Hazara community, from which these miners had come, is huddled in two heavily guarded ghettos in Quetta and surrounded by high walls and barbed wire, after hundreds of them were killed in sectarian violence over the past couple of decades. For the religious minorities and the "deemed minorities" like Shias, Ahmediyas and several others, justice is a far cry.

Even if the odd individual wishes to stand up for justice and for upholding the constitutional provisions, the societal regression that envelops the Pakistani judicial system is all-pervasive and powerful, as was seen when the proud murderer Mumtaz Qadri (who had killed Punjab Governor Salman Taseer in broad daylight) was showered with rose petals by the resident lawyers when he attended court. The judge who finally gave Qadri the death sentence had to face an impromptu strike by the District Bar Association, had his office vandalised and was forced into exile out of the country, fearing for his life. Further, the witness protection programmes in Pakistan are completely ineffective as "influential" bodies routinely and

brazenly ensure intimidation and retractions, and people are simply too scared to testify.

The patent sophistry of ascribing the booming terror network in Pakistan onto the so-called "non-State actors" is a bogey that has lost all credibility. No such apparatus or ecosystem can survive for so long with such impunity despite so many Acts, laws and military exercises aimed at "uprooting terror" — unless the elements of the law-makers (politicos), law enforcers (police/paramilitary), military, religio-social leaders and the judiciary themselves are hand in glove with the perpetrators. Indeed, many a time these terror elements also turn onto their one-time benefactors to settle scores and, therefore, the disentanglement of the murky terror wirings is not very obvious, linear or simple, given the multiplicity of the individual and institutional cross-support afforded to them from time to time. Therefore, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's unconvincing posturing as the "victim of terror" is akin to crying wolf as the Frankensteinian reality convinces nobody. The quartet of Pakistan's military-politicians-clergy-judiciary can never come clean or abort their inter-linkages with such elements. But they will do well to remember that the slippery slope of terror spares absolutely no one.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUND BITE

The 444-km Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline commissioned on Tuesday would benefit industrial, commercial entities and households in Karnataka's coastal districts.

Karnataka CM
BS Yediyurappa



I am very disappointed that China has not yet finalised the permissions for our team's arrivals, given that two members have already begun their journey.

WHO chief
Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus



There are some films that are made only for the big screen. There are a few films of mine that are going to be released this year, so I hope audiences watch those films in theatres.

Actor
Anil Kapoor



Rohit Sharma will open the innings for India in the third Test against Australia which begins at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) on Thursday.

Indian cricket captain
Ajinkya Rahane



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Give up, Trump!

Sir — The 45th US President Donald Trump's adamancy to give up his office despite having lost to his political rival Joseph Biden comes across as a bizarre challenge to the very ideals, values, norms and standards the world's oldest democracy stands for. Joe Biden's oath-taking ceremony, scheduled for January 20, remains just a *fait accompli* now. That the outgoing US President's defeat seems to be not going down well with him is evident from his desperate attempt to overturn the public verdict in the recently-held presidential election, given the recent revelations about a phone call that he made to the Secretary of State in Georgia that he would "fight like hell" to hold on to the presidency. At the end of the day, both President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have jointly been entrusted with a major responsibility to uphold the unity of the US which seems to be sharply divided in 'Blue' and 'Red' States. The world is closely observing.

Azhar A Khan
Rampur

Govt must allay apprehensions on Central Vista

This refers to the editorial '*SC nod to makeover*' (January 6). The Supreme Court's nod to the controversial Central Vista redevelopment project clears the way for the construction of a new Parliament building envisaged to be ready by August 2022, when the nation will celebrate its 75th Independence Day.

Now that the project has been approved, the Centre needs to reach out to leaders across the political spectrum and be mindful of their apprehensions. The ground-breaking ceremony held last month was boycotted by the Opposition and frowned upon by the apex court.

The project's proponents must take adequate measures to allay the fears of environmentalists who allege that the project is detrimental to the flora and fauna. The top court said that the Government will have to take approvals from the Heritage Conservation Committee and municipal authorities before starting the construction.

The Central Vista project aims for an integrated administrative block and synergised functioning of ministries spread across 47 buildings in the region. The Government claims that the new structure



would save crores of rupees which are paid as rent for the offices by the exchequer. It also claims that the new building will not face issues like inadequate space, structural weaknesses and so on. That may sound logical but building an edifice for a forum meant for informed discussion and debate while giving these very considerations the go-by is a false start.

N Sadhasiva Reddy
Bengaluru

Let the stalemate end

Sir — The seventh round of talks between farmers and the Central Government have failed and the next round of talks is slated for January 8. The Centre is dragging the issue and doesn't seem to be interested in really solving the problem.

The demands of thousands of farmers who are protesting in

severe cold and rain at Delhi's borders cannot be ignored in such an apathetic manner. The farmers are adamant on their demands for the repeal of three new farm laws and a legal guarantee on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) but the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA Government is in no mood to concede to their

demands. Keeping in view the large section of people from all walks of life supporting the agrarian protest, the Government must take it seriously and resolve to end the stalemate, else it would prove to be counterproductive for the incumbent regime.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Boost new enterprises

Sir — The entrepreneurship in the fields of livestock and fisheries has proved to be a game-changer for the rural economy. Livestock contributes handsomely to the income of small farm families and provides self-employment to millions of people, especially the villagers. It has contributed significantly to the empowerment of women by increasing their income. Instead of migrating to cities for employment, the youth must take to livestock farming.

The Government should do advance research and encourage farmers to adopt an integrated farming approach. A public-private partnership for sustainable livestock rearing should also be promoted, not to mention the need to have advance technological intervention and increase in market connectivity and processing chain. The Centre, along with the State Governments, should frame a comprehensive policy for the same.

Dr Satywan Saurabh
Hisar

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Assange is safe, for now

America had worked hard to get around natural British reluctance to extradite a non-American, non-resident to the US, for a political crime



GWYNNE DYER

Recently, a British judge finally rejected America’s attempt to extradite WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and jail him forever (or at least for 175 years in a high-security “super-max” prison) on the grounds that he is, as US President-elect Joe Biden once called him, a “high-tech terrorist.”

The vindictiveness of the American security establishment towards whistle-blowers is awesome to behold. The American Government had worked quite hard to get around natural British reluctance to extradite a non-American, non-resident to the US, for a political crime. Washington always tried to assure London that Assange’s sentence would “probably” be only four to six years (but there was no guarantee that it wouldn’t turn out to be 10 times that once he was on American soil).

The US prosecutors too, tried to make their desire to get their hands on Assange look non-political by charging him with a civil crime (conspiring to hack into a Pentagon computer network) but if extradited to the US, he also faces 17 charges under the Espionage Act for soliciting and publishing confidential information.

Chelsea Manning, the former US Army Intelligence analyst who gave WikiLeaks that spectacular dump of 7,25,000 classified cables from American embassies a decade ago, was jailed again for eight months in 2019-20 in an attempt to force her to incriminate Assange. (She had already served four years of a 35-year sentence before being pardoned by Obama in 2016.)

To her credit, Manning held out under huge pressure, accumulating \$1,000 fines for each day she refused to talk and was finally released in March 2020 after attempting suicide. The fines still stand, however, and she is now a bankrupt activist who owes the US Government a whopping \$2,56,000.

Vindictive is definitely the word for the US Government and Judge Vanessa Baraitser at the Old Bailey (Central Criminal Court) in London had to work quite hard to thwart America’s campaign to get its hands on Assange. Thankfully, she found a way in the end. She ruled that while the American prosecutors had met the legal criteria for Assange to be extradited to the US for trial, their request was denied because the US authorities could not prevent him from attempting to take his own life. He has effectively been in solitary confinement for the last eight years and his psychological state is too shaky to survive back in solitary (as he certainly would be) in a US prison.

Assange now goes back to Belmarsh prison in London and back to solitary confinement because the COVID pandemic is raging at Belmarsh. But his application for bail will probably be granted later this week. He’s not completely out of the woods yet, since the US Government undoubtedly will appeal. However, Judge Baraitser probably based her decision on health grounds because a higher court would be less likely to reverse it. In the meantime, Assange could be at home for the first time ever with his partner (whom he met while taking political asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy) and his two young sons.

The road of the whistle-blower is long and lonely. Edward Snowden, who alerted the world about the scale of the US’ global electronic surveillance operation in 2013, is still in exile in Russia. But such people are among the few protections we have against the misdeeds of the overweening security State. Daniel Ellsberg, celebrated for his theft and publication of the *Pentagon Papers* detailing the US Government’s crimes in Vietnam, put it best: “The American public needed urgently to know what was being done routinely in their name. And there was no other way to learn it than by unauthorised disclosure.”

Julian Assange is firmly in that tradition. His accusers trot out the usual allegation that the confidential material he published endangered people’s lives, but if that were true you would certainly have heard those people’s names and details by now.

His revelations about the US military’s misdeeds in Iraq were as valuable as Ellsberg’s about Vietnam. Few who saw it will ever forget the video in which the crew of a US Apache helicopter over Baghdad machine-guns innocent civilians, while saying things like “Oh yeah, look at those dead bastards” and “It’s their fault for bringing their kids into battle.”

There are aspects of Assange’s private life that still cast a shadow, like two charges of sexual assault (now dropped) against women in Sweden. But it is also the case that serious attempts were being made to discredit Assange and WikiLeaks even before the famous 2010 dump of the US embassy cables. And in any case his professional behaviour has nothing to do with his private life, even if any misdemeanour cannot be condoned. So, as the UK court gives the beleaguered whistle-blower a breather for now, take a moment to honour Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning. These hounded, unsung heroes have earned it.

(Gwynne Dyer’s new book is ‘Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work.’ The views expressed are personal.)

DON’T PAY US FOR MOTHERING OUR OWN. WE DON’T NEED A SALARY FOR BEING THE QUEENS OF OUR OWN LITTLE KINGDOM, OUR HOME.

—ACTOR
KANGANA RANAUT



IT’S ABOUT RECOGNISING THE VALUE OF UNPAID WORK AND ENSURING A BASIC INCOME TO EVERY WOMAN. I’D LIKE ALL TO BE EMPOWERED LIKE YOU.

—CONGRESS LEADER
SHASHI THAROOR

A case for Mount Sikdar

Changing the name of Mount Everest to Mount Sikdar Everest will perhaps do full justice to Radhanath and give him global recognition which was his legitimate due



KK PAUL

All of us are aware from the days of our childhood that the highest mountain peak in the world is Mount Everest and it was named after George Everest. It was only much later that one came to know that Sir George Everest was the Surveyor-General of India and the peak was so named as he had “discovered” it to be the highest in the world. As the Surveyor-General he had his offices at Dehradun and used to stay in Mussoorie. He left India in 1843, almost 200 years ago, but his house in Mussoorie is still being preserved and is now a place of tourist interest.

The truth, however, is somewhat different. It is indeed a fact that Sir George Everest was the Surveyor-General of India from 1830 to 1843, but it is also a fact that during his tenure, Mount Everest, as we know it today, was known only as peak XV. Everest had neither initiated the process of measuring the height of this peak, nor was he instrumental in its naming, which was done much later, long after he had proceeded to England, to enjoy his retirement after 1843.

Located on the border of Nepal and Tibet, peak XV was worshipped as a holy place by Tibetans, who called it Chomolungma, the mother goddess of the world. In Nepal this peak is known as Sagarmatha, meaning the peak of the heavens. Even these days this peak is addressed by its traditional names both in Tibet and Nepal, while we have followed what was given to us by the British i.e. Mount Everest. In fact the name Everest was given by Colonel Sir Andrew Waugh of Bengal Engineers, who succeeded Everest as the Surveyor-General of India from 1844 to 1861. The circumstances under which peak XV was named as Mount Everest are rather peculiar and reveal a very biased handling of the matter so that the entire credit went to the British officers of the East India Company.

Going through the historical records of the *Survey of India Volume IV, 1830 to 1843*, pertaining to the tenure of Everest, one can at a glance observe that he had shown no interest in peak XV during this time in office. It was his successor Andrew Waugh, who made the official announcement of peak XV being the highest-known peak of the world in 1856. The measurements had of course been initiated much earlier and finalised by our own Radhanath Sikdar.

Recognising the work of the brilliant mathematician Radhanath Sikdar, the Government of India issued a postage stamp in his honour in 2004. However, his work is of such great importance that issuing a postage stamp and then forgetting about him does not do justice to him or his contribution. Ironically, it was Everest, who recruited Sikdar in the Great Trigonometrical Survey and became extremely fond of him. Volume IV of the *Historical Records of the Survey of India*, pertaining to his tenure, has the following mention about Sikdar.

“Radhanath is high in favour with everybody, and universally beloved in the GT Survey. You will not know him for the same person when you see him again, for he is no longer a puny stripling, but a hardy, energetic young man, ready to undergo any fatigue and acquire a practical knowledge of all parts of his profession...”

“There are few of my instruments which he cannot manage; and none of my computations of which he is not thoroughly master... Eventually he will furnish a convincing proof that the aptitude of your countrymen for the practical, as well as the theoretical, parts of mathematics is in no wise

“WE DO NOT HAVE TO SEEK ANYBODY’S APPROVAL FOR SUCH A CHANGE AS THE RATIONALE IS WELL-DOCUMENTED. EVEN IF THE WORLD CONTINUES TO CALL IT EVEREST, IN INDIA, WE COULD STILL CALL IT SIKDAR EVEREST”



inferior to that of Europeans.”

“Of the qualifications of the young man himself I cannot speak too highly. In his mathematical attainments there are few in India, whether European or Native, who can at all compete with him, and...even in Europe those attainments would rank very high.”

Later, on account of a special technique developed by Sikdar for accurate computation of heights and distances through spherical trigonometry, he virtually became indispensable to the organisation and rose to become the Chief Computer in the office of the Surveyor-General of India. In that position he moved from Dehradun to Kolkata in 1849. As to why Andrew Waugh gave the name Everest, even though he had left the scene long ago, is an interesting piece of history.

Had Sidney Gerald Burrard, a later Surveyor-General of India, not acknowledged the good work of Sikdar through a research paper published in 1904 in the scientific journal *Nature*, these facts would not have come to light. He published in detail various steps taken for the measurement of peak XV.

This, in a way, also exposed the machinations of Waugh, who had tried his level best to take credit away from Sikdar. It is human nature that, in case something important is achieved, one tries to take or give credit to someone but in this case Waugh specifically mentioned that Sikdar had nothing to do with this work, indicating his bias.

Later, he could be seen placating Sikdar by telling him that he should be happy that the peak had been named after his mentor. Waugh also gave the additional charge of the Indian Meteorological Department to Sikdar, raising his salary to ₹600 per month,

which was unheard for an Indian in those days. Clearly all these efforts were to keep him happy but away from the core of the survey work.

Burrard’s publication in *Nature* specifically mentions that the Chief Computer (who was Sikdar) from Kolkata (then Calcutta) had informed Waugh in 1852 that the peak designated XV had been found to be higher than any other highest measured peak in the world at that time.

The raw data from theodolites taken from seven observation stations at Jiro, Mirzapur, Janjpati, Ladiva, Haripur, Minai and Doom Dongi was collected at the trigonometrical survey at Kolkata. This was processed by Sikdar who then conveyed to Waugh that peak XV had been measured at 29,002 feet taking the mean value of all the observations. Considering that the scientific instrumentation available at that time was only of a rudimentary nature, the level of accuracy reached was almost 100 per cent and this figure has not undergone any major change despite the current state of technological progress.

Significantly, after years of debate, China and Nepal recently agreed on a precise elevation for Mount Everest. The new agreed height of 29,031 feet was announced at a virtual ceremony. Such a minuscule change in the height of the peak despite the sophisticated technology used is a great proof of Sikdar’s excellence.

Correspondence between Waugh and Sikdar reveals that Waugh did privately acknowledge the achievement of Sikdar, but did not recognise his work on record and in public. In his letter dated August 25, 1856, Waugh wrote to Sikdar that he was glad to hear that naming the peak as Everest had given the latter a lot

of satisfaction. Thus it is clear that the name Everest was given to ensure that Sikdar, who could have been the rightful claimant for credit, did not object as he was extremely fond of Everest who had recruited him in service. This information would have remained obscure, but for the research paper of Burrard in 1904. Later, Professor Meghnad Saha acknowledged this feat in 1938 by giving Sikdar full credit. Earlier Kenneth Mason in 1928 had recognised his work as also John Keay in his book, *The Great Arc*.

Changing the name of Mount Everest to Mount Sikdar Everest will perhaps do full justice to Sikdar and give him worldwide recognition which was legitimately his due, long time ago. We do not have to seek anybody’s approval for such a change as the rationale is well-documented. Even if the world continues to call it Everest, in India, we could still call it Sikdar Everest.

On several occasions, achievements of Indian scientists have not been recognised. For instance, Sir JC Bose could have got the Nobel Prize for Physics or at least shared it with Marconi for his work on the wireless and radio.

SN Bose could have got the Nobel Prize way back in 1932 for his work with Einstein on the Bose-Einstein condensate but at least he was recognised, though belatedly by the naming of the God particle, Higgs-Boson after him. Naming Everest as Sikdar Everest would be a recognition of a scientist whose work has stood the test of time. Besides it would also justifiably add to our national pride.

(The writer is a former Police Commissioner and ex-Governor of Uttarakhand. The views expressed are personal.)

The Blue Economy can dispel economic blues

With many traditional industries currently stagnated, India urgently needs an eco-friendly sector whose economic potential has not yet been fully realised



KOTA SRIRAJ

The rapidly spreading new strain of the COVID-19 virus indicates that the fight against the pandemic and its fallout is far from over. The UK has announced a complete lockdown until mid-February in order to cut the spiralling infection rate, while India is also witnessing a sudden spurt in cases of the new strain in various States. These developments are bound to take a heavy toll on an already beleaguered economy. However, humanity has not lost hope and believes that the global economy will bounce back.

The socio-economic destruction in the wake of the COVID-19 pan-

dem brought the Indian economy to its knees. Unemployment rose sharply from 6.7 per cent in March 2020 to 26 per cent in April 2020. This translates to nearly 140 million people losing their jobs in a shockingly short span of time. The same period also witnessed a fall in business activity from 82 per cent to 44 per cent, eventually followed by the largest-ever Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contraction of minus 24 per cent in the First Quarter of the Financial Year 2020-21.

In fact, India suffered a staggering loss of ₹32,000 crore per day during the first 21 days of the lockdown. These tremendous economic reverses need the intervention of innovative measures such as an increased focus on marginally leveraged areas such as the ‘Blue Economy’.

The World Bank defines the Blue Economy as sustainable use of the global oceanic resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and for sustaining a healthy ocean ecosystem. Originally coined by Belgian economist Gunter Pauli in

2010, the term ‘Blue Economy’ holds tremendous environmental and economic relevance for the Indian economy which holds fifth position in the world.

Judicious development of the Blue Economy is critical for the country’s efforts to revive its crippled fiscal health. This sector will not only help resurrect the comatose economy but can also lead to sustainable growth in the coming decade and beyond. With many traditional sectors currently stagnated and bogged down in the recession, India urgently needs an eco-friendly and long-term sector whose economic potential has not yet been fully realised.

The oceans abutting India’s nearly 7,000-km-long coastline have the capacity to provide just what the nation needs. According to the Ministry of Earth Sciences, currently the Blue Economy in India comprises just 4.1 per cent of the GDP, which demonstrates the need to scale up this sector.

India already has robust traditional oceanic activities such as fisheries,



tourism, maritime transport and so on. For the Blue Economy, the Government can increase its focus on certain emerging areas such as maritime renewable energy, seabed extractive activities, marine biotechnology and bioprospecting. Of all the avenues, bioprospecting is the most exciting because it has the potential to become a long-term economic resource as it involves eco-friendly exploration and harnessing of plant and animal species from which medicinal drugs, biochemicals and other

commercially valuable material can be obtained. With a sea of opportunities waiting to be tapped, the Blue Economy can prove to be the next level of growth for India but at the same time, we need to exercise extreme caution in order to ensure that any harm to the environment or the delicate marine biodiversity is not only predicted beforehand but also avoided properly. For instance, bioprospecting can sometimes cause overharvesting of individual species which leads to their extinction. It caus-

es immense damage to the environment as the role of any particular species in the ecosystem cannot be replicated by any other breed. The Government must also ensure that the private sector enterprises engaged in the Blue Economy abide by strict norms and regulations for safeguarding the marine ecosystem. Only then we will be able to have environmentally responsible economic growth for our nation.

As a first step towards leveraging the oceans for responsible economic growth, India needs to up the explorative extent of the oceans under its purview. This area definitely needs improvement. Furthermore, the achievements and potential of Blue Economy-related activities mostly go unreported which results in less awareness among the citizens and investors regarding its potentiality. Therefore, it does not attract private sector enterprises or investments and these conditions are detrimental to its development and growth.

The Blue Economy can turn the proverbial economic page for India as

it entails multiple socio-economic benefits. It can not only help in livelihood generation, providing energy security and improving the health and prosperity of coastal communities but can also increase the ecological resilience of the oceans surrounding India. If piloted properly, the Blue Economic development drive will help India achieve its Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and also pave the way for marine sector services to assist the Indian economy to become a \$10 trillion one by 2030. But careful planning and implementation are needed for these goals to be achieved. Oceans constitute over 70 per cent of the Earth’s surface and if their vast resources are harnessed with a sense of responsibility and due respect for the environment, they can provide infinite assets for our economy. India is gifted with abundant oceanic resources making it possible to power the country’s future with the aid of the Blue Economy.

(The writer is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

COVID-19 IMPACT

Housing sales down 37%

OFFICE LEASING DIPS 35PC IN 2020 ACROSS 8 CITIES

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Housing sales fell 37 per cent year-on-year during the 2020 calendar year while gross office space leasing declined 35 per cent on low demand because of the coronavirus pandemic, but demand improved significantly in the last quarter to cross pre-COVID level, property consultant Knight Frank India said on Wednesday.

In its 'India Real Estate - Residential and Office Update H2 2020' report released on Wednesday, the consultant reported that sales of residential properties fell 37 per cent to 1,54,534 units in 2020 across eight cities as compared with 2,45,861 units in the previous year. Similarly, the gross office

space absorption declined 35 per cent to 39.4 million sq ft from 60.6 million sq ft.

However, both housing sales and gross office leasing during October-December 2020 were higher than the corresponding period of the previous year. The sales of residential properties in the fourth quarter of the 2020 calendar year rose to 61,592 units from 58,402 units in the year-ago period on pent-up and festive demand, while office absorption increased to 17.5 million sq ft from 16.4 million sq ft.

As per the annual data, housing sales fell in all eight major cities during 2020, with demand falling most in Ahmedabad and least in Pune. In the office market, Hyderabad witnessed maximum decline in leasing activities and Ahmedabad the least.

Knight Frank India tracks eight property markets -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, and

Ahmedabad.

In the residential property market, housing sales fell 18 per cent in Pune to 26,919 units in the previous year, while Mumbai saw 20 per cent decline at 48,688 units from 60,943 units. The Maharashtra government's decision to temporarily cut stamp duty on registration of properties led to higher sales in Mumbai and Pune region during the last four months of the 2020 calendar year, the consultant said.

Housing sales in Delhi-NCR decreased 50 per cent to 21,234 units in 2020 from 42,828 units in the previous year, while demand slumped 51 per cent in Bengaluru to 23,579 units from 48,076 units.

In Chennai, sales fell 49 per cent to 8,654 units in 2020 from 16,959 units in the previous year. The sales of residential properties in Hyderabad declined 38 per cent to 10,042 units from 16,267 units. Kolkata saw 21

per cent fall in sales to 8,912 units from 11,266 units.

Ahmedabad was worst hit, with sales down by 61 per cent to 6,506 units in 2020 from 16,713 units in the previous year."Despite the on-going pandemic, the H2 2020 sales growth in some cities is fairly encouraging. In Q3 2020, the real estate market started witnessing revival signs, further recording a significant improvement in home sales during Q4 2020," Knight Frank India CMD Shishir Baijal said.

Out of the total sales number in the second half of 2020, he said Mumbai and Pune contributed around 50 per cent in home sales.

"This marvellous performance can be largely attributed to the state government's decision of reducing stamp duty in Maharashtra. The other state governments would need to jump into the bandwagon or offer something similar to bolster demand across their markets," Baijal said.

RBI to be on a long-pause in rates on sticky non-food inflation, says DBS report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The non-food component in the price basket will continue to keep inflation at a high level and result in a "long pause" in interest rates, a foreign bank said on Wednesday.

The central bank is likely to pare the pandemic-driven emergency response as well, the report by Singaporean lender DBS said.It can be noted that the high inflation driven by the food prices has forced the RBI to go for a status quo in rates for the three consecutive reviews of the bi-monthly policy meetings, even as growth continues to be in the negative territory. The RBI expects the GDP to contract by 7.5 per cent for FY21.The bank report said over a six month period, food inflation is likely to ease, but non-food may be sticky on account of rigidity in domestic fuel taxation, marginal hikes in manufacturing costs after months of the shutdown, com-

modity price rises, telecom price adjustments and return in demand impulses in certain core categories.The recent rally in commodities lends to fresh cost-push impact, especially industrial metals, it said, pointing out that generic steel hot-rolled coil futures are up by over 80 per cent since late-September 2020, while on oil, Brent crude rallied 30 per cent in the December quarter.

"While India's CPI inflation is expected to ease, 2021 average inflation will stay above the 4 per cent target. Room for outright rate cuts is, thereby, limited, but the central bank will settle into a long pause, with a bias to anchor rates through strong dovish guidance," as per the report.

It added that an upcoming review of the inflation targets is "unlikely" to result in a material change. The 4 per cent inflation target given to the Reserve Bank of India is up for review post-March.

WhatsApp updates terms of service, privacy policy for users

New Delhi:WhatsApp has updated its terms of service and privacy policy regarding how it processes user data and partners with Facebook to offer integrations across the social media giant's products. Users have received in-app prompts informing them of the update in terms of use that take effect on February 8, 2021.

The message to users noted that the key updates include what WhatsApp's service and how it processes user data; how businesses can use Facebook hosted services to store and manage their WhatsApp chats; and how WhatsApp partners with Facebook to offer integrations across the company products.

The message added that users will need to accept these updates to continue using WhatsApp. When contacted, a WhatsApp spokesperson said, "As we've previously talked as part of WhatsApp's business

vision in October 2020, in order to enable small businesses better, we are updating our terms of service and privacy policy as we work to make WhatsApp a great way to get answers or help from a business." The spokesperson said the updated terms of service and privacy policy include additional information on how the company handles user data.

"Our updated Terms and Privacy Policy provide more information on how we process your data, and our commitment to privacy. "For example, we've added more information about more recent product features (like catalogs/ add to cart feature, etc) and functionalities, how we process your data for safety, security and integrity, and added more direct links to user settings, Help Center articles and how you can manage your information," the spokesperson said.

PTI

PM Modi to interact with leading economists tomorrow

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with leading economists and sectoral experts on Friday to delib-

erate on measures that may be included in the upcoming budget for promoting growth, amid uncertainty on multiple fronts caused by Covid-19. The meeting, being organised by the

government think tank Niti Aayog will be held virtually and will also be attended by Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar and Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant. The meeting

assumes significance as according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), India's economy is projected to contract 7.5 per cent in the current fiscal ending March 31, 2021.

Large number of farmers supporting agri laws: Tomar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Wednesday said a large number of farmers from across the

country are coming out in support of three farm laws and urged protesting unions to understand the sentiments behind reforms brought through these legislations.

He also expressed confidence that the protesting unions will focus on farmers interests and help the government reach a solution through constructive dialogue.

Speaking to reporters after meeting a group supporting the laws, Tomar said the government is committed towards all farmers of the country and their interests.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	14,240.95	14,244.15	14,039.90	14,146.25	-53.25	
POWERGRID	188	197.6	187	195.8	7.8	
HINDALCO	250.75	260	247.75	259.2	8.9	
GAIL	130.8	136	130.5	133.9	4.6	
SHREECEM	24,084.00	24,947.40	23,850.00	24,699.00	803.5	
BHARTIARTL	515	531.75	513.1	528.2	14.2	
GRASIM	960	989.5	955.05	985.85	24.55	
ONGC	98.9	99.3	96.25	96.95	2	
ULTRACEMCO	5,360.00	5,468.50	5,300.00	5,443.15	101.95	
ICICIBANK	538.75	550.6	535.85	544.9	7.65	
JSWSTEEL	397.2	407.35	395.75	400.5	5.25	
IOC	93.35	95.6	93.2	94	1	
DIVISLAB	3,847.00	3,889.30	3,815.55	3,883.50	41.4	
TATAMOTORS	194.45	197.6	190.65	194.9	1.7	
SBIN	283	289.15	281.4	283.9	2.15	
IT	1,308.00	1,330.00	1,300.00	1,314.65	8.35	
HDCLIFE	73.1	72.05	70.5	71.78	4.05	
SBILIFE	906.55	915	901	910.65	5.1	
TATASTEEL	684	696.65	675	684.55	3.6	
KOTAKBANK	1,973.90	1,979.00	1,948.40	1,969.95	10.2	
HEROMOTOCO	3,081.30	3,123.60	3,046.00	3,070.40	6.8	
ASIANPAINT	2,801.30	2,822.45	2,780.00	2,799.95	6.1	
NTPC	98	99	97.25	97.8	0.2	
SUNPHARMA	604.1	610.95	596.15	604	0.55	
UPL	471.95	481.95	471.65	471.65	0.4	
TITAN	1,578.00	1,621.35	1,561.85	1,569.60	-1.35	
DREDDY	5,286.90	5,315.00	5,226.00	5,282.00	-4.9	
WIPRO	405	417.4	403.3	405.49	-0.4	
COALINDIA	135.4	137.3	133.8	135	-0.15	
BRITANNIA	3,568.00	3,602.00	3,510.00	3,546.65	-9.45	
CIPLA	829	834.4	815.25	825	-2.25	
NESTLEIND	18,510.05	18,600.00	18,430.00	18,490.05	-68.2	
MARUTI	7,654.00	7,749.00	7,555.50	7,625.25	-30.2	
INDUSINDBK	927.45	936.95	910	922.35	-6.5	
INDUSINDBK	927.45	936.95	910	922.35	-6.5	
BAJFINV	1,435.00	1,440.00	1,413.10	1,419.60	-6.9	
TECHM	8,900.00	8,900.00	8,636.00	8,774.95	-45.9	
HDCLIFE	1,004.00	1,026.00	983.35	996	-7.85	
DECC	2,664.70	2,665.00	2,619.00	2,631.00	-20.85	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3,492.65	3,527.00	3,435.90	3,462.35	-30.3	
INFY	1,300.00	1,320.00	1,288.05	1,282.50	-11.3	
ADANIAPORTS	501.8	504.95	489.5	495	-4.45	
M&M	741	746.45	730.45	733	-7.1	
BPCL	392.6	396.95	382.55	388	-4	
TCS	31,000.00	31,113.50	30,732.00	30,531.00	-40	
EICHERMOT	2,668.00	2,672.00	2,610.00	2,639.55	-35.35	
HINDUNIVHR	2,445.80	2,450.00	2,401.60	2,416.45	-35.9	
HCLTECH	997.9	998	964.6	976	-15.35	
BAFINANCE	51,300.00	51,683.55	49,930.00	50,029.95	-98.05	
AXISBANK	662	667.15	649.15	651.55	-12.9	
RELIANCE	1,965.90	1,966.00	1,905.15	1,915.50	-50.6	
ITC	211.45	211.55	204.5	205.3	-61.5	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	33,551.20	34,068.80	33,376.25	33,555.50	-63.25	
HINDZINC	257.25	279.9	256.95	276.8	19.9	
IGL	918.2	975	918.2	971.1	57.25	
SICAR	522.85	545.3	521	543	23.95	
CONCOR	420	444.9	417	432	16.8	
UNIL	1,193.00	1,237.45	1,180.95	1,221.10	38.05	
ADANTONS	441	459.8	437.7	452	14.05	
INDUSTOWER	256.5	270.75	255.15	261.35	7.35	
AMBUJACEM	255.4	262	253.25	260.65	6.45	
NMDC	122	126.4	121.25	123.4	2.45	
ACC	1,658.00	1,679.00	1,641.00	1,673.50	28.2	
PGHH	11,042.00	11,266.05	11,042.00	11,251.00	144.05	
ICICIIG	1,589.00	1,626.45	1,575.55	1,604.00	19.75	
ADANIGREEN	1,100.00	1,110.00	1,080.00	1,107.70	11.25	
MCDOWELL-N	94	95.8	93.78	94.55	5.3	
HAVELLS	584	593.65	577.8	587.34	7.7	
INDIGO	1,731.45	1,745.00	1,708.85	1,725.40	10.65	
HDCLFAMC	3,119.10	3,138.95	3,052.50	3,105.85	13.9	
ICICIPRULI	512	518.00	501.15	509.8	2.3	
BAJAJHLONG	3,067.00	3,137.00	3,067.00	3,118.00	7.15	
SIEMENS	1,617.70	1,635.45	1,602.15	1,614.45	0.7	
PPC	119.7	120.3	117.2	118.6	0	
PETRONET	258.95	259.4	252.55	256.25	-0.15	
ABBOTINDIA	15,689.25	15,800.00	15,483.55	15,577.00	-28.7	
COLPAL	1,605.00	1,615.00	1,585.30	1,596.00	-2.95	
MARICO	423	424.9	415.05	418.45	-1.25	
ALKEM	2,999.95	3,017.95	2,972.00	2,975.00	-9.05	
PILITIND	1,800.55	1,800.55	1,790.00	1,795.00	-5.55	
BANKBARODA	66	67.7	64.7	65.35	-0.25	
TATACONSUM	613	613.8	595.4	605.75	-3.8	
DLF	241.7	244.4	234.65	240	-1.75	
TORNTPHARM	2,825.00	2,855.95	2,768.40	2,788.20	-21.25	
HINDPETRO	224	226	217.25	221.35	-1.85	
DABUR	539	541.7	529.6	534.3	-4.6	
CADILAHC	486	487.7	475.35	481.5	-4.35	
MUTHOOTFIN	1,299.80	1,311.05	1,258.05	1,279.00	-13.6	
BERGEPAINT	791.5	794.35	775.6	783	-8.4	
MOTHERSUN	168.25	170.15	163.8	166.45	-1.8	
BOSCHILTD	13,400.00	13,620.00	13,173.35	13,287.80	-145.7	
PNB	35.8	36.4	34.75	35.2	-0.4	
BANDHANBNK	403.95	409.25	394.6	396.95	-4.9	
AUROPHARMA	979.9	984.35	954.4	964.65	-12.95	
DIET	142.5	143.1	138.6	139.4	-2	
GMARF	3,006.45	3,100.00	2,832.80	2,940.00	-51.15	
BIOCON	467.35	469.25	453.8	459	-8.65	
GODREJCP	763	763.7	738.75	745	-15.3	
ACC	1,449.40	1,454.50	1,382.00	1,412.70	-29.25	
OFSS	3,448.50	3,480.00	3,333.30	3,370.05	-78.45	
LUPIN	1,039.95	1,039.95	991	1,000.00	-39.95	
ITIL	4,147.00	4,159.00	3,935.00	3,968.00	-161.35	
NAUKRI	5,500.00	5,880.00	5,181.05	5,258.00	-236.4	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	TATACONSUM	609.55	615	595.2	604.8
KOTAKBANK	1966	1978.5	1949.5	1970.65	ADANIGREEN	1096.55	1110.95	1080	1106.55
PNCINFRA	185.4	186.5	170.7	174.8	VENKYS	1625	1625	1542.2	1558.95
ANANDIPOWER	50	51.8	48.95	50.7	VOLTAS	842	877.5	835.15	869.3
RELIANCE	1968	1968	1905	1914.15	JUBILANT	876.55	920.4	867.15	908.45
IDEA	12.05	12.23	11.5	11.85	NCC	63.45	63.7	59.6	61.65
TATAMOTORS	194.05	197.45	190.7	195.35	TATAELXSI	1990	2071	1946.95	1995.2
BAFINANCE	5123	5167.45	4991.35	5027.95	BSOFT	269.8	272.35	255	259.35
ITC	211	211.6	204.35	205.45	M&M	739.3	746.45	731	736.4
TATASTEEL	683.2	696.3	674.95	683.95	SPICEJET	93.9	95.5	92.4	93.45
SKRTANSFTL	1120	1208	1117.75	1197.25	HDCLIFE	717	720.25	705.25	718.6
BHARTIARTL	516.15	531.7	513.75	525.6	PAGEIND	28650	29422.75	28417.35	35287.13.35
VEDL	171	183.95	170.45	180.15	HAVELLS	949.9	953.35	942	946
SBICARD	919	974	917.25	969.2	TATAMTRDVR	78.5	79.9	77.25	78.8
TRIDENT	16.97	16.98	14.69	16.01	SRF	5700.25	5790	5642.35	5708.5
BLBLANK	252.6	270.6	252	264.25	HINDPETRO*	223.1	225.85	217.4	220.25
FORTIS	160	168.7	158	162.15	ULTRASLABS	360.95	363.7	353.2	355.1
NAUKRI	5510	5876.05	5183.75	5258.45	GRASIM	947	989	927	984.5
ONGC	98.3	99.35	96.25	96.95	SANOFI	8150.05	8213.9	8106.05	8126.35
ICI*CBANK	537.3	550.55	536.2	546.7	MOTHERSUMI	169.75	170.1	163.55	166.6
SBIN	283.45	289.05	281.4	288.9	BIOCON	466	469	453.75	460.05
AUBANK	884.8	896.95	873.65	884.5	INOXLEISUR	314.95	340.7	314.95	333.65
HNFC	1296.25	1302.5	1268.5	1281.6	EICHEMOT	2674.8	2674.9	2609.6	2643
HDCLCBANK	1448.8	1448.8	1413.5	1420.1	BEML	1001	1040	976.15	991.8
LT	130.8	1329.95	1301.95	1313.65	DABUR	544	544	530	533.75
AIL	130.4	135.95	130.4	133.9	HSCIL	46.2	48.5	45.9	47.75
PNB	35.85	36.4	34.75	35.2	INDUSTOWER	258	270.9	255.25	261.25
ASIANBANK	66.33	66.68	64.935	65.45	PCJEWELLER	26.9	29.2	26.35	28.8
TCS	3102.15	3114.45	3037.3	3052.95	INDIA	2256.55	2290.55	2215	2227.25
WIPRO	406.15	417.3	403.5	406.55	PADCON	464	484	461.2	477.25
INDUSINDBK	927.45	936.95	910	922.35	ASTRAZEN	4610	4610	4419.95	4467.75
LUPIN	1035.55	1040	991.05	1005.6	DEEPAKIN	1018.7	1042	1006.2	1033.35
HEROMOTOCO	3085	3122.5	3047.15	3082.6	GOALRE/PROP	1423.95	1472.9	1408.15	1460.75
CONCOR	420	444.75	417.1	434.05	HDB	91.31	96.01	93.1	94.3
BUNHSHGFN	220	227	216	219.7	LENMARK	51.97	525.55	511.75	525.95
BANKBARODA	65.6	67.65	64.7	65.5	GTTS	2510	2619	2412.55	2496.25
BANDHANBNK	403.7	409	394.65	396.15	VINITORTGA	1227	1340.45	1215.6	1322.25
PVR	1419	1466.9	1418.55	1438.6	HFCL	27.15	27.6	25.9	26.75
ALKYLAMINE	5225	5603.2	4962	5089.35	GODREJCP	765	765	739.2	745
IOC	131.55	135.4	129.75	133.1	INDIGO	1744	1744	1710	1730.8
HCL	93.45	95.55	93.2	94.05	SBMIL	3782.95	4040	3778.3	3861.35
GLITTECH	996	998	967	977.75	GENIE	906	914.3	900.7	909.95
BRITANNIA	3579.8	3601	3510	3538.85	PLINTIDIND	1802	1803.3	1770.9	1793.95
TATAPOWER	82.45	83.45	80.8	82.45	BLISSGVS	201.5	207.1	194.75	203.15
DMCT	3002	3094.95	2846.55	2906.05	DIVISLAB	3860	3885.55	3818.2	3876.35
IRFC	1463	1514.8	1449.05	1482.8	BAJAJ-AUTO	3485.15	3526	3437.7	3464.4
HDHFC	2661	2663.25	2619	2636.35	APILOFTYRE	188.15	189.8	183.8	186.4
SHRDFIRSTB	39.9	42.85	38.45	41.35	GMRINFRA	27	27.35	26.4	26.6
INDUSINDBK	494.8	502.2	477.85	485.7	GREAVESCOT	99.95	102.1	95	96.8
ICICIBANK	135	137.7	128.1	132.05	PPC	419	120.35	117.2	118.15
UJZULON	7.8	7.93	7.55	7.93	MARICO	422	425.75	415.15	414.35
BATAINDIA	1615	1684.25	1615	1659.6	MFSL	705	716.55	698	707.5
IRVM	27.7	29.85	28.1	28.75	BOMDYEING	77.8	80.2	76.6	78.8
TATACHEM	486.5	504.5	481.7	491	KTKBANK	62.3	63.9	62	62.95
HINDALSTEL	287.6	290.5	278.45	284.15	COFORGE	2880.25	2898	2760	2799.25
SAIL	78.7	79.15	75.5	76.25	MAHSEAMLES	324	330	319.5	324.2
JUSTDIAL	744.7	764.8	587	703.35	UBI	1181.55	1236.4	1180.8	1220.65
ICI	524	545	521.95	542.3	NESTEIND	18500	18606	18437.8	18510.5
FEDERALBNK	73.1	74.2	71.4	72.7	RAYMOND	351.7	355.45	342.2	347.8
BHEL	40.45	40.6	38.25	39.4	TORNTPOWER	321.85	333.8	321.3	330.15
ESCORTS	1318	1325.65	1278.4	1294.3	CADILHAC	490	490	475.4	481.6
TECHM	1007	1025.95	983.4	996.5	BANKINDIA	51	52.45	50.65	51.15
ASHOKLEY	104.75	106.7	103.45	105.05	KALKINDIA	1680.1	1691.8	1650.35	1674.1
JSRULFOLG	2800	2854.6	2748	2799.65	IRONCON	92	94.2	91.05	99
DREDDEY	5287.3	5314.2	5225.3	5291.65	ABBOTINDIA	15780	15784.75	15480	15565.5
UPL	469.5	481.75	467.25	472.25	GRANULES	356.05	362.75	353.1	357.65
POWERGRID	188	197.6	187.3	196.15	INDIACEM	176	176.1	168.05	172.7
LJCHSGFIN	129.25	417.6	395.1	408.1	CENTURYTEX	430	434.15	413.1	417.4
NMDC	122.45	126.3	121.25	123.2	SIEMENS	1615	1648.8	1602.6	1619.4
<FH	102.85	106.3	100.7	102.85					
BAJAJFINSV	8855	8891.25	8635.95	8784.65					
HINDALCO	250.2	259.95	247.95	259					
AMBER	2435.6	2699.3	2435	2629.6					
DLF	4134.1	4158.39	3927.2	3950.5					
SUNPHARMA	605.4	610.6	596.25	605.3					
JSWSTEEL	396.1	407.45	395.6	401.85					
TITAN	1575	1620.95	1563	1574.3					
ADANIPOINTS	504	504.5	489.45	496.7					
PEL	1447	1454	1383.05	1415.75					
MAHARUTI	7655	7779.65	7557.25	7633.35					
COALINDIA	135	137.2	133.85	135.1					
ADANIANT	496.5	500.25	484.7	491.15					
M&MFIN	185	191.1	184.65	188.65					
INDIANAMART	7236.45	7589	7015	7087.85					
ULTRACEMCO	5365	5465.95	5301	5446.7					
ANANDINFLUOR	2644	2820	2610	2749.8					
NBCBB	33	33.6	31.55	32.45					
HINDUNILVR	2454.85	2454.85	2402.15	2417.05					
ASIANPAINT	2801	2822	2780	2803.15					
JMFINANCIL	86.5	92.8	86.35	91.4					
MINDTREE	1713.8	1724	1666.6	1682.55					
MINUTHOOTFIN	1300	1310.35	1258.55	1290.57					
HDHFCAMC	3129.9	3141.7	3050.2	3098.5					
BPCPL	393	396.85	382.6	387.3					
HINDZINC	258	280	257.4	275.45					
MGL	1119.75	1132.45	1100.35	1129.25					
MPHASIS	1594	1696.9	1577.1	1616					
NTNTPC	98.15	98.95	97.25	97.85					
NATURALONAL	46.45	47.45	45.65	47.15					
AUROPHARMA	981	983.45	955.75	968.85					
ZEE	223	225.15	217	221.25					
ACC	1660	1762.8	1641	1674.3					
POLYCAB	1157	1204.5	1150.5	1178.84					
MOF&F	79728.85	79799	77675.45	78783.4					
AMBAJUCEAL	255.5	262	253.5	261.1					
CIPLA	830	834.15	815.35	825					
CHOLAFIN	437	446.1	430.6	435.55					
APOLLOHOSP	2509	2544.85	2482.05	2495					
					PHILIPCARB	178.9	179.9	169.35	170.75
					KALPATPOWR	319.05	333.5	318.3	327.2
					CUMMINSIND	614	623.45	602.2	61
					RAMCOCEM	799.75	804	786.55	802.05
					RAIN	143.5	146.5	138.7	141.1
					GODFREYPHLP	980	991.35	956.65	966.6
					BHARATFORG	558	559.25	542.45	548.8
					CATROLIND	125.7	127.45	125.1	125.75
					CESTRONED	158	259.2	252.5	256.25
					ADANTRANAS	441.95	459.3	438	453.5
					FRETAIL	76.6	77.5	76	76.75
					BDL	352	360.45	350	355.1
					EXIDE	196.95	198.05	191.7	193.75
					RECLTD	140	142.3	138.6	141.0
					IBREALEST	79.5	80.85	77.3	78.4
					CANFINHOME	495	498.95	477.5	481.75
					CSFL	102.75	105.55	100.55	102.75
					MANAPPURAM	173.7	175.75	171.25	175.3
					STAR	971	983	926	949.95
					IDBI	32	32.31	31.55	31.1
					BOCSHLTD	13422	13663.2	13195.45	13294.4
					MRPL	39.85	40.25	38.3	39.2
					DSHTV	12.91	13.15	12.25	12.91

India calls on Lanka to meet expectations of Tamils

Colombo: India on Wednesday called on Sri Lanka to meet the expectations of its minority Tamil community for equality, justice, peace and dignity within a united country for its “own interest”, as part of the reconciliation process.

During a joint media interaction with his counterpart Dinesh Gunawardena, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is in the island nation for his first overseas visit of the year, underlined India's backing for Lanka's reconciliation process and an “inclusive political outlook” that encourages ethnic harmony.

“As we promote peace and well-being in the region, India has been strongly committed to

the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. Our support for the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka is long-standing, as indeed for an inclusive political outlook that encourages ethnic harmony,” he said.

“It is in Sri Lanka's own interest that the expectations of the Tamil people for equality, justice, peace and dignity within a united Sri Lanka are fulfilled. That applies equally to the commitments made by the Sri Lankan government on meaningful devolution, including the 13th Amendment to the Constitution,” Jaishankar added.

The progress and prosperity of Sri Lanka will surely be

advanced as a consequence, he asserted.

The 13th Amendment provides for devolution of power to the Tamil community. India has been pressing Sri Lanka to implement the 13th amendment which was brought in after the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement of 1987.

His remarks assume significance in the backdrop of moves by the ruling Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) allies to mount a public campaign for abolition of Sri Lanka's provincial councils system.

The SLPP's Sinhala majority hardliners have been advocating a total abolition of the island's provincial council system established in

India will always be a dependable partner and reliable friend of Sri Lanka, says Jaishankar

Colombo: Assuring that India will always be a “dependable partner and reliable friend” of Sri Lanka, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said the country is open to strengthening its relationship with Colombo on the basis of “mutual trust, mutual interest, mutual respect and mutual sensitivity”.

Speaking at a joint media briefing here with his Sri Lankan counterpart Dinesh Gunawardena, Jaishankar also said that the coronavirus pandemic has not been able to dent the bilateral relationship and that the two countries are now

looking at post-COVID cooperation.

“COVID hasn't been able to dent our bilateral cooperation. In fact, high level contacts were maintained and indeed strengthened during the past year and the virtual summit between our prime ministers was a high watermark for us in 2020,” he said.

Jaishankar, who earlier met President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, said he discussed cooperation for post-COVID health and economic recovery. “India will be a reliable partner in Sri Lanka's development,” he said.

Joint Session of US Congress set to formally certify Joe Biden's presidential victory

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A joint session of the US Congress, presided over by Vice President Mike Pence, on Wednesday is scheduled to count the result of the November 3 presidential election and officially confirm the Electoral College votes won by President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

However, a large number of Republican lawmakers, including more than 100 members of the House of Representatives and over a dozen Senators, are expected to raise their opposition to the counting of votes and election results.

“When the Congress meets tomorrow, this resounding victory will be recognised, and Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will be officially

Pence told Trump he lacks power to challenge election results: Report

Washington: Vice President Mike Pence has told Donald Trump that he lacked the power to challenge President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the November 3 election despite the US president's insistence that he did not, according to a media report.

The New York Times reported on Tuesday that Pence delivered the message to Trump during his weekly lunch with the president.

Pence is set to preside over the US Senate on Wednesday as it receives the results of the state-by-state Electoral College that determines the winner of presidential election.

Biden, a Democrat, beat Trump 306-232 in the Electoral College and in the popular vote by more than 7 million ballots. Trump, a Republican, has not conceded the election, reiterating unverified claims that the presidential polls were rigged.

Dozens of lawsuits by his campaign challenging election results have failed in US courts.

“Vice President Mike Pence told President Trump on Tuesday that he did not believe he had the power to block congressional certification of Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s victory in the presidential election despite Mr Trump's baseless insistence that he did,” the daily reported, citing unnamed people briefed on the conversation. Trump, however, has denied the report as “fake news”, asserting that Pence never told him what the report said.

Thousands converge in Washington for Trump rally

Washington: Thousands of supporters of Donald Trump have converged here to attend a massive rally to be addressed by the US president on Wednesday in protest against what he alleges to be a rigged presidential election.

“Washington is being inundated with people who don't want to see an election victory stolen by emboldened Radical Left Democrats. Our Country has had enough, they won't take it anymore! We hear you (and love you) from the Oval Office. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!” Trump said in a tweet on Tuesday.

Trump is scheduled to address the rally at about 11 a.m. The rally is being held at the same time, when in a joint session, the US Congress is scheduled to count the votes of the Electoral College and certify the results of the November 3 presidential election.

Trump, the Republican incumbent, has not conceded the election, reiterating unverified claims that the presidential polls were rigged. Dozens of lawsuits by his campaign challenging election results have failed in US courts. Biden, a Democrat, is set to be inaugurated as the 46th US President on January 20.

Thousands of Trump supporters gathered at various places in downtown Washington with posters and banners “Stop the steal” to “Trump is my president.” US media feared a violent clash between Republican and Democratic supporters.

Trump orders ban on transactions with eight more Chinese apps

Washington: President Donald Trump has signed an executive order barring transactions with eight Chinese apps including Alipay and WeChat Pay to protect America's national security, citing the steps taken by India to ban more than 200 Chinese connected software applications.

Trump's order said action is needed to “deal with the national emergency” caused by the “pervasiveness of the spread” of apps created and controlled in China.

The ban against the eight Chinese apps -- Alipay, CamScanner, QQ Wallet, SHAREit, Tencent QQ, Vmate, WeChat Pay, and WPS Office -- will come into effect in 45 days from Tuesday.

“The pace and pervasiveness of the spread in the United States of certain connected mobile and desktop applications and other software developed or controlled by persons China, to include Hong Kong and Macau (China), continue to threaten the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States,” Trump said on Tuesday.

“At this time, action must be taken to address the threat posed by these Chinese connected software applications,” Trump said in his executive order.

The orders follow two others Trump signed in August banning dealings with the popular video app TikTok as well as the main WeChat app.

Trump said that India has banned the use of more than 200 Chinese connected software applications throughout the country.

China criticises US order against dealing with Chinese apps

Beijing China's Government on Wednesday accused Washington of misusing national security as an excuse to hurt commercial competitors after President Donald Trump signed an order banning transactions with payment services Alipay and WeChat Pay and six other apps.

Tuesday's order escalated a conflict with Beijing over technology, security and spying accusations that has plunged U.S.-Chinese relations to their lowest level in decades.

It followed confusion in financial markets after the New York Stock Exchange announced last week it would remove three Chinese phone companies and then withdrew that plan Monday.

WikiLeaks founder Assange denied bail in UK

London: A British judge on Wednesday denied bail to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, ordering him to remain in a high-security prison while U.K. Courts decide whether he will be sent to the United States to face espionage charges.

District Judge Vanessa Baraitser said Assange must remain in prison while the courts consider an appeal by U.S.

Authorities against her decision not to extradite him.

The judge said Assange “has an incentive to abscond” and there is a good chance he would fail to return to court if freed.

On Monday, Baraitser rejected an American request to send Assange to the U.S.

HK arrests 53 activists under national security law

Hong Kong: Hong Kong police arrested 53 former lawmakers and democracy proponents on Wednesday for allegedly violating the new national security law by participating in unofficial election primaries for the territory's legislature last year.

The mass arrests, including of former lawmakers, were the largest move against Hong Kong's democracy movement since the law was imposed by Beijing last June to quell dissent in the semi-autonomous territory.

“The operation today targets the active elements who are suspected to be involved in the crime of overthrowing, or interfering (and) seriously destroy the Hong Kong governments legal execution of duties,” John Lee, Hong Kong's security minister, said at a news conference.

He said those arrested were suspected of trying to paralyze the government, via their plans to gain a majority of the seats in the legislature to create a situation in which the chief executive had to resign and the government would stop functioning.

In a video released by former lawmaker Lam Cheuk-tung on his Facebook page, police turned up at his house and told him he was “suspected of violating the national security law, subverting state power.” Police told those recording the video to stop or risk arrest.

The legislative election that would have followed the unofficial primaries was postponed by a year by Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam, who cited the public health risks during the coronavirus pandemic. Mass resignations and disqualifications of pro-democracy lawmakers have left the legislature largely a pro-Beijing body.

Lee said the police would not target those who had voted in the unofficial primaries, which were held in July last year and attracted more than 600,000 voters even though pro-Beijing lawmakers and politicians had warned the event could breach the security law.

All of the pro-democracy candidates in the unofficial primaries were arrested, according to tallies of the arrests being reported by the South China Morning Post, online platform Now News and political groups.

At least seven members of Hong Kongs Democratic Party — the city's largest opposition party — were arrested, including former party chair-

man Wu Chi-wai. Former lawmakers Lam, Helena Wong and James To were also arrested, according to a post on the party's Facebook page.

Benny Tai, a key figure in Hong Kong's 2014 Occupy Central protests and a former law professor, was also arrested, reports said. Tai was one of the main organizers of the primaries.

The home of Joshua Wong, a prominent pro-democracy activist who is serving a 13 1/2-month prison sentence for organising and participating in an unauthorized protest last year, was also raided, according to a tweet posted from Wong's account.

American human rights lawyer John Clancey was also arrested on Wednesday. Clancey was the treasurer of political group Power for Democracy, which was involved in the unofficial primaries.

“We need to work for democracy and human rights in Hong Kong,” Clancey said as he was being led away by police, in a video posted by local online news outlet Citizen News.

Police also went to the headquarters of Stand News, a prominent pro-democracy online news site in Hong Kong, with a court order to hand over documents to assist in an investigation related to the national security law, according to a livestreamed video by Stand News. No arrests were made.

Lee also pointed to a “10 steps to mutual destruction” plan among those arrested, which included taking control of the legislature, mobilising protests to paralyse society and calling for international sanctions.

WHO disappointed at Chinese delays letting experts in

Geneva: The head of the World Health Organization said on Tuesday that he is “disappointed” Chinese officials haven't finalised the permissions to allow a team of experts into China to examine the origins of COVID-19.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in a rare critique of Beijing, said members of the international scientific team began departing from their home countries over the last 24 hours as part of an arrangement between WHO and the Chinese government.

“Today, we learned that Chinese officials have not yet finalized the necessary permissions for the team's arrival in China,” Tedros said during a news conference in Geneva.

EU calls for immediate release of HK activists

Brussels: The European Union called for the immediate release on Wednesday of the 53 former lawmakers and pro-democracy activists who have been arrested in Hong Kong after being accused of violating a new security law.

The mass arrests, including of former lawmakers, were the largest crackdown on Hong Kongs democracy movement since the law was imposed by China last June to quell dissent in the semi-autonomous territory.

EU spokesman Peter Stano told a press conference that the arrests send the “signal that political pluralism is no longer tolerated in Hong Kong.”

He added that the security law is being used “to crush dissent and stifle the exercise of human rights and political freedoms.”

FROM PAGE 1

R-DAY TRACTOR RALLY REHEARSAL TODAY

Niti Ayog members say Government can't buy and store food, while Government says procurement will continue, said the AIKSCC.

This dichotomy should end, it added.

“Meanwhile on the call issued by the AIKSCC and the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, several mass programmes have been planned. People all over the country shall burn copies of the three Acts on occasion of Lori and Makar Sankranti. January 18 shall be observed as Mahila Kisan Diwas and we have also decided that sit in and relay fasts shall continue,” said the AIKSCC.

Since the farmers arrived at the national Capital's borders, the Delhi Traffic Police has been posting alerts on its official Twitter handle to inform commuters about road closures across the city.

In a series of tweets on Wednesday, it said Singhu, Auchandi, Piau Maniyari, Saboli and Mangesh borders were closed for traffic movement.

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

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

It said Tikri and Dhansa borders are also closed for traffic movement.

“Jhatikara Border is open only for LMV (Cars/Light Motor Vehicles), two wheelers and pedestrian movement,” another tweet read.

According to the traffic police, people travelling to Haryana can take the routes

via Jharoda (only single carriageway), Daurala, Kapashera, Badusarai, Rajokri NH-8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundaheha borders.

NO IMPROVEMENT ON GROUND, SC SAYS, POSTS MATTER FOR JAN 11

Venugopal, however, wondered how a person could challenge a constitutional amendment in a writ petition.

The Supreme Court had on December 17 refused to interfere with the ongoing agitation against farm laws by farmers from Punjab and some other States who have blocked certain entry points to the national Capital for weeks, saying it was their fundamental right. The court had asked the Centre to consider to put on hold the three laws and form a panel to go into the concerns raised by the farmers.

Later, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said those farmer unions, which are protesting against the farm laws, will understand the idea behind bringing laws for reforms in the agricultural sector and actively arrive at a solution after discussion.

“The Government of India is committed to the welfare of farmers. We meet those who are supporting the laws and those opposing it. I am sure that farmer unions who are agitating will understand the idea behind agriculture laws and they will think about the welfare of farmers and actively arrive at a solution by a positive discussion,” Tomar told reporters.

Meanwhile, the All India Farmers Association (AIFA) headed by former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's grandson Sanjay Nath Singh on Wednesday extended support to the three new agriculture laws against which 40 farmers' unions have been protesting at

various borders of the national capital for over a month now. Singh, in a representation, made to Tomar made some suggestions to the Centre that would be of help in negotiating with the protesting farm unions in the next round of meeting to be held on January 8.

12 BIRD FLU EPICENTRES IN 5 STATES IDENTIFIED

The Health Ministry has deployed multi-disciplinary teams to Avian Influenza affected Alappuzha and Kottayam districts in Kerala, and Panchkula District in Haryana.

The Health Ministry has also issued an action plan which says dead birds should be handled with utmost caution and scientific supervision. As per the action plan on Avian Influenza, the Ministry has suggested the affected States for strengthening the biosecurity of poultry farms, disinfection of affected areas, proper disposal of dead birds/carcasses, timely collection and submission of samples for confirmation and further surveillance, intensification of surveillance plan as well as the general guidelines for prevention of disease spread from affected birds to poultry and human.

“In India, the disease spreads mainly by migratory birds coming into India from September - October to February - March. The secondary spread by human handling (through fomites) cannot be ruled out,” it said.

To allay fears about transmission of the disease from poultry to humans, Union Minister for Animal Husbandary, Giriraj Singh, on social media advised people to properly cook eggs and meat before consuming them. “In some places there have been reports of migratory and wild birds dying from bird flu. Cook the meat and eggs completely before eating. There is

nothing to worry. All possible help is being given and states have been alerted,” Singh tweeted in Hindi. His deputy Sanjiv Balyan said that five states have reported Bird flu but there has been no case of transmission of the Avian Influenza to humans in India.

Accordingly, an advisory was issued to the States of Rajasthan and MP on January 1 to avoid further spread of the infection. As per the information received from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, control measures have been taken as per the guidelines of the National Action Plan of Avian Influenza. “Another advisory has been issued on January 5 to HP advising it to take measures to avoid further spread of disease to poultry. As per the report received, Kerala has already initiated control and containment operations at epicentres and culling process is in operation,” it said.

SC TO HEAR PLEAS AGAINST RELIGIOUS CONVERSION FOR MARRIAGE LAW

The bench said that this is not the transfer petition where it can transfer to itself all the cases on the law after one of the petitioner said that the issue should be examined by the top court.

Senior advocate CU Singh, appearing for the NGO, referred to the judgement of Justice (ret'd) Deepak Gupta and says that similar laws are being made in various states.

He sought stay of the provisions of the law and said that people are being in the middle of wedding ceremonies.

Singh added that some of the provisions of these laws are oppressive and horrible in nature and requires prior consent of government to marry which is absolute-

ly obnoxious.

The bench said that it is issuing notice and sought response from both the state governments within four weeks.

When Singh insisted for stay of provisions, the CJI said that now stay is sought on some provisions without hearing the states. “How can it be done?” the bench said.

NIRBHAYA REVISITED IN BUDAUN: 50-YR-OLD GANGRAPED, KILLED

“The 50-year-old woman, who had gone to a temple on Sunday, was found dead under mysterious circumstances. Family members of the woman have accused the temple mahant (priest) and his accomplices of raping and murdering her. Based on this, a case was registered against the accused. Two of the accused persons were arrested on Tuesday night while the mahant is still absconding,” he said. Four teams have been formed to nab the priest, the SSP said. Following the incident, Bareilly ADG Avinash Chandra too visited the crime spot and announced a reward of Rs 50,000 on the arrest of the absconding priest.

PETROL PRICE NEARS ALL-TIME HIGH

Alongside, state-owned fuel retailers cut prices by another Re 1 a litre, which they recouped later.

However, no tax cut is under consideration as of present, a senior government official said on Wednesday.

Though petrol and diesel rates are to be revised on a daily basis in line with benchmark international price and foreign exchange, government-controlled fuel retailers have been moderating rates since

the pandemic broke out. They first did not pass on to the customers a reduction in price warranted from the slump in international oil rates witnessed due to demand erosion beginning March 2020.

SHAPOORJI PALLONJI EMERGES AS LOWEST BIDDER FOR CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

Apart from Shapoorji Pallonji and Company Limited and Tata Projects Limited, NCC Ltd and ITD Cementation India Limited had qualified for the opening of financial bids. ITD Cementation India Limited quoted the bid amount of Rs 490.59 crore while NCC Ltd quoted Rs 601.46 crore as the bid amount, according to Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

The Rajpath redevelopment project includes large scale stone work, construction of underpasses, underground amenities blocks and horticulture work. The work may be completed before the 2022 Republic Day parade.

In September last year, Tata Project had won the tender work for the construction of the new Parliament building.

On Thursday, the Supreme Court gave the green signal to the Central Vista revamp project, holding there was no infirmity in the grant of environment clearance and permissions for change of land use.

Official said that the historic Rajpath will go for redevelopment work soon after hosting the Republic Day parade on January 26.

In its notice inviting tender, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), which is executing the Central Vista project, said that the redevelopment work of Central Vista Avenue will be executed in a phased manner so that some parts of Rajpath are available for visitors.

TrendSlazer

Go get what's yours: Varun

Actor **VARUN DHAWAN** has shared his mantra of success. He has urged everyone to go get what is theirs.

Varun posted a picture on Instagram where he flaunts wash-board abs in a shirt-less pose, wearing black basketball shorts, against the backdrop of a bright blue sky and the ocean.

"Go get what's yours," he wrote.

Varun was recently seen in his digitally released film *Coolie No. 1*, which also stars Sara Ali Khan.

He will next be seen in *Jug Jugg Jeeyo*. The film also features Manish Paul and YouTube sensation Prajakta Koli in her Bollywood debut role.



'There are a few films that are made for the big screen only. There are a few films of mine that are going to be released this year, so I hope the audience watch those films in theatres. I am sure about that because people are eager to watch films in theatres. There are few films that give you the same joy on big screen and on OTT platforms, and AK Vs AK is one of those.'

—Anil Kapoor

KGF Chapter 2 has emerged as one of the most anticipated films of the year.

The makers of the film launched the first edition of KFG Times. The newsletter is a treat to all the fans of the film as it offers them a sneak peek into the world of KGF. It gives a glimpse into the behind the scene photos, trivia and stills of the film.

Talking about it, director Prashanth Neel says, "We came up with KGF Times because we understand the kind of excitement surrounding *KGF Chapter 2*. We wanted to offer a glimpse into the world of the film and share some exclusive images and trivia."



Parenting is painful & rewarding: Sia

Singer **SIA**, who adopted two teenage boys a couple of years ago, says she finds parenting a task that is rewarding as well as painful.

"It's hard. It's been both painful and rewarding. All I can say really is that I just have to just keep reminding them that I'll be here, I'm never going anywhere, and I love them. I think it's just scary to have someone say 'I'll love you forever' when you've been in 28 different homes your entire life," Sia said.

The singer had earlier described motherhood as the "best thing she's ever done."



The 2021 Grammy Awards will no longer take place this month in Los Angeles and will broadcast in March due to a recent surge in Coronavirus cases and deaths.

The annual show would shift from its original January 31 broadcast to March 14, according to a joint statement released from the Recording Academy and CBS, which broadcasts the ceremony. The statement said the decision was reached "after thoughtful conversations with health experts, our host and artists scheduled to appear."

"The deteriorating COVID situation in Los Angeles, with hospital services being overwhelmed, ICUs having reached capacity, and new guidance from state and local governments have all led us to conclude that postponing our show was the right thing to do. Nothing is more important than the health and safety of those in our music community and the hundreds of people who work tirelessly on producing the show," read the statement from Recording Academy interim CEO Harvey Mason Jr, CBS executive Jack Sussman and Grammys



executive producer Ben Winston.

"We want to thank all of the talented artists, the staff, our vendors and especially this year's nominees for their understanding, patience and willingness to work with us as we navigate these unprecedented times."

The Grammys will be held in Los Angeles at the Staples Center. Los Angeles County, the epicenter of the crisis in California, has surpassed 11,000 COVID-19 deaths and has had 40 per cent of the deaths in California. It is the third state to reach the 25,000 death count.

An average of six people die every hour from COVID-19 in Los Angeles County, which has a quarter of the state's 40 million residents. County health officials fear the incoming Christmas and New Year's surge.

The new Grammys date coincides with the scheduled hosting of the Screen Actors Guild Awards, which is typical-

ly held at another downtown Los Angeles venue, the Shrine Auditorium. That show honors the best performances in film and television.

The *Daily Show* host and comedian Trevor Noah is set to host the 2021 Grammys, where Beyoncé is leading contender with nine nominations. She scored nominations for song and record of the year with *Black Parade*, which she released on Juneteenth, while *Savage* — her No. 1 collaboration with Megan Thee Stallion — picked up bids for record of the year, best rap song and best rap performance.

Beyoncé's *Black Is King*, which aired on Disney+, is nominated for best music film while *Brown Skin Girl*, a song dedicated to dark- and brown-skinned women, is nominated for best music video. Her daughter Blue Ivy Carter sings on *Brown Skin Girl* and also earned a Grammy nomination.

Taylor Swift, Dua Lipa, Roddy

Ricch, Jhené Aiko, Post Malone, Renée Zellweger, Billie Eilish and her producer-brother Finneas also scored nominations. First-time nominees include The Strokes, Megan Thee Stallion and Harry Styles.

Since the pandemic, a number of awards show were postponed and later revamped due to COVID-19 restrictions. The BET Awards was the first major awards show during the pandemic and was a success thanks to its artsy, highly produced, well-crafted pre-taped performances. The MTV Video Music Awards featured Lady Gaga winning awards and performing onsite in a mask, and the Latin Grammys pre-taped several performances the week of the show, handing out some of its awards to the winners who attended the show.

Performers at the forthcoming Grammys will be announced at a later date.

—AP



THE BRIDESMAID LOOKBOOK

If you're caught between the madness of organising wedding favours, planning activities and overlooking details of various functions, you shouldn't have to fret about one more thing, that is looking your best during all the ceremonies. Here are a few ensemble ideas

The only underrated group of individuals who can change a Brideszilla to a total Bridechilla are her squad of loyal Bridesmaids! And we do know the importance for all bridesmaids to match up to the charm and charisma of the bride, while not completely outshining her!

But if you're caught between

the madness of organising wedding favours and planning activities and overlooking details of various functions, you shouldn't have to fret about one more thing, that is looking your best during all the ceremonies.

It is for this reason, we present to you the ultimate list of outfit ideas that all bridesmaids can take cues from for every



occasion during your best friend's wedding!

EVENING OF THE ENGAGEMENT

Kickstart the wedding festivities with romantic colours, flowy fabrics and dainty embroideries in contemporary silhouettes, such as Ridhi Mehra's. Style your regal ensemble with minimal jewellery and clean pulled-back hair to complete the posh avatar!

HALDI CEREMONY

Serve some serious fashion goals with warm tones, *lehariya* prints and immaculate floral embroidery for the auspicious *haldi* ceremony by designers Sukriti & Aakriti and Gulabo Jaipur. Add that remarkable touch to your traditional ensemble by styling your dupatta over the shoulders for a demure look.

RITUAL OF MEHNDI

Channel a vivacious vibe for the ritual as you are caught between collating all the *mehndi* favours

and other wedding frenzy! Gulabo Jaipur's bright pastels with floral detailing and intricate thread-work reflects the essence of traditional chic while Sukriti & Aakriti's revival of phulkari evokes a sense of pride in our hearts — both of which are apt for the merriment around the *mehndi* ceremony.

SANGEET SHENANIGANS

What can be more breathtaking than a saree or a lehenga for your best friend's *sangeet* ceremony? An opulent pre-draped pant or lehenga saree by Ridhi Mehra! Beautiful pearl embroidered blouses, ruffled hems and chiffon plush fabrics in rich hues embody all the dreamy and fun shenanigans of the *sangeet* or cocktail evening.

THE SACRED VOWS

Be it doling up in the prettiest of lehengas or adorning the most gorgeous floral jewellery, bridesmaids today are all game for making spectac-

ular style statements, (sometimes even co-ordinated) for their close friend's *phasas*. Sukriti & Aakriti's resuscitation of the intricate craft of phulkari commemorates this special occasion while being an absolute treat for the bohemia admirers.

RECEPTION UNDER THE STARS

As you save the best for the last, the evening of the reception demands a certain amount of extravagance, so no shying away! Instead, slip into those gorgeous jewel-toned lehengas, embellished blouses and elaborately embroidered sarees and shararas to complement the grandeur of the night. Even better, pair your minimal looks with navratna ornate belts like Ridhi Mehra's or strikingly magnificent *dupattas* by Sukriti & Aakriti.

So go big or go home for your best friend's wedding festivities this wonderful winter season as there is no time for it such as now!

Youthful take

Digital star BHUVAN BAM expands his merchandising brand with the launch of Youthiapa 2.0

er dimension to the brand's identity. It accurately describes the youthful zeal and enthusiasm in today's generation. The collection features pieces such as sweatshirts, hoodies, T-shirt and more which are colorful yet mature.

Staying true to the brand name, Youthiapa has remained a consistent resource for an everyday streetwear wardrobe. This offset carries the brand

message of "For The Youth, By The Youth" and is made of pieces that have not only been designed to look stylish but also resonate with our favorite memories of childhood.

Launching the collection for the consumers, Bhuvan Bam said, "Youthiapa 2.0 encapsulates versatile and easy to wear pieces. The designs and the colours are such that it reverberates with the youth. This is the

clothing that makes sense for them today. It's what they want to wear, whether it's for work, college, or [a reflection] of what they're seeing on the street."

Rohit Raj, partner at Youthiapa, said, "Every piece of clothing features unique, signature prints. Youthiapa has found its niche as a go-to place for streetwear staples among our generation. Keeping that in mind, we have launched a capsule collection which will cater to a new generation of young shoppers. As the name goes, the designs are developed by the line's target audience: a hand-picked group of young, on-the-rise talent. In all its literal sense, it is 'For The Youth, By The

Youth.' The response has been great so far that we are planning to team up with experts to foray into fragrances. That is something we are really excited about."

Youthiapa has erstwhile popularly mastered the balance between usability and addressing cultural, national and world issues through its tongue-in-cheek fashion. It's trending slogan 'Hustle Karo Bhasad Nahi' has caught a lot of attention among the industry and his fans. The slogan translates as a message to teenagers to galvanise and work hard, without creating any chaos — something Bhuvan considers his life's motto.



HIGH VIGILANCE FOR NEW STRAIN OF COVID REQUIRED: GEHLOT

The new strain of Coronavirus has become a major cause of concern," said Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. "Any kind of negligence towards it can land us in a huge crisis. We need to pay special attention to the travellers coming to the state from other countries, including those affected by the virus. COVID tests and intensive screening of the passengers should be done. Due to the new strain, a terrible situation has arisen in England and lockdown has to be imposed again. Taking lessons from this, we need to take extra precautions. Necessary ideas should be sent to the Central Government from the state regarding the important measures soon," he added.

Gehlot also highlighted that with the best management and cooperation of the people of Rajasthan, the situation is currently under control. The recovery rate has increased to an all-time high of 96.31 per cent. With positive cases being zero in some districts, the situation is getting better. In view of this, he



advised to open schools for classes from 9 to 12, university and colleges, coaching centres and government training institutes from January 18. Medical, Dental, Nursing and Paramedical colleges were also directed to open from January 11.

The institutions will have 50 per cent attendance on the first day and the remaining 50 per cent on the second day. Teachers will be given necessary training by the Health Department for prevention of compression. The Chief Minister said that all the health protocols, including masks, should be taken care of in all institutions. They should be governed under the guidelines and SOPs of the Centre. Medical and Health

Minister Dr Raghu Sharma said that special vigilance is being done in the state regarding the new strain of Coronavirus. The medical department is sending contact-tracing and screening of passengers from the UK as well as sending them to the ICMR lab in Delhi for a sample test.

Principal Secretary, Home Affairs, Abhay Kumar said that the number of positive cases in the state has reduced. In such a situation, it is possible to conduct intensive monitoring of people coming from other countries including the UK to prevent contraction of new strains. Government Secretary Medical and Health Siddharth Mahajan said that the maximum number of active cases in the state on November 29 was 28,758, which came down to 8,189 on January 4. Similarly, the number of positive cases per day, which reached 3,314 on November 24, came down to 457 on January 4. He also informed about the preparations being done for providing vaccination in the state.

Vice Chancellor of Rajasthan Health Sciences

University, Dr Rajababu Panwar said that it is necessary to be vigilant in the state regarding the new strain. He said that in our country, the risk of new strain will be reduced due to good immunity levels of the people.

Principal of SMS Medical College, Dr Sudhir Bhandari said, "The traffic from the affected countries should be kept to a minimum. Also, effective scanning should be done at the entry point of all passengers. He informed that the facility of testing new strains is currently available in eight institutions in the country. In three weeks, the facility of investigation will also be available in Rajasthan."

Medical expert Dr Ashok Panagadia said, "Due to the continuous effort by the state government, the concentration of Corona in the state has been controlled and the death rate has been very low. He also stressed on giving necessary training to health workers for vaccination. Other specialist doctors of SMS Medical College also expressed their views regarding the new strain, vaccination and health protocol."

Clean and green India

The ICAR-Central Research Institute for Jute and Allied Fibres (CRIJAF), Barrackpore, is dealing with research and promotion of scientific production technologies of jute and allied fibre crops in the country and now playing leadership role in promoting sustainable jute based eco-farming and eco-friendly conversion of agricultural waste into wealth.

During last fifteen days ICAR-CRIJAF and CRIJAF-KVK, North 24 Pgs, have organised awareness and sensitisation programme, quiz and painting competitions to propagate the message of cleanliness and sustainable agriculture among the students, farmers and general public.

The emphasis was given for waste recycling, vermicomposting, organic agriculture and by product utilisation with special reference to jute and allied fibre crops. Being a natural fibre institute, ICAR-CRIJAF has taken many initiatives on *Swachhata* particularly in disseminating the knowledge to make wealth from the waste, which will fulfill the dream of clean environment vis-a-vis higher income for the farmers. The institute is dedicated

to support the government mission on *Swachha Bharat* and is making all efforts in realising the dream of clean and green India.

India, which uses about 14 million tonnes of plastic annually, lacks an organised system for management of plastic waste, leading to widespread littering. Realising the consequences of plastic pollution, which can handicap the sustainable developmental goal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call on minimising the consumption and ban on 'single use of plastics' in the country has created nationwide awareness to go for alternate to plastics. We are fortunate that jute of which India is the world's largest producer is the best alternative to plastics.

In coming decades, it is expected that a number of jute mills and mini-jute plants will be seen engaged in a big way in the production of jute and jute blended yarns for manufacturing jute bags. If a biodegradable jute bag is used instead of a regular plastic bag, it can reduce the amount of waste formed significantly. Consumers can be encouraged to always carry a jute bag to put their items in when they go to the market.

IN SHORT



Continuing its mission to improve the livelihoods of the tribals (both forest dwellers and artisans), TRIFED has now decided to explore a convergence and build a partnership with Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Kendra, an organisation that has been working for the welfare of tribals in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand since 1952. In this regard, a Memorandum of Understanding was exchanged between the two organisations to work together for setting up of TRIFOOD Parks in five districts in Madhya Pradesh. The MoU was signed by Pravir Krishna, Managing Director, TRIFED and Yogesh Bapat, General Secretary, Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Ashram.



Punjab National Bank (PNB) announced the extension of its popular 'PNB Festival Bonanza Offer-2020', till March 31, 2021. The promotional scheme has been rechristened now as 'PNB NEW YEAR BONANZA-2021'. The promotional bonanza was designed to further accentuate the retail credit growth of the bank as well as to encash the opportunities emerged in the market during the festive season. Under the scheme, the bank will offer full waiver of upfront/processing fees and documentation charges on all fresh housing loans, takeover housing loans, car loans and myProperty loans.



Lt Gen Tarun Kumar Aich, DG NCC, formally inaugurated the National Cadet Corps Republic Day Camp 2021 at Delhi Cantt. The inauguration ceremony started with *Sarv Dharam Pooja*. Around 1,000 cadets are participating in the camp, which will culminate with the Prime

Minister's rally on January 28, 2021. Speaking on this occasion, Lt Gen Tarun welcomed the cadets and congratulated them on getting selected for the most prestigious camp of the NCC. He said that the aim of the camp is to enhance self-confidence of cadets, deepen their value system and provide an exposure to the rich culture and traditions of our nation.



Surpassing the previous records, National Fertilizers Limited (NFL) has achieved ever highest production of 9.99 Lakh MT Urea in the third quarter during FY 2020-21. The company successfully maintained its

operations during constraints posed by COVID-19. The plants at Nangal and Panipat achieved their ever best urea production during October-December 2020. The company through meticulous planning worked past the disruptions caused by COVID and *Rail Roko* agitation in Punjab and Haryana. NFL has been increasing its non-urea business as well. In Q3, NFL produced ever highest quantity of 4,981 MT of Bentonite Sulphur at its Panipat Plant. The company has also undertaken a number of energy saving schemes.

As a part of Fit India Movement, Northern Railway Sports Association (NRSA) organised 'Fit India Cyclothon' at Karnali Stadium, New Delhi. The General Manager, Northern Railway and Patron, NRSA, Ashutosh Gangal, presided over the cyclothon event. Speaking on this occasion, he said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the slogan of *Fitness Ka Dose, Aadha Ghanta Roz*, whose aim is that every Indian citizen should dedicate half an hour every day for his health. As part of that initiative, this cyclothon was organised. These days cycling has emerged not only as a hobby but as an economical means to keep oneself fit."



The District Magistrate of Baghpur, Shakuntala Gautam and MP representative Thakur Pradeep Singh inaugurated

the *Kisan Mela*, organised under the aegis of the welfare mission in the district headquarters premises. This fair has been organised by the Farmers Welfare Mission. On this occasion, a seminar and agricultural exhibition was also organised in the fair. The District Magistrate visited the exhibition and appraised all the farmers about all the agricultural equipment related to the farmers' fair.

Following the overwhelming response received for Atma Nirbhar Agent New Business Digital Application (ANANDA), LIC of India has introduced the feature of online proposal deposit collection in ANANDA, where the customer can pay online proposal deposit through payment gateway using various options such as Credit Card, Debit Card, Netbanking, Wallets, UPI etc. The digital application is a tool for the on-boarding process to get the Life Insurance policy through a paperless module.



A BATTLE WON

Ghaziabad DM Dr AJAY SHANKAR PANDEY says an integrated control room can help citizens negotiate departmental problems. By ASHOK NIRWAN

The Ghaziabad district of Uttar Pradesh is counted in the sensitive and developing districts of the country. To solve the departmental problems of the citizens of Ghaziabad, the district administration has established an integrated control room. The special thing is that now complaints related to the functioning of 19 different departments of district administration can be easily registered under one roof. The Dynamic District Magistrate, Ghaziabad, Dr Ajay Shankar Pandey, shares more. Excerpts:

Ever since you were appointed as the District Magistrate of Ghaziabad, you have been facing one challenge after another but dealing with them successfully. Who would you want to give credit to?

I took charge of Ghaziabad District on July 15, 2019. It was a big challenge for me to successfully complete the Kavar Yatra. After this, the movement against the NRC and CAA, the removal of Section 370 and the decision on Ram Janmabhoomi brought challenges to the law and order. Apart from this, the biggest challenge was COVID-19. During this time, it was a huge task to provide treatment to the victims and also save the district from rumours, but succeeded in tackling these challenges by way of self-confidence, public support and the support of its administrative officers.

What steps have you taken to curb corruption in government departments?

When I had joined, initially, there were a lot of complaints regarding corruption in the city's government departments. For the same, we made action plans regarding the lands so that the common man can complain and his name can stay confidential. This way, there will be no threat to his safety. We kept a black box in the Collectorate premises and kept the key with ourselves. Through this black box, the public filed their complaints in a confidential manner and after investigation of these letters, many major cases of corruption were revealed. Required action was also taken against many officers and employees.

What about the smart development of Ghaziabad metropolis. What were the steps taken?

I feel the National Highway of Delhi and



Meerut-Expressway should be constructed as the country's first rapid rail project. We are trying to clear all the hurdles for the progress. The construction of Dasna-Meerut Express was hampered at more than 252 points, which were removed after mutual discussion. Disputes related to land of farmers were also settled. Its construction was to be completed on November 30, 2020, but due to the pandemic, it had to be extended. Now, the project will be completed by the end of this month. As far as the Rapid Rail Project is concerned, land has been made available on Meerut Road after talking to farmers for Rapid Rail Depot.

Do you want to talk about any important scheme which is yet to be launched for the public?

After getting the green signal from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, work to establish an integrated control room in a district has begun. However, due to the pandemic, the first integrated control room was established in the state, which received a very good response. Now, the integrated control room, the problems of the general public related 19 departments, including medical, health and family planning, education, railway, food and logistics, disaster and relief, agriculture and pollution will be addressed. The control room will be constructed in Raj Nagar.

In its 50 years of existence, Taparia Tools Limited (TTL), a hand tools manufacturing company, has deployed every known right method to market its products across the country. This was necessary as it initially had formidable competition, mainly from tool manufacturers in the unorganised sector and other Indian companies. TTL today commands almost 70-75 per cent market share in the organised sector. Marketing a high quality hand tool is quite a task, says the CMD of the ₹500 crore TTL in a market.

Taparia Tools Ltd, an ISO-9001 accredited company, started manufacturing hand tools in 1969 in India in technical collaboration with a reputed company by the name of AB Bahco of Sweden. The company has a well laid out fully equipped factory located at Nashik. All the manufacturing facilities required for production of hand tools are under one roof.

The company's research and development department is manned by mechanical engineers and metallurgists equipped with latest CAD design facilities from its inception. It has laid high emphasis on the quality of its products.

Tools for all



Taparia Tools are guaranteed against manufacturing and raw material defects and are replaced free with no questions asked.

The factory has a fully equipped Quality Assurance Department and laboratory for meticulous and continuous testing of materials up to the final finished product. All tools are built tough for prolonged use and are tested to conform to strict highest international standards.

The company has received award for export excellence since 1974-75 onwards. Over the years, TTL has developed a network of over 300 distributors. It has also expanded its retail

network to over 1 lakh stores across the country. In addition, for direct marketing, the company has prepared a database of manufacturing companies that do bulk purchases of hand tools. There is also an ever-increasing demand for newer and heavier industrial hand tools such as pipe wrenches, truck wheel spanners, flat and ring and combination spanners.

Seeing the recent trend of quality conscious consumers opting for 'do-it-yourself' tools, the company has launched a variety of home tool kits. Taparia believes that hand tools are an extension of a human hand.

DMF assures irrigation in Keonjhar

In many parts of the country, the lack of proper irrigation avenues limit farmers to cultivate their land only once a year. The district of Keonjhar was no different from other parts of the country and in the entire district, not more than 15 per cent of the land was sown more than once.

To cope with the challenge of limited irrigation, District Mineral Foundation (DMF) came up with the novel concept of using the river Baitarani for the benefit of the farmers. The river passes through different blocks in the district and being a perennial river, the flow is certain even in summers. Building upon the geographical advantage, the DMF launched a project called *Surface Based Solar Lift Irrigation*. Under this project, farmers with continuous land were formed in groups and provided

with Lift Irrigation Points. The water was lifted using renewable source of energy and solar panels were installed for lifting the water through 5 HP pump. Once such solar based surface lift point covers more than five acres of land. About 125 such points are installed within the district with a cost of about ₹5.5 crores. Another 74 points are yet to be installed.

"We used to cultivate only once a year despite a channel of Baitarani flowing near our fields. The solar lift irrigation point has helped us to cultivate the land even in summers. Also, we have started growing vegetables as we now have any assured source of irrigation, which we never had earlier," said Janardhan Dehuri, a farmer in Bhatunia village of Padmapur, GP of Sadar block of Keonjhar.

Bird flu poses fresh challenge: Gehlot



Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot gave instructions to maintain special vigilance in view of the death of crows and other birds. The bird flu (Avian Influenza) caused by the virus H5N1 is contagious

and fatal. He said that special incidents should be monitored in dense bird sanctuaries. The incidence of death of birds including crows in 46 districts of the state is a matter of concern. Veterinarians and bird

experts analyze these incidents closely and keep adequate arrangements to prevent them.

The Chief Minister said that people have special association with birds here. Due to carelessness and non-adher-

ence to protocol, this virus can also affect humans. In view of this, special care needs to be taken.

Gehlot informed that at present there is no information for the spread of this disease in

chickens in Rajasthan. So far, 625 birds have been reported dead in the state, out of which 122 samples have been sent to a laboratory in Bhopal. Avian influenza virus has been confirmed in 29 crows.

THE VOICES ONLINE

An acclaimed corporate lawyer and a social activist, RUHAIL CHOUDHURY, creates a digital platform for children across the globe to engage in constructive communication and various developmental activities



During this pandemic, lifestyle for children across the world has drastically changed. They are now mostly confined within the four walls of their apartments with various restrictions and are compelled to follow the new normal. Several experts dealing with children psychology have raised serious concerns over the expected negative impacts of the new restrictive lifestyle on children in particular. Being worried with such concerns, Ruhail Choudhury, an acclaimed corporate lawyer and a social activist, who also specialises in Child Rights from Harvard University, created a

digital platform for kids across the globe to share their talent and creativity. He want them to engage in constructive communication and various developmental activities. Ruhail has been involved with various social activities particularly relating to the welfare of children for more than a decade now.

The digital platform provides news and articles related to education, health and community development exercises involving school students. The website also aims at developing friendship among children of various nations and thereby ensures international peace and

friendship in future. To facilitate such objectives, it also recognises icons from all over the world, who have not only championed means of attaining global peace but have also contributed in betterment of society.

The website managed to get global icons of peace — Danish Ambassador To India, Freddy Svane, CGO Tata Sons from Delhi, Tanmoy Chakrabarty, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India, Anoop Bose, James Strock, Lawyer and Writer from California, and Acclaimed Journalist and Former Sheriff of Calcutta, Utpal Chatterjee from Kolkata.

India ready to change Sydney script



INDIA-AUSTRALIA AT SCG					
Team	P	W	L	D	W%
Australia	108	60	28	20	64.81
India	12	1	5	6	33.33
HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS					
Ind	705-7 dec in 187.3 overs			2003-04	
Aus	659-4 dec in 163 overs			2011-12	
TOP SCORES					
Ind	241* Sachin Tendulkar			2003-04	
Aus	329* Michael Clarke			2011-12	
BEST BOWLING (INNINGS)					
Ind	8-141 Anil Kumble			2003-04	
Aus	5-48 Glenn McGrath			1999-00	

RESULTS OF INDIA-AUS TESTS	
Season	Result
1947-48	Match drawn
1967-68	Australia won by 144 runs
1977-78	India won by an innings & 2 runs
1980-81	Australia won by an innings & 4 runs
1985-86	Match drawn
1991-92	Match drawn
1999-00	Australia won by an innings & 141 runs
2003-04	Match drawn
2007-08	Australia won by 122 runs
2011-12	Australia won an innings & 68 runs
2014-15	Match drawn
2018-19	Match drawn

Faisel Features

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Having touched nadir and zenith in a span of 10 days, Ajinkya Rahane's India will look to start afresh against Australia with the big-hitting Rohit Sharma's presence adding a new dimension to what promises to be an enthralling third Test starting here on Thursday.

The Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), despite being witness to some extraordinary batting performances from the touring Indian sides over the years, has not exactly been a happy hunting ground

with six defeats. The lone win came a good 42 years back.

If Rahane's side can go 2-1 up and ensure the retention of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, it will be one of the finest hours in the history of Indian cricket. Making it even more special is the fact that the side has been without two world class performers and a senior pacer against a nearly full-strength Australian team.

Seldom has an Australian batting unit, that boasts of a player of Steve Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect and literally intimidated by an Indian

bowling unit, which isn't operating at full-strength.

Pacer Navdeep Saini will make his debut here, replacing Umesh Yadav who went home following an injury.

The pressure is understandable as Australia are literally pushing a 70 per cent fit David Warner out there in the middle to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

And in this backdrop, enter Rohit Sharma, whose last couple of months have been loads of off-field drama.

First it was his absence from the initial part of the tour due to a hamstring injury sustained while playing the IPL.

Then his subsequent quarantine for two weeks in a Sydney apartment.

And when he finally united with his teammates, an excited fan inside a Melbourne restaurant led to an inquiry against him and four other teammates for what was called by the local media, a potential bio-security breach.

But the white-ball legend has learnt

Ashwin's knack for learning new things, Jadeja's improved batting massive for us: Rahane

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The ever inquisitive Ravichandran Ashwin, who has a knack for learning new things, and much-improved batsman Ravindra Jadeja have stood out for India in the first two Tests against Australia, skipper Ajinkya Rahane said on Wednesday.

While Ashwin is currently leading the wicket-takers' chart with 10 scalps, Jadeja's half-century and the hundred plus stand with skipper Rahane in the second Test formed the cornerstone of India's eight-wicket win in Melbourne.

Asked about the hallmark of Ashwin's greatness, Rahane said, "He is always looking to learn new things. He has good skills but is always looking to learn new things, and that's what makes Ashwin great."

The captain couldn't be

more happier with the Tamil Nadu twacker's success.

"I hope that he continues for next two Test matches and do the job for us," said Rahane.

If Ashwin's improvisation has impressed Rahane, he is mighty pleased with Jadeja's Test match application which adds the necessary balance the team has often lacked.

"As a batsman Ravindra Jadeja has improved a lot and that is a massive point as a team's perspective," Rahane said.

"When you know that your number seven can contribute with the bat, that becomes really easy for you to actually get that (decent) total

and obviously in the field, you have seen him taking some brilliant catches.

"So yes his addition in the team helped us a lot and he has been really fantastic and it is really great for us," he said.

Happy with Rohit Sharma's addition to the playing XI, the skipper informed that his deputy has had some seven to eight net sessions as he gears up for his first Test in 13 months.

"He is batting really well in the nets. He has had good seven-eight sessions. He came to Melbourne,

started his practise straight away when our Test match got over," Rahane said making it clear that Rohit will open the innings.

The SCG wicket aids spinners but Nathan Lyon is their quality spinner, who has done well here, so we don't want to take anybody lightly," he said.

While signing off, Rahane with a note of caution reminded one and all that Melbourne is history now.

"As I said earlier, whatever happened in Melbourne it is history now. Australia is a very good team, especially when playing in Australia. They are a dangerous team and we respect that. We just want to be in the moment and start well tomorrow."

Nathan Lyon.

KL Rahul's injury has given Hanuma Vihari one more chance despite his returns being as underwhelming as Mayank Agarwal, who has been forced to make way for Rohit.

But it is Australia's wobbly batting that will again be put to test by Ashwin on a track, that has traditionally helped spinners.

With 10 wickets and a new-found confidence, Ashwin has won both on and off-field battle against opposition's key players such as Smith and Marnus Labuschagne.

It's not just the wickets that he has scalped but the manner in which the intelligent Chennai engineer has managed to create doubts in the minds of world class batters is worth its weight in gold.

As much as Australia needs Smith to be back in form, they would also need someone like Travis Head to deliver as he has failed to get a hang of both pace and

spin.

Jasprit Bumrah, who is still some games short of 20 Tests, will be leading the pace attack and is expected to show the way with his bagful of tricks.

Whether it's Siraj or Saini, whoever shares the new ball will have their task cut out as they aim to match the highest standards set by the likes of Mohammed Shami and Ishant Sharma.

SQUADS

Australia: David Warner, Matthew Wade, Will Pucovski, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Cameron Green, Tim Paine (captain and wk), Nathan Lyon, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Marcus Harris, Mitchell Swepson, Michael Neser
India (XI): Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah, Navdeep Saini.

We're always better team when Warner plays: Paine

PTI ■ SYDNEY

David Warner's mere presence makes Australia a better side and fills the other 10 on the park with exuberance and energy, skipper Tim Paine gushed on Wednesday as the opener looks set for return to Test cricket when the third match against India begins here Thursday.

Warner missed a lot of action since India arrived as he sustained a groin injury during the second ODI.

He is still not hundred percent fit but Paine's eulogies bore a testimony to team's desperation to get their opener back in the wake of their batting unit's flop show in three of the four innings so far.

"Hopefully, if he gets in and gets away, that puts pressure back on opposition right away. Regardless of whom we are playing, we are a better team when David Warner is in that team from the runs he scores or the energy he brings into the group," Paine said.

"He protects our middle-order a bit with Marnus (Labuschagne) and Steve coming in. Other guys coming when bowlers are a bit tired, it's an advantage. So David has got a huge role for us," his skipper said even as the senior opener is battling against time to get closer to full fitness.

There were multiple adjectives used by Paine in praise of Warner, who is an enforcer, who can lift the other players with his impact performance.

"David has been awesome. Fills the guys with lot of confidence. He is a player you love having on your side. Always got plenty to say, really energetic, professional and I have always loved playing with him," Paine couldn't stop raving about the man, who was hated by his countrymen after his role in the ball tampering scandal.

However, Paine refused to believe that Australia's batting formula had gone for a toss during the first two games in Warner's absence.

"I don't think so as batting

formula is very individual. You definitely want to bat long periods of time but how you do it is up to the player.

"David is known as a dashy opening batter but if the conditions are not favourable he's got to respect that. In short, he likes to be aggressive and no doubt about that but he has got great hand-eye skills and he can often score quicker than others," the glovesman said.

While Paine said that they won't be naming the squad immediately, he did drop enough hints about young Will Pucovski making his debut having recovered from concussion suffered during a warm-up game against India A.

"Will has been fantastic as well. He has been out of the bubble for a couple of weeks. He is fresh and batting well in the nets, looks ready to go if he is called upon," said Paine, confirming that if he plays, he will open the batting.

AFP ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Towering paceman Kyle Jamieson completed an 11-wicket match haul on Wednesday as New Zealand thrashed Pakistan in the second Test to become the world's top-ranked team.

Jamieson was near unplayable in Pakistan's second innings in Christchurch, finishing with 6/48 to go with his 5/69 in the first innings, as Pakistan were all out for 186 during day four's final session to give New Zealand victory by an innings and 176 runs.

The win, which saw them sweep the series 2-0, also confirmed New Zealand had overtaken Australia as the world's number one Test side.

Pakistan resumed the day at eight for one, needing to bat for the better part of two days to salvage a draw but they were never in the hunt.

Trent Boult captured the first wicket when he had night-watchman Mohammad Abbas out for three in the fifth over and after that the day was mainly about Jamieson, who recorded his best match perfor-

Kiwis climb to No.1 ranking

NZ beat Pak by an innings & 176 runs in the 2nd Test to win series



mance.

Although he is the junior member of a pace attack headed by higher-ranked veterans

Tim Southee and Boult, the 26-year-old has rapidly advanced to playing a senior role.

In his sixth Test after mak-

ing his debut against India 10 months ago, Jamieson has taken 36 wickets at a stunning 13.27 average and with four

five-wicket hauls to his credit.

After Abbas departed, Abid Ali and Azhar Ali looked to be laying the ground work for a solid third-wicket stand and moved the score to 46 when the 2.3 metre (6ft 8in) Jamieson went to work and removed Abid Ali for 26.

After using his height to create extra bounce and force Abid Ali on to the back foot, Jamieson whipped up a fuller delivery and the batsman's attempt to switch to a drive was sliced to backward point where substitute Will Young took a one-handed, diving catch.

In a potent middle session, Jamieson had Haris Sohail and Azhar Ali caught behind, and bowled Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan as he moved through his repertoire.

Sohail did not get his feet moving as he poked at a rising delivery on 15 and was caught behind.

LOCAL EVENTS

DIVA, DAKSH EMERGE CHAMPIONS

Diva Bhatia of Uttar Pradesh defeated her statemate Tanushri Pandey 6-2, 3-6, 10-8 to lift the girl's singles trophy in AITA Under-18 Championship Series at Avadh School on Wednesday. In the men's singles, Daksh Prasad of Madhya Pradesh beat Daksh S Kumar of Uttar Pradesh 6-3, 6-2 to emerge champion.

KOOH CLUB LIFT TROPHY

Kooh Sports Cricket Club thrashed Indian Eleven by nine wickets to win the 16th BBD 'B' Division League at Akhilesh Das Stadium on Wednesday. Electing to bat, Indian Eleven scored 168 runs for the loss of five wickets in 35 overs, with the help of a century by Virat Jaiswal. In reply, Kooh Club achieved the target in 22.3 overs. Yashovardhan Singh and Ansh Chaudhary played unbeaten knocks of 96 and 63 runs.

BREIF SCORES:

IE: 168 (Virat 100, Gaurang 29; Surendra 31/3)
KSCC: 173 (Yashovardhan 96, Ansh 63; Arun 28/1).

Ozil in talks to join Fenerbahce

London: Arsenal's out-of-favour German midfielder Mesut Ozil is in advanced talks to join Istanbul club Fenerbahce, Turkish media reported on Wednesday.

Ozil is expected to sign a three and a half year deal with the 19-time Turkish champions, the privately-owned DHA news agency reported.

The reports came after the 32-year-old, a World Cup winner with Germany in 2014, fanned speculation by tweeting a photograph of himself in Istanbul with the words: "This city ... #throwback #Istanbul". Sports daily *Fanatik* reported that Fenerbahce chairman Ali Koc and team director Emre Belozoglu flew to London to persuade the player, who is of Turkish origin, to make the move. Other reports on Tuesday said Ozil was in talks with MLS side DC United.

AFP

Eng-SL series set to go ahead

Colombo: The England cricket team all passed coronavirus tests after all-rounder Moeen Ali was found to have Covid-19 and have been cleared to start restricted training in Sri Lanka on Wednesday, a spokesman said.

Moeen was found to have the coronavirus shortly after the squad arrived in Sri Lanka on Sunday and has been put in isolation in a hotel away from the other players.

The result was an early blow to preparations for the two Tests in Sri Lanka that start in

Galle on January 14. But the plans in the secure bubble in Hambantota in the south of the island are now largely back on track.

"Good news from the camp all PCR tests from yesterday are negative except for Moeen Ali, and we can start controlled training this afternoon," said an England spokesman.

Chris Woakes, who had been a close contact of Moeen, tested negative but will continue to isolate in his room. The tourists must undergo a third test on Thursday.

India team to start training, get access to physio

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The entire Indian badminton contingent cleared the Covid-19 test on Wednesday and is set to begin training ahead of the Yonex Thailand Open, starting next week.

The Indian team, part of the Green Zone, consisting of players and all stakeholders such as umpires, line judges, personnel from BWF, Badminton Association of Thailand, medical staff, and TV production crew, were tested after arrival in Bangkok.

The Asia leg in Bangkok consists of two Super 1000 events — Yonex Thailand Open (Jan 12-17) and Toyota Thailand Open (Jan 19-24) followed by the \$1,500,000 HSBC BWF World Tour Finals (Jan 27-31). "The Asian Leg in Bangkok received a boost with all 824 participants in the Green Zone quarantine bubble testing negative for Covid-19," BWF said in a statement. "Players are now cleared for training under strict safety protocols."

The Indian team, comprising Olympic hopefuls PV Sindhu, Saina Nehwal and B Sai

Praneeth, have been allotted training timings. The players also had their first gym session in the afternoon. "Indian Team will be resuming their training from today, the Gym timings allotted are from 2-3pm and the training time is 7-8PM," BAI media tweeted. The players will also now have access to physio in their rooms but they will have to take prior appointment as part of the protocols in place.

MINIONS PULL OUT

Indonesia's men's doubles top seeds have been forced to pull out after one of them, Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo, tested positive for coronavirus, the BWF said. The withdrawal of Sukamuljo and Marcus Fernaldi Gideon, affectionately known as the *Minions*, is the latest loss for badminton's restart tournament, which is already missing the star-studded Chinese and Japanese teams. Sukamuljo developed coronavirus symptoms last month including a loss of taste and smell and a mild flu, according to the BWF website. After testing positive he has been recovering in isolation at his home.

Spurs reach League Cup final

AP ■ LONDON

Jose Mourinho reached his first final as Tottenham manager after Son Heung-min and Moussa Sissoko clinched a 2-0 victory over Brentford in the League Cup.

But he will have to wait 110 days before Tottenham contests the final against either of the Manchester clubs, with City playing United in the other semifinal on Wednesday.

Second-division team Brentford knocked out four Premier League sides to reach the semifinals, but gifted Tottenham an opening goal in the 12th minute when Sissoko was left unmarked for a header.

But Tottenham took until the 70th minute to extend its lead when Son lifted the ball into the net after Harry Kane and Tanguy Ndombé combined for the breakthrough.

Brentford, which had been denied an equalizer when a VAR review spotted — through a forensic examination of footage — that Ivan Toney was marginally offside with his knee before scoring.

The west London club finished with 10 men after Josh



Dasilva's high studs-up challenge left Pierre-Emile Højbjerg with a gash on his left shin.

And Mourinho, who won the League Cup three times across spells in charge of Chelsea and Manchester United, will have a chance to deliver Tottenham's first trophy since winning the competition in 2008.

The song *Spurs are on their way to Wembley* was played on the final whistle at Tottenham's empty stadium. The final has been pushed from February to April 25 in the hope that fans

will be allowed in — unlike any sporting event now in the country. A return to Wembley will be familiar for Tottenham, which used the north London stadium as a temporary home from 2017 to 2019 while its new stadium was being built.

But Spurs haven't contested a final there since losing to a Chelsea side managed by Mourinho in 2015 in the League Cup.

This is the only trophy Tottenham has won — also in 1999 — since lifting the FA Cup in 1991.