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12 VIVACITY

# Inoculation sites reduced by half

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From Goa to Meghalaya and Jammu & Kashmir to down south Kerala, the vaccines against Covid-19 are being ferried to far corners of the country for the vaccination drive that will be launched on Saturday even as the Government on Wednesday reduced the number of inoculation sites to almost half from previous target of 4,895, citing technical reasons.

It means, coronavirus vaccine will be administered in fewer sites than originally decided, at least for the first few days with fewer people getting vaccinated. Earlier, the vaccination was scheduled to take place through Government hospitals — there was to be 4,895 sites across the country.

Sources said that the number has been slashed to almost half. For instance, in Punjab, the number of these sites has been reduced from 110 to 59 for the opening day while Assam has been asked to reduce the number of sites from 74 to 59, sources said. Required cold supply chain has been one of the challenges for the delivery system, especially in the rural areas.

"The Centre asked us to reduce the vaccine centres. Now we have reduced it from 511 to 350. The Centre said, 'Don't be in haste,'" Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope told the media. In Mumbai, the number of sites has been reduced from 72 to 50. The numbers have been slashed in Pune also, now vaccination will take place only in 39 sites.

The authorities are hoping to finish the vaccination of 30 crore people belonging to high-risk groups within six months

Covid-19 vaccines reaching all centres across India, earlier 4,895 vaccination spots were chosen in country



Medical department workers unload boxes of Covid-19 vaccines from a vehicle at cold storage of a hospital in Srinagar on Wednesday

PTI

to achieve a critical mass of vaccinated people with around 3 crore health workers and corona warriors to get the shots in the first phase beginning January 13.

On their part, Serum Institute of India has moved about 56 lakh doses of Covishield to 13 cities. Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech said it had successfully transported the indigenous Covaxin, developed in collaboration with the ICMR and the

National Institute of Virology, to 11 cities. It said it has donated 16.5 lakh doses to the Centre.

"After having received the Government purchase order for 55 lakh doses, the company shipped the first batch of vaccines (each vial containing 20 doses)," Bharat Biotech said in a statement on Wednesday.

It added that the vaccine was sent to Ganavaram, Guwahati, Patna, Delhi, Kurukshetra, Bengaluru, Pune,

Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Chennai and Lucknow.

As the vials began reaching their destinations, in readiness for the pan-India vaccination drive that will be launched on Saturday, States firmed up their plans and finetuned logistical details.

In Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said his AAP Government will provide the vaccine free if the Centre fails to do so. He said he has already appealed to the Centre as there

## Vaccination trial on local population must for jabs' nod in India

**New Delhi:** Any vaccine maker, including Pfizer, which has sought emergency-use authorisation for its Covid-19 shot in India, must conduct a local "bridging" safety and immunogenicity study to be considered for the country's immunisation programme, a senior government official told Reuters.

are many people in the country who can't afford the life-saving jab. In accordance with the national priority list, the Covid-19 vaccines will be given first to healthcare and frontline workers.

The first consignment of about 94,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine reached Bhopal on a scheduled flight from Mumbai, a State Government official said.

From the airport, insulated vans of the health department transported the boxes — which signals India entering a decisive phase in its fight against the pandemic — to the State vaccine centre where Medical Education Minister Visvas Sarang inspected the arrangements. The doses will be dispatched to eight districts from Bhopal.

Kerala, too, received its first Covishield vaccine consignment on Wednesday morning on a Go Air flight that landed at Kochi. Sources in the National Health Mission said of the 4.33 lakh doses of the vaccine, 1,100 will be sent to Mahe, an enclave of Puducherry.

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# Farmers burn copies of agri laws on Lohri



Farmers burn copies of the new farm laws as they celebrate Lohri festival during their ongoing protest against the Central Government, at Singhu Border in New Delhi on Wednesday

Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Farmers protesting at Delhi borders burnt copies of Centre's new agriculture laws at all demonstration sites on the festival of Lohri on Wednesday, as a mark of protest against the legislation. Meanwhile, All India Kisan Sangarsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) on Wednesday claimed farmers burnt copies of the Act at more than 20,000 spots all across the country.

Many farmer leaders also threw copies of the farm laws in the bonfire created on the premises of the Kisan Andolan office.

According to Paramjeet Singh of Samyukta Kisan Morcha, around one lakh

copies of the three agri laws, were burnt at the Singhu border alone.

Lohri is widely celebrated in Punjab and Haryana to mark the harvesting of rabi crops. People traditionally celebrate it by circling around bonfires, throwing food items — peanuts, puffed rice, popcorn, etc — into the fire, singing folk songs, dancing and feasting.

"The celebrations can wait. We will celebrate all these festivals the day our demand of the repealing of these black laws are met by the Centre," said 65-year old Gurpreet Singh Sandhu who hails from Haryana's Karnal district.

"This Lohri is filled with struggle," said Rajbir Singh, a

34-year-old farmer from Punjab's Barnala. "It is minus the fun, the song and the dance we used to have back home on Lohri. But I am happy to be here and celebrate it with my family of farmers this time."

"Today, we have burned the copies, tomorrow the Centre will burn them. They have to, we will make them do it," he added.

Several bonfires were lined up at the Delhi-Haryana border stretch, the nerve centre of the farmers' agitation. The protesting farmers raised slogans, sang songs of resistance and hope as they orbited the bonfire, burning copies of farm laws and praying for the success of their protest.

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# In desi push & IAF boost, ₹48K cr OK'd for 83 Tejas

## Induction into IAF scheduled for 2026

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major boost to indigenisation drive in defence manufacturing, the Government on Wednesday approved a ₹48,000-crore deal for producing 83 Tejas light combat aircraft (LCA) by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

The induction of these aircraft will give a much-needed push to the IAF's efforts to modernise and stabilise its dwindling fighter jet strength. While the sanctioned strength is nearly 40, the IAF has now only about 30 squadrons. One squadron has 18 to 20 jets.

If the production schedule is on time, the fleet of 83 jets will start coming into the IAF by 2026. A contract between the IAF and the HAL is expected to be inked next month. At present, the IAF has 18 Tejas manufactured by the HAL and



these jets are operating from the IAF base in Sulur, Tamil Nadu.

Given the current security scenario where the armed forces have to be ready to face the possibility of fighting a two-front war simultaneously with Pakistan and China, the IAF urgently needs to shore up its number of fighter jets.

The Defence Ministry said the Union Cabinet approved procurement of 73 Tejas (LCA) Mk-1A fighter aircraft and 10 Tejas Mk-1(LCA) trainer aircraft at the cost of ₹45,696 crore along with Design and

Development of Infrastructure sanctions worth ₹1,202 crore.

The MK-1A variant is an indigenously designed, developed and manufactured state-of-the-art modern 4 plus generation fighter aircraft. This aircraft is equipped with critical operational capabilities of Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) Radar, Beyond Visual Range (BVR) Missile, Electronic Warfare (EW) Suite and Air to Air Refuelling (AAR) would be a potent platform to meet the operational requirements of the IAF.

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## Married daughter too eligible for govt jobs on compassionate ground: Alld HC

**Allahabad (PTI):** The Allahabad High Court has ruled that a married daughter of a government official dying during his service is no less eligible than her married brother for the state job on the compassionate ground.

Justice JJ Munir gave the ruling on a plea by a state native Manjul Srivastava challenging a June 2020 order of the Prayagraj's district basic education officer, rejecting her claim to the appointment on the compassionate ground following her father's death during his service to the state government. The district's Education Department had dismissed her claim saying she was a married daughter of the deceased official and her appointment would violate the provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Recruitment of Dependents of Government Servants Dying in Harness Rules, 1974.

# 150-metre-long, 30-ft-deep cross-border tunnel found

## Sand bags with Karachi markings found, high alert sounded in area

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The foot soldiers of the Border Security Force (BSF) on Wednesday detected a 150-metre long and 25 to 30-foot deep cross-border tunnel, the third in recent months, in Bobiya area of Samba sector in the Jammu region.

The tunnel originated from the Pakistani side of the international border and was detected by a BSF patrol party during its special anti-tunnel drive. The drive was launched following intel reports about presence of such tunnels in the Samba and Kathua sectors of Jammu frontier.

A high alert has been sounded in the entire border belt to find out whether the same under-construction tun-



nel has been used by the terrorists to sneak inside the Indian territory with the help from the Pakistani rangers.

Inspector General of BSF, Jammu frontier, NS Jamwal, who himself rushed to the spot, told reporters that it was a matter of investigation whether the tunnel was put to use by the Pakistan-based infiltrators to sneak inside the Indian territory.

Sharing details of the operation, Jamwal said, "During an

anti-tunneling drive the vigilant troops of BSF detected a tunnel in BOP Bobiya Area in Samba Sector around 10.30 am on Wednesday."

He said the tunnel was detected about 90 metres from zero line and about 20 meters from the fence on our own side.

IG BSF told reporters that the exit on Indian side was reinforced with sand bags which carried markings of a Karachi based unit.

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## SC issues notice on Govt plea against decriminalising adultery in forces

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued a notice on a plea of the Centre which urged that the 2018 judgment of a five-judge constitution bench decriminalising adultery under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) be not made applicable to the armed forces.

Attorney General KK Venugopal said under the relevant rules of armed forces, adultery is a ground for court martial for unbecoming conduct and therefore armed forces should be exempted from the purview of 2018 verdict of the Constitution bench.

A bench comprising Justices RF Nariman, Navin Sinha and KM Joseph, after issuing the notice to the PIL petitioner one Joseph Shine and others on the Centre's plea, referred the matter to Chief Justice SA Bobde for setting up of a five-judge Constitution Bench which can clarify the position.

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## CAPSULE

### PM: FASAL BIMA YOJANA BENEFITTED FARMERS

**New Delhi:** The crop insurance scheme launched by his Government has benefitted crores of farmers by mitigating farming risks against the vagaries of nature, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday as it completed five years since its launch. In tweets, Modi also asked people to get information on how the 'PM Fasal Bima Yojana' has helped farmers from his NaMo app.

### GOVERNMENT DEFERS NATIONAL POLIO DRIVE

**New Delhi:** The National Polio immunisation programme, as part of which children in the age group of 0-5 years are administered polio drops, has been deferred "till further notice" by the Centre citing "unforeseen activities". The Pulse Polio Immunisation programme was scheduled for January 17 across India.

# Dhoni's poultry plan goes for a toss as 2,500 Kadaknath die of bird flu

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Former Indian cricket team skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's dream of Kadaknath breed chicken farming at his sprawling farm in Ranchi has been hit by the bird flu outbreak in Madhya Pradesh.

Nearly 2,500 Kadaknath chickens of a poultry farm died of bird flu or avian influenza in Jhabua's Rudipanda village under Thandla tehsil on Wednesday. Dhoni's firm had placed an order for the supply of 2,000 Kadaknath chicks to the village hatcheries.

According to officials, nearly 2,500 Kadaknath chickens have died of bird flu in Jhabua district, which has GI-tag for Kadaknath. In August 2020 Dhoni's farm managers had got in touch with the

poultry farm through the Krishi Vikas Kendra (KVK) and MP Kadaknath mobile phone app. Dhoni's farm managers had also credited advance sums for the supply of the chicks.

The black-winged and tan-blooded "Kadaknath" chicken is known for its high iron content and low cholesterol, and sells at a much higher price than other varieties. "Now, transportation of chicken from the infected area has been banned for three months," officials said.

Bird-flu cases have been detected in Indore, Mandasaur, Agar, Neemuch, Dewas, Ujjain, Khandwa, Khargone, Guna, Shivpuri, Rajgarh, Shajapur, Vidisha, Bhopal, Hoshangabad, Ashoknagar, Datia and Barwani districts so far.

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## All municipal corps ban sale, storage of poultry or processed chicken meat in Delhi

**New Delhi:** All the three MCDs — North, South and East — on Wednesday imposed a ban on sale and storage of poultry or processed chicken meat by shops and restaurants with immediate effect in view of the bird flu situation in the national Capital.

## Central Vista project work to begin tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The construction of the new Parliament building will start on January 15, considered an auspicious day as it falls a day after "Makar Sankranti". The heritage panel on Monday approved the construction under the ambitious Central Vista redevelopment plan.

The new building is being constructed by Tata Projects Ltd. Sources said that Tata Projects started mobilising machinery and other items.

The redevelopment project of the Central Vista envisages a new triangular Parliament building, a common central secretariat, revamping of the three-km-long Rajpath from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate, new PM Residence and PMO, and a new VP Enclave.

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## Mandatory publishing of notice for inter-faith marriage now optional, rules Allahabad HC

**Lucknow:** In a judgment that is likely to bring relief to inter faith couples, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on Wednesday declared as optional the mandatory publication of notice of intended marriages under the Special Marriage Act, saying it violated the Right to Privacy.

It would also affect the couple's freedom to choose marriage "without interference from state and non-state actors", Justice Vivek Chaudhary said.

Justice Chaudhary said it shall now be optional for the parties to the intended marriage to make a request in writing to the marriage officer to publish or not to publish such a notice.

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# US lawmakers seek to hold Trump countable for January 6 storming

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Top American lawmakers on Wednesday sought to hold Donald Trump, the outgoing president, accountable for storming of the Capitol Hill by his supporters on January 6.

"Every moment Donald Trump is in the White House, our nation — our freedom — is in danger. He must be held to account for the attack on our capital that he organised and incited. I solemnly urge my colleagues to support this rule and the underlying article," Congressman James McGovern said on floor of US House of Representatives.

McGovern brought to the House Floor H. Res. 24, the article of impeachment against



Trump.

The article charges the president with "Incitement of Insurrection" for his actions on January 6, 2021, when he delivered a speech inciting his supporters to lay siege to the United States Capitol.

This riot temporarily halted the counting of Electoral College votes and led to the deaths of five people, including a Capitol Police Officer.







# City gets 61,980 vaccine doses

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The District Immunisation Centre in Lucknow has been provided 6,198 vials (61,980 doses) of Covid vaccines by the Directorate of Family Welfare. District immunisation officer MK Singh said the consignment is more than sufficient for the 51,000 health workers who will be vaccinated in the first phase in the district. From the directorate, the vaccines were brought to the District Immunisation Centre in Aishbagh on Wednesday afternoon.

Singh said all the vials were placed in the ice-lined refrigerators. These vaccines will be sent to 21 cold chain points across the district amidst tight security on Thursday.

DG, Medical Health, DS Negi said the vaccine vials were sent to all the districts under Lucknow commissionary and will be sent to the vaccination centres as per local arrangements. He said he will be monitoring the hospitals during vaccination and if there is any problem, help will be extended. A senior health official said they are fully prepared for the vaccination after three dry runs. He said the good sign is that the coronavirus graph is coming down and the cases are consistently decreasing. "Active cases have gone down to 2 per cent, which means that for every hundred persons, two are suffering from Covid," he said.

"Due to regular contact tracing, sampling and containment activities, the cases have come down even in the cluster areas," he said.

Regarding those above 60 years with co-morbidities who want to register for vaccination,



## 117 more test positive for coronavirus

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As many as 117 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow on Wednesday while 199 patients recovered, taking the number of recoveries to 76,928. Lucknow's death toll stands at 1,143 while there are 2,177 active cases in the district. The fresh cases included 12 from Alambagh, 11 from Gomtinagar, and 10 each from Rae Bareilly road and Jankipuram.

Across the state, 487 persons tested positive, including

he official said: "According to the government's notification, these people should provide the

30 in Kanpur, 12 in Ghaziabad, 22 in Gautam Buddh Nagar, 36 in Varanasi and 17 in Meerut, taking the UP tally to 5,94,641.

There were 15 deaths in the state, including four in Lucknow, and one each in Kanpur, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Lakhimpur Kheri, Hardoi, Sultanpur, Chandauli, Sitapur, Ambedkarnagar & Unnao, taking the UP toll to 8,529. Besides, 879 patients recovered, taking the number of recoveries to 5,75,980. There are 10,132 active cases in the state.

information on the portal and wait for the date of vaccination in the third phase. These peo-

ple are required to furnish details along with Aadhar number and other relevant information on the Co-Win portal," he added.

Meanwhile, Dr Surya Kant Tripathi from KGMU's Covid task force said that with the arrival of the vaccines, there is a considerable excitement amongst health workers.

"Doctors and health workers are excited but the general public is having a mixed response. Some are over excited because we are getting calls from the aware and educated elderly eager to know how can they get vaccinated, but some of them are having apprehensive as well. These are people in the age group of 20-50 years and they have based their opinion after reading or watching some random news. They are also not happy that they would have to keep the masks on even after getting vaccinated," he pointed out.

# Ajit murder case: Police puzzled by shooter's escape to Delhi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the entire focus on Giridhari aka Kanhaiya Vishwakarma, the prime shooter in Sanjay Singh murder case, police are puzzled as to why the conspirator took risks in saving the life of another shooter who suffered injuries in the return fire by Ajit's aide Mohar Singh on the fateful day.

The injured shooter was treated at a residential apartment in Lucknow by a doctor hours after he suffered injuries in the gunbattle at Kathautia crossing on January 6. Former block pramukh Ajit Singh of Mau was peppered with bullets and he suffered as many as 22 bullet wounds, most of which were in the face and head.

According to sources, the injured shooter was later shifted to a nursing home in Sultanpur for further treatment. Interestingly, the injured shooter was taken to Sultanpur by road the same night. "Mohar Singh named Kunti Singh and Akhand Singh for criminal conspiracy in murder while

Giridhari and three of his aides were named in the murder case. In the FIR, Mohar stated that he saw Giridhari open fire at Ajit and him," sources said.

However, they said Mohar's statement also needed to be scrutinised. "In case of a contract killing, a conspirator seldom takes risks of saving gun-slingers. In this case, the conspirator or conspirators surprisingly took a risk in ensuring safe exit for the prime shooter as well as medical treatment to him," they pointed out. They said the doctors who treated the injured shooter were said to be well linked.

Meanwhile, Giridhari, who was challanged under Arms Act, could not be brought to Lucknow on Wednesday. Sources said the investigator would now submit an application in a Delhi court stating that Giridhari was named in a case in Lucknow and his transit remand was required.

"After the magistrate gives permission, Giridhari will be transferred from the Delhi jail to Lucknow. Thereafter, the

police will take him on remand and quiz him," the sources said. They said Giridhari's confession would be of utmost importance.

"He may be quizzed about his links in the crime world, the crimes he committed and about the mentor who provided him help, if any, in his escape from Lucknow to New Delhi. He will also be quizzed about the persons who were present when Ajit was gunned down," the sources said.

Meanwhile, alarmed after the Vibhuti Khand gang war, the Lucknow police are preparing to collect details of the visitors to high-rise apartments in newly developed colonies. The police will also prepare the list of flats owned by mafia in these colonies. The move came after it surfaced that the attack on former block pramukh Ajit Singh was chalked out by the miscreants during their stay at one of these flats. The gateway car of the shooter was also found parked at one of such apartments. The police are planning to collect details about

the flats owned by or allotted to mafia.

Under the scheme, the police have prepared a format on which such flat owners will have to give details and the same will be verified later. Sources said a drive would be initiated in colonies in Gomti Nagar, Gomti Nagar Vistar, Vibhuti Khand, Chinhat, Sushant Golf City, PGI, Gudamba and Madaon among other areas. "Ajit himself had a criminal past and he was exterminated by the Mau district administration on December 31 last year. He was staying in a high-rise apartment in Gomti Nagar Vistar. Besides, a shooter who was injured was also treated in a flat in Gomti Nagar.

The police will also expedite the tenant verification process and seek details from the societies of residential apartments. The drive will be carried out police station-wise and details will be provided to the office of Police Commissioner where a dossier will be prepared.

## Man duped of cash in name of lottery draw

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Unidentified miscreants duped a resident of Sushant Golf City area of Rs 1 lakh after telling him that he won a car in a lucky draw. Abhay Kumar said he got a call on January 7 and he was informed that he had won a high-end car in the annual lucky draw of YouTube users.

The caller gave him the option to get cash instead of the car and Abhay agreed to take the money. The caller asked Abhay to share his Aadhaar and bank account numbers so that the money could be transferred into his account, and he readily obliged the caller. He was trapped and gave Rs 75,000 and Rs 25,000 to the caller and was promised that the money

would be transferred into his account soon. However, as he did not get anything, he dialled the same number but found it switched off. He then lodged a complaint in this connection.

In another case, an unidentified miscreant duped one S Gadekar of Rs 32,000 in the name of selling a bike through an online shopping site. Reports said Gadekar saw the

advertisement on the site and called the owner of the bike. He was told the bike's price was Rs 22,500 and was asked to pay the money and later the miscreants withdrew the cash in the name of advance sum. In Para, a woman Niharika complained that unidentified miscreants withdrew Rs 20,000 from her bank account even as her ATM was with her.

## Khichdi to be distributed on Makar Sankranti

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Various organisations will distribute *khichdi* and *tehr* at various points in the state capital with Covid-19 protocols on the occasion of Makar Sankranti on Wednesday.

Ridhi Gaur from Shubh Sanskar Samiti said they are organising a *khichdi bhoj* near KGMU. "We will distribute 11-kg *khichdi* in the morning and 5 kg in the evening. We will be serving green *urad khichdi* in the morning and black *urad khichdi* in the evening. Our primary aim is to feed the attendants of patients who come from far-off places," he said.

Litterateur Yogesh Praveen said it is the festival of new kharif harvest and is celebrated across the country with different names but with the same underlying theme.

"*Khichdi* is made essentially of *urad dal* because it is considered highly nutritious. In earlier times, our ancestors who were into a lot of physical work and would prefer to have this lentil. This *dal* is made on auspicious occasions such as marriages and pujas. *Khichdi* is served with papad, pickles, salad and ghee. Even today in traditional homes, people only prepare *urad dal khichdi* in this festive period," he said.

"People also make *tehr* with a dash of turmeric in the festival," he added.

Vandana Rastogi, a homemaker, said she makes *moong dal* and *arhar dal khichdi* to celebrate Makar Sankranti. "The younger generation does not like the taste of *urad dal*, which is also difficult to digest, and hence I prepare *moong dal khichdi* which is light on the stomach and delicious as well. I also prepare sesame and jaggery laddoos on the occasion," she said.

Poonam Tewari, a dietician, said people also have *chhilkha moong dal khichdi* is equally nutritious.

tributed at the time of Makar Sankranti and it has a high nutritive value. The poor who cannot afford this costly *dal* get to eat it on Makar Sankranti. It is recommended that it should be eaten with curd because it becomes a first-class protein combination," she said.

She said that having it with other accompaniments makes it better for digestion. "People also say that with the winters tilting towards the summers during this period, it is also considered good for health to have sesame seeds and jaggery items," she said. She added that *chhilkha moong dal khichdi* is equally nutritious.

## LMC forms anti-garbage unit for all zones

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Municipal Corporation constituted an anti-garbage unit on Wednesday for all the zones coming under its jurisdiction. A senior LMC official said that the unit has been constituted under the Swachh Bharat Mission to help keep the city clean and for good ranking in the cleanliness survey.

He said the unit will spread awareness amongst the general public that they should not litter the roads. He said action will also be taken against those who do not follow the rules.

Additional municipal commissioner Archana Dwivedi administered the pledge to members of the unit asking them to spread awareness amongst people.

The unit will ask all the shopkeepers to not spread garbage and hand over the garbage to only authorised garbage collectors. She also told them to spread awareness on avoiding the use of polythene.

## Mercury plummets to 5° C



People sitting around a bonfire on Wednesday morning

Pioneer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Cold north-westerly winds brought a dip in the minimum temperature which plummeted to 5 degree Celsius on Wednesday. However, the weatherman has forecast slight relief in a couple of days. The day began with dense fog even as chilly winds continued throughout.

MeT director JP Gupta said the weather conditions would improve in the next two days. "The speed of the north-

westerly winds is likely to decrease, which will ease the cold weather conditions," he said. Lucknow recorded the maximum temperature at 17.4 degree Celsius, which was 3.9 degrees below normal. The minimum temperature at 5 degree Celsius was 2.6 degrees below normal. The lowest minimum temperature was recorded in Churk (3.2 degree Celsius), followed by Muzaffarnagar and Bareilly (3.8 deg C each) and Fursatganj (3.9 deg C each).

The forecast for Lucknow is moderate to dense fog in the morning and clear sky thereafter. The maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be around 17 degree Celsius and 4 degree Celsius, respectively. The weather is likely to be dry over the state while there is a warning for cold day to severe cold day and cold wave conditions at a few places over the state. Dense to very dense fog is likely at a few places over the state in the morning.



Lohi celebrations at Guru Nanak Girls' Inter College in Naka on Wednesday

Pioneer

## IGNOU gets NAAC accreditation

Lucknow (PNS): Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has become the first distance learning university in India to get a National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accreditation. The 'A++' grade (highest) has been conferred upon IGNOU after a rigorous evaluation process which lasted over a year. In 2019, NAAC issued guidelines for accreditation of distance learning institutes based on the recommendations of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Vice-Chancellor, IGNOU, Prof Nageshwar Rao said: "The accreditation comes from a team comprising seven serving vice-chancellors. It can thus be gauged that it was an in-depth evaluation process. In fact, 70% of the evaluation is done by a neutral third-party agency on factors which can be quantified."

## Seaplane services to be launched in Gorakhpur's Ramgarh Tal soon

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amidst the ongoing projects of strengthening of road and air connectivity in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced that the seaplane services would soon be launched in Ramgarh Tal of Gorakhpur.

Addressing people from the stage of Gorakhpur Mahotsav on Wednesday, the CM said: "The process in this regard will start soon. The main speciality of this plain is that it can also land in water. There are nine flights from Gorakhpur to all major cities of the country, and soon the international flight will start from Kushinagar."

Speaking on the closing ceremony of the two-day Gorakhpur Mahotsav on

Wednesday, the CM said modern infrastructure needs development and people should get the benefits. "In the coming days, anyone can board a plane from the circuit house and fly to any corner across India," he added.

Adityanath also unfurled the tallest national flag in the state. Being 246-feet high, it is the 10th highest national flag in the country and is visible from a distance of 15 kilometers. He also virtually inaugurated the gateway of Naya Saveri and the Buddha Gate near Padleganj.

At the closing ceremony of Gorakhpur Mahotsav, motorised tricycles were provided to 100 divyangs by the chief minister.

Bhajan singer Nandu Mishra, Chief Warden of Civil Defense Sanjeev Gulati, oph-

thalmologist Dr Narendra Mohan Seth, Meenakshi Narayan who discovered God particle in the field of science, Dr Ramchet Chaudhary who discovered five species of Kalanamak rice, olympian Ali Saeed & Arjun Awardee Prem Maya, international wrestler Amarnath Yadav and entrepreneur Jyoti Maskara were conferred with 'Gorakhpur Ratna' awards by the CM.

Urging people to follow Covid-19 protocols even after getting vaccinated, Adityanath said: "The vaccination against coronavirus will start from January 16 under the leadership and guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Have patience and wait for your turn, do not rush for vaccination." The CM said Gorakhpur has the potential to become a hub of readymade garments.

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Fulfilling his duty as head of Goraksh Peeth in Gorakhpur, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ensured that the entire temple complex would be plastic-free and devotees coming at the Peeth would be urged to bring 'khichdi' in cloth and paper bags. A fair is held on Khichdi / Makar Sankranti in the temple premises for a month every year.

After the CM's request, devotees carrying khichdi from villages have been seen in the temple premises adhering to the eco-friendly process.

"Devotees bring khichdi in cloth and paper bags inside

the temple premises is indeed heartening. It reflects people's commitment towards protecting the environment and also proves that the society respects selfless and people-friendly requests made to them," said a government spokesman.

While visiting Gorakhnath temple on January 2 and inspecting Khichdi Mela ground, the CM had appealed to devotees to bring khichdi in a cloth or paper bag instead of polythene bags.

Earlier, Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation has declared the area adjoining the temple complex as a polythene-free zone. Besides, publicity was started to stop the use

of plastic bags in the temple premises.

Despite this, if someone brought khichdi in polythene bags, then arrangements have been made to replace it. Many departments and institutions like Khadi, Municipal Corporation, Prison, Indian Medical Association and others were helping in preparing and distribution of such bags.

The spokesman also said that a record number of plantations have been done during Van Mahotsav, which is held every year from World Environment Day (June 5) which is a proof of the CM's love for environment conservation.

## Minor raped

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A minor boy kidnapped a minor girl and allegedly raped her in a field in Mohanlalganj. The accused let her go after threatening to kill her parents if they reported the matter to police.

The girl narrated her ordeal to her mother after she reached home. On a complaint, the police registered a case and detained the accused. The girl was sent for a medical test. Reports said the mother of the girl had gone to a relative's house in Gosainganj while she was all alone in the house. As per reports, the accused, who is also a minor also, barged into the house on knowing that the victim was all alone and kidnapped her. He then took her to a field and raped her.

## Ganges conservation in school curriculum

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath-led BJP government is set to include Ganga conservation and related subjects in the curriculum of secondary education, making Uttar Pradesh the first state in India to do so.

Now, students of the state will learn ways to save the Ganges from pollution and the

journey of the river from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal.

Taking forward the concept of 'Nirmal and Aviral Ganga' of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the CM has decided to link Ganga cleanliness campaign with school students.

"This state government initiative will not only enhance the knowledge of children but

will also give a new momentum to cleanliness of the river," said an official communiqué released in Lucknow on Wednesday.

It further said that on the initiative of Namami Gange department, Secondary Education Council has accepted the proposal to include Ganga conservation and water pollution prevention in the curriculum of high school

and Intermediate classes.

The Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply department have directed Department of Secondary Education to make it compulsory for students to take part in Ganga cleanliness. In order to make school children aware of pollution in the Ganges, the government will also organise different competitions on topics related to its conservation.



# Witness to gram pradhan's murder gunned down

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A witness to the murder of a former Gram Pradhan was shot dead by gunmen in Chiraiyyakot area of Mau triggering protests, stone pelting and torching of police vehicles by the victim's kin and friends on Tuesday evening.


As per reports, former Gram Pradhan Munna Bagi was shot dead in front of Panchayat Bhawan in Asalpur village of Chiraiyakot area last year. His nephew, Arvind Ram was an eyewitness to the murderous attack. On Tuesday evening, while Arvind was returning home, he was accosted by unidentified gunmen and shot dead.

Enraged with the killing, angry villagers pelted stones at police vehicles that reached the scene of crime after the incident and later torched

them. It was suspected that Arvind was murdered to stop him from testifying in the murder trial at the court. A case registered and the police was on the lookout for suspects.

Meanwhile in Auraiya, a woman was murdered while she had gone out to relieve herself on Wednesday morning. Sarita Dohre of Lalpur locality went out of the house and when she did not return for an inordinate time, her husband looked for her and enquired from the locals.

A little away from her home, some locals spotted her body lying in a pool of blood. Unknown miscreants had brutally hit her with a blunt object as a result of which she succumbed. A case was registered a case in this connection, the body was sent autopsy and investigations were on.

**उत्तर प्रदेश स्टेट लोड लिमिटेड**  
**सेक्टर उद्योग प्रदायक**  
**कारपोरेट लिमिटेड ई-निविदा संस्था**  
**संस्था-04/UPPSCL/DC/UPS/2020-21**  
आव्हानात्मकता द्वारा अनुमोदी केन्द्रीय/मौखी से निम्नलिखित कार्यों हेतु अलग अलग सीलबद्ध ई-निविदाये दो भागों में ई-टेंडरिंग वेब साइट [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in) पर आमंत्रित की जाती है। ई-निविदा के प्रथम भाग में घोषित घनराशि व वेस्ता, तकनीकी एवं अनुभव सम्बन्धित प्रश्न, व्यावसायिक व अन्य शर्तें आदि एवं दूसरे भाग में दूर व वाणिज्यिक नियम एवं शर्तें प्रदान करनी होगी। निविदा प्रश्न मूल्य, घोषित घनराशि एवं जी.एस.टी. पंजीकरण प्रमाण-पत्र आवेदन पत्र के साथ संलग्न करने एवं इनकी Scanned copy upload करना अनिवार्य है। निविदा प्रश्न एवं घोषित घनराशि, जो कि मुख्य अग्रिमता (एसएलओडीसीटी), यूपीएसएलओडीसीटी, लखनऊ के (Account Name:- UPPCL-SLDC A/c Current A/c No- 628105029041, I/FSC: ICIC0006281, Shalimar Tower, Hazratganj, Lucknow) के खाते में RTGS/NEFT के माध्यम से स्थानान्तरित कर य.टी.आर. संख्या तथा पे-रिस्स की प्रति ई-टेंडरिंग वेबसाइट [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in) पर निविदा प्रश्नों के साथ स्व प्रमाणीत PAN एवं GST पंजीकरण प्रमाण-पत्र की प्रति प्रथम भाग के साथ लगाना अनिवार्य होगा। वांछित घोषित घनराशि एवं अन्य प्रश्न पूर्ण तथा उचित/स्वीकार्य योग्य न होने पर द्वितीय भाग को नहीं खोला जायेगा। ई-निविदाओं का विवरण निविदा सं.0, कार्यों का नाम, घोषित घनराशि, खुलने की तिथि व समय क्रमशः निम्नानुसार है :- 04/यूपीएसएलओडीसीटी/यूपीएस/2020-21, UPPSCL, गोतीनीनगर, लखनऊ के खाते में 10 KVA Online UPS (Make NPS Three Phase In & One Phase Out) के कम्प्रीहेन्सिव वाकिंग अनुक्षण एवं परीक्षण आदि का कार्य, घोषित घनराशि रु 240000.00, निविदा दिनांक 04-02-2021 को 16.00 बजे तक ई-टेंडरिंग वेब साइट [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in) पर उपलब्ध है। अघोस्ताहककर्ता को बिना कोई कारण बताये किसी भी ई-निविदा अथवा समी ई-निविदाओं को अस्वीकार/विमोचित करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। निम्नलिखित तिथि के विस्तार तथा शुद्धि पत्र से सम्बन्धित सूचना यदि कोई कोई केवल वेबसाइट पर डाली जाएगी। अतः स्वयं को अपडेट रखने के लिए उपरोक्त वेबसाइट को नियमित देखते रहना चाहिए। **अधीक्षक अभियन्ता, विद्युत पोषण मण्डल-प्रथम, उद्योग प्रदायक ट्रान्समिशन कारपोरेट लिमिटेड लि. ब्ला सं.0-111 से 114, प-तल, पोषण नगर, विद्युत खण्ड-I, गोतीनी नगर, लखनऊ पत्रांक- 88 दिनांक 13.01.2021 "राष्ट्रहित में विजली बचाय"**

**उत्तर प्रदेश स्टेट लोड लिमिटेड**  
**सेक्टर उद्योग प्रदायक**  
**कारपोरेट लिमिटेड ई-निविदा संस्था-04/UPPSCL/DC/UPS/2020-21**  
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# 'Govt's affidavit on farm laws evasive'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Wednesday Calleged that the Central Government has misled through its affidavit in the Supreme Court on January 11 claiming that due consultations were made before bringing in the three farm laws which is infact an attempt to "prevaricate, distort, misrepresent" the facts.

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Manu Singhvi said the Government's affidavit is at variance to an RTI reply given by them. In reply to two RTI applications filed by activist Anjali Bhardwaj who sought details of pre-legislative consultations, the information officer had said "this CPIO does not hold any record in this matter".

"The Government in its affidavit said it is being filed 'for the purpose of dispelling the erroneous notion that the protesters have peddled that the Central Government and Parliament never had any consultative process or examination of issues by any Committee before passing of



**Cong spokesperson Abhishek Manu Singhvi said the Govt's affidavit is at variance to an RTI reply given by them**

the laws in question'. And as examples of pre-legislative consultations, the government quotes circulating Draft Model Acts in 2003 and 2017 to the State governments among other things.

The Government claimed that the "legislations are not hurriedly made but are a result of two decades of deliberations. Can you call this elaborate consultative process? For a law that you bring in 2020, you circulate Model Act in 2017," Singhvi, also a senior Supreme Court lawyer said.

Singhvi said not even perfunctory consultations were done. "It is clear that there are serious attempts at prevarication, distortion, misrepresentation and misleading of the nation, the Supreme court and all relevant stakeholders, apart

from indulging in blatantly contumacious conduct. These laws were rammed down the throat of Parliament. "The Government has attempted to fool all the people of India all the time by practising falsehoods on stilts. Unfortunately, they have not even spared the hon'ble Supreme Court," Singhvi added.

He also said bringing the laws shows incoherence within the Government since it was well aware the serious lack of legislative competence in passing uniform all India Acts which is why it sent out the Model Acts to be adopted by the States. "The content of such model laws was also different from the three enactments as passed without discussion in Parliament," said the Rajya Sabha member.

# ED arrests former TMC MP KD Singh for money laundering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has arrested former Rajya Sabha member from the TMC and businessman KD Singh in a money laundering case related to ₹1,900 crore ponzi scheme fraud. The 59-year-old founder of Alchemist Ltd. is facing charges under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The ED arrested him late last night for not cooperating in the investigation of the case, sources said. Singh was produced before a special court here on Wednesday which remanded him to the ED custody till January 16, they said. In September 2019, the ED had carried out searches at the premises of Singh and those linked to him in Delhi and Chandigarh and had seized cash of ₹32 lakh and \$10,000. Singh was the chairman of Alchemist Ltd., which deals in

pharmaceuticals and other sectors, before he resigned in 2012. He is said to be the Chairman Emeritus and founder of the business group at present. The agency is probing him in connection with two money laundering cases and has questioned him on earlier occasions. This case relates to a probe against the former MP and a firm linked to him -- Alchemist Infra Realty Ltd. The ED had filed the case in September, 2016, taking cognisance of a charge sheet filed against the company, its directors and others by SEBI.

The scam is estimated to be worth about Rs 1,900 crore and the agency had attached assets worth Rs 239 crore of Alchemist Infra Realty Ltd in 2019. The company had allegedly launched an illegal collective investment scheme, also called a ponzi or chit fund scheme, and mobilised funds of about Rs

1,916 crore from the public in the years preceding 2015, the sources said. The second money laundering case against him and others is based on an FIR filed by the Kolkata Police in 2018. The Kolkata Police had booked Singh, his son Karandeep Singh, Alchemist Township India Limited, Alchemist Holdings Limited and various other group companies and directors for allegedly cheating thousands of customers.

"Singh through companies raised huge amounts of money from thousands of customers in the garb of investments by luring them with high returns and also against sale and booking of plots and flats. So far, investigation has revealed that these funds raised from the public were not used for the intended purpose and were diverted or siphoned off to various group companies," the agency had alleged.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday hoped that farmers would respect Supreme Court decisions as BJP has done saying "we should trust all constitutional institutions".

"We respect Supreme Court and so should be done by the

# Hope farmers' will abide by SC order: BJP

farmers", said BJP's national spokesman Sambit Patra. "In Supreme Court's decisions the nation takes pride and that therefore the BJP with utmost respect bows down in front of the Supreme Court and accepts

their decision on the Farm laws," Patra said he was hopeful that the farmers too will accept this decision and walk on the path that the SC has paved for them. He said BJP's four-point formula a for the solution of the

## FASAL BIMA COMPLETES 5 YEARS

# 29 cr farmers enrolled with yojna so far: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Wednesday said 29 crore farmers have so far insured their crops under the Government's Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and urged other growers — who have not yet got one — to enroll soon. On the occasion of five years of implementation of PMFBY, the Minister said crop insurance is the only "suraksha kavach (security shield)" for farmers from any crop losses arising due to natural disasters.

"So far, 29 crore farmers have insured their crops under the scheme and about 5.5 crores new farmers are getting registered every year. A total of ₹90,000 crore have been paid as claims to farmers till now. In fact, the scheme was fully operational during the Covid-19 lockdown, distributing claims of over 8,741.3 crores to 69.70 lakh farmers across

India, which is highly commendable," he said.

PMFBY was launched on January 13, 2016 with an aim to provide a comprehensive risk solution at the lowest uniform premium across the country for farmers.

"On this occasion, I want to again congratulate farmers and urge them to tell fellow farmers and relatives to take advantage of the crop insurance message. He also urged those farmers, who have not yet got their crop insured, to get one today itself and secure crops from natural disasters.

Tomar also interacted with stakeholders across the country via video conferencing on the occasion of completion of five years of the PMFBY. He said that there is a need to raise awareness about the PMFBY so that many more farmers can take advantage of the scheme.

The Minister informed that PMFBY has been made voluntary and the scheme is

linked with technology. Moreover, efforts have been made to ensure transparency. For speedy disbursement of claims and crop assessment, the centre is using satellite and is working closely with the State Governments.

A crop insurance mobile app, where farmers can get all information related to the scheme, is also made available, he added. Under the scheme, the premium cost over and above the farmer share is equally subsidised by the Centre and States. The average sum insured per hectare has increased from ₹15,100 during the pre-PMFBY Schemes to ₹40,700 under the PMFBY.

Aadhar seeding has helped in speedy claim settlement directly into the farmer accounts. Even during Covid lockdown period, nearly 70 lakh farmers benefitted and claims worth ₹8,741.30 crores were transferred to beneficiaries, according to the Ministry data.

# Covid healthcare workers at risk of mental health problems: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than half of doctors, nurses, and emergency responders involved in Covid-19 care could be at risk for one or more mental health problems, including acute traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, problematic alcohol use, and insomnia, as per a study.

While noting that the daily toll of Covid-19, as measured by new cases and the growing number of deaths, overlooks a shadowy set of casualties, the researchers found that the risk of these mental health conditions was comparable to rates observed during natural disasters, such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.

"What health care workers are experiencing is akin to domestic combat," said Andrew J Smith, Ph.D., director of the U of U Health Occupational Trauma Program at the Huntsman Mental Health Institute and the study's corresponding author. "Although the majority of health care professionals and emergency responders aren't

necessarily going to develop PTSD, they are working under severe duress, day after day, with a lot of unknowns. Some will be susceptible to a host of stress-related mental health consequences. By studying both resilient and pathological trajectories, we can build a scaffold for constructing evidence-based interventions for both individuals and public health systems." The study appears in the Journal of Psychiatric Research. In addition to U of U Health scientists, contributors include researchers from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences; University of Colorado, Colorado Springs; Central Arkansas VA Health Care System; Salt Lake City VA Healthcare System; and the National Institute for Human Resilience. The researchers surveyed 571 health care workers, including 473 emergency responders (firefighters, police, EMTs) and 98 hospital staff (doctors, nurses), in the Mountain West between April 1 and May 7, 2020. Overall, 56 per cent of the respondents screened positive for at least

one mental health disorder. The prevalence for each specific disorder ranged from 15 per cent to 30 per cent of the respondents, with problematic alcohol use, insomnia, and depression topping the list.

"Frontline providers are exhausted, not only from the impact of the pandemic itself, but also in terms of coping day to day," said Charles C. Benight, co-author of the study and a professor of psychology at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.

"They're trying to make sure that their families are safe [and] they're frustrated over not having the pandemic under control. Those things create the sort of burnout, trauma, and stress that lead to the mental health challenges we're seeing among these caregivers." In particular, the scientists found that health care workers who were exposed to the virus or who were at greater risk of infection because they were immunocompromised had a significantly increased risk of acute traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression.

# Climate change stunts baby sharks' growth

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Warming of oceans due to Climate change is leaving baby sharks not only smaller, exhausted, undernourished but also making their survival tough, a study published in the journal Scientific Reports has warned, painting gloomy picture for marine world as temperatures underwater is predicted to exceed in the coming years. Researchers reached to this conclusion after testing the growth, development and physiological performance of embryos and hatchlings of epaulette sharks—an egg-laying species at the New England Aquarium in waters up to 31 degrees Celsius (87.8 degrees) Fahrenheit.

Lead author Carolyn Wheeler a PhD scholar from the University of

Massachusetts Boston and at the ARC Center of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University, studied the sharks as embryos and hatchlings, under the guidance of Dr John Mandelman, Vice President and Chief Scientist of the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life at the New England Aquarium.

There are more than 500 types of shark living around the world, and the majority give birth to live young. Some shark species, like epaulette sharks, lay eggs, which are left unprotected and must be able to survive on their own for up to four months.

"We found that the hotter the conditions, the faster everything happened, which could be a problem for the sharks," said Wheeler. "The embryos grew faster and used

their yolk sac quicker, which is their only source of food as they develop in the egg case. This led to them hatching earlier than usual." Wheeler said the hatchlings were not only smaller, but they needed to feed almost immediately while lacking significant energy.

"The ocean faces increasing threats from humans, such as the effects of climate change, and it is vital to conduct scientific research to help strengthen the management and protection of those ocean species most negatively impacted and vulnerable," Mandelman said. "In this case, we addressed a pressing threat—ocean warming--and the potential impacts on a species that could serve as a model for other egg laying species among sharks and their relatives."

## NIA files chargesheet against 3 in murder case of Hindu Takht leader

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA on Wednesday filed a supplementary chargesheet before a Special NIA Court here against accused persons Ashish Kumar, Javed and Arshad Ali, all residents of Meerut, under various Sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Arms Act and IPC in the case relating to the killing of Hindu leader Amit Sharma, president of Sri Hindu Takht, Ludhiana in 2017 by banned terror group Khalistan Liberation Front.

The case was re-registered by the NIA on

December 10, 2017 arising out of FIR No. 06 dated January 15, 2017 of Police Station Division Number 8, Ludhiana, Punjab related to the killing of the Hindu leader.

On January 14, 2017, two unknown motorcycle-borne assailants killed Sharma as a part of an organised conspiracy hatched by terrorist outfit Khalistan Liberation Front (KLF). This murder was one among eight such cases of serial killings/attempted killings that took place in Punjab in 2016-2017 with a view to create terror and communal disturbance.

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ DIVISION**  
*Welcomes you in*  
**MAGH MELA 2021**  
**Direction wise Mela Special Trains on Main bathing days of Magh Mela 2021**

Direction of Special Train	Nominated Station
<b>Towards Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Jn.</b> • Meja Road, Manda Road, Gaipura, Vindhyachal, Mirzapur, Chunar & Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Jn. onward stations.	<b>Prayagraj Jn. and Naini Station</b>
<b>Towards Kanpur</b> • Bharwari, Sirathu, Khaga, Fatehpur & Kanpur onward stations.	<b>Prayagraj Jn. Station</b>
<b>Towards Manikpur</b> • Shankargarh, Dabhaura, Manikpur, Jaitwar and Satna onward stations.	<b>Prayagraj Jn. and Naini Station</b>
<b>Towards Lucknow</b> • Amethi, Pratapgarh, Unchahar, Raebareilly, Lucknow & Bareilly onward stations.	<b>Prayag and Phaphamau Station</b>
<b>Towards Ayodhya</b> • Phulpur, Faizabad, Ayodhya, Jaunpur, Lalganj and onward stations.	<b>Prayagraj Rambagh and Jhansi Station</b>
<b>Towards Varanasi</b> • Ramnathpur, Madhosingh, Bhadohi, Gyanpur Road, Manduadih, Varanasi, Aunrihar, Bhatni & Gorakhpur onward stations.	

**Reach to Prayagraj Rambagh and Jhansi station for boarding trains towards Varanasi, Mau, Gorakhpur and Ballia.**  
**Reach to Prayag and Phaphamau station for boarding trains towards Lucknow, Pratapgarh, Sultanpur, Faizabad.**

**Important : For the convenience of passengers during Magh Mela, Ticket booking counters for reserved tickets have been opened at Triveni Road in the Sangam area. Passengers can obtain tickets from there also.**

59/21 (R)  North central railways [www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in)  @ CPRO NCR



# Covid vaccines arrive in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Giving a rare relief to the people from the global coronavirus pandemic which has disturbed their normal life for almost 10 months, the first consignment of COVID-19 vaccines arrived at Lal Bahadur Shastri International (LBSI) Airport, Babatpur here on Wednesday. In this first consignment there were 1.6 lakh vaccines which were brought here by Vistara Airlines from Mumbai. Earlier, there was information that the same to this parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be brought by SpiceJet cargo. The consignment which has arrived would be sent to 14 districts of this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) as per the directive of the state government.

After bringing the vaccine doses here, all the pockets were brought out from the cargo amidst tight security arrangements and SDM (Pindra), SP(Protocol), LBSI Airport Director, nodal officer and other senior health department officers were present there. Later, the vaccines were sent to the State Drug Centre at Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital. The vaccination in the first phase is scheduled to be started from January 16 when the same would be administered to all the health workers who led from the front during the fight against COVID-19. The list of all these health workers has already



Covid vaccines being delivered from LBSI Airport, Babatpur in Varanasi on Wednesday

Pioneer

been uploaded on the concerned app. A cold chamber with a capacity of five tonnes was inaugurated at the airport last month where Ice Line Refrigerators (ILRs) have been installed to maintain proper temperature between two to eight degree Celcius.

**35 NEW COVID CASES IN VARANASI:** As many as 35 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district on Wednesday, increasing the total number to 21,696. The day also saw one more death, increasing the toll to 373. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 42 and 40 of them

have been recovered from home isolation while two from the hospitals, increasing the number to 18,046 and 2,955 respectively. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 21,001, leaving 322 active cases. The recovery rate is 96.79 per cent, while the mortality rate is 1.71 per cent.

In the first report of the day, 23 positive patients were found out of 2,367 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 5,52,513 and the results of 3,003 are awaited. Out of them, 5,30,829 were negative while 21,684 were positive. The total num-

ber of samples collected was 5,78,793. Earlier, a female aged 65 from Raja Talab succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sunderlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU). Meanwhile, mass / group corona antigen tests continued and all the 180 tests were found negative at SSPG Hospital Kabirchaura apart from 42 at CHC Shivpur, 69 at Vivekanand Hospital Bhelupur, 240 at LBS Hospital Ramnagar and 125 at SSH BHU. Along with this, samples of 150 from SSPG, 200 from LBS Hospital Ramnagar and 46 from Vivekanand Hospital have been sent for RTPCR investigation.

# No bird flu case in division: DC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Divisional Commissioner (DC) Deepak Agrawal reviewed the development works at a meeting with divisional officers here on Wednesday. According to him, in the division comprising four districts no case of bird flu has come into the light so far. However, he added that as per the directives of the state government, he asked the Animal Husbandry department to establish contact with poultry farms in view to take precautionary measures.

Reviewing the works of the Basic Education department, Agrawal directed that all the students enrolled in schools must be able to get education through any medium like online, offline, Mohalla classes etc. While reviewing the applications received under various social



DC Deepak Agrawal reviewing development works in Varanasi on Wednesday

assistance or pension schemes, he said that the applicants who are not being benefited due to any reason of their ineligibility should be informed of the reasons in view to clear doubts.

He has instructed the concerned officers to ensure reg-

ular inspection of stray cattle shelter centres, in view to ensure providing proper measures to help the cattle get relief from cold. According to him, fishing is a very good source of income as now its marketing is well accessible and asked the officers to

encourage farmers for fisheries because fish seed production is a good business.

The DC said 231 new panchayat buildings have been constructed in the division this year and about 1,700 are under construction. Emphasising the development of Panchayat buildings as village secretariat, the DC said that all facilities should be available there. District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma said that in Sewapuri block, Panchayat buildings are being developed in such manner.

The DC informed that in various schemes of the Labour department, 1,15,023 applications were received in the division in which the workers have been provided financial assistance of ₹ 19.5 crore. The DMs of Chandauli and Jaunpur and other senior officers were also present.

# Kites flood sky on Makar Sankranti eve

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the eve of auspicious Occasion of Makar Sankranti, kites having the pictures of different leaders, places and quotes including some lines of Prime Minister Narendra Modi were seen flying and flooding in the sky in his parliamentary constituency here on Wednesday. In this belt of eastern UP and adjoining Bihar, the festival is popularly known as Khichadi. Despite all prevailing coron-

avirus pandemic, heavy rush of people was seen in the markets purchasing various typical articles of this famous festival, which is celebrated not only in different parts of the country but also abroad with different names.

Meanwhile, there was festive mood in all the localities dominated by Punjabi residents here as they celebrated their famous Lohri festival on eve of Makar Sankranti and its date is always fixed. In Ashok Nagar, Lalpat Nagar, Sonia and

many others, the Punjabis and Sikhs assembled near the bonfires and continued the programme of dance till midnight hours and eating Revaris and Moongfalis (groundnuts) among other items.

On the eve of festival, the rush of customers was seen on hundreds of temporary shops installed on the roadsides, selling various gur, teel and groundnut items. As a huge number of residents hail from adjoining Bihar and eastern UP districts, most of them also

consume Chuda-Dahi on this festival. Varanasi is a city with cosmopolitan character. As the festival is known with different names across the country, there are also separate localities for Gujaratis, Marathis, Bengalis, South Indians, Nepalese and others, the city would see a variety of colours of the festival on Thursday. Preparations have also been completed to provide Khichadi 'prasad' to a large number of devotees at Khichadi Baba Mandir, located near Dashaswamedh Ghat.

# Provide Ayushman cards to beneficiaries: CMO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh directed the operators of various Common Service Centres (CSCs) in the district to provide the golden cards to all eligible beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (Ayushman Bharat) at the earliest. He also instructed the operators to contact the concerned ward representatives and the medical officer incharges (MOICs) in view to ensure providing the golden cards to the beneficiaries. In this direction, a meeting of CSC operators was held recently in which they were also trained how to issue golden cards. All the 35 operators of the urban areas were given the responsibility of making golden card of one ward each and they were directed to seek cooperation from the Municipal Corporation and District Supply department.

CSC operations were also instructed that non-Aadhaar documents of those whose

names are incorrect and not having ration cards should be collected so that non-Aadhaar cards can be made from the CMO's office in their collaboration. Any person in the urban areas can contact the concerned corporators and MOICs of Urban Primary Health Centres (UPHCs) to know their eligibility. A fee of ₹ 30 is payable for making a golden card at Jan Seva Kendras while golden cards are made free in the listed hospitals associated with the scheme. For any type of problem related to the scheme, one can contact the CMO office.

As many as 40 CSC operators have been assigned for making golden cards in rural areas. Ayushman Golden Card is made free at primary and community health centres (PHCs/CHCs) of all the eight blocks. Any person in rural area can contact HEOs / BPMs of the health centres and gram pradhans can be contacted for knowing one's eligibility.

According to information, in the district so far, golden cards

of 89,026 families have been made against 1,14,419 eligible beneficiary families and 45,085 beneficiaries have been successfully treated under the scheme. DCMO and Nodal Officer of the scheme Dr Piyush Rai, DISM Navendra Singh, CSC Cluster Manager Umesh Rai, CSC District Manager Arvind Maurya, Ayushman Mitra Rajat Singh, Janmejay Mishra etc were also present in the meeting.

**STREET PLAYS STAGED:** Aiming at generating consciousness among common people about violence against women and girls and gender discrimination, the artists of Prerana Kala Manch on Wednesday staged street plays in some villages of the district.

The social organisations Asha Trust and Lok Samiti organised an awareness programme at Chandpur, Sawari, Payagpur and Harpal villages of Rohania under which the artists of the Manch staged a street play to generate consciousness among common

people about violence against women and girls.

The artists also made the women and girls aware about their fundamental rights to get education and safety besides the gender discrimination through street play. They also generated consciousness about foeticide and save girl child.

The women of the villages lamented that they do not get the respect and honour in the family what they deserve because of male dominated society and said, the girls are worshipped in the auspicious occasion of Navratri but despite this, the social evil foeticide is still prevailing in the society. There is a need to bring a change in this mentality and the girls should also be given respect, honour and place equal to boys, they added.

The artists conveyed the message through the street play that the girls are not burden on anyone and they are also the base of social life and thus they should also have right to get education.

# Minister reviews performance of Zonal Railways

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal along with Suneet Shrama, Chairman Railway Board and CEO and other Members of Railway Boards reviewed performance of Zonal Railways including North Central Railway, and Production Units in safety, punctuality, freight loading, revenue, expenditure control, key infrastructure projects, HR management and efficiency enhancement. General Manger North Central and North Eastern Railway Vinay Kumar Tripathi, AGM NCR Ranjan Yadav, PHODs of NCR and DRMs from Prayagraj, Jhansi and Agra division participated in this review meeting held through video conferencing.

At the outset, CRB and

CEO Suneet Sharma said, 'safety is our first and foremost concern and we have to remain focused to safety in train operations'. He specially discussed proper implementation of cold weather precautions and all due care. He also discussed elimination of manned level crossings and said if ROB/RUB has been constructed then closure of LC must be done expeditiously. He congratulated zonal railways for improved freight loading performance in December-2020 and impressed upon zones and divisions to keep this momentum going in the last quarter of current financial year. He laid special emphasis on Removal of Permanent Speed Restrictions (PSRs) and also relaxing PSRs. He also emphasised electrification of sidings and yard so as

to streamline shunting movements.

While addressing the meeting the Railway Minister Piyush Goyal greeted everybody for the ensuing festivals of Lohri/ Makar Sanranti /Onam/ Pongal and praised the loading performance of previous quarter and asked to continue the performance in last quarter of financial year as well. He said, Railway is a vibrant organisation and its deeds should send positive message to the nation. He specially applauded the six zones including North Central Railway for surpassing the last year loading performance by 6.5 per cent. He also congratulated the 37 divisions who have crossed the last year loading. He emphasised upon not only increasing the revenue but also

controlling the operating expenses.

On the front of freight loading, North Central Railway has achieved many important milestones in December-2020. During the month, originating freight loading of has been ever best in a month i.e. 16.6 lakh tonnes and so far, total 118.2 Lakh tonnes freight has been loaded in current financial year. With positive loading performance even during Covid crisis, NCR has surpassed last year loading of 112 Lakh tonnes freight loaded till December. NCR has substantially improved its foodgrain loading by more than 82 per cent in comparison to last year, thus not only ensuring the supply of essential items but also supporting in agriculture sector.

# Building of Rashid demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Prayagraj Development Authority officials targeted a property of Rashid alias Neelu, cousin brother of mafia don Atique Ahmed in Chakia area on Wednesday. With the help of JCB machines Rashid's building was demolished within hours.

Rashid was closely associated with Atique Ahmed and was his partner in several property deals.

According to officials the above property in Chakia had been grabbed by Rashid and he had constructed a building on the same without getting the blue print approved. Police records reveal that Rashid was involved in a good number property grabbing with Atique Ahmed.



# Rice mill owner robbed of ₹16 lakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

A rice mill owner and trader of the neighbouring district of Pratapgarh was deprived of ₹ 16 lakh at pistol point by motorcycle-borne robbers on Wednesday morning. The police are trying their level best to arrest the culprits and recover the robbed cash, but they could not succeed till late in the evening.

Amarjit Chaurasia, who lives in Pratapgarh and own a rice mill and foodgrain stock in Mangraura Bazar. On Wednesday morning he reached Mangraura on his SUV. The driver took the bag of cash and stepped towards the office while Chaurasia went a side to answer the call of nature. Within seconds three miscreants riding a Pulsar bike snatched the bag from the driver. The driver raised alarm, and the local residents gave the bike riders a hot chase, but they opened fire to make a successful escape towards Patti.

The police officials reached

the spot within minutes and tried to gather clue. Vehicle checking was launched and hide outs of the criminals were raided, but to no avail.

**COPS STILL GROPING IN DARK:** Five days after the robbery in the bullion trader's shop of Pratapgarh, the police are still groping in the dark and failed to nab the culprits involved in this loot. There is no result of the raid and the questioning. This is also the case in bullion trader's murder and robbery in Patti area. This failure of the police has caused grief and anger among people and businessmen.

On January 7, the miscreants entered the shop of a bullion trader Suresh Soni in Shyam Bihari Gali of the city and robbed jewellery worth ₹ 90 lakh, ₹ 10,000 in cash and mobile phone. In this incident, seven teams of police have been engaged in the investigation and arresting of the miscreants. Apart from this, the help of STF Prayagraj is also being sought with Fatehpur,

Rae Bareilly, Sultanpur, Jaunpur Police. Police teams are reconnaissance in the district as well as nearby districts. Many miscreants are in police custody who are being questioned. Top police officers are claiming that clues have been found but criminals are still roaming scot-free. Police are also saying that the robbers have fled outside the state.

The police are searching for the miscreants who did not run away from Shyam Bihari Gali after the incident, in the neighborhoods around Shyam Bihari Gali. On the other hand, the murder and robbery of Saraf Mohammad Ahmed near Patti town has also passed three days but the police failed to get hold of the culprits till date. In this incident too, five teams of police are engaged in the search for miscreants. STF Prayagraj and SWAT team are also engaged. Police teams have also been sent to neighbouring districts. Police are questioning several suspects in custody.

Shops in Patti town were

closed for two days in protest against the robbery by killing Sarafa Mohammad Ahmed. Meanwhile, shops opened in Patti town on Tuesday.

Activists of the Congress's Minority Department submitted a memorandum to the Administrative Officer in the Collectorate on Tuesday under the leadership of District president Feroze Qureshi. Through the memorandum, Sarafa Mohammad Ahmad's wife demanded ₹ 50 lakh and a job. District president Feroze Qureshi said that everyone is scared of the increased crime in the district. Imran Khan, Mumtaz Ahmed, Firoz Ahmed, Shamim, Javed Ahmed etc. were present during the handing over of the memorandum.

Police checked vehicles intensively across the district on Wednesday. During this a black film was taken out of the glass of four wheelers. Police seized 18 bikes and challaned 112 vehicles. 92 people were fined ₹ 9200 for not wearing masks.

# 14 more test positive in Prayagraj

**ALLAHABAD (PNS):** After six months, the Covid report of just 14 people came positive in 24 hours. Tuesday was a major relief from Corona infection. Earlier on July 8, 15 patients were found infected. Nearly three times of the infected people became infection free. No one died of infection for the fourth consecutive day.

According to Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, on Tuesday, a Covid test of 5,513 people was conducted in the district. Of them, 14 people were discharged from various Covid hospitals. At the same time 27 people completed home isolation. So far, the number of healthy people in home isolation has crossed to 21,028.

He informed that the number of active patients of Covid has now come to 400 in the district. A total of 28,774 people have been infected. About 383 people have died due to corona infection. Currently, no infected person has died of corona infection for four days. He informed that testing and screening work is being done in the Magh Mela area at a rapid pace.

**SPL TRAINS, BUSES:** Even

the devotees coming from the neighbouring district Pratapgarh and Kaushambi will not have trouble to reach the Magh Mela in Sangam city. They will get adequate facility of roadways bus and train. Both the departments have set the framework for conducting the Mela Special. The Railway and Transport department is going to operate special buses and trains from other districts including Kaushambi to reach Magh Mela.

In view of the annual Magh Mela, many trains of Railways have started running in Pratapgarh. Railways have run many trains connecting Prayag and Ayodhya. Among these, especially the Manwar Sangam Express running from Prayagraj to Basti was the special one. This operation was started due to the Magh Mela. The train was off for eight months. Similarly, Prayagraj-Haridwar Express also started running.

Railway Board started operating PRL passenger train with Saryu Express, Three F and Four F. Passengers have breathed a sigh of relief as these trains started moving. Along with this, Passenger Mela train

will pass through here on Wednesday night to reach the Ganga coast on Makar Sankranti. The railway administration has asked the station superintendents and SM to follow the Corona Guideline to provide facilities to the passengers.

If we talk about the roadways, 70 buses will be run from here during Magh Mela. Devotees will be facilitated by cutting through the routine route. 40 vehicles have been arranged from the city depot. Ten buses will be run from tehsils. Magh Mela special and attractive stickers are also being installed on these buses. This will make these buses easily recognisable to the people. ARM PK Katiyar said that the buses have been repaired. Drivers, operators are asked to enter as many seats as they can. They are asked not to let anyone stand up in bus while travelling. On the way, the officers of the Transport Corporation will check. Strict action will be taken if found arbitrary. The fare of such passengers can be recovered from the concerned personnel.

**PHYSICAL DISTANCING NOT POSSIBLE AT**

**GOVT HOSPITALS:** The government's emphasis on this guideline is that people should keep a distance of two yards between themselves to avoid coronavirus infection but the arrangements of government hospitals are such that physical distancing is not possible to be maintained here. People are compelled to stand close to each other in Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital, the largest hospital in Prayagraj. This is because the crowd is getting more and from registration to the inquiry fee counter and counter has not been increased.

Only three registration counters are opening in Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital (SRN Hospital). There are only two counters for depositing the examination fee, while in the hospital now about 2,000 people have started pouring in to the OPD. People are having problems with this. Standing close to each other in a queue becomes a compulsion of people. The same situation is with Motilal Nehru Divisional Hospital. Here, physical distancing is not being followed anywhere from registration counter to OPD room.





Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar holding a divisional development meeting on Wednesday

Pioneer

## DC reviews development work

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar, while holding a development work review meeting of the entire Kanpur division at his camp office on Wednesday lashed out at the officials of Kanpur city for their poor performance in the entire division. He cautioned the officials that drastic improvement had to be shown in the next fortnight. He said in case the desired target was not achieved then the officials will be answerable. He said Kanpur city stood at sixth (last) position in the entire division.

He said the UP government was concerned about the farmers and thus it had issued

directives to ensure that water reached the tail ends of the canals and this needs to be accomplished by January 31, 2021. He directed the DM to ensure the monitoring of water reaching canal tail ends needs to be done through field level employees and they should check there was nor erosion or breach in the canals.

He pulled up the KESCo officials for their poor revenue recovery and said even Etawah recovery was poor and directed that all care be taken to ensure proper recovery be done as per the given target. He added that all the new roads be laid on priority and for ODR and MDR it all be repaired and made free of potholes. He expressed concern over the

performance of Auraiya.

Shekhar said in view of the bird flu the departments concerned need to ensure that they identify the areas affected by bird flu and take samples and send it all to the Bhopal for testing. He said all the Asha employees should be directed to ensure that they ensure the targets of Golden Card holders were achieved. He also directed the Auraiya officials to ensure there was no more laxity on their part in the development works.

Regarding vaccination drive of the Health and Welfare department, he said Kanpur City achieved 46.81 per cent, while Kanpur Dehat achieved 47.01 per cent. He also directed the health officials to ensure

they ensure full and proper COVID-19 vaccination. He also directed the officials to ensure that the targets of the Mass Marriage programmes were met with latest by January 18, 2021

The DC expressed concern over the slow pace of work of the Anganwadi workers and asked the official to ensure they were asked to speed up. He said all the PDS under quota should be allotted at the earliest. He said the officials need to survey the road construction work and once it was done the signal will be given by the DM after proper cross checking of facts. Officials of several departments and Army officials took part in the divisional review meeting.

## Minister orders probe into Mayor's allegations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The statement of Mayor, Pramila Pandey, stating the Smart City Funds were being misused and the benefit of the government schemes were not reaching the masses has created a furore. The State Urban Development Minister, Ashutosh Tandon has ordered an inquiry into the allegations put up by the Mayor on Wednesday. She said it was high time strict monitoring and cross-checking be carried out on all the development works being carried out under Smart City plans.

The Mayor was famous for her sharp criticism in every

sphere be it her own government policies. On umpteen times the Mayor has criticised the manner in which the schemes were being implemented which tantamounted to sheer wastage of money. The Mayor had been carrying out constant visits at the places where the development works were being carried out and lashed out at the officials who were found absent the the quality of the development work had been dangerously compromised.

She made a dig at the Jal Nigam officials for their apathy and refusal to make changes or carrying out monitoring of the projects. She all the pipe laying

works which were being carried out by the Jal Nigam were sub standard and were of and on getting damaged leading to disruption of water supply to the citizens which placed the people in great difficulty. She said more than half a dozen time in short span of less than a month there has been major damage in pipelines not only leading to wastage of precious water but also the government money.

Pandey said drew the attention of the underground water pipelines which despite repair had got damaged in a very short span of time and pointed an accusing finger at the officials who had been car-

rying out pipeline laying and repair work.

She said on account of the compromise on quality the government was not only losing precious revenue but putting the people in great difficulty and at places the water supply was resumed after nearly one week.

She also drew the attention of the Minister that cattle feed arrears had not been paid for the past several months. She said the government paid ₹ 30 for cattle fodder especially for cows in shelter homes and the pending arrear has risen to ₹ 5.50 crore and demanded that it be immediately released to ensure the continuity.

## Traffic camp on road safety held

KANPUR (PNS): The Superintendent of Police Traffic, Basant Lal while addressing a traffic camp on Road Safety Week observed from January 11 to January 17 every year on Monday said it aimed at making the roads and streets safer. During this week-long yearly campaign, the government spreads awareness about how to drive safely in order to avoid accidents and injuries. He said the traffic police of the city had now been equipped with smart phones and electronic printing devices and thus all the traffic violators will be fined then and there.

He said the earlier process was lengthy and tedious where the person had to drive till the Rail bazar police station to pay ones fines. He said with the e-challan being introduced the process has become easy for both the traffic police and the people as well.

He said e-challans had several benefits as it was fast and easy to make payments for vehicle owners and saved time as one did not have to visit the Rail Bazar or RTO office. He said the new method ensured transparency as one can check why one had been issued a challan and the exact amount one had to pay as fine. He said with this facility the Kanpur Traffic Police will be better equipped with right to challan any driver who did not follow the traffic rulebooks while driving.

The Traffic SP said there had been a rapid rise in road accidents and majorly fatal ones and this was more because the traffic guidelines were not being followed, challan had become quite a common concept. He said as everything was on an electronic platform, the concept of e-challan had been introduced. He said with the introduction of this patter of challan there will be an effective and strong monitoring of the traffic violators for the traffic police.

He said in the times of digitalisation, traffic defaulters will be able to now pay e-challan either online or offline, depending on the facility given by their city or state. He said e-challan system had been introduced to avoid cash transactions so that everything was very clear and transparent. He said there were multiple reasons for e-challan like violations of traffic rules, jumping red lights, travelling without a valid licence, driving an unauthorised vehicle, over-speeding beyond the specified speed limit, drunk driving, driving without a valid insurance policy, causing traffic obstruction.

Basant Lal said as CCTV cameras were already installed on the main roads that record and track the footage of the continuous traffic all the time. He said if one was found guilty of not obeying any traffic regulation, then the traffic police will see the footages of the offence from the respective CCTV and record the same in their books, get the details like name, full address, contact number, vehicle details of vehicle from the RTO office and an SMS will be sent notifying about the fault committed and the amount of fine to be paid. He said the traffic police were given the swiping machines to generate and print the vehicle e-challan instantly to the traffic violators. He said if one did not put on seat belt the CCTV cameras will take pictures even for those two-wheeler riders who did not wear helmets.

### Youth killed

KANPUR (PNS): A youth was beaten to death by his relative with his two accomplices under the Rasoolabdd police station of Kanpur Dehat late on Tuesday night. In a bid to rescue him, son of the deceased was also injured. Police have lodged FIR against three persons and launched raids to nab them. According to reports, Tashim (38) of Bhuganiapur, Akbarpur, lived with wife Reshma and son Gulshan in a hut on the outskirts of Bujhwagdhewa village of Rasoolabad. Late on Tuesday night, when they were fast asleep, his uncle Kisari along with Jai and Viru reached there and began to beat up Tashim with stick. When Gulshan tried to rescue his father, they also beat up him and caused serious injury. On their raising alarm, all the assailants escaped from there.

## NER wins three awards

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

At the National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA)-2020 given by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) of the Union Ministry of Power for outstanding contribution in the field of energy conservation the Indian Railways dominated and it received 13 awards in various categories. The North Eastern Railway (NER) also made its presence felt by winning three awards. The NER was awarded the Certificate of Merit in transport, building and workshop categories, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. The tireless and continuous efforts being made by the NER administration to provide clean and pollution-free transportation services to railway passengers and consumers have been recognised at the national level through these awards. The entire NER and workshops located here through various innovative efforts along with energy conservation are constantly striving to increase energy efficiency. The running of electric locomotive-run trains owing to the rapid electrification of the railway tracks on NER has led to a remarkable achievement in energy savings. Among the measures taken under energy conservation at



Divisional Railway Manager's Office building, Lucknow, include replacement of old 40 AC machines with energy-efficient five-star machines, 100 per cent use of LED lights and energy-efficient fans besides use of solar energy on a large scale.

On the other hand, at the mechanical workshop situated in Izzatnagar for energy conservation and energy efficiency, for improvement in power factor, installation of APFC panel, provision for star-rated pumps in place of existing ones, in place of centralised air compressors small portable compressors, arrangement for energy savers on the welding sets, in place of conventional welding plant provision for synergic pulse inverter-based welding plant, arrangement for LED light and in place of traditional AC availability of star-rated AC is included. Apart from this, at other places like on the roofs of station and buildings solar panels have been installed. Arrangement for solar water heaters have also been made in the rest houses. Besides arrangements for 100 per cent LED lighting has been made in all railway colonies. The NER is constantly working trying to conserve energy and many effective steps are being taken in this direction.

## NTPC Rihand receives Certificate of Merit

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

NTPC's Rihand station under the 30th National Energy Conservation Award received the Certificate of Merit in Thermal Power Plant Sector from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE). Rihand station received this award for the year 2020. Due to Covid-19 pandemic Executive Director (Rihand) Balaji Iyengar received it via MS Teams on Monday. Expressing his happiness Executive Director Balaji Iyengar congratulated the staff

of Rihand station.

**COMPETITIONS:** On the occasion of World Hindi Day at NTPC's Rihand station due to Covid-19 various competitions were held online. For promotion of Rajbhasha Hindi, for NTPC employees, associates and women living in the colony premises, essay, self-composed poetry and calligraphy competitions was organised online. The essay competition was organised on the topic 'Your routine during lockdown' or 'Efforts being made in the promotion of Hindi'. In the context

of Covid-19 or Hindi along with poetry competition a calligraphy competition was also organised. An online Hindi workshop was also organised on the occasion of World Hindi Day. During the workshop, manager of the NTPC's central office, Srinivas, through his statement, while advising the employees to work in Hindi said that they all should always use it office work and during conversation. By doing it Hindi will gradually move towards progress. He also explained easy ways to learn Hindi.

## '10,025 Health dept employees to be vaccinated in 1st phase'

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr PD Gupta at a Health Communication Strengthening Workshop organised in collaboration with Centre For Advocacy and Research (CFAR) on Tuesday while giving details of preparations for Covid vaccination said that all arrangements had been made to kick it off on January 16 in the district. He said that till date there were 27 active cases in the district and recovery rate was 97.5 per cent. About the vaccination programme the CMO said in the first phase 10,025 employees of Health department will be vaccinated, in second phase the police, homeguards and revenue officials and in third phase the com-



CMO Dr PD Gupta interacting with media at a workshop on Tuesday

mon people over 50 years of age. About the effect of the vaccine he said that it will be able to create resistance capacity in the body after 42 days of the first vaccination. So it was necessary to follow the norms of social distancing even after the vaccination, he said and appealed to media to play a positive role. On the occasion the speakers stressed on washing hands with soap for 20 seconds. While proposing vote of thanks national leader of the organisation Dr Ranjana 97.5 per cent. About the vaccination programme the CMO said in the first phase 10,025 employees of Health department will be vaccinated, in second phase the police, homeguards and revenue officials and in third phase the com-

Dwivedi eulogised the Corona warriors. She also praised the hard labour of her associates, including Vikas Tiwari, who worked hard for the success of the workshop. The workshop was also addressed by Dr Neelesh and Dr Ajay.

### Kanpur Central-AVT spl to run from Jan 17

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of the passengers will run 04161/04162 Kanpur Central-Anand Vihar Terminus (AVT)-Kanpur Central weekly special train from January 17 until further notice every Sunday. All coaches will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 guidelines, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. The 04161 Kanpur Central-Anand Vihar Terminus weekly special train will from January 17 till further order leave Kanpur Central

every Sunday at 07.50 hrs, from Kanpur Anwarganj at 08.02 hrs, from Kalyanpur at 08.13 hrs, from Kannauj at 09.05 hrs, from Gursahaiganj at 09.26 hrs, from Fatehgarh at 10.12 hrs, from Farrukhabad at 11.20 hrs, from Bhongaon at 12.10 hrs, from Mainpuri at 12.35 hrs, from Shikohabad at 14.15 hrs, from Tundla at 15.20 hrs, from Aligarh at 16.10 hrs and will reach Anand Vihar Terminus at 18.20 hrs. On the other hand, during the return journey, the 04162 Anand Vihar Terminus-Kanpur Central weekly special train from January 17 till further notice on every Sunday will leave Anand Vihar Terminus at

20.45 hrs, from Aligarh at 22.25 hrs, from Tundla at 23.27 hrs, from Shikohabad on the second day at 00.02 hrs, from Mainpuri at 00.55 hrs, from Bhongaon at 01.15 hrs, from Farrukhabad at 02.55 hrs, from Fatehgarh at 03.12 hrs, from Gursahaiganj at 03.53 hrs, from Kannauj at 04.20 hrs, from Kalyanpur at 05.25 hrs, from Kanpur Anwarganj at 06.02 hrs and reach Kanpur Central at 06.20 hrs. A total of 20 coaches, including two of generator-cum-luggage van, six of general second class, eight of sleeper class, three of air-conditioned third and one of air-conditioned second class will be attached in the train.

### Vineet's effort in vain

PNS ■ VARANASI

During the ongoing inter-departmental T20 cricket competition going on at the Mini Stadium of North Eastern Railway (NER) under the joint aegis of Manoranjan Institute and Divisional Sports Association (DSA) a match between Mechanical and Signal departments was played on Tuesday. Batting first, the Mechanical department team was dismissed for 112, runs. Vineet contributed 26 runs, Sujeet 13 and Deepak 11. For the Signal department, Pankaj took three wickets and Ankit and Subhash two each. In response, the team of Signal department in 19.1 overs losing nine wickets made 117 runs and won the match by one wicket. Anurag contributed 44 runs, Ankit 14 and Dharmendra 13. Vineet and Mukesh took three wickets each for the Mechanical department. Vineet of the Mechanical department was declared Man of the Match for his all-round performance. On the occasion railway employees and sports lovers were present in the pavilion.

### International webinar held

CORRESPONDENT ■ BAREILLY

An international webinar was organised under the aegis of the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Rohilkhand University (MJPRU)'s Law Department and Women Grievance and Redressal Cell under the patronage of Vice-Chancellor Prof KP Singh recently. It's topic was 'Protective Laws for Women: Comparative Analysis of the World and India' in which participants from six countries i.e Britain, America, Brazil, Hungary, India etc took part. It was convened by Dr Amit Singh and Prof Nivedita Srivastava. Dr Erzsebet Barat from Hungary, Dr Maria Luiza from Brazil and Professor Asha Choubey from MJP Rohilkhand University attended the event as keynote speakers. Dr Amit Singh said empowerment of any country and society depends on status of women. Extensive provisions have been made in the Indian Constitution and its laws regarding the empowerment and protection of women. Keynote speaker Dr Erzsebet Barat said women's contribution to society cannot be underestimated whether they work in home or outside, their work is as important as men and mentioned various provisions related to women in Hungary. The second keynote speaker on the occasion was Dr Maria Lucia of Brazil. The programme was conducted by a teacher of the Law Department Kamini Vishwakarma while the vote of thanks was proposed by Tapan Verma. Besides as members of the organising committee of the programme, Prasun Trivedi, Raghvendra, Mansi Shukla, Aman Khan etc made their active contribution.



SP Aparna Gautam investigates the murder of a woman in Phaphund on Wednesday morning.

Pioneer

his house, a farmer committed suicide by hanging himself at his tubewell in Balharamau village under the Derapur police station of Kanpur Dehat late on Tuesday night. He was involved in the murder case of a teenage girl in which his son had already been sent to jail. According to reports, in a one-sided love affair, a 17 years old girl was slit to death by her cousin brother Rishabh on Sunday morning. Villagers had caught hold of Rishabh and

handed over him to police. Uncle of the deceased girl had lodged FIR against Rishabh and his father Dinesh for the murder of his niece. Police had sent Rishabh to jail while raids were on to arrest his father Dinesh. On Tuesday, after a notice for demolishing his house was pasted at the doors of Dinesh's house by the police, the funeral of the girl was performed. Dinesh was still absconding and being traced by his family members along with the police.

On Wednesday morning, villagers found him hanging from a mango tree at his tubewell on the outskirts of the village and informed the police. It was apprehended that Dinesh had become mentally upset on being named in the murder case and served notice for demolition of his house which forced him to end his life. Station Officer, Derapur, Samir Singh said Dinesh, wanted in a murder case, has committed suicide.

## Woman hacked to death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A woman was hacked to death when she had gone to ease herself in Lalpur village under the Phaphund police station of Auraiya district on Wednesday morning. Villagers informed the police when Superintendent of Police and Circle Officer reached the spot and carried out investigations. Sarita (32) wife of Arvind Dohre of Auraiya was killed by unidentified persons with sharp-edged weapon when she had gone to answer call of nature in the field on Wednesday morning. On the information of villagers, her husband Rajesh informed the Station Head Officer Rajesh Singh who immediately reached the spot. Meanwhile, SP Aparna Gautam and Circle Officer Surendra Nath along with forensic experts also reached the spot and carried out investigations. SP Aparna Gautam said investigations were on. No complaint was received from the kin so far by the police.

**FARMER COMMITS SUICIDE:** Upset from the police notice for demolishing



# Adhikari sees threat to his life, moves HC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Days after quitting the ruling Trinamool Congress and joining the BJP kicking up a political storm, Suvendu Adhikari has moved the Calcutta High Court apprehending threat to his life and seeking directions for the Mamata Banerjee Government to ensure full security along his route wherever he travels.

In his petition, Adhikari has referred to recurrent attacks on his convoy by alleged Trinamool Congress goons saying though he enjoys Z category security provided by the central Government the vehicles of his followers are regularly being attacked by the TMC-backed hooligans.

“On January 3 my convoy was

attacked at Kanthi, thereafter my followers were attacked at Purulia and other places. As I am under Z category security they are targeting my followers’ vehicles so as to hinder my movement,” Adhikari said adding “it is the duty of the State Government --- and there by the State police administration --- which controls State’s law and order to ensure my security when I am on the move.”

Referring to a similar order passed by Justice Dipankar Dutta in 2007 directing the State Government to ensure his security the former Bengal Minister said “I have petitioned the High Court to direct the State Government to re-implement the 2007 order itself.” Adhikari said that the Centre

has provided him Z-category security following two IB reports apprehending threat to his life demanding “full protection along the routes I travel and the areas where my rallies are held.” He said the superintendents and commissioners of police should be directed to “ensure full protection to me and my followers during such political programmes.”

Meanwhile, continuing to take penal actions on the Adhikari family the Trinamool Congress on Wednesday removed Suvendu’s father Sisir Adhikari from the district presidency of the party’s East Midnapore unit. He was replaced by State Minister Soumen Mahapatra.

The senior Adhikari, also a powerful leader with mass con-

nect is a sitting MP and a former Union Minister. He was on Tuesday removed as the chairman of Digha Sankrpur Development Authority Board (DSDA).

Though the elder Adhikari continues to remain the chairman of district TMC inside sources said that the TMC top leadership decision to remove him from the said posts was a ploy to instigate him into following in his son’s footsteps. Suvendu’s younger brother was earlier removed as the Chairman of Haldia development Authority. His another brother Dibeyendu Adhikari too is a party MP from Tamluk constituency.

Meanwhile, in a related development Deputy Election Commissioner Sudip Jain on Wednesday told the

Magistrates and Superintendents of Police to pull up their socks or face action.

Acting tough on erring officers Jain said that election will be conducted only after “hundred percent peace” has been ensured. He said so during a meeting with the DMs, SPs and Commissioners of Police.

Sources said that the EC has told the officials that any dereliction of duty would not be tolerated and that any complaint against any official from the rank of presiding officer till the commissioner of police will first see the his or her removal.

“Only after removal or suspension, other disciplinary actions like show-cause etc will follow,” an insider quoting Jain said.

## Seven MLAs sworn in as Cabinet Ministers in K’taka

**Bengaluru:** With the induction of seven new faces, Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Wednesday expanded his Cabinet for the third time in the last 17 months. This comes after days of hectic parleys and discussions, including with the central leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Those who took oath on Wednesday in the Raj Bhavan are Umesh Katti, Aravind Limbavali, MTB Nagaraj, Murugesh Nirani, R Shankar, CP Yogeeshwara and S. Angara.

Rajarajeshwari Nagara MLA Muniratra Naidu, who was part of a group 17 defectors, has been left out, but Yediyurappa for the time being assuaged him stating that he would be accommodated during the next Cabinet reshuffle.

While being inducted, six of the new

ministers took the oath of office and secrecy while Katti took it in the “name of farmers and God”. Eight-time legislator from Hukkeri, Katti was the first one to be sworn in while six-time legislator from Sullia, S. Angara was the last to be sworn in.

With the swearing in of seven new members, Yediyurappa has filled 33 Cabinet slots, while keeping one vacant for the time being. Yediyurappa had directed Excise Minister H. Nagesh to resign from his ministry and the CM is likely to keep one vacant berth.

This was the third expansion of the Cabinet since Yediyurappa assumed charge in July 2019 after the collapse of the Congress-JD(S) government as 17 MLAs of the coalition partners defected and joined the BJP by resigning their Assembly membership.

IANS

## ADMK-led alliance, not NDA, to shine in polls: EPS

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy has categorically stated that there would be no National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu for the upcoming assembly election. “The Front in Tamil Nadu will only be known as the AIADMK-led alliance,” said Palaniswamy in his interaction with reporters on Tuesday.

The Chief Minister also made it clear that there would be no change in the AIADMK-led alliance. This means that all parties that contested in alliance with the AIADMK in the 2019 Lok Sabha election would fight the 2021 assembly election together.

He pointed out the announcement by CT Ravi, the BJP’s National Secretary in

charge of Tamil Nadu that the Hindutwa party endorsed his name as the chief ministerial candidate. G K Vasan, leader of Tamil Manila Congress, too declared his party’s support for Palaniswamy as chief minister.

A source close to Dr Ramadoss, founder of the Vanniyar dominated PMK, told The Pioneer that the party would remain with the AIADMK. “Doctor Ayya (as Ramadoss is addressed by others) is in talks with the AIADMK leadership for reservation for Vanniyar community in government institutions and jobs. If our demands are accepted, we will remain in the AIADMK-led alliance,” said the source.

But he also disclosed that there was no question of the PMK aligning with the DMK.

“The DMK is the party which has done maximum damage to the Vanniyar community,” said the PMK leader.

This means that the DMDK is the only political outfit that is yet to make its stance known about the assembly polls. With party founder Vijayakanth ailing and remaining out of action, his wife and party treasurer Premalatha is unlikely to move towards the DMK camp, said a political commentator.

Political Tamil Nadu is expected to come alive after the visit of former Congress President Rahul Gandhi to Madurai on Thursday. The scion of the Congress party is flying down to Madurai to watch the traditional jallikattu (bull taming) at Avaniyapuram.

Congress chief K S Alagiri said that Rahul Gandhi has no

other engagements except watching the bull taming. He is likely to interact with farmers to get a first hand information about the issues faced by them. Interestingly, the Congress had assured the people in its 2009 and 2014 election manifestos that the party, if voted back to power, would ban Jallikattu.

J P Nadda, BJP President, too would pay a two day visit to Tamil Nadu starting Thursday. Besides celebrating Pongal (the annual harvest festival of Tamil Nadu) at a suburb in Chennai, the BJP boss would be the chief guest at the anniversary celebrations of Thuglak, the weekly launched by late “Cho” Ramaswamy. The Thuglak anniversary is rated as Tamil Nadu’s major socio-political-cultural event held on January 14 every year.

## Kerala Film Academy chairman’s letter to regularise Left staff triggers controversy

**KOCHI:** An effort by the chairman of Kerala State Chalachitra Academy (Kerala State Film Academy) to jumpack the government-funded institution with Marxists and Islamic fundamentalists have come a cropper thanks to an initiative by Ramesh Chennithala, Leader of the Opposition in the Kerala Assembly.

Chennithala shocked the ruling CPI(M) and the cultural fraternity in the State when he released on the floor of the House, copy of a letter written by Mohammed Majeed Kamaluddin (popularly known as Kamal), chairman of Kerala State Film Academy, in which he has demanded A K Balan, minister of culture, to declare the Marxists and Islamists work-

ing in the Academy on contract basis as permanent staff.

Kamaluddin was appointed chairman of the Academy by the CPI(M)-led Pinarayi Vijayan Government as part of its policy of appeasing minorities. The movie maker is an accused in a sexual abuse case that happened in 2018. An upcoming film artist had alleged that Kamaluddeen had sexually exploited her after promising the role of heroin in his new venture. But the director said that he had settled the issue then and there giving credence to the charges by the young artist.

The Film Academy chairman has said in his letter that persons who have been working as Deputy Director (Festival), Festival Programme Manager,

Deputy Director (Programmes), Programme Manager on contract basis be declared as permanent staff members of the Government of Kerala. Film Academy is tasked with holding the annual International Film Festival of Kerala. Kamaluddin has said that cultural institutions in the State should be packed with Marxists and those who u p h o l d / f o l l o w Progressive/Marxist ideology. “This is to sustain the Left nature of the Film Academy,” Kamaluddin has written in his letter to the Minister.

“All cultural organisations funded by the Government of Kerala, viz Kerala Sahitya Academy, Music and Dance Academy, Folklore Academy, Academy of Fine Arts are jam-

packed with CPI(M) activists and fellow travellers of the party. There is no space for persons who do not believe in other ideologies,” said Prof P G Haridas, working president, Tapasya, Kerala’s largest and oldest socio-cultural organisation. Following Wednesday’s uproar from all non-Marxist organisations in the State, Kamaluddin said that it was to prevent Right Wing elements from hijacking the cultural institutions that he wrote to the minister demanding the regularisation of the Marxist and Islamic elements. “There was a lack of vigilance in sending the letter. The letter was not sent through the Film Academy office because it was a personal communication,” Kamaluddin said.

## Coal & cattle scam: CBI to summon 17 IPS officers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

In what BJP leaders Suvendu Adhikari and State party president Dilip Ghosh sees just the penultimate step before the Central Bureau of Investigation reaches the doors of the “topmost Trinamool Congress leadership,” the central investigation agency is all set to send summons to at least 17 IPS officers in connection to the coal smuggling case.

“There is just one step remaining ... let the CBI first catch hold of these corrupt businessmen and implicate the IPS officers then their hands will reach the TMC leadership that reside in South Kolkata,” Adhikari said.

The CBI is investigating the coal and cattle smuggling cases in which it has already quizzed six Bengal police officers and two former IPS officers. Two top businessmen Enamul Haq and Binay Mishra are also being probed in the cattle and coal

smuggling case. While Haq is in CBI custody Mishra, considered close to TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee is currently at large.

According to reports the CBI is speculating the role of government officials in the organised racket behind the cattle-smuggling case and coal-mining scam. The CBI had earlier discovered that cattle smuggling was unrestrained along the India-Bangladesh border which is allegedly aided by some corrupt officers of the BSF and Customs receiving illegal gratification from smugglers.

The 17 IPS officers under CBI radar may soon get the notice from the central agency to appear before it, sources said while the ruling TMC leadership saw in it a ploy by the BJP to force these officials to depose against their top leadership. “Nothing will deter our leader Mamata Banerjee from fighting against the communal forces like the BJP,” Trinamool MP Saugato Roy said.

## BJP demands rape-accused NCP Minister’s resignation

### Munde dismisses charges as fake

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Two days after a woman lodged a complaint with the Mumbai police against Maharashtra’s Social Justice Minister Dhananjay Munde for alleged rape, the Opposition BJP on Wednesday upped the ante, by demanding the minister’s resignation on “moral grounds” and also seeking action against him from the Election Commission for allegedly suppressing information that he had two wives.

On a day when the NCP minister came out with a detailed Facebook post dismissing the allegations against him as “fake” aimed at “defaming and black-mailing me”, BJP’s women’s wing leader Chitra Wagh asked the Mumbai police to conduct an

impartial investigations into the allegations against Munde by “not succumbing to political pressure”.

Talking to media persons, Mrs Wagh said: “The allegations made against the minister are serious and shocking. I would like to tell the police not to succumb to any political pressure but to conduct an impartial probe into the allegations against the minister and act against those found guilty”.

“A couple months back, a few private photographs involving Dhananjay Munde had gone viral. I have been given to understand that the minister wrote a letter in November last year that he was being blackmailed and he had apprehended that there might be allegations against him. Now a woman named Renu Sharma has come forward and made allegations against Munde,” Mrs Wagh said. “There is a need for an impartial probe into the allegations against Mr Munde. Mr

Munde should accept moral responsibility and resign from his post as a minister. Even my party president Chandrakant Patil has made a demand for Mr Munde’s resignation as the minister,” she said.

“In high profile cases like this, political pressure is brought to bear on the victim woman and her family and there is also likelihood of evidence being tampered with. Hence, it is essential for Mr Munde to resign from his post to paver way for an impartial probe into the allegations against him,” Mrs Wagh said.

In a complaint lodged with the Election Commission of India (ECI), BJP leader Kirit Somaia said that Munde had not disclosed in his election affidavit filed during the 2019 State Assembly polls that he had two wives, children and properties in their names. He urged the ECI to order an inquiry and take appropriate action against

Munde, a senior NCP leader.

Dhananjay Munde is the estranged nephew of late BJP leader Gopinathj Munde. He formally joined the NCP after resigning as the BJP MLC on July 2, 2013. He was re-elected to the Maharashtra Legislative Council on September 2, 2013. It may be recalled that Ajit Pawar had encouraged Dhananjay, a BJP MLC then, to rebel against his uncle Gopinath Munde in the run up to the December 2011 presidential poll in the Parli Municipal Council.

Meanwhile, in a detailed Facebook post, Munde referred to the allegation of rape made against him by one Renu Sharma, sister of the alleged victim woman, in social media. “The documents (released by Renu Sharma) mention some complaints filed against me. All these allegations are fake, aimed at defaming me and black-mailing me,” he said.

“I have been in a relationship with a woman named Karuna Sharma since 2003. This matter was known to my family, wife and friends. In this relationship of mutual consent, we were blessed with a son and a daughter. I have given my name to both of these kids,” Munde said.

“From school admission to all the papers these kids have my name as parents, these kids stay with me. My family, wife and my children have also taken these kids as family and approved. I have taken the responsibility of taking care of the woman named Karuna Sharma as the mother of my children,” Munde said.

“But from 2019, Karuna Sharma and his sister Renu Sharma blackmailed me and started demanding money. A complaint has also been lodged with the police in connection with the happenings since November 12, 2020,” he said.

## Sankranti cockfights popular in Andhra Pradesh despite Covid

**Seesali (Andhra Pradesh):** Hundreds of people gathered at Seesali village in Andhra Pradesh’s West Godavari district on Wednesday afternoon to engage in cockfights and place bets worth crores of rupees as part of Sankranti celebrations.

Sankranti just started with Bhogi festivities on Wednesday, wherein people pile up old wood and burn it to symbolically ring out the old and invite the new in the wee .

Seesali is a small Godavari village, 10 km away from Bhimavaram by the JP Road, where some acres of flattened paddy fields host the bloody sport every year without fail, behind a defunct prawn packaging and exporting company.

Manthana Ramaraju, local MLA and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader representing the Undi constituency was seen to be busy at the event. He entered the ring many times.

As the specially bred cocks fight it out with sharp knives tied to their feet, Ramaraju was also seen enjoying the show from a vantage point, wearing dark sunglasses on the first day of cockfights in this village.

Other local big shots who attended the cockfights include G. V. Narasimha Raju, brother of former Narasapuram MP Ganga Raju, newly appointed YSRCP Undi constituency in charge Ramaraju and others.

In about five acres of levelled paddy fields, the organisers pitched makeshift tents. The central tent serves as the

ring where the cockfights occur, which is surrounded by some more tents where the punters sit to watch and gamble.

Hundreds of plastic chairs are laid in the tents for people to sit and enjoy the show. On the other side of the tents, space is allocated for temporary food and beverage outlets where spicy fried chicken in Andhra style is making brisk sales.

Despite the arrangements, many spectators had to stand on their feet and struggle to catch a glimpse of the cockfight because the people sitting before would always block.

As the cockfights are planned to last for three days and also run till midnight, the organisers have fixed floodlights and a public address system. Volunteers wield a whip like stick used to control bull-dog cart bulls to bring order when people do not follow discipline and block others view.

“Everybody should vacate the ring right now. Please leave the ring. If you do not cooperate, we cannot conduct cock-fights,” requests a volunteer. He also warns that he will hit them and requests them not to feel bad later.

Meanwhile, a cockfight just got over, which triggers a chain reaction in the spectators. All of them faithfully exchange wads of cash pledged in the bet on their chosen rooster. In addition to the two individual cock owners who place the main bet in the central tent, hundreds of enthusiasts sitting by also bet with each other.

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## 4 girls, including three sisters go missing in

IAN S ■ ETAWAH (UTTAR PRADESH)

Four girls, including three sisters, have been missing under mysterious circumstances from the Civil Lines area of Etawah district.

The four girls had left their homes on Monday morning to attend their classes at a nearby government school.

The girls did not return home and their parents finally reported the matter to the police on Monday night.

One of the girls is 18 years

old while the remaining three are minors.

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Etawah Omveer Singh said that a case has been registered under sections 363 and 366 of IPC.

“We have questioned the school authorities who claimed that the girls did not reach school on Monday. The police also questioned their parents, who have denied having enmity with anybody. Four investigating teams have been formed to locate the girls,” he said.

## HC asks Govt to facilitate ‘E-snan’ at Ganga Sagar Mela

**Kolkata:** Amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic situation, the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday advised all the pilgrims to go for ‘E-snan’ (E-bathe) during the holy Ganga Sagar Mela in West Bengal this year. Concerned by the risk of spreading Covid-19 infection, a bench of Chief Justice Thottathil B. Radhakrishnan and Justice Arijit Banerjee ordered the Mamata Banerjee-led state administration to make necessary arrangements to dissuade the pilgrims going for a holy dip in the water. Instead the administration can facilitate them to opt for ‘E-snan’ during the religious congregation.

The bench was presiding over a Public Interest Litigation

**The bench was presiding over a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Ajay Kumar De over the issue of public health and safety on the occasion of Makar Sankranti**

(PIL) filed by Ajay Kumar De over the issue of public health and safety on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

The pilgrimage attracts lakhs of Hindu devotees every year who throng the Sagar Island in West Bengal’s South 24-Parganas district. Devotees take the holy dip in the water at the confluence of river Ganga offering prayers at the Kapil Muni temple on the island.

IANS

## J&K Police arrest 2 LeT associates

**Srinagar:** Jammu & Kashmir Police have arrested two associates of proscribed terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba from Bulbul Bagh in Barzulla area of Srinagar district, officials said on Wednesday.

The arrested terrorist associates have been identified as Muzaffar Jan, a resident of old Barzulla, Srinagar and Abass Shafi Najar, a resident of Natipora, Srinagar.

Arms and ammunition including two Chinese pistols, two magazines and 13 live pistol cartridges were recovered from their possession,” the police said.

Police have registered FIR and investigation in the case is underway.

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A woman paints a Rangoli design in front of her house on the eve of Makar Sankranti, at Lankamura village on the outskirts of Agartala on Wednesday

PTI

## Kerala cinema halls open after 10 months of Covid shutdown

**Thiruvananthapuram:** The movie theaters in Kerala, which were shut for around ten months owing to Covid restrictions opened on Wednesday.

Over 500 of the total 670 theaters opened to the public.

South Indian Super Star Vijay’s movie, “Master”, is the inaugural movie in all the theaters in the state. However in certain theaters, owing to projector equipment complaints, the show was put on hold. Apsara theater in Kozhikode cancelled the 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. shows owing to a projector complaints, thereby disappointing a huge number of fans who had gathered in the theater.

Mohammed Koya, 34, an

avid fan of Vijay while speaking to IANS over telephone from Kozhikode said, “We booked the tickets two days prior through an online portal and all the seats were full. However, Apsara theater let us down, two shows have been cancelled. They say they will refund the ticket charge, we don’t want that. We want to watch the movie”.

Theaters in the state capital Thiruvananthapuram opened with all the shows being booked. However, owing to Covid protocol theaters have been allowed to admit only half the capacity. Every theater has put a gap of one seat and tied ribbon so as to not allow the people to sit in between two

seats.

Murugan, owner of a theater group in Thiruvananthapuram told IANS, “It’s a great relief. Even though we may get only 25 per cent of the collection owing to distribution charges of the movies, we are happy that the government has allowed the theaters to open. It’s a grand gala opening with Vijay movie ‘Master’. This makes us doubly happy and all the shows are booked for the next one week”.

In Palakkad district which borders Tamil Nadu, the movie opened with fans showering huge cutouts of Vijay with flowers and even pouring milk on them.

Subramanian Mani, a member of the Vijay fans club while speaking to IANS over telephone said, “Vijay is indeed a mega star. The movie will be super, we are about to enter the theater and there are no tickets even for fan club members for the next one week”.

Super stars of Malayalam movie industry, Mammooty, Mohanlal, Prithviraj have thanked the Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan for having allowed the theater’s to function.

With the theater’s opening, there is a long list of movies to be screened in the days to come with Jayasurya starrer, “Vellam” to be screened in select theaters on January 22.

IANS



## The jab of health

Feverish preparations are going on across India for the ‘world’s biggest vaccination drive’ beginning January 16



With just hours to go before the first anti-COVID injections are given to the very first lot of beneficiaries — including three crore healthcare and frontline workers, high-risk groups with co-morbidities and around 27 crore people over 50 years of age — across India on January 16, the mammoth scale of preparations resembles a General Elections-type or a wartime-like setting, with pace, precision, efficiency, teamwork and synergy being the buzzwords. While the States firmed up their plans and fine-tuned logistical details, there were airplanes carrying the two vaccines flying into airports across the country from where the precious cargo was dispatched to small cities and towns in readiness for the inoculation exercise, and the police across States were in all readiness to receive and swiftly transport the life-saving immunogen and ensure its safety while it was under their charge. A day after the first consignment of 56 lakh doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca’s Covishield vaccine rolled out from the stable of the Serum Institute of India (SII) manufacturing facility in Pune to 13 cities, the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech — which has donated 16.5 lakh doses to the Centre — said it had successfully transported Covaxin, developed in collaboration with the ICMR and the National Institute of Virology, to 11 cities. On a day when there were reports of “promising new antibodies” being found against the Coronavirus and China recorded a spike in cases ahead of a World Health Organisation team’s visit to investigate the origins of the virus, the exercise signalled India entering a decisive phase in its fight against the pandemic that has left the world crippled and economies in the doldrums.

Currently, active COVID-19 cases in India stand at 2,14,507 while 1,01,29,111 people have recovered from the disease after the country reported a single-day rise of 15,968 new cases and 202 fatalities, pushing its virus caseload to 1,04,95,147 and the death toll to 1,51,529, according to the Union Health Ministry. The world has been waiting with bated breath to get inoculated against the virus. The world’s most inexpensive vaccines are now being made available in India. Even the Union Health Ministry categorically stated that the two vaccines in India would be probably the “cheapest” vials because these are not being sold at market rates. Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan has clarified that the option of choosing either vaccine wasn’t available to the person going for vaccination, adding that only countries with a variety of vaccines available to them could enjoy this luxury. The Government Medical Store Department (GMSD) in Karnal, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai are being treated as the four main storage centres for the vaccine rollout, which shall see a “sequential rollout”. The Union Government, realising the import of the historic drive, also advised the States to “exercise continuous oversight and personal involvement at the highest level in the entire process” of the vaccination exercise. We wish the Union Health Ministry, the various pharmaceutical companies producing the vaccines and the State Governments deploying the vaccines, the very best of luck going into the inoculation drive. We also hope and pray that there are no untoward incidents and all unforeseen hiccups can be dealt with promptly. All of us need and want the “world’s biggest vaccination drive” to be a success so that the Herculean job of vaccinating millions of Indians can be completed as soon as possible.

## Welcome, Tesla!

The blue-chip electric car maker’s entry into the country promises to take the driving experience one gear higher



It is official! The Electric Vehicle (EV) major, Tesla, has entered the Indian market which is certainly good news for the green brigade and all EV enthusiasts. This is a development that everyone hankering after a thoroughbred EV was awaiting. It is expected to give a big push to India’s plans to move to green car technology in a major way in order to meet its global commitments to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. The increased use of EVs could reduce CO2 emissions by 37 per cent. In October 2020, Tesla CEO Elon Musk had said that the process of bringing Tesla cars to India would begin in January 2021 and, towards the end of December 2020, Union Minister for Road

Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari had reiterated that commitment. Now that promise is being fulfilled and Tesla has registered Tesla India Motors and Energy Private Limited in Bengaluru as a subsidiary of the foreign company. However, as in all things related to maverick tech-billionaire Musk, there is a lot of mystery and speculation surrounding this entry at the moment and the firm’s India operations. But the positive thing is that the company is in talks with other State Governments too in its search for local partners. It’s not yet known what the car maker’s Bengaluru subsidiary will do, and there are reports that it could be just a research and development unit. It is speculated that Tesla may launch its fully electric Model 3 sedan in India at ₹60 lakh. However, this is way above the price tag common Indians can afford. Plus, there are already enough pure EVs in India that come at a much more reasonable price and Gadkari has already promised that India will continue to encourage other carmakers to build cheaper EVs which will be as technologically advanced as those made by Tesla.

Also, a few customers have already burnt their fingers as in 2016, Tesla collected \$1,000 as deposit from interested buyers in India but, despite Musk hinting in 2017 that his cars could come to the country in the summer of that year, those buyers who had paid the deposits are still waiting for their cars. At that time, Musk had cited FDI norms as the reason for the delay. “Maybe I’m misinformed, but I was told that 30 per cent of the parts must be locally sourced and the supply doesn’t yet exist in India to support that,” he had tweeted. But still, the news of Tesla’s entry has been received with a lot of enthusiasm in the country as all those who want a thoroughbred EV and for whom money is not a consideration will certainly opt for it. If the firm sets up a manufacturing unit, the cost of the EVs, too, will come down. It is hoped that Tesla will bring the charging infrastructure, which is much needed in the country right now, even though it might be on a proprietary basis at the beginning. Plus, with the Government also planning to set up 69,000 charging stations across the country at existing petrol pumps, EVs are the way forward, especially considering the soaring prices of petrol and diesel. Adoption of EVs in the country would help curtail its dependence on oil imports and lower its massive import bills which stand at nearly 85 per cent and a whopping \$102 billion respectively. In the end, the blue blood of EVs coming to India is good news because it will force the other car makers to ramp up their R&D and manufacturing in the country. It will make the use of EVs more acceptable because of its hip brand image and this uptake of EVs will also yield manifold benefits for the country, such as lowering pollution levels, improved balance-of-trade levels and meeting global climate change commitments. So now that Tesla has made a foray into India, it remains to be seen how its presence gives a fillip to the EV market in the country.

# opinion08

## Opportunistic Oli?

China’s mission is to prevent a formal split in the NCP after Parliament dissolution but the Nepal PM says he wants to be ‘a real friend of India’



ASHOK K MEHTA

Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali is in New Delhi for the 6th Meeting of India-Nepal Joint Commission. The invitation was given before Nepal Prime Minister KP Oli, facing a revolt in his party, dissolved Parliament last month and ordered elections, making him the head of a caretaker Government. Oli shot to fame by winning an overwhelming mandate for the pro-China Nepal Communist Party (NCP) on an anti-India wave of ultra-nationalism and later bashing New Delhi with sundry charges, including territorial aggression and attempts at unseating his Government. In diplomacy there are neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies, only permanent interests. Oli decided to make up to India with friendly overtures to which India responded favourably, prompting Nepalis to speculate that the dissolution of the House might be at India’s behest and that China’s loss is India’s gain. Except that the validity of the prematurely terminated Parliament in which Oli enjoyed a majority is to be determined by that country’s Supreme Court and an “election Government” could be in place if and when the elections are held. So far, India has issued one official statement noting that the political developments are an “internal matter for Nepal to decide as per its democratic process”. Indian Ambassador Vinay Kwatra has met Government Ministers in Kathmandu to continue minimal engagement. Meanwhile, the majority faction of the NCP — led by co-chairs Madhav Nepal and Prachanda, who is also the new leader of the parliamentary party and other Opposition parties — is out on the streets challenging Oli’s “undemocratic” and “unconstitutional” dissolution of Parliament. Heavily invested in Nepal, China failed to secure a patch-up and unity in the NCP despite dispatching a Chinese Communist Party delegation to the Himalayan State.

The China-US rivalry in Nepal has been hotting up over the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) and the related Millennium Challenge Corporation, both seen by the Prachanda-Nepal group as countering China and obstructing its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India’s border standoff and longstanding contestation with China makes it a natural partner of the US — rather the other way round in Nepal — turning the bilateral competition tri-lateral. The US has normally let India take the lead in Nepal and it



has followed. Since its drubbing over mishandling Nepal’s Constitution in 2015 and the Kalapani row in 2019, India has remained hands off Nepal, especially after the NCP’s unassailable election victory in 2017. It was resigned for a full five-year term of the NCP, during which China was expected to consolidate its strategic gains. The long-simmering power-sharing dispute within the NCP, egged on by ego and ambition of its leaders, presented an opportunity for New Delhi to try and subtly reshape the political landscape. There is nothing immoral or sinful in preventing China from turning the tables on India as long as the game is played skilfully, and not clumsily as in the past. It is the first time during Nepal’s internal crisis that China is seen as the “great interferer”, not the usual culprit India, and what’s better is that there is no palpable anti-India sentiment.

The Oli Government is expected to be in office for some time before the Supreme Court delivers its verdict. New Delhi has secured a timely reconciliation with Oli who is pro-US, pro-IPS, pro-MCC and once India’s blue-eyed boy. His statement on Sunday in the National Assembly that “I want to be a real friend of India” has to be tested. Routine work and interaction between the Governments has to continue. Following King Gyanendra’s royal coup in 2004, India condemned the squashing of democracy by stopping all lethal military aid to the Nepal Army, which was fighting the Maoists, but soon it accepted the *fait accompli* and resumed bilateral

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business. India reported increased speed and efficiency in the interactions among Government departments and an Indian official had remarked: “Never achieved so much so fast!”

Nepal’s Supreme Court will decide today whether an extended full Bench or a constitutional Bench should hear the case. There is also a legal and moral

issue in Chief Justice Cholendra Rana heading the Bench. Whether the House is restored or fresh elections held, the awe and might of the NCP will never be the same again. We may see two NCPs or the NCP could unravel into its previous avatars — the CPN UML and the CPN Maoist Centre. The division, it is noteworthy, has taken place more among the CPN UML (which has had three former Prime Ministers) than among the Maoists. The NCP has not split as neither Oli nor Prachanda want to be blamed for its bad optics. The Election Commission says that the Prachanda-Nepal faction, claiming to be the larger and original faction, has applied for ownership of the party’s symbol and name but it has not recognised the split as they are not registered as two parties. Despite the matter being *sub judice*, Oli has been publicly claiming that Parliament will not be restored even as four former Chief Justices have called the dissolution unconstitutional.

The primary mission now of the Chinese Communist Party and its versatile Ambassador Hou Yanqi is to prevent the formal split at all costs. Although both factions have spurned Chinese attempts to effect a compromise for the sake of party unity, Beijing’s wealth is a strong incentive for compliance. Still, while both the factions are China-leaning, the two separate entities of the NCP were also India-friendly. It was post-2015, and especially after 2017, that the Communist factions visibly tilted towards Beijing. During the civil war, the Chinese lampooned

the Maoists as “hijackers of Mao’s fair name” and called them “mischievous anti-State rebels” till they rocketed into power, with China conveniently recognising ideological congruence between them.

After Prachanda was forced to step down as the Prime Minister in 2008, he admitted that initially he thought China was required to balance India but later realised that India was more important for Nepal. Former Prime Minister Madhav Nepal used to be jokingly called Madhav India. In the power games that were ritually played out in Kathmandu, New Delhi’s blessings were invariably sought. Beijing, though a late entrant, assumed primacy after India’s marginalisation.

A fresh election is the best case scenario for democratic forces, especially the Nepali Congress which could emerge as the single largest party as it did in 2013 after Maoists were routed. New Delhi should have sound relations with all the parties but, most of all, with the people of Nepal. Seasoned Nepal-watchers in India are warning the Government against entertaining the opportunistic Oli and his caretaker Government and let the Nepalese deal with the political mess they have created. In other words, India should be an idle bystander. This is precisely what China wants India to do.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal.)

## SOUND BITE

The Modi Government is not embarrassed when 60 farmers are martyred but is ashamed about the tractor rally by the farmers.

Congress leader  
Rahul Gandhi



The US political opportunism is recognised by those who are honestly concerned about the scourge of terrorism and its victims.

Cuban Foreign Minister  
Bruno Rodriguez



Objectification of women still exists, and often women are valued primarily for their looks. I think there is a conversation to be had over that.

Actor  
Keira Knightley



I literally cannot believe some of the rubbish I read about Steve Smith. Absolute load of rubbish. He is a bit quirky, he does some weird stuff.

Australian coach  
Justin Langer



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Incentivise girl students

Sir — Every State in India should follow in the footsteps of the Assam Government which has decided to give financial incentives to school-going girls. It will help encourage the girls to attend school, eventually increasing their attendance and enrolment ratio.

In many far-off places and rural areas, parents are still reluctant to send their daughters to school due to several reasons. Consequently, girls often fail to complete their schooling and are married off at an early age.

Illiterate women and girls are more vulnerable as they are unaware of their rights and privileges. If the girls are educated and financially independent, several unethical and illegal practices like dowry will come to an end. We need more social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who can staunchly fight for the rights of women. Although Indian women have made a mark in every field, be it academics, bureaucracy, politics and so on, we still need to end gender discrimination at all cost.

Aman Jaiswal  
Delhi

### Govt should draft a national liquor policy

Deaths due to consumption of spurious liquor have become very common in India. In the recent tragedy, more than a dozen lives were lost in Madhya Pradesh’s Morena after drinking countrymade liquor. In most cases, the police rounds up bootleggers and petty criminals who sell the liquor while real perpetrators of the crime walk away scot-free. It is because of the complicity of district-level officials in the business of illegal sale and purchase of hooh.

Ironically, mostly those who are from the lower rungs of society fall prey to the menace of illicit liquor. A lack of quality control while preparing countrymade liquor results in many impurities and adulterants being present in it. This leads to serious organ damage or even the death of the person who consumes it.

The Government must come up with a national liquor policy and make stringent laws banning the manufacturing, sale and purchase of hooh. If illicit liquor is manufactured somewhere, the local district administration should also be held accountable. As of now, the legal drinking age in the country and the laws which regulate the sale and consumption of alcohol vary sig-

### Expand expert panel

Sir — It’s not appropriate on the part of farmers’ unions to judge the expert panel set up by the Supreme Court (SC) on the basis of the previous stand of its members. The fact remains that they are experts on the subject.

It is quite possible for the farmers to feel that the compo-

sition of the panel is heavily weighing against their interests. Perhaps the apex court should have taken onboard members having both for and against stands in equal numbers. In such a situation, there would be better amalgamation of thoughts to arrive at an amicable solution.

The top court can still review this angle and expand the



nificantly from State to State. Political patronage to the criminals involved in the business of illegal liquor is also one of the major causes that makes hooh business flourish. In turn, these criminals help politicians at the time of elections. There is also a need to break the nexus involving police, politicians and criminals involved in the illegal liquor trade.

Ganapathi Bhat  
Akola

panel by adding members who agree with the farmers’ views. When the SC has intervened, the farmers should wait and watch and take a break from dharna. Ultimately, both the Government and the farmers should reach a point where they are able to end the deadlock.

D Nagarjuna  
Hyderabad

### Ensure user privacy

Sir — As the furore over changes in WhatsApp’s privacy policy grows, a wide range of companies have started switching to the messaging platform Signal. This happened after the Facebook-owned company decided to continue with its new privacy policy.

In the coming days, common people will also move out of WhatsApp to other platforms and the company will receive a major setback. The companies in the field of social media must remember that the privacy of end users is of utmost importance and people are not willing for it to be compromised.

It is also high time for the Government to encourage young entrepreneurs to come up with alternatives to the WhatsApp platform. We should also avoid using such platforms where our privacy is not secure. Social media is an effective tool in our hands only if we are aware and cautious of our privacy breaches.

Bhagwan Thadani  
Mumbai

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

## The future must be green

Our clean energy sector has been at the forefront of the country's fight against climate change, but is currently faced with liquidity constraints



DHRUBA PURKAYASTHA

India's energy sector is one of the fastest-growing in the world and has been attracting substantial investments. However, meeting the country's climate goals requires an increase in proportionate and transformative investments at the sectoral level. Given the current rate of penetration and the overall health of the economy which is bogged down by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to find new and alternative ways of financing the transition and incentivising private industries' participation to scale-up investments in clean energy. This is because a huge corpus of funds is required for creating a sustainable impact in the field of green energy. Our clean energy sector has been at the forefront of the country's fight against climate change but is currently faced with liquidity constraints and supply chain disruptions due to the ongoing contagion. Addressing the growing needs of the nation while simultaneously taking steps to protect the environment, requires both international and domestic capital flow towards high-impact sectors. The latest report by the Climate Policy Initiative (CPI), gives us unique information about green finance trends in India by mapping finance from source to end users, thus helping us to know whether we are on the right track to meet the nation's economic and environmental goals. Such an exercise can also help us in identifying new avenues to ramp up our climate expenditure, mobilise new resources, build trust with investors besides bringing transparency and accountability in the governance of domestic public finance. The study reflects that green sectors are outpacing our overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. For instance, green investments in India grew by 24 per cent between 2016 and 2018, whereas the GDP grew by only 7.4 per cent over the same period.

One of the major recipients of green finance in the country is the power generation industry (70 per cent), followed by energy efficiency (20 per cent) and sustainable transportation (10 per cent). Grants-in-aid and budgetary allocations are the most commonly used instruments by the Government to finance the area while loans by commercial banks are a major source of finance to private industries involved in green energy. Out of the total, 85 per cent of the clean energy finance is raised domestically, with Government finance sources being the backbone for strong private sector investment. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India, in the renewable energy sector, crossed the \$1 billion mark in 2018. While foreign underwriting plays a role, it is dwarfed by the contributions of the Indian Government, its agencies and domestic private markets. In the face of methodological constraints regarding defining and tracking green funding across its value chain in the country, it is a big challenge to procure granular data and apportion public, private, domestic and international investments. Further, lack of consensus on what constitutes "green" is especially acute in sectors like energy efficiency and power transmission.

Moreover, we are far short of the capital required to reach the nation's ambitious renewable energy and climate targets. India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) estimates that the country would need \$2.5 trillion between 2015 to 2030, an annual requirement of roughly \$170 billion per year to finance its climate action programmes. The nation's clean energy finance flows currently stand at around \$19 billion per annum. No doubt, there is a long way to go in order to create a sustainable and transformative impact.

So, what can be done? First, aspirations of a \$5 trillion economy by 2024 as well as an "atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) must be underpinned by green solutions. The renewable energy sector entails several benefits like providing safe and non-hazardous jobs, accelerated economic growth and so on. Hence we must turn towards the renewable energy sector for sustainable growth.

Second, Indian policymakers can look at various studies to assess whether they are using the best instruments to unlock private capital in priority social areas. Creating an integrated domestic measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) system to track green finance can be the first step towards identifying the entry points for dedicated action. A combination of climate budget tagging and MRV will form a strong foundation for the nation's climate investment strategy in the coming decades. Last, expenditure on climate mitigation activities undertaken by dedicated Public Sector Units (PSUs) more than doubled from 2017 to 2018. PSUs are important channels for the disbursement of funds for Central and State Governments, bond markets and international development agencies. They also operate as a critical source of green finance themselves through various public schemes and initiatives. Agencies such as the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency and the Solar Energy Corporation of India have helped to launch India as a renewable energy leader. Even in these dark times, we must believe that the country has a bright future. To make it true, that future must be green.

*(The writer is Interim India Director and Director, USICEF. The views expressed are personal.)*

SITA TOLD LORD RAM SHE WAS LUCKY TO BE ABDUCTED BY RAVAN AND NOT BY HIS CHELAS OR ELSE HER FATE WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SAME AS THE HATHRAS GIRL'S.

—TMC MP

KALYAN BANERJEE



IT SEEMS KALYAN HAS AUGMENTED THE SLOGAN OF 'TMC HATAO BANGLA BACHAO' BY DRAGGING THE NAME OF MOTHER SITA AS PART OF TMC'S POLITICS.

—VHP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

VINOD BANSAL

# Don't expect a dignified exit

The infamy of a second impeachment is a fitting denouement of Donald Trump's presidency. If he were a man of honour or good sense, he would have quit



DEVENDER SINGH ASWAL

In a historic decision, the US House of Representatives which had initiated the process to impeach US President Donald Trump over the recent Capitol Hill attack — that was unprecedented in the country's history — passed a resolution urging Vice-President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove the President from office. The resolution, which called upon Pence to mobilise the Cabinet to activate the 25th Amendment was voted by 223 to 205 votes. The voting was mostly on party lines, with one Republican voting in favour of the resolution and another five abstaining.

The 25th Amendment, adopted more than 50 years ago in the wake of President John F Kennedy's assassination, provides a mechanism for the succession of the President for his replacement in the event he proves unfit to serve. Under the amendment, the Vice-President and a majority of either the Cabinet or some other body designated by Congress may remove the President from office.

Wednesday's resolution came after Mike Pence wrote to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that he would not invoke the 25th Amendment. Earlier, the House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler released a majority staff report for the impeachment of Trump. The 50-page report made a strong case to impeach the Republican President.

At a time like this, one cannot help but be reminded of the warnings issued by Mitt Romney, a Republican Senator. He had forewarned prophetically during the presidential campaign in March 2016 that Trump was a "fraud who had neither the temperament nor the judgement to be President."

Other elder Republican Senators like John McCain and Lindsey Graham, too, had warned against Trump becoming the President. During the campaign, Trump had threatened: "If I become President, the media is going to have a problem." He had gone on to describe the media as "among the most dishonest groups of people I have ever met."

In a February 2017 tweet, Trump, then the President, called the media the "enemy of the American people", a term, the critics noted then, was used by Stalin and Mao Zedong. It's intriguing that despite the complex electoral procedure established by the makers of the US Constitution to ensure that the office of the President does not "fall to men with low intrigue and the little arts of popularity", Trump was elected the 45th President of the country.

The shameful assault on the Capitol Hill, the seat of the US Congress, by the rioting supporters of Trump on January 6, when the Congress was in joint session to take count of the votes of the Electoral College, proved the proverbial last nail on his presidency. The premeditated violence was so egregious that even the Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell appealed to the lawmakers to finish the count in the wake of "the failed insurrection."

The votes were counted and the results were declared by Mike Pence, the ex-officio President of the Senate. Biden was declared elected,



NO AMERICAN PRESIDENT HAS EVER BEEN REMOVED FROM OFFICE BY THE IMPEACHMENT PROCESS, AND NO PRESIDENT HAS BEEN IMPEACHED BY THE HOUSE MORE THAN ONCE. IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS WERE LAUNCHED AGAINST FOUR PRESIDENTS, NAMELY, ANDREW JOHNSON (1868), RICHARD NIXON (1974), BILL CLINTON (1998) AND DONALD TRUMP (2019) BUT THE MOTIONS FAILED



despite Trump hectoring: "Do it Mike, this is time for extreme courage."

Lawmakers, mostly Democrats and some Republicans, have accused Trump of "fomenting the violence with his relentless falsehoods" and want him impeached or removed. Albeit, a few days are left for the inaugural of the new presidency, yet Democrats and a considerable number of Republican leaders and officials want Trump to be removed from office before January 20. They accuse Trump of abuse of power to the effect that he "wilfully made statements that encouraged and foreseeably resulted in imminent lawless action at the Capitol."

The draft impeachment mentioned Trump's prior and consistent efforts to "subvert and obstruct" the results of the election and referenced his call to the Georgia Secretary of State asking him to find more votes after losing the State to Biden.

The draft went on to say: "Trump has falsely claimed there was widespread fraud in the election, and the baseless claims have been repeatedly echoed by congressional Republicans... President Trump gravely endangered the security of the United States and its institutions of Government... He threatened the integrity of the democratic system, interfered with the peaceful transition of power and imperilled a coordinate branch of the Government. He thereby betrayed his trust as President, to the manifest injury of the people of the United States."

Impeachment is not something which is new to Trump. He was

impeached by the House on December 18, 2019, on two counts: Abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. Of course, he was acquitted by the Republican, the Grand Old Party, (GOP)-controlled Senate on February 5, 2020. Yet, Trump faces the ignominy of a second unprecedented impeachment bid at the end of his presidency. Normally, there is an impeachment investigation by the House and the evidence is sent to the House Judiciary Committee, which holds hearings, drafts articles and sends them to the full House. The impeachment of Trump by the House in 2019 took three months.

However, this time, with so few days left, there was a feeling among Democrats that there was little need to investigate what happened, since most members of the Congress were in the Capitol Hill when the mob broke in.

Speaker Pelosi held a floor vote with no hearings or reference to the House Judiciary Committee. Now that the House has moved a resolution urging Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove the President from office, the article and evidence would be sent to the Senate, where a trial would be held and there would be final votes to convict or acquit. It would outlast the tenure of Trump.

However, even now, many Republicans, even those who have criticised Trump, say impeachment would be unhelpful, as it would do "more harm than good." But Democrats and some Republicans, too, feel that: "It must be made clear that no President, now or in the future, can lead an insurrection against the US Government."

No American President has ever been removed from office by the impeachment process, and no President has been impeached by the House more than once. Impeachment proceedings were launched against four Presidents, namely, Andrew Johnson (1868), Richard Nixon (1974), Bill Clinton (1998) and Donald Trump (2019) but the motions failed.

Nixon resigned before the proceedings were launched. Legal experts are divided into three camps over the desirability or otherwise of the impeachments proceedings against Trump. According to one view, "A President can be impeached only while in office." Another opinion is that, if the House votes to impeach while the President is in office, the Senate can proceed to a trial even after the President has left office. And, a third view is that the entire process can begin even after the President is out of office. No President has ever been impeached after leaving office. But as the House Speaker, Pelosi, said: "Democrats will preserve every option" to force Trump from office, either through the 25th Amendment or impeachment. In the end, whether Trump is impeached or not, only time will tell. However, the infamy of a second impeachment is a fitting denouement of Trump's presidency. If he were a man of honour or good sense, he would have quit. But a dignified exit is not Trump's style of functioning. He will make a mess of it and go down fighting.

*(The writer is former Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Good intentions are not enough, implementation is key

The Govt should regularly do a status check of the implementation status of schemes, and taxmen should be accommodative in their approach



SHSHANK SAURAV

Former President late Pranab Mukherjee had quoted Kautilya in his 2010 Budget speech highlighting the fact that financial prosperity depended on public affluence. Policy certainty is essential to bring financial prosperity to a nation and the ruling BJP promised this in its 2014 election manifesto. Bringing on board all State Governments for adopting the Goods and Services Tax (GST), addressing all their concerns, overhauling the dispute resolution mechanism and providing a non-adversarial and conducive tax environment were also part of the poll promise which the saffron party made in that election year.

To its credit, the Government made some notable structural reforms in the areas of indirect tax-

ation and insolvency cases. GST was the biggest-ever indirect tax reform in the country which helped in simplification and unification of the tax regime. As with all big changes, there were some teething problems in the implementation of GST but these were driven by shortcomings related to the information technology platform. Apart from this, the lackadaisical attitude of States regarding cracking down on tax evasion was coming from the fact that GST compensation was guaranteed by the Centre but the Coronavirus crisis changed the situation drastically. However, GST collection is increasing now after State Governments began taking action to check the revenue loss arising out of fake input tax credits.

Similarly, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was a major shift in policy towards dealing with the bad loan crisis plaguing the country. Various cases have been successfully resolved under the IBC framework but this will be put to a tougher test now because various entities are facing financial stress due to the ongoing pandemic.

However, the Government's

track record in dealing with litigation is not impressive. The NDA Government unveiled the Transparent Taxation Rights Charter for Taxpayers in its second term which shows good intent on its part. Prior to this, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had proposed a Dispute Resolution Scheme (DRS) in 2016 to reduce tax litigation.

Though the infamous Vodafone retrospective tax amendment ghost which continues to haunt the Centre is a legacy issue, the Government's own record doesn't align with the promises made to taxpayers. Budgetary data show that direct tax collection has increased at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10 per cent, while the amount under dispute has increased at a CAGR of 15 per cent.

The disputed amount has increased from ₹3,40,985 crore in 2014 to ₹8,02,621 crore in 2020 while direct tax collection has increased from ₹7,35,271 crore in 2014 to ₹13,19,000 crore in 2020. Since 2020 was an exceptional year due to the outbreak, tax collections are likely to be significantly less than the budgeted numbers. Therefore, tax collection CAGR will go down

even further. The real estate sector is one of the largest employment-generating ones in the country and new arrangements keep evolving in it. The Joint Development Agreement (JDA) is one such arrangement in which a landowner enters into an agreement with the developer and the owner of the plot gets his share in the constructed property after completion. There are many cases where an agreement was made but the building is yet to be constructed due to reasons ranging from delay in getting necessary approvals to lack of funds and so on.

In a nutshell, the landowner gets nothing except for an agreement on a piece of paper till the time the building is completed. However, the tax department has raised demand, interest and levied penalty on such transactions. Thankfully, the Government bought an amendment in 2017 to ensure that the taxman could tax such transactions only after the completion certificate was received. This was the right decision. But if taxmen have raised demands on the JDA where the building is not yet completed then isn't it unjustified?

The Government's role is not

just limited to bringing about changes in laws. It must ensure that these changes are implemented correctly on the ground. It is right to chase and penalise tax evaders but, if raising tax demands on transactions which are not yet crystallised is not "tax terrorism" then perhaps Government officials should redefine this term as per their convenience.

The Government launched the ambitious 'Vivad se Vishwas' (VSV) scheme in the last Budget with the intent to unclench the judiciary and realise the money locked in litigation. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) issued circulars for implementation of the scheme and the intent was to settle the disputes. But if field officers are not complying with the legislative intent to a large extent and many issues are not getting resolved, the Government is to be blamed squarely for this. Because it is not the bureaucracy who has to seek the mandate of the people every five years. And people see the faces of their elected representatives, not bureaucrats.

The VSV scheme had specified January 31, 2020, as the cut-off date for settlement of disputes. Successive

clarifications issued by the CBDT entitle a taxpayer to avail the scheme if the appeal period had not expired on January 31.

This means that the time to raise the dispute is still available in cases like tax orders not being served on the assessee or even if a delayed appeal is filed which is admitted by the tax department. However, many assesseees are allegedly awaiting communication from the department on the status of admission of their appeals. This is again a case of poor implementation of the well-intended scheme of faceless assessment/appeal.

A similar initiative called 'Sabka Vishwas' was launched in the previous year to settle indirect tax cases which received a lukewarm response. Though the Centre claimed that it had realised ₹39,000 crore from it, the Government received only around ₹15,000 crore because the rest of the amount was already pre-deposited by assesseees. In a nutshell, this scheme was not a success despite desperate calls made by the Government to people to avail it. VSV is a good scheme but the Government had to reach out to Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)

to file declarations under this scheme to avoid an embarrassing situation. If the mandarins sitting in the North Block didn't learn from the failure of Sabka Vishwas and now VSV, too, is going in the same direction, then the babus must be criticised for their myopic vision. There is no mechanism to take stock of how taxpayers' grievances are dealt with. If genuine issues are not resolved then people will approach courts with writ petitions. This will defeat the very purpose of such schemes.

Socio-political issues like farmers' agitation require use of political capital but resolving tax litigation and charting a clear path requires a vision and honest implementation on the ground. The road to a \$5 trillion-economy requires more than a noble intent and wishful thinking. The Government should regularly do a status check of the implementation status of schemes and laws and taxmen should be accommodative in their approach while implementing settlement schemes.

*(The writer is a Chartered Accountant and a public policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)*



# Economic activity continues on normalisation: Report

FY21 GDP to contract 6.7%

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Economic activity continued with its pace of normalisation and the festivities helped narrow the deficits as compared to the

year-ago period in December, a Japanese brokerage said on Wednesday.

Based on data shown by its proprietary models, Nomura also revised up wits FY21 GDP forecast to a contraction of 6.7%, as against the official estimate of a 7.7% contraction in the pandemic-impacted fiscal year.

The Nomura India Monthly

## ‘GDP may clip at just 6 pc in FY22 if vaccine distribution is delayed’

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A delay in Covid-19 vaccine distribution could impact GDP growth prospects in the next fiscal year and the Reserve Bank may cut policy rates by 50 basis points by June as inflation cools down, a foreign brokerage said on Wednesday.BofA Securities said it expects GDP growth at 9 per cent in 2021-22 if the vaccine distribution is done in the first half of the new fiscal year but may be just at 6 per cent if the distribution is deferred to the second half (October-March).

For the current financial year, it expects GDP to con-

tract by 6.7% as against the government’s estimate of 7.7% contraction. It can be noted that a slew of policy measures have been taken in the recent past including deep rate cuts, which had to be halted because of a surge in inflation to beyond the upper end of the range set for RBI. Speaking to reporters a day after official data suggested a sharp cool-down in the consumer price inflation to 4.6 per cent in December after being consistently above 6 per cent, its India economist Indranil Sen Gupta said BofA expects the RBI to cut rates by 50 basis points by June before it starts hiking them again.

Activity Indicator rose to -2.3% in December provisionally when compared to the year-ago periods performance, and was much better than the -7.7% year-on-year witnessed in November and -13.3% in September, it said.

The brokerage said this suggests a “strong recovery” in Q4. “The pandemic situation did not substantially deteriorate in the festive season in December quarter, clearing the decks for a faster pace of economic normalisation,” it said.

“We expect GDP growth of -6.7 per cent y-o-y in FY21, before rising to 13.5 per cent in FY22, above consensus (10 per cent).”

Along with the moderation in inflation in the short term due to lower food prices, we believe the economy is entering a Goldilocks period,” it said. It can be noted that earlier in the day, analysts at its American peer BofA Securities also pegged the GDP to close FY21 with a contraction of 6.7%.

The Japanese brokerage said an index which it uses as a proxy for the extent of normalisation across the economy suggests economic activity continued to improve during December.

At the end of the festive season, the overall normalisation index for consumption improved to 88.3% in December as against 87% in November and 85% in October,

# Sensex snaps 3-day winning streak; M&M soars 6 pc

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Snapping its three-day record-setting run, the BSE Sensex closed marginally lower after a choppy session on Wednesday as investors pocketed gains in banking and finance stocks amid mixed global cues.

Participants also kept their powder dry ahead of some key corporate results, traders said.

After gyrating over 721 points during the day, the 30-share BSE index ended 24.79 points or 0.05 per cent lower at 49,492.32. It scaled a record intra-day peak of 49,795.19.

The broader NSE Nifty inched up 1.40 points or 0.01 per cent to its fresh closing record of 14,564.85. The index touched a lifetime high of 14,653.35 during the day.

M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying 6.24 per cent, followed by SBI, ITC, NTPC, Bharti Airtel and Axis Bank.

On the other hand, Bajaj Finance, HDFC, Bajaj Finserv, Titan, Sun

Pharma and Dr Reddy’s were among the laggards, tumbling up to 2.85 per cent.

According to Binod Modi, Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities, domestic equities were volatile and gave-up early gains as profit booking was visible in a large number of stocks.

“While contraction in November 2020 IIP data indicates more measures by FM in the budget to stimulate economic activities, better than anticipated softening in CPI data for December 2020 negates the looming concerns over low interest rate scenarios.

“We continue to believe that that a sharp rebound in high frequency key economic data for December 2020 indicates demand revival, which bodes well for the markets. Further, 3Q FY21 corporate earnings are progressing well and are expected to sustain growth, which along with weak dollar and soft monetary policy of global bankers should continue to attract FPIs into domestic equities,” he said.

Rupee firms up 10 paise to finish at 73.15 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian rupee strengthened gains for the second straight day and closed 10 paise higher at 73.15 against the US dollar on Wednesday, tracking upbeat Asian currencies and sustained foreign fund inflows.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 73.16, and hit an intra-day high of 73.10 and a low of 73.23. It finally finished at 73.15, higher by 10 paise over its last close.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.07 per cent to 90.15.

# Delhi-NCR residential sales grow 43% in Oct-Dec, says JLL

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Capital Region (NCR) witnessed a quarter-on-quarter growth of 43 per cent in the sale of housing units during the October-December period on the back of festive discounts, low interest rates and some premium launches by established developers, said a JLL report.However, sales are yet to reach the pre-Covid levels witnessed in 2019, it said.

Noida continued to dominate sales with 45 per cent share of overall sales in Delhi-NCR, followed by Ghaziabad, which contributed 31 per cent of the total sales.

The residential market also rebounded with some prominent new launches. In Q4 2020, new launches more than tripled when compared to the last quarter. Majority of the launches were recorded in Gurugram, which accounted for 61 per cent of the new launches followed by Noida which contributed 24 per cent of the launches.

“Homebuyers are increasingly becoming more confident about returning to the market. Site visits and enquiries from prospective buyers have been increasing consistently, driven primarily by end-users who are keen in ready-to-move-in projects and newly launched projects by established developers,” said Manish Aggarwal, Managing Director, Delhi NCR, JLL India.

The report also noted that the quarter also witnessed the launch of plotted developments and individual floors by prominent developers. While prices remained range-bound across all the submarkets, developers are offering freebies and attractive payment terms to serious homebuyers.

Overall, residential property sales across the top seven markets in the country rose by 51 per cent as compared to Q3 2020.It is important to note that this improvement has been holistic with seven key residential markets showing an uptick in sales.

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	14639.80	14653.35	14435.70	14564.85	1.4
M&M	7846	837.5	782.25	824	4415
SRIN	296	308	294.5	305.95	13.45
ADANIAPORTS	515.9	540	514.6	539.5	22.65
IOC	98.45	102.75	98.2	101.05	3.1
NTPC	100.25	104.35	100.15	102.5	2.35
ITC	207.45	213	205.25	212.1	4.75
BPCL	406	425	404.65	411.5	8.95
TATASTEEL	701.45	714.55	693	709.9	15
GRASIM	1009.00	1041.00	1007.45	1031.80	21.5
TATAMOTORS	242.9	248.8	238.4	242.85	5.05
ONGC	104.95	107.9	104.1	105.5	2.05
BHARTIARTL	588	601.7	567	576.3	10.55
INDUSINDBK	932.8	953.5	926.15	942.15	14.5
AXISBANK	676	691.2	669.05	686.05	10.35
ICICIBANK	551.5	561	548.25	556	8
INFY	1373.85	1392.80	1360.00	1388.65	16.9
POWERGRID	203.8	206.6	202.6	205	1.3
JSWSTEEL	401.55	407.4	394.15	401.8	2.25
SBIILE	927.5	949	922.5	928.4	3.4
WIPRO	461	467.45	452.8	459	13
HEROMOTOCO	3260.00	3318.00	3216.70	3256.00	7.75
ULTRACEMCO	5650.00	5674.00	5600.00	5645.50	6.5
TECHM	1074.00	1078.75	1059.05	1065.40	1.2
NESTLEIND	18039.95	18275.00	17965.00	1801.500	15.9
GAIL	144	144	139.15	141.45	0.05
IT	1354.00	1373.00	1344.30	1350.00	0.2
EICHERMOT	2869.50	2910.40	2836.65	2877.00	-4.65
HINDUNILVR	2381.90	2398.00	2364.60	2371.00	-4.9
BRITANNIA	3640.00	3648.00	3600.00	3622.00	-9.65
CPIA	847.35	852	832.5	840.9	-2.25
HCLTECH	1064.00	1067.00	1041.00	1057.00	-5.1
HDFCBANK	1492.90	1496.90	1462.10	1473.65	-1.35
TCS	3175.00	3177.00	3126.25	3158.00	-7.85
BAJAJ-AUTO	718.45	724.7	708.55	713.7	-4.7
RAJFLIFE	3624.25	3633.00	3577.00	3600.00	-24.25
MARUTI	8188.00	8250.00	8111.00	8132.00	-56.05
COALINDIA	148.5	148.8	143.5	145.5	-1.1
ASIANPAINT	2760.00	2763.00	2678.00	2700.00	-20.55
HINDALCO	265.5	268.4	258.85	261.65	-2.7
RELIANCE	1963.55	1974.95	1918.45	1936.00	-21.05
SUNPHARMA	611	645	597.25	604.5	-7.2
KOTAKBANK	1911.00	1911.00	1877.00	1880.00	-23.45
TITAN	1358.00	1356.00	1305.50	1308.00	-9.1
DIVISLAB	3730.50	3792.20	3657.00	3718.00	-49.5
DRREDDY	5365.00	5375.00	5238.00	5280.00	-73.85
BAJAJFINSV	9004.80	9030.00	8710.15	8784.65	-174.35
UPL	502	505.8	484.4	491	-10.55
HDFC	2760.45	2777.15	2651.10	2670.00	-75.5
SHRECEM	25585.00	25600.00	24567.50	24650.00	-719.1
BAJFINANCE	5066.00	5074.00	4826.25	4894.00	-148.2

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY NEXT 50	34543.05	34644.30	33756.80	34156.00	-207.2
BANKBARODA	72	76	70.05	75.35	4.6
DLF	271.8	292.75	262.25	279.1	11.55
ITI	4300.00	4435.00	4271.00	4430.00	144.85
UBL	1264.00	1305.00	1247.00	1295.00	39.15
SBCARD	963	979	962.9	971.1	13.35
GODREJCP	768	774	758.5	770.5	8.3
HDFCAML	3220.00	3258.95	3173.20	3246.00	33.4
AIKEM	3083.60	3114.00	3050.15	3090.00	27.65
BOSCHLTD	14702.00	15348.00	14525.05	14750.00	123.9
HINDPETRO	225.1	232.85	224.6	226.8	1.9
PGPH	3200.00	3239.95	3181.05	3205.50	17.85
LUPIN	10630.30	10899.00	10466.65	1065.90	5.6
PEL	1577.10	1601.00	1522.35	1565.10	0.6
OFSS	3497.00	3542.00	3461.00	3506.00	0.35
PNB	37	37.2	35.25	36.5	0
IGL	570.05	570.05	560	565.95	-1.25
PIDILITIND	1809.90	1815.00	1771.00	1794.00	-5.2
PFCL	122.8	123.15	118.5	121.05	-0.4
ACC	1795.15	1811.70	1771.10	1788.95	-6.15
ADANITRANS	450	454.15	441.55	448	-2
ADANIIGREEN	930	935.4	900.1	919.05	-5.1
BERGEPAINT	803.2	805.9	787.7	798	-5.15
CADILAHC	493	494.5	481.65	487	-3.35
HAVELLS	1024.25	1071.75	1006.75	1011.70	-7.1
TATACONSUM	626.8	633	611.3	619.95	-4.35
MCDOWELLN	646	656.95	631.5	639.35	-4.65
COLPAL	1621.50	1629.25	1587.40	1602.00	-11.6
SIEMENS	1642.00	1649.90	1623.90	1630.50	-12.05
DABUR	541.15	545.45	533.6	546	-4.4
MARICO	425	426.9	415.1	419.45	-3.6
INDUSTOWER	265.95	269.8	253.7	259	-2.35
MOTHERSUMI	170.5	172.35	165.25	167.5	-1.65
ICICIING	1570.40	1594.30	1533.40	1549.95	-1.6
HINDZINC	296.7	298.6	283	286.85	-3.8
AMBUJACEM	268.1	269.4	261.1	264.5	-3.6
CONCOR	448	450.55	433	439	-6.6
NMDC	128.35	128.9	123.85	125.4	-2.05
AUROPHARMA	960.2	974.9	938.55	940.55	-17.7
PETRONET	271	274.7	261.6	263.55	-5.2
BIOCON	472	472.2	460.55	462.65	-9.1
NAUKRI	5420.00	5241.10	5173.45	5260.05	-109.65
ICICIPRULI	528	529.15	511.55	509.95	-11.7
TORNTPHARM	2844.95	2849.20	2742.75	2767.95	-65.55
INDIGO	1695.00	1700.00	1621.10	1640.00	-40
DMATINDIA	15450.70	15505.00	14925.00	14999.50	-405.9
ABIR	3001.00	3008.65	2878.50	2916.50	-81.7
CIGRE	149	149.95	142.9	143.8	-4.4
MUTHOOTFIN	1280.00	1289.45	1206.00	1237.95	-38.7
BANDHANBNK	395.3	395.45	371	375.65	-15.8

## BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	ITL						
ADANIIGREEN	926	935	899.2	921.5	ADANIPOWER	56.4	56.65	52.95	53.6	4345	4438.35
NAUKRI	5375	5417.45	5174.2	5252.6	DELTAACORP	154.6	159.95	152.6	156.45	2300	2305.3
TATAMOTORS	243.3	248.8	238.55	242.5	AMBUJACEM	268	269.45	261.35	264.95	425.5	426.55
TCS	3179.95	3179.95	3127.1	3158.8	LTTS	2525	2625	2509.15	2600.35	1222	1326.1
IDEA	12.23	12.75	11.9	12.24	POWERGRID	203.95	206.5	202.95	204.95	901	908
BHARTIARTL	588	601.8	566.7	578.25	NBCC	33.7	34.15	33.35	33.7	30100	30254.1
SBIN	295.4	308.05	294.6	306.7	GLENMARK	518.5	523.55	505.3	513.75	77	77.15
INFY	1379.8	1392.7	1360	1387.7	HAVELLS	1024.8	1041.9	1006.7	1012.4	346.25	385.65
TATACONSUM	628.4	632.75	610.8	619.75	NMDC	128.6	128.85	123.85	126.15	1665	1674.1
IIFLWAL	1067	1095	1049.75	1080.25	UNIONBANK	33.2	33.85	32.25	33.15	570	570.55
RELIANCE	1964.8	1974.95	1918.65	1939.1	IDFC	44.05	45.45	41.75	43.3	223.9	228.4
BAJFINANCE	5065	5074	4830	4899.5	INOXLEISUR	345.55	354	335.8	342.55	330	339.9
BANDHANBNK	395.95	395.95	370.9	374.95	SBCARD	962	979.3	962	974.1	67	67
DLF	271.5	292.9	268.3	280.45	HINDCOPPER	66.8	69.5	64.05	65.7	94.7	95
CANBK	139.3	145.85	136	144.7	IDBI	32.45	32.65	31.25	31.55	1495	1495
M&M	783	837.25	782.9	828.65	INDHOTEL	124.5	129.8	123.45	126.75	4821.15	4847.35
BANKBARODA	71.6	76	70.1	75.2	JUBLFOOD	2880	2914.55	2784.2	2837.15	100	100
WIPRO	463.9	467.2	453.1	458.75	SRF	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
TATAELEXIS	2178	2424	2150	2376.4	BAJAJ-AUTO	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BHEL	39.7	42.25	39.65	40.75	APOLLOHIS	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
TTCL	207.85	21.35	205.25	211.25	GRASIM	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
PNB	36.8	37.7	35.2	36.55	ALOKTEX	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HINDUNILVR	337.7	2397	2365	2372.85	CONCOR	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
TATASTEEL	703.2	714.7	693.15	709.2	ABBOTIN	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BRITANNIA	3637	3648.5	3600	3627.1	APOLLOHIS	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
IOC	100.2	104.35	100.1	102.5	AEIGISLOG	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
NTPC	98	102.65	98	100.85	NATIONAL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HDFC	1490.1	1494	1461.9	1470.95	SBILILE	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BPCL	623	676.1	615	629.1	POLYCAP	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ICICIBANK	550.5	561	548.7	556.4	DMART	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HINDUNISINDBK	935.6	953.2	926.45	947.75	TATACOF	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
TATACHEM	528	551.5	526	542.3	CADILAC	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ITUBHSHGFIN	237.4	243.45	222.8	234.3	MANAPPUR	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
AXISBANK	675.7	691.25	669.55	687.75	VAKRANG	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ONGC	104.5	107.85	104.1	105.2	HFCL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ASHOKKYLE	123.15	125.45	118.35	121.55	BALKRISNA	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
TATOCABANK	1906.35	1912	1876.75	1883.15	PCF	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
MT	1351.2	1372.75	1344.3	1352	CUMMINS	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
MAARUTI	8178.35	8400	8110.15	8137.4	SOUTHAIR	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ASIANPAINT	2767	2767	2678.3	2704.5	AARTIDRUGS	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
TATAPOWER	87.2	87.7	83.8	85.85	INDIANCER	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BPCL	1568	1601.1	1522.5	1566.15	ULTRACEL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
SRTRANSFIN	405	424.9	404.85	411.85	MOIL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
MUTHOOTFIN	1271	1284.95	1178	1216.6	TATACAP	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
FEDERALBNK	1277	1288.65	1206.05	1236.7	BERGEMAC	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HDFC	77.1	78	74.35	74.75	ACC	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
GOERORILTY	2758	2777.7	2650.8	2670.25	IBREALE	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HCILTECH	595.15	601.25	566.55	580.5	ASHOKA	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HEROMOTOCO	1064.9	1073.55	1040	1085.5	UBL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
L&T	3260	3317.55	3217	3256.8	JKTYRE	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
COALINDIA	148	149.8	143.5	145.75	HFDCAMC	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
PVR	1463.6	1498.7	1436.1	1454.75	AMRINF	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
DLF	442	463.7	427.9	438.25	MFSL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
DIGCHIRSTB	47.55	47.75	45.1	46.05	MRPL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
IRCTC	1485.1	1497	1441.35	1460.75	FORTIS	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
INDIASTEEL	298	305.45	288.45	299.85	DABUR	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ADANIPORTS	612.9	540.15	512.9	536.7	ITI	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
SUNPHARMA	512.4	614.4	597.105	602.1	PILITINDIA	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HUDCO	406.75	427.55	427.25	469.95	INDUSTO	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BAJAJFINSV	892.65	9029.95	8712.5	8745.5	ABCARBIT	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ICICI	1544	1544	1495.15	1504.65	GODFREY	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
CAU	1424	1439.9	1425.1	1447.35	GRAPHITE	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
AUROPHARMA	957.5	974.8	928.49	947.2	GROJECR	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
IRBANK	259.95	263.65	247.3	254.5		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
CESC	668	694	629	683.6		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BIOCHEM	472.3	472.3	460.7	463		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
TECHM	1074	1078.5	1050.3	1068.55		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HDF	86201	87557	85265.65	85631.3		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
MINPETRO*	225	232.8	224.6	227		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
VEDL	182	184.25	176.4	180.4		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
CIPLA	845	851.95	832.55	841.4		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
SUNTV	533	539.2	520.3	525.95		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ADANIANT	526.25	540	521.5	536.25		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HINDALCO	266	268.4	258.8	262.55		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
PETRONET	271	274.55	261.7	265.45		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
INDVISLAB	3799	3799	3677	3720.9		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
DIMANDAMART	8284	8370	7621.3	8131.65		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
M&MFIN	191.7	198.4	185.85	189.95		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
HSCL	51	54.4	51	52.2		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
&KBANK	29.3	30.55	28.1	30.55	NCC	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ZYKAMOTOR	525	526.45	506.95	511.05	MINDTREE	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ZEEL	229.5	232.7	223.45	227.95	GSFC	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
UPL	505.7	505.7	482.55	491.5	CEATLTD	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
EXIDEIND	206.8	209.1	197.3	200.95	STAR	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BAJAJELEC	712.85	737.8	709.65	719.6	ENGINEER	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
DIXON	15237	15275	14415.15	14535.5	QUERUS	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
CHOLERAFF	5356.8	5361.15	5234.55	5291.1	ABFLR	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
DDREDFIN	445.05	449	419.85	427.6	VOLTAS	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BOSCHLTD	14784.15	15337.9	14523.6	14762.6	JUSTIDIAL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
SAIL	76.2	77.75	73.75	74.7	SHREECE	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
MOTHERSINDIA	173.75	172.75	165.3	167.45	HAL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BANKOFBAROD	53.85	56.75	52.5	54.5	AMARAJA	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
TRIDENT	138	147.3	138	143.4	NAM-INDIA	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
MIDHANI	197	211.15	196.95	209.45	GUJGAS	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
SWSTEEL	403.7	407.3	394.2	403.55	CARBORUN	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
LUPIN	1080.1	1088.95	1047.05	1067.15	HAWKING	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
EICHERMOT	2874.95	2910	2838.1	2866.85	TORNPTNT	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
ESCORTS	1375.2	1389.7	1308	1365.95	ICICIPRUD	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
BATAINDIA	1635	1662	1612.55	1633.9	COLPAL	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
NINDIGO	1696.9	1696.9	1622	1634.3	JYOTHY	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
NSEINSTEIND	8005	8268.4	7961.55	8022.75	BEML	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
RVNL	33.15	34.15	32.65	33.15	RECITD	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
TATAMTRDRVR	97	99.9	94.1	96.58	GODREJIN	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
KAJARIACORP	735	755	733.75	751.15	RAJESHIN	100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
DLFCLIFE	722.8	724.7	708.8	713.25		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100
JUBILANT	926.6	987	915.45	978.2		100	100	97.5	98.5	100	100



REMOVAL OF TRUMP FROM OFFICE

# Pence asked to invoke 25th Amendment

**Washington:** The Democratic-controlled US House of Representatives, which is rushing ahead towards impeaching Donald Trump over the unprecedented Capitol Hill attack, has passed a resolution urging Vice President Mike Pence to invoke 25th Amendment to remove the president from office.

The resolution was voted by 223 to 205 votes on Tuesday night. The voting was mostly on party lines, with one Republican voting in favour of the resolution and another five abstaining. The resolution calls upon Pence to mobilise the Cabinet to activate the 25th Amendment to remove the president from office.

The 25th Amendment, adopted more than 50 years ago in the wake of President John F Kennedy's assassination, provides a mechanism for the succession of the president for his or her replacement in the event he or she proves unfit to serve. Under the amendment, the vice president and a majority of either the Cabinet or some other body designated by Congress may remove the pres-



ident from office.

The vote came after Pence, a Republican, wrote to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that he would not invoke the 25th Amendment.

"Under our Constitution, the 25th Amendment is not a means of punishment or usurpation. Invoking the 25th Amendment in such a manner would set a terrible precedent," Pence said in a letter to Pelosi, a Democrat.

Speaking on the House floor, Pelosi said on January 6, President Trump incited a deadly insurrection against America that targeted the very heart of its democracy, the US Capitol.

"Defiling the genius of the Constitution, separate but

equal, attacking the first branch of government, trying to prevent the US from ascertaining – the constitutional duty to ascertain that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will be President and Vice President of the

United States.

"The gleeful desecration they have – gleeful desecration of the Capitol and violence against the Congress, our staff and our workers are horrors that will forever stain our

nation's history. Five Americans have died following the violent attack. More than 50 police officers were seriously injured, including fifteen officers who were hospitalised," Pelosi said.

**PTI**

## Free speech is under assault like never before: Trump

**Washington:** Free speech is under assault in the United States like never before, outgoing President Donald Trump said as almost all major social media outlets moved to block him following the breach of the Capitol Hill by his supporters.

In his first public speech on Tuesday after the January 6 storming of the US Capitol, Trump, in a Texas border town, addressed for the first time several issues, including impeachment proceedings against him, last week's incident itself and the call to invoke the 25th Amendment

to the US Constitution where-in he can be removed by his cabinet members.

"Free speech is under assault like never before. The 25th Amendment is of zero risk to me but will come back to haunt Joe Biden and the Biden administration. As the expression goes, be careful what you wish for," Trump said in his remarks at a border wall in Texas.

"The impeachment hoax is a continuation of the greatest and most vicious witch hunt in the history of our country and is causing tremendous anger and divi-

sion, and pain far greater than most people will ever understand, which is very dangerous for the USA, especially at this very tender time," he said.

Referring to last week's events, Trump said millions of Americans watched on as a mob stormed the Capitol and trashed the halls of the government.

"I have consistently said throughout my administration, we believe in respecting America's history and traditions, not tearing them down. We believe in the rule of law, not in violence or rioting," he said.

**PTI**

### YouTube suspends Trump's channel for at least a week

**Hong Kong:** YouTube has suspended Donald Trump's channel for at least a week amid concerns over "ongoing potential for violence," making it the latest platform to limit the president's online activities.

YouTube said in a tweet that it suspended Trump's channel after new content was uploaded that violated its policies. It did not specify which videos were in question or how they were in violation.

The move to curtail Trump's social media activity comes after a mob of his supporters, urged on by his rhetoric, stormed the Capitol last week to try to stop Congress from certifying President-elect Joe Biden's win.

"After review, and in light of concerns about the ongoing potential for violence, we removed new content uploaded to Donald J Trump's channel for violating our policies," YouTube said in a statement on Twitter.

YouTube said that the channel had its "1st strike" and comments would be indefinitely disabled on the channel. Under its policies, a second strike will result in a two-week suspension, while a third strike bans the account permanently.

**AP**

## FBI opens over 160 investigations against Capitol Hill rioters

**Washington:** The FBI has opened more than 160 investigations against the January 6 Capitol Hill rioters, officials said here, and asserted this is just the tip of the iceberg.

The agency has worked hand-in-hand with the United States Attorney's Office and law enforcement partners in DC and across the country to arrest and charge multiple individuals who took part in last week's breach of the US Capitol, FBI Washington Field Office Assistant Director In-Charge Steven M D'Antuono told reporters at a news conference.

"In six days, we have opened over 160 case files, and that's just the tip of the iceberg," he said, adding the FBI has received more than 1,00,000 pieces of digital media.

D'Antuono said the FBI will be knocking on the doors of the people who participated in the attack on the Capitol. "But before we do this, this is your opportunity to come forward as several individuals involved in Wednesday's riots

have done," he added.

In the weeks leading up to the January 6 rally, the FBI, D'Antuono said, developed some intelligence that a number of individuals were planning to travel to the DC area with intentions to cause violence.

This was immediately shared and action was taken as demonstrated by the arrest of Enrique Tarrio by the Metropolitan Police Department the night before the rally, he said.

Other individuals were identified in other parts of the country and their travel subsequently disrupted, D'Antuono noted.

Acting US Attorney for the District of Columbia, Michael Sherwin, said the scope and scale of the investigation in these cases are really unprecedented not only in FBI history but also probably in the history of the Department of Justice in which the Capitol grounds outside and inside are essentially crime scenes.

**PTI**

### Around the Globe

**Terre Haute (US):** A Kansas woman was executed on Wednesday for strangling an expectant mother in Missouri and cutting the baby from her womb, the first time in nearly seven decades that the US Government has put to death a female inmate.

**United Nations:** The UN and humanitarian partners in Afghanistan are seeking \$1.3 billion to assist almost 16 million people in need of life-saving assistance as a result of decades of conflict, recurrent natural disasters and the added impact of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic.

**Wellington:** Police said a man armed with an axe smashed the glass doors that form the main entrance to New Zealand's Parliament early on Wednesday but did not attempt to enter the building.

**Karachi:** Pakistan's restive Balochistan province saw 2,886 terrorist attacks and 3,184 related deaths in the last decade, according to a media report.

## US cancels ambassador's controversial trip to Taiwan

**AP ■ TAIPEI**

The US State Department canceled the planned Taiwan visit by its UN ambassador that has drawn strong opposition and a warning from China.

The department announced it was canceling all senior-level overseas travels, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's planned trip to Belgium, in a decision to assist with the transition to the next administration.

US Ambassador to the UN Kelly Craft was due to begin a three-day visit Wednesday, which would have involved meetings with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu as well as delivering a speech.

Craft's trip was one of two moves in the twilight days of the Trump administration that

increases official exchanges with the self-ruled island while also provoking China, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory.

The US and China have clashed on everything from the origins of the pandemic to Hong Kong. China had already warned the US would pay a "heavy price" in response to the planned visit.

It follows an announcement from Pompeo on Saturday that the US would remove longstanding restrictions on how its diplomats and others have contact with their Taiwanese counterparts.

Under the Trump administration and bipartisan support from Congress, relations with Taiwan has warmed up considerably, with the government increasing the frequency and quality of weapons sales to the island's government.

## China says it'll defend self over UK Xinjiang labour measures

**Beijing:** China said on Wednesday that it would defend itself against a British government demand that companies ensure their supply chains are free from forced labour linked to the northwestern Chinese region of Xinjiang or face punishing fines.

The comment came after British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said officials have issued guidance to British firms with ties to Xinjiang on how to carry out due diligence checks.

The government intends

to exclude suppliers and review export controls to prevent the shipping of any goods that could contribute to such violations in Xinjiang, where China is accused of widespread rights violations against Uighurs and other Muslim minority groups.

China denies allegations of rights abuses and forced labour, saying it aims only to raise incomes among minorities and stamp out radicalism.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said China would "take all necessary measures to defend national

interests and dignity and firmly safeguard its sovereign, security and development interests."

"Individual countries including the UK have funded, concocted and deliberately spread lies and rumours to smear and discredit China on the pretext of so-called human rights issues," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing. "It fully exposes their hypocrisy and sinister intentions to curb the development and progress of Xinjiang and interfere in China's internal affairs."

**AP**

## Iran to hold missile drill in Gulf of Oman amid tensions

**Tehran:** Iran's navy was poised to begin a short-range missile drill in the Gulf of Oman on Wednesday, state TV reported, amid heightened regional tensions over Tehran's nuclear program and a US Pressure campaign against the Islamic Republic.

The two-day missile drill was to be held

in the gulf's southeastern waters and two new Iranian-made warships were expected to join the exercise: The missile-launching Zereh, or "armor," and the Makran, a logistics vessel with a helicopter pad named after a coastal region in southern Iran.

### FROM PAGE 1

## INOCULATION SITES REDUCED BY HALF

The vaccine will be stored in the regional vaccine centres at Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode from where it will be distributed to 133 centres. Giving details of the vaccination plans for Maharashtra, Health Minister Rajesh Tope said the State had already received 9.83 lakh doses of the total requirement of 17.5 lakh for the first phase.

Of these, 9.63 lakh vials were from SII and 20,000 from Bharat Biotech, the State Minister told reporters.

The Northeast State of Assam received its second consignment of 12,000 doses of Covaxin. SpiceJet said it had transported 3.5 tonnes of Covid-19 vaccines on Wednesday from Mumbai, Pune and Hyderabad to 11 cities.

"On January 13, 2021, SpiceJet shipped 111 boxes of Covid-19 vaccine, weighing 3.5 tonnes from Mumbai, Pune and Hyderabad to 11 cities including Bagdogra, Dehradun, Srinagar, Jammu, Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Jabalpur, Ranchi, Rajkot, Delhi and Bengaluru," the airline said in a statement.

GoAir said it will airlift a total of 69,600 vials of the vaccine. The budget carrier also moved 2,400 vials (24,000 doses) of Covishield to Goa from Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA).

## FARMERS BURN COPIES OF AGRI LAWS ON LOHRI

"AIKSCC has appealed to all districts within 300 km of Delhi to mobilise thousands of tractors for the Republic Day Tractor Parade in Delhi. All should assemble at the borders a day before the parade," said AIKSCC in a statement.

"Along with the preparation for Mahila Kisan Diwas programme on January 18, Mahapadavs are planned before Governors in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala from January 23 to 25, in Maharashtra from January 24 to 26 and in Odisha on January 23," stated the AIKSCC.

"After reading the order of the Supreme Court it is also clear that the Centre Government has falsely accused farmer leaders of not pointing out 'even one clause' which is 'detrimental to their interests'," it stated.

"The Centre Government has not

only failed the farmers, it has also failed in its duty to put correct facts before the highest court of the Country," it further stated.

## IN DESI PUSH & IAF BOOST, ₹48K CR OK'D FOR 83 TEJAS

It is the first "Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)" category procurement of combat aircraft with an indigenous content of 50 per cent which will progressively reach 60 per cent by the end of the programme.

The Cabinet has also approved infrastructure development by the IAF under the project to enable them handle repairs or servicing at their base depot so that the turnaround time would get reduced for mission critical systems and would lead to increased availability of aircraft for operational exploitation. This would enable IAF to sustain the fleet more efficiently and effectively due to availability of repair infrastructure at respective bases.

Underlining the importance of the decision, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said in a message, "The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by the Prime Minister today approved the largest indigenous defence procurement deal worth about Rs 48,000 crore to strengthen IAF's fleet of home-grown fighter jet 'LCA-Tejas'. This deal will be a game-changer for self-reliance in Indian defence manufacturing."

He also said, "The LCA-Tejas is going to be the backbone of the IAF fighter fleet in years to come. LCA-Tejas incorporates a large number of new technologies many of which were never attempted in India. The indigenous content of LCA-Tejas is 50 per cent in Mk1A variant which will be enhanced to 60 per cent. The project will act as a catalyst for transforming the Indian aerospace manufacturing ecosystem into a vibrant atmanirbhar-self-sustaining ecosystem, Rajnath added.

The HAL has already set up second line manufacturing facilities at its Nashik and Bengaluru divisions, the Defence Minister said, adding, "Equipped with the augmented infrastructure the HAL will steer LCA-Mk1A production for timely deliveries to the IAF."

The procurement of Tejas will considerably expand the current LCA ecosystem and help in creating new job

opportunities, the Minister said. The HAL follows a system integrator model in LCA Mk1A programme and acts as an umbrella organisation, fostering manufacturing & design capabilities in private industry, he added.

Under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, India is continuously growing in its power to indigenously design, develop and manufacture advanced cutting-edge technologies and systems in the Defence Sector. The manufacturing of the LCA by the public sector aeronautics conglomerate HAL will give a further push to Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative and boost indigenisation of defence production and the Defence Industry in the country.

About 500 Indian companies including MSMEs in the design and manufacturing sectors will be working with the HAL in this procurement.

## SC ISSUES NOTICE ON GOVT PLEA AGAINST DECRIMINALISING ADULTERY IN FORCES

"Issue notice. Since the clarification is on a Constitution Bench decision, it is appropriate that the Chief Justice issues orders to post this matter before a bench of five Judges. The Registry is directed to place the matter before the Chief Justice for appropriate orders," the bench said in its order.

The AG said a clarification is needed in this regard from the top court on the applicability of the verdict in armed forces.

In a path-breaking verdict, a five-judge Constitution bench headed by the then CJI Dipak Misra unanimously struck down Section 497 (adultery) of the Indian Penal Code and declared that adultery is not a crime and the penal provision was unconstitutional as it dented the individuality of women and treated them as "chattel of husbands".

The apex court, in a September 2018 judgment, however had said adultery would continue to be a ground for seeking divorce in matrimonial disputes.

The Centre, in its interim plea filed in a disposed of PIL of Joseph Shine, has sought clarification and a direction that the judgement be not made applicable on special statutes and rules governing the armed forces which take actions on its personnel for indulging in adulterous relationships to ensure dis-

cipline in forces.

It has been said when jawans and officers are posted in forward inhospitable areas, their families are taken care of at base camp by other officers and the laws and rules, providing actions for indulging in adulterous or promiscuous activity, help in maintaining discipline.

An armed forces personnel can be cashiered from service on grounds of unbecoming conduct for committing adultery with a colleague's wife, it said.

Section 497 of the IPC says: "Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery."

Adultery was punishable by a maximum five years in jail or fine or both.

Striking down the law, the apex court had said IPC Section 497 was manifestly arbitrary, archaic law which is violative of the rights to equality and equal opportunity to women.

## 150-METRE-LONG, 30-FT-DEEP CROSS-BORDER TUNNEL FOUND

He said it appears that proper engineering effort has gone in making the tunnel. "This shows the hand of the Pakistani establishment, deployed in the Shakargarh area opposite to Samba sector," he said.

Flanked by other senior BSF officers, the IG BSF also supervised the ongoing operations and directed to troops to remain vigilant in the run up to the Republic day celebrations as attempts would be made from across the border to push heavily armed infiltrators inside the Indian territory.

Earlier, BSF had exposed Pakistan's complicity in aiding and abetting terrorism by detecting a 160-metre long cross-border tunnel, along the International border in Regal area of Samba sector on November 22, 2020.

The tunnel was believed to be used by the four member fidayeen squad (members of a suicide squad) of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), to infiltrate inside the Indian territory before they were neutralised at Ban Toll Plaza near Nagotra on November 19.

Another 'rat hole' tunnel, which was

at least 25 feet deep and 170 metres long, was detected by the Border Security Force (BSF) jawans along the international border in Galar village of Samba sector on August 28, 2020.

## MANDATORY PUBLISHING OF NOTICE FOR INTERFAITH MARRIAGE NOW OPTIONAL, RULES ALLAHABAD HC

If the couple did not intend so, the marriage officer has to solemnise their marriage forthwith without publication of 30 days notice, the court said.

A section of the Special Marriage Act, 1954, requires an inter-faith couple to give written notice of the marriage to the district marriage officer.

The court was considering a habeas corpus petition alleging that an adult girl is being detained against her wishes to marry her lover who belongs to a different religion. The judgement comes against the backdrop of a recent controversial law enacted by the Uttar Pradesh government which prohibits forcible conversion for the sake of marriage.

The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, prohibits conversion of religion by marriage to be unlawful.

## DHONI'S POULTRY PLAN GOES FOR A TOSS AS 2,500 KADAKNATH DIE OF BIRD FLU

Officials said that a surge in avian influenza or bird flu, an outbreak that has now spread to 10 States, has impacted the bar-headed geese, duck, pigeon, black and brown headed gulls and the Eurasian teal among migratory birds, and crows and poultry among domestic birds till now. New cases of bird flu have been reported in Jammu & Kashmir's Ganderbal district and four districts of Jharkhand.

The Centre had constituted a committee comprising the Inspector General, the Deputy Inspector General of Forests and Wildlife and a project scientist to monitor the handling of the avian flu situation by States. The committee held a meeting with all State chief wildlife wardens on Tuesday to take

stock of the situation and ensure that Centre's advisory is being followed.

In a statement, the Ministry on Wednesday said that States were asked to ensure that the infection does not spread among poultry, as it would have a high economic cost for the poultry farmers but it was found that many States are banning supply of poultry and poultry products from other States. As this would add to the negative impact on the poultry industry, the States were requested to reconsider such decision, it said. The Ministry has held a meeting with 17 States and asked to efficiently manage the spread of avian influenza in their respective States in accordance with the Action Plan 2021.

"To deal with the situation, the States were asked to coordinate with the Department of Health and Forest and sensitise them about the issue. States were also asked to maintain sufficient supply of protective equipment and maintain bio-security measures in poultry farms. States were also directed to identify BSL-II labs at the State level for speeding up the identification of infection in the State and timely introduction of control mechanism," it said.

The animal husbandry department of Maharashtra said that 238 bird deaths were reported in the State on Wednesday adding that the samples have been sent for testing. "Total 2,096 bird deaths reported in the State from 8 January till now," the department said.

Meanwhile, several birds have died in Prayagraj, Jalaun in Uttar Pradesh and samples have been sent to a laboratory. Samples taken from two dead crows in Kanpur have tested positive for bird flu and with these, the number of confirmed cases of the influenza has increased to four in the city.

## CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT WORK ...

The Heritage Conservation Committee on Monday gave its nod to the new Parliament project, after the Supreme Court asked the Centre to seek prior approval from the panel and other relevant authorities before starting construction work. According to the plan, work on redevelopment of Rajpath will start soon after this year's Republic Day parade. The work is expected to be completed in the next 10 months and the 2022 Republic Day parade will be held on a redeveloped Rajpath.



## Trend Slazer

### Cyrus challenged his fears in Manali

Actor-anchor **CYRUS SAHUKAR** challenged his fears in Manali, and he says the outcome was a meditative and relaxed feeling. "It was an incredible experience being in Manali after months of lockdown. To be in such a beautiful setting, hanging with (actor) Amol (Parashar) and doing all these adventure activities was a magnificent experience for me," Cyrus said.

"The best moment was canyoning down the waterfall as I had never done that before. It was super scary, yet there was something very calm about it. It was almost like after you get over your fears, there's a meditative and relaxed feeling that you get," he added.

Cyrus went to Manali to host the reality series *Feelin Alive Season 2*.

Actor **KAJOL** shared a hilarious way to avoid all things that make her fat, and fans sure are amused.

On Instagram stories, she shared a post that read: "I've decided I'm ignoring all the things that make me fat...Mirrors, Scales, Opinions..."

She is currently gearing up for the release of her next film, the Renuka Shahane-directed women-centric digital release, *Tribhanga: Tedhi Medhi Crazy*.

The film, written and directed by Shahane, also features Tanvi Azmi and Mithila Palkar. It is a family drama about three distinct women, and their unconventional life choices.



## Live outside the box

As long as there is a demand for affordable accommodation in cities, co-living will continue to be a lucrative business for brands, creating opportunities and a better way of living, even amid a pandemic

There are many myriad disruptive start-up ideas that have exploded in the Indian living ecosystem, especially if we look into the real estate sector. In the recent years, only a few of them have made the kind of impact that co-living has. The idea of co-living has been embraced by the present generation wholeheartedly with arms wide open. It has become an obvious answer to the age-old concern of affordable housing. The utility of shared living spaces is set in motion to find its way into the urban millennial headspace.

During the initial two lockdowns, many people spent months in isolation and some of them within their limited support bubble. This further resulted in starved human connection, urging people to look for more ways to socially engage than ever before. The young workforce was seen and even looking forward to build social connections even in their own buildings. The pandemic came as realisation that there is a necessity of organised purpose-built co-living accommodation and the objective being to disrupt the PG (accommodation) market, which is highly unorganised and is poorly managed, with least or no COVID-19 protocols in place. Hassle-free living sounded like a distant dream a few years ago. The shared economy concept has now percolated all aspects of society, giving rise to unprecedented disruptions along with the creation of new opportunities. It is important to note that the driving force for co-living in the market is not just the lack of available spaces or cramped living, but also flexibility and affordability, aspira-

tions of the present generation, the breakthrough technological innovation and the digital economy.

Predominantly focussed at millennials and working professionals, without an age limit, co-living aims to build an instant community for those looking for open-minded friendships. It also intends to facilitate an opportunity to live in the main business and commercial areas of the city that would usually be highly expensive in the otherwise traditional private rented set up. Because of millennials contributing to the larger share of the population, the requirement of the hour is to have affordable, organised and thoughtfully planned communities that will lead to disruption in the market and resolve the purpose-built co-living solutions for this constantly growing segment of target consumers.

### The way of living will become affordable and better organised

Co-living enables residents to dwell in a sociable environment and to take the benefits of a much wider variety of facilities than the ones that would be available to them in an individual apartment or flat share. If we look beyond the numbers, it becomes quite obvious that across a spectrum of sectors, the shared economy concept has unleashed disruptive forces that have forced a simple choice upon the occupants i.e. to level up and to elevate their communal needs.

It is important to note that the business of shared living spaces is moving to an asset-light model, where operators are changing and evolving their business model as per consumer needs,



rather than involving high business risks such as taking up building on rent. The aim is to take up buildings on a revenue share basis, which means that the operators operate the building as a co-living space on behalf of the owner for a fee in return. These are spaces that go beyond offering a space to live in, but a congregation of thoughts, ideas, opinions and backgrounds to coexist and be a part of a vibrant community for people to come together and connect.

### The growing need and importance of building a sustainable community

Community living is the principal driving force of co-living — to bring together people regardless of their age, to shape communities around similar and niche interests according to the ever-changing individual needs, to have the same mindset as millennials, and to pursue the will for a richer communal living environment. Further, co-living aims to be an option to combat loneliness, especially among the migrant millennial workforce in metro

cities, inviting people from different walks and different stages of life to co-create, evolve and flourish in collaboration by building meaningful connections and shaping a vibrant ecosystem with the help of recreational activities. Community management is thereby regarded as the key to the success of co-living.

Remote work is going to sustain for long or for the least, hybrid remote work is likely to become an integral part of workplace strategies as we go forward. Since human connection during the lockdown has been starved, co-living is an option that gives access to communal spaces and social events in a way that is unmatched by any other housing model. The properties are designed to revolutionise creative spaces in order to create an environment which is fun, playful and yet inspiring and fulfilling.

A specifically curated holistic community fosters a culture of inclusivity among the occupants which enables meeting a variety of other individuals and in turn expanding their network. Besides, provid-

ing contemporary lifestyle solutions that are fully equipped for people who enjoy hassle-free living. It provides smart living solutions, creating a balance for both leisure and work. However, co-living spaces need to elevate and step up their facilities to sustain and to endure the new reality.

### The outlook on co-living in 2021

Sustainability, community, and well-being are intertwined aspects. Health and well-being will continue to remain as the two primary factors for anyone to consider living in a safe space, especially in these unprecedented times. Considering the expansive offerings that shared accommodations and co-living spaces offer, along with ensuring enhanced safety protocols, this alternative will gradually become a necessity for modern migrants as they adjust and familiarise themselves with the new normal.

Today's workforce is on a constant move and does not wish to compromise on their living standards. The lockdown has led to starved human connection and there is a strong yearning for more social engagement opportunities than ever before. Promotion of positivity and empathy is the key to re-build the bond. To exemplify, build relationships between the residents and the local commerce or engage co-residents by curating events and fun activities. The pandemic has forced people to prefer places that offer safety and hygiene along with fully furnished facilities, rather than public places, which makes their transition to their new homes easier.

As long as there is a demand for affordable accommodation in cities, co-living will continue being a lucrative business for brands, providing opportunities to create conversational bonds and diverse communities with a better way of living, even in a pandemic. Residents are looking for proximity to the workplace and a holistically curated community living. The future of co-living sees a bright light at the end of the tunnel.

(The writer, Kahraman Yigit, is the co-founder and CEO of Olive by Embassy.)

## Stay in the new normal

Hospitality brands are now gearing up to ensure contactless, seamless and exceptional services to guests amid social distancing. Here are a few trends to watch out for in 2021

As the largest industry in the world, tourism is everything and everything is tourism. India is expected to become the youngest country by 2022, with an average age of 29. Instagram is ruling the social media networks worldwide and with 59 million active monthly users, we are the third-largest market for Instagram. Millennials have set their own rules and pushed the brands and market strategists to serve what they want even before the COVID-19 era.

The Indian Hospitality brands are now gearing up to ensure contactless, seamless and exceptional hospitality services to the guests in the new social distancing world. The new informed world consumer is setting new trends which are going to rule out 2021, says Roop Pratap Choudhary, Managing Director of Noor Mahal.

### Smart rooms with smart controls

Be it Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning or Internet of Things, futuristic technologies have taken complete control of hotel rooms to ensure contactless experiences. From room key to personal entertainment during your staycation, everything is now accessible from smart devices. Once sounded as a sci-fi movie scene, now you can set the temperature, mood and ambience of your hotel room via voice command. Imagine your room detecting light automatically or adjusting the brightness level, controlling temperature and contributing to energy saving while ensuring your luxurious comfort and stay.

You can enjoy contactless room service using voice recognition technology or book your favourite spa session with a single click on your smartphone. Opulence, comfort and exceptional room experiences are going digital in 2021. The smart rooms are going to be power packed with keyless entry, soundproof windows, smooth



streaming entertainment, wireless device charging, real time video chats with hotel staff and a lot more for new age guests.

### Sustainability is going to be much bigger and greener

The positive side of worldwide lockdown is that the nature has got the time to reboot and blossom. This has made us realise the true value of sustainable and eco-friendly practices to save the life saving planet. Maintaining the beauty of environment through recycling and proper management of five living elements i.e. water, waste, energy, food and structure, hotel brands in the new informed world are now committed to deliv-

er sustainable hospitality experiences. Hotels are using bare minimum artificial powers whether it is in the form of air, light and water. Organic, vegetarian and vegan choices are now leading the F&B menus. Hotels are going to bet high on solar energy so as to contribute their bit in energy conservation for future generations. Plastic straws, cutlery, water bottles, toiletry bottles etc have been replaced now with compostable or reusable alternatives.

### Mobile check-in

This year has set new trends in motion



### Robots room service

Many hotel brands in India have already adopted robotics to transform the room cleaning and room service operations. The rise of service robots has ushered a new era of guest hospitality. Guests are excited to take services from these robots who are here to assure utmost safety, hygiene and comfort. The next year — 2021 will have a new brigade of robot butlers delivering your snacks, toiletries or other amenities to guest rooms. They can navigate floors by using the Wi-Fi to call lifts or be placed at front door where guests can ask questions and enjoy chats with them. They are now your front desk managers providing basic information such as the spa and gym timings, best places to hangout, popular shopping hubs and personalised information for a guest's needs.

### Short distance tours and staycations

People are now preferring staycations over long holidays and short distance tours over long journeys. A recent survey conducted by Booking.com has revealed that people have been taking smaller journeys and discovering (or rediscovering) wonderful experiences closer home with ease in travel restrictions. Be it bag packers, corporate groups, families or friends, people are preferring to drive down to their nearby getaways for short and relaxed staycations. In a bid to encourage more footfall on domestic tourism destinations, the Tourism ministry has also started *Dekho Apna Desh* campaign asking Indians to take pledge to visit at least 15 different tourism locations in India by the year 2022.

—IANS



# Chennai airport gears up for a makeover



AAI's Chennai airport has been witnessing tremendous traffic growth over the years, which has necessitated the revamp of the airport aimed at providing a world-class terminal to passengers. The second phase of Chennai Airport Modernisation commenced in the year 2019 when the Prime Minister of India laid the foundation stone for the project.

The modernisation of the Chennai airport is planned in two stages. The first

stage has seen dismantling of the existing Domestic Terminal T-2 with an area of 19,250 sqm for construction of new facility, which is scheduled to be commissioned by June 2021. The second stage will be the demolition of International Terminal T-3, with an area of 42,300 sqm and construction of new terminal. The total project will be commissioned by December 2022.

The estimated cost of the project is ₹2,467 crore, which also includes integra-

tion of airside corridor for seamless flow, augmentation of contact bays, integration of multi-level mechanised car park and metro rail.

The new combined terminal (Stage-1 + Stage-2), which will function as one large integrated terminal for international and domestic operations having a total area of 2,18,000 sqm, will enhance the present capacity from 21 million passengers per annum to 35 million passengers per annum.

The design of the roof is most important as it gives the structure an iconic look. It is derived from the traditional form of local art and culture, the movement of traditional costume from Tamil Nadu's Bharatanatyam dance. The pleats in these costumes open beautifully when the dancer forms particular postures and the roof will reflect the movement and lightness of the garment. The fabric-like roof lightly sits above the terminal with the ripples creating from layers of curvature roof

structure. The roof then cantilevers over the forecourt road to create a welcoming space and weather protection for the passenger and visitors alike. Evidently, the new terminal and its interiors will reflect an array of aesthetic elements taken from the rich cultural repository of Tamil Nadu.

The new terminal will also be GRIHA (Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment) compliant, with various eco-friendly materials planned to be used during the construction phase. A host of new facilities will ensure passengers flow is smooth and safety/security aspects are given equal importance. Apart from multiple lounges and master concessionaires; Automated Tray Retrieval System (ATRS), Self-Baggage Drop (SBD), Passenger Flow Monitoring System (PFMS) and Boarding Process Control e-Gates will enhance passenger convenience.

With the commissioning of Multi-Level Car Parking (MLCP), the present

1,200 car parking capacity will increase to 3,000. The buildings will accommodate car parking area along with spaces created for commercial use.

AAI has also taken up works to enhance the efficiency of operational area (airside) of the airport by constructing Rapid Exit Taxiways (RETs), taxiways to the main runway (07/25), taxiway straightening works etc. The RETs will reduce runway occupancy time of aircraft. The introduction of MARS (Multi Apron Ramp System) ensures optimal usage of tarmac/apron.

The commissioning of New Terminal will not only create new opportunities for the communities around airport but will also provide the required impetus to health and educational tourism.

The Chennai airport is the fourth biggest airport in India in terms of passenger handled every year. With the new terminal coming up, it will be termed as one of the unique engineering marvels.

## LIC gives new opportunities

To encourage continuation of the risk cover in the current circumstances of Corona pandemic, LIC brings an excellent opportunity for its policyholders to revive their lapsed policies. It has decided to launch a Special Revival Campaign for its customers to revive their individual lapsed LIC policies. It has also authorised its 1,526 satellite offices to revive policies where special medical tests are not required.

Under this Special Revival Campaign, policies of specific eligible plans can be revived within five years from date of the first unpaid premium subject to terms and conditions. Certain concession in health requirements is also being offered subject to eligibility. Most policies

can be revived only on the basis of a declaration of good health and a COVID questionnaire to be submitted by the proposer/life assured.

The campaign is launched to benefit those policy holders who were not able to pay premiums due to unavoidable circumstances and their policy lapsed. It always makes better sense to revive an old policy to restore insurance cover. LIC values its policyholders and their desire to continue their life insurance cover. This campaign is a good opportunity for LIC's policyholders to revive their policies and restore life cover to ensure financial security for their family. LIC currently services almost 30 crore policies across the nation.

## NTPC'S OLDEST UNIT RECORDS HIGHEST PLF



NTPC Ltd's very first unit, which was commissioned 38 years ago at Singrauli in Uttar Pradesh, has achieved the highest Plant Load Factor (PLF) of 100.24 per cent among all thermal units in the country between April to December 2020, data published by Central Electricity Authority (CEA) showed. The 200 MW unit was commissioned in 1982 and

the robust PLF signifies the exceptional operational and maintenance efficiency.

Besides the exceptional feat achieved by unit #1, three more NTPC units — Singrauli unit #4 and Korba unit #1 and #2 in Chhattisgarh, have figured among top five performing units.

Further, NTPC Group achieved highest gross gen-

eration of 222.4 Billion Unit (BU) from April to December 2020, an increase of 3.8 per cent compared to the same period last year. Concurrently, NTPC coal power stations have maintained high availability of 92.21 per cent from April to December 2020 as against 87.64 per cent during the same period last year.

Six flagship power

plants of NTPC i.e. NTPC Korba (2,600 MW), NTPC Sipat (2,980 MW) in Chhattisgarh, NTPC Rihand (3,000 MW) in Uttar Pradesh, NTPC Vindhyachal (4,760 MW) in Madhya Pradesh, NTPC Talcher Thermal (460 MW) and NTPC Talcher Kaniha (3,000 MW) in Odisha have also featured among the top 10 performing thermal plants in the country.

### IN SHORT



POWERGRID received SKOCH Silver Award for its transformational performance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and POWERGRID's Skill development and employment generation

program for sustainable growth of 200 underprivileged Women in Damoh district of MP. SKOCH group is India's leading think tank dealing with socio-economic issues with focus on inclusive growth since 1997. SKOCH has instituted India's highest independent civilian honours in the field of governance, finance, technology, economics and social sector.



Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna PSU has won the SHRM HR Excellence Award at the SHRM20 India Annual & Tech Conference- a virtual conference hosted by SHRM India, the world's largest HR professional society. This is the first award that SHRM body has awarded to any PSU in India. POWERGRID won the award after competing with almost a dozen PSU organisations and more than 360 organizations participating in the overall awards process. The award was presented to Mr. K. Sreekanth, CMD, POWERGRID and Mr. V. K. Singh, Director Personnel, POWERGRID in person at POWERGRID Corporate Office. The SHRM HR Excellence Awards have been instituted as an exemplary platform to recognize organizations that put people first, deliver future focused excellence in the field of People Management and understand the importance of human capital as a key contributor to business outcomes.

### PRESS RELEASE

#### DIRECTORATE OF TOURISM, JAMMU Celebration "Lohri Festival-2021 at Katra"

The Directorate of Tourism, Jammu celebrated Lohri Festival-2021 on a grand scale at Katra today on 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. The event was celebrated in collaboration with the District Administration Reasi, Hotel & Restaurant Association, Travel Agent Association, Dry Fruit Association, Katra and officers/officials of Tourism Department. The above said event was organized for the 1st time at Katra by the Tourism department, started from Asia Chowk, to Fountain Chowk, Katra with cultural procession and local folk dance also performed by the artists. Special Kud performance and Lohri Haran dance was performed by the artists of J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Jammu at Foundation Chowk Katra. The aim of celebration of this festival is sustainable effort being made by the Tourism department with other stakeholders to revive the Tourism sector, in the area.

On this occasion the Deputy Commissioner Reasi, Mrs. Indu Kanwal Chib KAS, was Chief Guest, DDC Panthial, Sh. Rajinder Mengi, CO CRPF 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Katra, Sh. Jatinder Gupta, Joint Director Tourism, Jammu, Mrs. Neelam Khajuria, SDM Katra, Sh. Ashok Kumar Chowdhary Addl. SP, Katra Sh. Amit Bhasin, Assistant Director Tourism, Katra, Ms. Ambika Bali and staff of Tourism Department were present

The Directorate of Tourism, Jammu, celebrates Lohri festival.

Over a month-long 9th International Adolescent Summit 2020: Life Skills, Health, Safety and School Well-being closed in a valedictory function. Organised by Expressions India with National Book Trust, India as the knowledge partner, the event was inaugurated by Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal.

The summit aimed to understand and review the concept, needs and trends of mental health, life skills and values in the national as well as global perspectives. The summit also enabled an interactive dialogue on good practices on integration of school safety, sanitisation, nutrition, hygiene and mental health. With active participation of nearly 14,000 students and 1,200 teachers from all over India, the summit gave a chance to them to appreciate and suggest their views

with other schools from all over the country, thus, facilitating and promoting cultural exchange.

Over the course of four weeks and over 15 sessions, the summit saw the presence of various eminent educationists, artists, counsellors, psychologists, academicians from across India as the National Resource Faculty. Various events such as poster-paintings, Indian classical dance, Nukkad Natak and making short films along with Yuva Sansad provided an eclectic platform where students from schools across the country and abroad interacted with each other to promote creativity and awareness in health, wellbeing, friendship and



peace, amongst the various cultural backdrops of the nation. The International Adolescent Summit also endeavoured to facilitate an understanding of other adolescent concerns such as gender

sensitization, family bonding and communication, media literacy thus enabling a conducive environment for application of Life Skills and partnering for Behavioural and Emotional Safety of school

going students.

Shri Rajat Sharma Chairman & Editor-in Chief, INDIA TV News, and the Guest of Honour at the event said that the adolescents are also our teachers in some regard as they constantly teach us new ways of life and lead the world to a new direction. He applauded the program director, Dr. Jitendra Nagpal for successfully organizing this interactive summit wherein the adolescents were not mere audience but an integral part of the entire program. He said that good health, both mental and physical, is the most important aspect of life and the biggest lesson that the pandemic has taught us. Adolescents

especially need to focus on their mental well-being.

"If you are rich, travel. If you are poor, read. But if you are in between, then do both." Speaking at the valedictory ceremony of the International Adolescent Summit, Shri Yuvraj Malik Director National Book Trust, India implored adolescents to have self-faith and believe in their own capabilities. Recognizing the adolescents as future leaders and future of the nation, he encouraged them to embrace the talent that sleeps within and express it fearlessly. Adolescence is the stage of life where one has unlimited capabilities, strength and the youth should be fearless in

accepting and expressing their talent.

Adolescence is a tender age where an individual goes through self-realization and requires the right guidance and mentorship to build his life. The importance of introducing the adolescents to the rich Indian culture and history at this age so that they inculcate human values and ethos early on, was highlighted in all the events and interactive workshops of the Summit. During the course of the Summit, the students engaged with participants from schools across the country and abroad in various events that helped foster a newer understanding of 21st-

century life skills, innovative programs for promoting values, gender sensitivity, health and wellbeing.

A Students Charter on Life Skills, Health, Safety and School Wellbeing-2020 was also drafted and came into effect at the conclusion of the 9th International Adolescent Summit on Life Skills, Health and Wellbeing, after extensive deliberations during the International Summit that facilitated the voice of school students from across the country who came together for the first time in addressing their opinions, needs and concerns regarding the core themes such as health and wellbeing.

## BSF rolls out Maitri Cycle Rally

and after covering of total distance of 4,097 Kms along the border, the rally will end on 17th March, 2021, at Border Out Post Silkor, 60 Battalion, Mizoram Frontier. 13 Bicycle riders would be participating in this Cycle Rally. This rally will be completed in 66 days and it will be passing through the states viz. West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram along the Indo- Bangladesh border covering distance of 4,097 Kms.

This Cycle Rally will be flagged

off from Border Out Post Panitar, at 1100 hours, by General Shankar Rai Chaudhary PVSM, AVSM, (Retd) on 10th January, 2021, in the presence of other dignitaries including senior officers of Border Security Forces & Border Guard Bangladesh and local people. This rally will cover distance of 90- 100 Km each day and will have nightthals at the Border Posts along the International Boundary. Various programs will be organized by the Border Security Force at var-

ious Border Posts enroute, which will involve local government officials and people from the border areas who will encourage the riders.

On 11th January 2021, a programme will be held at Petrapole to welcome this bicycle rally, in which Sh. S. Ramakrishnan, IPS, ADG (Police) Retd, will be the Chief Guest. The event will be attended by Shri Pankaj Kumar Singh, IPS, Additional Director General, Eastern Command, Officers of

Border Security Force & Border Guard Bangladesh and local people. This cycle rally will culminate on 17th March 2021, at Border Out Post Silkor, Mizoram.

The objective of this bicycle rally is to create sense of security among the people living on the border, to enhance the friendship between Border Security Force and Border Guard Bangladesh, to create awareness amongst the border population, to stop trans-border crimes, no use of drugs and to stop cattle smuggling on the border. The Border Security Force is determined to make this cycle rally a success.

## International Adolescent Summit ends



# ‘IPL timing responsible for growing injury list’

PTI ■ BRISBANE

He loves the IPL but Australia coach Justin Langer on Wednesday questioned the timing of the last year's edition, which he believes could have been a contributing factor in the injury setbacks that both his and the Indian team have endured in the ongoing series.

The IPL was held in the September-November window in 2020 in the United Arab Emirates due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The lucrative tournament is usually held in India during the April-May window.

India have had a spate of injuries since the IPL and also in the current Australia series. Australia too had its share of injuries.

"It is really interesting how many injuries (it) has been throughout this summer. I can't help and think that the IPL this year (2020) was in reality, probably wasn't ideal timing for anyone, certainly for such a big series like this," Langer said at a virtual press conference.

The latest addition to the Indian injury list is Ravindra Jadeja, who was hit on his thumb, and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who has been ruled out of the last Test following an abdominal strain.

Earlier, KL Rahul, Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav were ruled out of the series due to the various injuries they suffered.

For Australia, David Warner was a big blow but he recovered in time for the last two Tests.

Langer was all praise for the IPL saying it helps in development of young players but was critical of the previous edition's timing.

"I love the IPL, I look at IPL now like I used to look at county cricket for our young players. They go and play county cricket and it helps them (in) their cricket development enormously. I think it is the same with the IPL, helps their white-ball development."

"But the timing of



Hanuma Vihari receives treatment to a leg injury during final day play of the third Test at Sydney Cricket Ground

AP

it...Because of what happened with Covid...Probably wasn't ideal, and I just wonder whether that is having an impact on the injuries that we are seeing for both teams throughout the summer, so I'm sure they'll review that," said the Australian head coach.

Asked how much the absence of the Bumrah-Jadeja duo will impact the contest, he said, "Hopefully, it (absence of

Bumrah and Jadeja) impacts it (the contest) a lot. But I have said this is going to be the survival of the fittest this summer."

"And I have said when I was asked at the start of the summer about Virat (Kohli) not being here...If you are taking your best players out of any team, whether it is our team or our opponent, it is going to have an impact or it is potentially going to have an impact," he said.

But Langer would rather focus on his team's resources than worry about how India would put together their playing XI in the fourth Test starting January 15 here.

"...Test cricket, like I keep saying survival of the fittest, and we can't concentrate on what India are doing, we just concentrate on (what) we are doing to make sure that we are up for the contest," he signed off.

## ‘Paine is an outstanding leader’

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Australia coach Justin Langer on Wednesday unequivocally supported his under-fire skipper Tim Paine, calling him an "outstanding leader", who will remain in the top job for some more time despite his poor keeping and unsportsmanlike conduct in the third Test against India.

Paine was heavily criticised for sledging and yelling at Ravichandran Ashwin who battled pain and aches to help India draw the match on the fifth and final in Sydney. He also dropped three catches at crucial junctures.

But Paine has "100 per cent" backing of his coach.

"You have no idea how much faith I have in Tim Paine, he did not have his best day, no doubt about that, but after three years he has been outstanding as the Australian captain, everything he does," Langer said.

The chief coach was speaking two days ahead of the series-deciding fourth and final Test here.

"He (Paine) had a frustrating day, that cut him some slack surely. But having said that when you set a standard as high

as he does and as we do, we understand when you are criticised when we fall below that.

"It is not what we are about, but Tim Paine is an outstanding leader and will continue to be for some time to come yet, he has my 100 per cent support," added Langer.

### ‘LOAD OF RUBBISH’

Justin Langer cannot believe the "absolute load of rubbish" that Steve Smith was trying to scuff up Rishabh Pant's guard in the drawn Sydney Test, and has called the criticism of his "quirks" way out of line and ludicrous.

Smith was accused of scuffing up the batsman's guard during the drinks break in the first session on Monday in the drawn Test. But Langer backed Smith to the hilt, coming down heavily on the criticism, mostly driven by fans online and some former players like Michael Vaughan.

"...I literally cannot believe some of the rubbish I read about Steve Smith. Absolute load of rubbish. I mean, if anyone knows Steve Smith, he is a bit quirky and he does some weird (stuff) and we have laughed about it for the last couple of years," Langer said.



Justin Langer chats with Marcus Harris

## Harris will open if Pucovski is unfit

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Opener Will Pucovski has a partially dislocated shoulder and Marcus Harris would replace him if he fails to recover in time for the fourth and final Test against India here this week, Australia head coach Justin Langer said on Wednesday.

Pucovski suffered the injury during the Sydney Test, which was his debut in

the longest format. The 22-year-old was injured while diving on the field.

"Will had a sore shoulder before he fell, he was actually going to have a scan after that day's play anyway, just to see what was happening," Langer said at a virtual press conference.

"We will see how he pulls up today, we are really hopeful that he will get up and if he doesn't, then the obvious thing would be

Marcus Harris would come in as an opener," he added. Langer said he is quite optimistic about the batsman pulling through.

"Will is a young guy, he has just played his first Test. So mentally he's going to be exhausted anyway. We will keep an eye on how he pulls up today. With shoulders, as long as he can bat OK and catch, it's not as big a deal in Test cricket, we're really hopeful

he will get up, we will probably know by tonight," Langer added.

Pucovski, who has suffered numerous concessions, made an impressive start to his Test career, scoring a half-century on debut.

Harris has so far played nine Test matches for Australia scoring 385 runs, including two fifties, with the highest score of 79.



## Injury-ravaged India trains in Brisbane

PTI ■ BRISBANE

The injury-ravaged Indian team on Wednesday underwent its first training session at the Gabba here, hoping to field 11 fit players in the series-deciding fourth Test against Australia.

Ruled out of the last Test with an abdominal strain, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah still accompanied the visiting team for its training session.

The likes of Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, skipper Ajinkya Rahane and others were seen in their training kits.

Bumrah, though, was not in his training outfit as he got involved in a discussion with bowling coach Bharat Arun.

"After an epic fightback in Sydney, it is time to regroup. We have begun our preparations for the final Test at the Gabba!" the BCCI posted on its twitter handle.

Chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav was seen bowling at the nets and there is a chance that he could be picked for the match with influential all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja ruled out due to a fractured thumb.

Also part of the session were seamer Shardul Thakur and all-rounder Washington



Sundar. Either T Natarajan or Shardul is likely to replace Bumrah in the playing XI at Gabba, forming a new-look pace attack alongside Mohd Siraj and Navdeep Saini.

Bumrah picked up the abdominal strain during the third Test in Sydney.

Head coach Ravi Shastri, who was keeping a tab on the proceedings, addressed the team huddle.

Shastri was also seen having a discussion with the rest of the support staff, which includes batting coach Vikram Rahtour and fielding coach R Sridhar, apart from Arun.

## Pogba's winner take Man Utd on top

AFF ■ BURNLEY

Paul Pogba said he is "always happy" when he is winning after scoring the only goal in a 1-0 victory at Burnley that took Manchester United top of the Premier League for the first time in three years on Tuesday.

Despite continued speculation over his future, Pogba has played an increasingly important role in recent weeks to aid United's first serious title challenge since legendary former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men now lead defending champions Liverpool by three points ahead of a top-of-the-table clash between the two most successful sides in English football history at Anfield on Sunday.

"I'm always happy when I win," said Pogba, who has been consistently linked with a move away from Old Trafford at the end of the season.

"I'm happy we are playing well and happy we are at the top, but there is a long way to go and we have big games coming up."

United have now taken 29 from the last possible 33 points to recover from just two wins in their opening six games of the season.

The signing of Bruno Fernandes shortly after Burnley

won 2-0 at Old Trafford nearly a year ago in the last meeting between the sides has transformed United's fortunes.

And if Pogba can finally produce consistent displays worthy of the then world record fee United paid for the Frenchman in 2016, there is reason for Solskjaer to believe he can end the club's eight-year wait for a league title.

"I've always said Paul is a big, big player for us," added Solskjaer. "He is a good character in the dressing room, he is always one of the lads look to (because) he's a world champion. We are seeing the best of Paul at the moment. He's getting better and better every game."

The manner of victory against a Burnley

side that had not lost at home since October also suggests United have the ability of champions to grind out a result when they need to.

The first-half was dominated by controversy over a series of VAR reviews as both sides escaped without having a man sent-off for challenges by Luke Shaw and Robbie Brady, while United had a goal harshly ruled out for a slight push by Harry Maguire when he powered home a header at the back post.

The visitors upped the pressure in the second-half and got their reward 19 minutes from time when Pogba's volley from Marcus Rashford's cross deflected off Matt Lowton and through the legs of Nick Pope to head to Anfield leading Liverpool.

"We couldn't be going there at a better

time to play them," added Solskjaer. "We are in good shape, good form, hungry, these boys want to get better and that's a test again."

### EVERTON WIN AT WOLVES

Everton moved back into the top four and within four points of United as they overcame an injury crisis to beat Wolves 2-1 at Molineux.

The Toffees took an early lead when Alex Iwobi converted Lucas Digne's cross but were pegged back when Ruben Neves levelled for Wolves.

Michael Keane's towering header won the game 13 minutes from time to bolster the Blues' European ambitions.

At the other end of the table, Sheffield United ended a 20-game winless league run as Billy Sharp's penalty earned a 1-0 victory over 10-man Newcastle.

The Blades still face an uphill task to haul themselves off the bottom of the table as they sit nine points adrift of safety.

But Chris Wilder's men ensured they will not set an unwanted record by going a full top-flight season without a win thanks to another night to forget for Newcastle.



## Atletico extend La Liga lead

AFF ■ MADRID

Atletico Madrid extended their lead at the top of La Liga to four points on Tuesday after a 2-0 win over Sevilla that strengthened their title credentials.

Goals in each half from Angel Correa and substitute Saul Niguez on a freezing night following historic snowfall in the Spanish capital allowed Diego Simeone's side to increase the gap between themselves and city rivals Real Madrid.

The match at the Wanda Metropolitano was one of three games in hand that Atletico had on Madrid and

Barcelona, who sit a further three points back in third.

Their home fixture with Athletic Bilbao at the weekend had to be postponed after Madrid experienced its heaviest snowfall in half a century.

"I'm very happy to help the team with this goal... the work pays off," said Saul after the win.

Sevilla meanwhile stay sixth on 30 points, level with fifth-placed Real Sociedad.

Zinedine Zidane's Madrid will have a tough task defending their La Liga crown on the evidence of Tuesday's display which bore all the hallmarks of a Simeone side.

## Saina, Srikanth progress in Thailand

### Satwik-Chirag clear first round hurdle, Kashyap retires midway, Sameer out

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Star India shuttler Saina Nehwal and former world number one Kidambi Srikanth entered the second rounds of their respective events but Parupalli Kashyap made an early exit from the Thailand Open Super 1000 tournament here on Wednesday.

Saina got the better of Selvaduray Kisona of Malaysia 21-15, 21-15 in the women's singles opening round to set up a clash with Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan.

Saina, who was first forced to withdraw from the event for positive Covid-19 results on Tuesday but later returned a negative test, thanked the Badminton World Federation officials and doctors for allowing her to participate.



"Yesterday, I was given a positive Covid-19 result after my PCR test but I already told them that I had Covid last November, so I have antibodies.

I tried to explain this to the doctor and after my blood tests and chest X-rays the doctor said I was OK and I don't have Covid-19," Saina said after her win.

"I am thankful to the doctors, the BWF and everyone who made the decision for me to play. It was a tiring day but I am happy I could comeback and play my match."

Earlier in the day, Srikanth took just 31 minutes to prevail over compatriot Sourabh Verma 21-12, 21-11 in the men's singles, but Kashyap was forced to retire midway in his opening-round match against Jason Anthony Ho-Shue of Canada.

Kashyap, a Commonwealth Games champion, was trailing 8-14 in the third game when he chose to retire after puling his calf muscle.

He had lost the first game 9-

21 before making a comeback to take the second 21-13.

Srikanth will next play eight seed Zii Jia Lee of Malaysia, who defeated another Indian HS Prannoy 13-21, 21-14, 21-8.

Sameer Verma too made a first round exit after losing 15-21, 17-21 to Shesar Hiren Rhustavito of Indonesia.

In the men's doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty came from behind to defeat the South Korean pair of Kim Gi Jung and Lee Yong Dae 19-21, 21-16, 21-14.

The two were delighted by the win over their idol.

"Lee Yong Dae was an idol for both of us when we were started, so it was excellent playing him today, and we are happy to get the win," Satwiksairaj said.

"Our strategy was to attack

as much as possible, but not to hurry. We gave up some points in the first game by hurrying too much. But we always knew what we had to do," Chirag added.

However, it was curtains for Arjun Madathil Ramachandran and Dhruv Kapila, who lost to the Malaysian duo of Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi 21-13, 8-21, 22-24.

Another Indian men's doubles pair of Manu Attri and B Sumeeth Reddy also lost in the opening round to Thai duo of Weeraphat Phakjarung and Wongsathorn Thongkham 19-21, 14-21.

The mixed doubles pair of N Sikki Reddy and Sumeeth Reddy B also failed to cross the opening hurdle, losing to Chung Man Tang and Yong Suet Tse 20-22, 17-21.

## Sabalenka wins 3rd straight title

AFF ■ ABU DHABI

Aryna Sabalenka heads to next month's Australian Open brimming with confidence after she captured a third consecutive title by outclassing Veronika Kudermetova 6-2, 6-2 in the Abu Dhabi final on Wednesday to extend her winning streak to 15 matches.

The 22-year-old from Belarus is the in-form player at the moment on the WTA tour and will be looking to translate her success from the smaller events into the majors, where she has yet to make it past the fourth round.

Sabalenka added a ninth singles trophy to her collection and will rise to a career-high number seven in the world when the new rankings are released next week.

"I came here to play some matches after one month of just preparation. I played six matches and it's really important and



I'm really happy I could play that long and to win this title," Sabalenka told reporters in Abu Dhabi.

"I'm going to Australia, I'm confident with only one thing, that I'll do everything I can to win matches and that's the only confidence I have right now."

Sabalenka, who ended her 2020 season by clinching back-to-back titles in Ostrava and Linz, is also riding an 11-match winning streak in the Middle East, having triumphed in Doha on her last previous visit to the region 11 months ago.

## Ankita falls short again

**Melbourne:** Ankita Raina's bid to qualify for a Grand Slam singles main draw failed yet again when she lost the final round of the Australian Open qualifying event to Serbian Olga Danilovic on Wednesday.

In the women's singles qualifiers being held in Dubai, Ankita lost the third and final round 2-6, 6-3, 1-6 to her Serbian opponent in almost two hours. It was the her sixth attempt to qualify for a competition at the grand stage.

Her defeat means that Sumit Nagal will be the only Indian to compete in the singles event of the first Grand Slam of the season.

Nagal has been awarded a wild card entry into the men's singles. PTI