

SII plant inferno kills 5

1-km-away Covishield production unit safe, will not affect vaccine supply, says Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla

PNS ■ PUNE/NEW DELHI

As many as five persons died in a fire that broke out at an under-construction building of India's Covid-19 vaccine producer Serum Institute of India (SII's) Gopal Patti plant in Pune on Thursday. Nine persons were evacuated safely.

SII CEO Adar Poonawalla, however, said that it will not hamper the supply of the Oxford-AstraZeneca "Covishield" vaccines, which are being manufactured some distance away from the spot of the fire.

The Manjari facility is where the Covishield vaccine used in the nationwide inoculation drive against the pandemic is made. The building where the fire broke out is part of the under-construction site of the Serum facility and is one km from the Covishield manufacturing unit, sources said.

"I would like to reassure all governments & the public that there would be no loss of #COVISHIELD production due to multiple production buildings that I had kept in reserve to deal with such contingencies," Poonawalla, Chairman and MD, SII, tweeted.

"We have just received some distressing updates; upon further investigation we have learnt that there has unfortunately been some loss of life at the incident. We are deeply saddened and offer our deepest condolences to the family members of the departed," Poonawalla added.



Smoke rises from the Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine maker that is manufacturing the AstraZeneca/Oxford University vaccine for the coronavirus, in Pune on Thursday AP

"Today is an extremely sorrowful day for all of us at SII. We're deeply saddened & offer our condolences to families of the departed. We'll be offering compensation of ₹25 Lakh to each family, in addition to mandated amount as per the norms," said Cyrus Poonawalla, Chairman and MD, SII.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his grief tweeting: Anguished by the loss of lives due to an unfortunate fire at Serum Institute of India. In this sad hour, my thoughts are with the families of those who lost their lives. I pray that the injured recover at the earliest. President Ram Nath Kovind

termed the deaths "distressing". Fire officials recovered the charred bodies during an inspection, Mayor Murlidhar Mohol said. He added that the five people who died were perhaps the workers at the under-construction building. "The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained but it is being speculated that welding, that was going on at the building, caused the fire," Mohol said.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said the State Government has ordered a probe into the blaze. The fire, which broke out at 2.45 pm on the fourth and fifth floors of the SEZ 3 building on the SII

premises, was brought under control in two hours, police said. Deputy Commissioner of Police Namrata Patil said that nine people were evacuated from the spot after the fire broke out.

Chief Fire Officer Prashant Ranpisie said fifteen water tankers were pressed into action and the fire was brought under control around 4.30 pm.

"The exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. Furniture, wiring, cabins were gutted. No major machinery or instruments were stored on the floors where the fire broke out," he said.

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PM, CMs, MPs, MLAs to get Covid jab in 2nd phase

Min age of public representatives to be eligible to get vaccinated against Covid-19 is 50 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, all Chief Ministers, MPs and MLAs above 50 will be vaccinated in the second phase of the Covid inoculation drive launched last week. Currently, under the ongoing first phase of the mega vaccine programme healthcare workers and others at the frontline of the coronavirus fight are receiving jabs of two vaccines — Serum Institute of India's Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

"Elected representatives above 50 years of age are likely to be vaccinated against Covid-19 in the second round of the ongoing inoculation drive after over three crore healthcare and frontline workers are vaccinated in the first round."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, most of his Cabinet Ministers, including Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and Nitin Gadkari, a majority of

Chief Ministers and top-rung leaders of all political parties besides MPs and MLAs fall in this category," said sources in the Union Health Ministry.

The Prime Minister in his interaction with Chief Ministers before the nationwide rollout of the vaccination programme had asked politicians to not jump the queue as the first round of inoculation is meant only for healthcare and frontline workers.

Modi had also said the turn of those over 50 years of age besides those younger but living with comorbidities will come after that.

Though the Government

has given no timeline, Modi had said on January 11 that 30 crore people, including those above 50 years of age, will be vaccinated in the next few months. Chief Ministers of States like Haryana, Bihar and Telangana had reportedly suggested that MLAs, MPs and other public representatives should be considered frontline workers and be vaccinated.

Many States are struggling to meet targets due to hesitancy to take vaccines and the fear of side effects.

Meanwhile, to boost the confidence among people of his Lok Sabha constituency, Varanasi, Modi will interact with beneficiaries and vaccinators of the Covid-19 inoculation drive in the holy city on Friday via video conferencing.

The participants in the interaction will share their first hand experience of vaccination, the Prime Minister's Office said on Thursday.

"The world's largest vaccination drive is underway in India. Our frontline warriors are getting vaccinated across the nation. At 1:15 pm tomorrow, January 22, I would interact with beneficiaries and vaccinators of Covid vaccination drive in Varanasi, via video conferencing," Modi tweeted.

"This interaction would give first hand opportunity to hear their experiences as well as feedback. I would urge you all to watch tomorrow's interaction," he added.

The interaction follows Modi's continuous dialogue and discussion with scientists, political leaders, and stakeholders.



Employees pack boxes containing vials of Covid-19 vaccine at the Serum Institute of India, Pune, on Thursday AP

92 nations queue up for Indian vaccines

PNS/IANS ■ NEW DELHI

There might be still time for Indian vaccines — Covaxin and Covishield — to gain the confidence of the masses here, but as many 92 countries have approached the Modi Government for the jabs. India is already sending its domestically developed vaccines to several neighbouring countries, including Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar.

In a letter to PM Modi on Tuesday, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit of the Dominican Republic has also requested for inoculation, signalling that the demand for Indian jabs has acquired a transcontinental appeal.

"As we enter 2021 and persevere in our fight against Covid-19, Dominica's population of 72,100 is in urgent need of enough doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. I, therefore, request, with great humility and respect, that you assist us by donating the doses we need to make our population safe (optimally 70,000 first and second doses)," wrote Skerrit.

In other parts of Latin America, Brazil, which has the second highest number of coronavirus cases in the world next only to the United States, has sent a special plane to pick up Indian vaccines from Pune.

A Brazilian plane is expected to fly the first 2 million doses of a Covid-19 vaccine purchased by the Government's Fiocruz biomedical institute.

The Bolivian Government had signed a contract with SII for 5 million vaccine doses.

Continued on Page 11

Farmers reject Govt's proposal to put laws on hold

No breakthrough in kisan-Govt talks on tractor march on Republic Day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After a detailed internal consultation in a full general body meeting of Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the protesting farmer unions on Thursday rejected the Government's proposal to suspend the three contentious farm laws for 18 months and set up a joint committee to find an amicable solution to end the deadlock.

This was announced by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of protesting unions leading protests at several Delhi border points.

"In a full general body meeting of Samyukt Kisan Morcha today, the proposal put forth by the government yesterday was rejected. A full repeal of three laws and enacting legislation for remunerative MSP for all farmers were reiterated as the pending demands of the movement," the Samyukt Kisan Morcha said in a statement.

"The SKM pays homage to the 143 farmers who have been martyred in this movement so far. These companions are separated from us while fighting this mass movement. Their sacrifice will not go in vain and we will not go back without the repealing of these farm laws," the statement said.

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Meanwhile, the deadlock between the farmer bodies and the Government continued even over the protesters' decision to hold a tractor rally on Delhi's Outer Ring Road the occasion of Republic Day.

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Lok Sangharsh Morcha activists join farmers protest against the farm laws at Singhu Border in New Delhi on Thursday PTI

SC panel talks with non-protesting farm unions from 8 States

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court-appointed committee on Thursday virtually met with farmers' unions and associations from eight States and sought their viewpoints on all the three farm legislations. These associations are not part of the protesting unions. This

was the first meeting of the committee after its formation.

"We had sent the invitation to 18 but 15 accepted. Of this 15, five could not attend the meeting. We are expecting that they will be joining in the next meeting which is scheduled for January 27," said a committee member. Only one farmer's organisation came in

person to join the meeting while the rest of them joined virtually. The committee will talk to all stakeholders, including dairies, fisheries, arthiyas and farmers cooperatives. The website will be ready by early next week and it will have a questionnaire for farmers on the three laws.

"Some expressed reservations over the farm laws while some have supported," said

Continued on Page 11

In a first, Sensex soars to 50,000, but closes lower on profit-booking

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The BSE Sensex scaled the 50,000-mark for the first time on Thursday on growth optimism and global cues, but succumbed to profit-booking in fag-end trade to finish in the red. Weighed by selling in banking, finance and IT counters, the 30-share BSE index ended 167.36 points or 0.34 per cent lower at 49,624.76.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty slipped 54.35 points or 0.37 per cent to close at 14,590.35. ONGC was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding 4 per cent, followed by Bharti Airtel, SBI, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Sun Pharma and

10 BJP, 2 SP picks elected UP MLAs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

All 12 candidates — 10 from the BJP and 2 from the Samajwadi candidates — were elected unopposed to the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council on Thursday.

Those elected included Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma, former IAS officer A K Sharma and State BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh.

After the nomination papers of independent candidate date Mahesh Chandra Sharma were rejected during the scrutiny on Tuesday, the decks had cleared for the election of the BJP and SP candidates to the legislative council.

Sharma's nomination was rejected as it did not have proposers and the papers lacked the receipt of the fee payment.

Continued on Page 11

Biden reverses Trump's key policies on Day 1

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

On day one in office, US President Joe Biden has signed 15 executive orders, reversing some of the key foreign policy and national security decisions of his predecessor Donald Trump.

The executive orders ranged from rejoining the Paris agreement on climate change, halting America's withdrawal from the World Health Organisation, revoking Muslim travel ban and stopping immediate construction of Mexico border wall.

"I'm proud of today's executive actions, and I'm going to start by keeping the promises I made to the American people. A long way to go. These are just executive actions. They are important, but we're going to

need legislation for a lot of the things we're going to do," Biden told reporters in the Oval Office of the White House as he signed the first lot of executive orders on Wednesday.

The president said he will be signing a number of executive orders over the next several days of the week. He also signed an executive order reversing Trump's decision to withdraw from the WHO.

"And I'm going to start today on the compounding crisis of Covid, along with the economic crisis following that, and climate crisis, racial equity issues," he said.

His first executive order was launching his 100-day masking challenge, asking Americans to mask up for 100 days.

Continued on Page 11

SC notice to 'Mirzapur' makers on charge of tarnishing city's image

PTI ■ BEIJING

New Delhi: The Supreme Court-appointed committee on Thursday sought responses from the Centre, Amazon Prime Video and Excel Entertainment Pvt Ltd on a plea which has alleged that web series "Mirzapur" has "completely tarnished" the historical and cultural image of the place by showing it as a "city of goons".

A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde issued notices on the plea which alleged that showing "shameless things" in the name of Mirzapur is an insult to the rich culture of the city. The petitioner, Mirzapur resident Sujeev Kumar Singh, said he has filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

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Hua said China's development and construction activities "within our own territory" is normal.

AP village: China says it's within its territory

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's development and construction activities "within its own territory" is "normal" and beyond reproach, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said here on Thursday, reacting to a report about China building a new village in Arunachal Pradesh.

"China's position on the Zangjan region (South Tibet) is consistent and clear. We never recognised the so-called Arunachal Pradesh," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told a media briefing while responding to a question.

Hua said China's development and construction activities "within our own territory" is normal.

CM asks people to follow traffic rules

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Playing the role of a guardian of the 24 crore population of the state, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed concern over road accidents and issued a passionate appeal to the people to follow all traffic rules.

He said that road accidents might have come down in recent years but about 65 people were still losing their lives every day in road mishaps.

The chief minister, who launched the Road Safety Month from his official residence on Thursday, said drunken driving, using mobile phones while driving, over speeding, not wearing seat belts and such similar small mistakes resulted in road accidents and the entire family had to pay for the mistake of a single person.

Insisting upon keeping vigil while driving or traversing through the roads, the chief minister said what it all required was to be alert, vigilant and aware of the traffic rules which could save thousands of lives. "Poor road engineering, high speeding and illegal cuts on expressways are also a big cause of road accidents. The departments concerned should pay special attention to these lapses and this special campaign has been organised to spread awareness among people," the chief minister said.

Empasising on spreading



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath flagging off the Road Safety rally in Lucknow on Thursday

PM to inaugurate Chauri Chaura incident's centenary celebrations

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate the year-long centenary celebrations of the Chauri Chaura incident in Gorakhpur, one of the ambitious programmes of the Yogi Adityanath government, on February 4.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has planned a series of events for the whole year starting February 4 next.

"The series of events will endeavour to give due respect to the martyrs of the Chauri Chaura incident and others who are little-known or unknown," a government spokesman said here on Thursday.

According to the instructions of the chief minister from February 4, 2021 to February 4, 2022, there will be daily events that will remind the people of the Chauri Chaura incident which played a decisive role in the freedom



movement.

The first meeting of the state-level organising committee headed by UP Governor Anandiben Patel on Wednesday released the logo of the event and finalised an action plan for the celebrations.

The chief minister had inaugurated the beautification work of the Chauri Chaura memorial earlier during his visit to Gorakhpur. He had also termed the renovation of the martyrs' monuments as a medium of reverence for the martyrs.

PM to interact with vaccine beneficiaries

Lucknow (PNS): Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with the beneficiaries and vaccinators of COVID-19 vaccination drive in Varanasi on Friday through video conferencing. During the interaction, the participants will share their first-hand experience of vaccination, a government spokesman said. He said the interaction was likely to take place at 1:15 pm. The interaction follows continuous dialogue and discussions by the prime minister with scientists, political leaders, officials and other stakeholders to proactively ensure smooth conduct of the world's largest vaccination drive.

NOTICE

It is informed that the original sale deed of my plot part of khasra no.11 village Takrohi, Lucknow executed by Guru Prasad in favour of Sarvesh Singh, registered book no 1 Khand no. 7922 dated 20-10-2011 in the office of the sub-registrar III Lucknow has been lost. If any person finds it or has any claim, he may contact my counsel sri Amit Chowdhry Adv. on mo. no. 9839265630 within 7 days.

Four start-ups get marketing assistance

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant boost to the Start In UP programme under the new UP Startup Policy-2020, the Policy Implementation Unit (PIU) under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary Alok Kumar approved marketing assistance to four startups here today.

Each of the four startups will get Rs 5 lakh as marketing assistance over a period of one year to launch minimum viable products in the market.

The four startups granted approval for getting funds include G Systems of Prayagraj, Enray Solutions LLP of Ghaziabad, Bhurak Technologies of Saharanpur and Matfusion Weld Pvt Ltd of Lucknow in the farming, solar panel, face recognition and bio-fuel sectors, respectively.

Emphasising the importance of support to startups through early stage funding for maturing their ideas, Additional Chief Secretary (IT and Electronics) and PIU Chairman Alok Kumar said that the objective of facilitation and incentives was to encourage innovators to stimulate commercialisation of their inventions and to help in validating 'Proof of Concept'.

Kumar said that under the new UP Startup Policy-2020, the seed capital was given in the form of marketing assistance up to R. 5 lakhs per startup up to 10 startups per incubator per year to launch the minimum viable product (MVP) in the market.

यू.पी.प्रोजेक्टस कारपोरेशन लि.

(तार प्रैंग सकारा उत्कर्ष)
CIN : U15209UP19765GCO04285

मार्यालय परियोजना प्रबन्धक, 10/2, महादेव शारदालय,

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अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सुचना

टेंडर नोटिस सं.-56/PM/PCL/2020-21/GKP-29 Date 21.01.2021

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परांक-971/PCL/PM/Gorakhpur/Da te 21-01-2021

(अनिल कुमार)
परियोजना प्रबन्धक

Defence industrial corridor development in full swing

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The development of the Defence Industrial Corridor is in full swing in Uttar Pradesh with around 90 per cent of the land having been acquired in all the nodes and different defence organisations working in collaboration with HAL and IIT, Kanpur.

The Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) has been named as the nodal agency for this work by the state government.

The UP Defence Industrial Corridor is being established in six districts of the state -- Lucknow, Kanpur Nagar, Agra, Aligarh, Jhansi and Chitrakoot. While in four nodes the land purchase or requisition process has started, in Jhansi, 94 per cent of the land has been selected, followed by 92 per cent in Chitrakoot and Aligarh and 81 per cent in Kanpur Nagar.

A defence industrial corridor is proposed to be set up in 3,525 hectares of land in Bundelkhand region. The entire land acquired for the defence corridor in Aligarh has been almost allotted by the UPEIDA to investors and the process of acquisition of additional land is in progress.

A government spokesman said that initially there was a plan to develop a defence park on 78 hectares of land.

He said the UPEIDA had signed MoUs with 25 companies to invest in Aligarh and a total investment of Rs 1,500 crore was proposed.

Defence corridor to be part of Aero India show

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridor is going to be a part of the upcoming International Aero India-2021 show for the first time in Bengaluru which is to take place from February 3 to 5.

Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor CEO Awanish K Awasthi said that there would be a huge pavilion of the UP Defence Industrial Corridor at the International Aero India show in Bengaluru. "Our team is ready and several foreign defence companies have signed agreements to put up their units in the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor and their work is in progress which will surely be able to attract more companies to come to Uttar Pradesh," he said. Awasthi said that backed by its robust industrial policy, UP will showcase the facilities provided in the corridor.

Aero India 2021 is the 13th edition of Aero India and participation of Indian domestic companies and public sector companies (PSUs) has increased every year. The air shows, where earlier aerial exhibitions of foreign ships were given prominence, are now prominently featured in the sky acrobatics and aerial displays of indigenous fighter Tejas and helicopters.

The Uttar Pradesh government last year successfully attracted the country's defence companies by organising the finest Defence Expo in Lucknow. The foreign defence manufacturing companies which were part of the Defence Expo in Lucknow will now make their presence at the Aero India show.

It may be recalled that UP is attracting a huge investment in defence manufacturing sector with the ambitious defence manufacturing being set up at six places of the state namely Chitrakoot, Jhansi, Kanpur Nagar, Aligarh, Agra and Lucknow.

Aerospace and Defence Manufacturing Research Lab, units related to drones, small arms and electronics are proposed in Aligarh.

A Defence Park is proposed to be set up on 213 hectares of land in Kanpur. Investment proposals have been received from different companies," the spokesman said.

In Lucknow, HAL and BDL have demanded about 250 acres of land.

"Along with this, proposals from 5-6 small and medium industries have also been received. The district administration is trying to identify the land in Lucknow. In addition, proposals have been received from Tata Technology, Siemens and Dassault for the establishment of a Central Facility Centre, whose selection process is in motion," the spokesman said.

A Centre of Excellence established by UPEIDA- IIT BHU and IIT Kanpur will also work closely with the Indian Navy, thus providing the much needed synergy between the industry-academia and the user.

The Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor is a Greenfield project aimed to increase investments in Uttar Pradesh. To initiate the development of the manufacturing industry, various incentives and subsidies have been provided by the state.

Along with this, the Uttar Pradesh Defence and Aerospace Unit and Employment Promotion Policy-2019 have been implemented to increase investment in this corridor.

Woman kills 5-yr-old son, commits suicide

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Upset with the dispute with her in-laws, a woman in Hamirpur district allegedly killed her son before ending her own life.

The local police registered a case and sent the body for post-mortem.

Further investigations are on. According to reports, the woman forced her 5-year-old son to eat powdered glass on Wednesday evening. Later, she also consumed the glass and ended her own life.

The deceased woman was identified as Soni Nishad and her son as Shan.

The woman's husband, Bhola, was not at home when the incident took place.

Reports said the victim had a tiff with her in-laws after which she shifted to her parents' house. For the last 6-7 months, Soni had been living with her parents and had refused to return to her in-laws.

The incident came to light when the woman's mother, Marri, who works as a cook at a basic school, came home and saw her daughter and her son lying in an unconscious state.

The woman raised an alarm and the cops were informed. The mother-son duo were taken to the district hospital where Soni breathed her last during treatment while her son was pronounced dead on arrival.

Reports said that the woman committed suicide as she was upset over in-laws skipping her daughter's 'chhati' ceremony.

Inspector Tara Singh told media persons, "The locals stated that Soni was upset as neither her husband nor her in-laws had attended a 'chhati' ceremony for her daughter. Besides, she was undergoing several hardships in taking care of her three children."

Initial investigation revealed that Soni forced her son to take the powdered glass and consumed the same herself.

Congressmen to fill up Priyanka's 'absence' through her calendars

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the dreams of party leaders that Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will shift to Lucknow and take command of the efforts to revive her party in Uttar Pradesh failing to materialise, the senior leaders are now planning to at least use her charisma to make the presence of the party felt in every household by distributing calendars having her photographs.

Sources said that senior UP Congress officer-bearers in UP had hoped that Priyanka would come during the ongoing night stay programme in gram panchayats to strengthen the party base and boost the morale of the party workers to gear up for the UP assembly elections scheduled in the beginning of the next year. However, the fortnight-long programme has almost concluded without the 'presence' of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, so now under a new plan, the Congressmen are busy preparing for the distribution of about one million calendars of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in every city and village of the state.

In the pictures, Priyanka is seen talking to tribal women, meeting women in Amethi, praying at the Mahakal Temple in Ujjain, attending Gandhi Jayanti programme in Lucknow, attending Ravidas Jayanti in Varanasi, meeting Hathras victim's family, the Congress in the coming times.

every page of the 12-page calendar to be placed on the table. It will show her journey since becoming active in politics and will also reflect the different moods and the kind nature of the politician

addressing election rally, meeting children in Azamgarh and participating in a road show in Haryana. Party sources also said that the calendar would be sent to different parts of Uttar Pradesh. It has been designed to promote the party under the leadership of Priyanka Gandhi ahead of the next assembly election in 2022. If sources are to be believed, the calendar also indicates that Priyanka may be projected as the chief ministerial candidate of the Congress in the coming times.

there will be a photo of Priyanka on every page of the 12-page calendar to be placed on the table. It will show her journey since becoming active in politics and will also reflect the different moods and the kind nature of the politician

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Last date for submission of filled in Application : 22.02.2021
Eligibility criteria, Application form and other details of advertisement can be downloaded from RSC, Lucknow.

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YEAR 2020/21

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Tender No.	Name of Work</
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Ensure vaccination as per Centre's guidelines: CM 8,500 health workers to get shots today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to conduct the entire proceedings of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign as per the guidelines issued by the Union government. He also stressed on timely completion of all the preparations for the vaccination drive to be held on Friday.

"From February 15, the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine should be administered to all the health workers who received the first shot in the first phase as per the prescribed timeline," he said.

The chief minister was on Thursday reviewing the COVID-19 vaccination campaign at a high-level meeting convened at his official residence in the state capital. He was informed that the vaccination work would be done on Thursday and Friday next week at 1,477 booths.

By next week, the COVID-19 vaccination of 26,667 health workers will be completed. A dose of 10.50 lakh vaccine is currently available and in the next three days, an additional 18 lakh doses of the vaccine will be made available to the state government by the Government of India.

Those present in the meeting included Medical Education Minister Suresh Khanna, Chief Secretary RK

Tiwari, Infrastructure and Industrial Development Commissioner Alok Tandon, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi, Director General of Police Hitesh C Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Sanjeev Mittal, Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue) Renuka Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary (MSME and Information) Navneet Sehgal, Additional Chief Secretary (Medical Education) Dr Rajneesh Dube, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister and Information Sanjay Prasad, Principal Secretary (Animal Husbandry) Bhuvnesh Kumar, Principal Secretary (Health) Alok Kumar, Secretary to Chief Minister Alok Kumar and other senior officials.

Meanwhile, 63 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow on Thursday while 74 patients recovered. The fresh cases included six from Gomti Nagar, and five each from Cantt, Indiranagar, Chowk & Rae Bareli road.

In the state, 321 persons tested positive, including nine in Kanpur, seven in Ghaziabad, five in Gautam Buddha Nagar, 19 in Varanasi & 16 in Meerut, taking the UP tally to 5,97,628. There were six deaths in the state, including two in Lucknow, and one each in Kanpur, Ayodhya, Rampur & Sitapur.

In the next phase of vaccination on Friday after the launch on January 16 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 8,500 health workers will be given the shots at 35 centres in Lucknow. District immunisation officer MK Singh said the drive will kick off at 9 am and continue till the last person is administered the vaccine.

The vaccines have been already sent from the District Vaccine Centre to the 20 storage points from where the vials will reach 85 session sites at 8 am on Friday. Covishield will be sent to 32 centres while Covaxin to three.

Singh said help desks will be set up at each vaccination centre where the beneficiaries will be checked for temperature before they are allowed in.

For the screening of beneficiaries for Covaxin, he said they have distributed leaflets at all the session sites. "ANMs have been trained and they have been told that lactating mothers, pregnant women, those below 18 years are not supposed to get the vaccine jabs," he said. About the wastage of vaccines sent to the various centres, he said they had estimated a 1.1 per cent wastage factor and had sent 110



Vaccines being despatched from District Vaccination Centre

Pioneer

doses per 100 persons on the day of launch. "However, we discovered that the wastage was not that much in case of Covishield. Normally, there are less chances of wastage because proper marks are made on the vials for the amount which has to be withdrawn."

Also, we ensure that the vials are not destroyed when we are transporting," Singh said.

A doctor from Civil hospital, where Covaxin will be sent, said they have two session sites and 200 health workers will be vaccinated. "We

received the list of health workers to be vaccinated in the evening," he said.

A doctor from Rani Laxmi Bai Hospital (Rajajiapuram), where Covaxin will be provided, said 200 health workers would be vaccinated at two session sites in the hospital. He said they would brief the health workers regarding the conditions under which they can be vaccinated.

Asked if health workers at the hospital were hesitant in getting Covaxin jabs, he said it would be seen on the day of vaccination.

Two persons arrested for acting fresh with girl

Lucknow (PNS): Two persons were accused of acting fresh with a girl in Gudamba on Wednesday. On a complaint, police registered a case and nabbed the accused. Those arrested were identified as Satyendra Kumar and Virendra Kumar, both of Sitapur. The duo were charged with voyeurism and booked for using criminal force against the girl, who is a native of Sitapur, with an intention to outrage her



modesty. The police also booked the accused under POCSO Act and they were arrested from near Unity City Crossing in Gudamba.

Notice Inviting Re-e-Tender

No. SSA/Esstt/Aids & Appliance/702/2014/Pt/4013 Date 19.01.2021

Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission (Samagra Shiksha), Kahlipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites re-tender through e-Tendering process from reputed supplier for supply of Assistive Device Equipment.

To participate in this tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender fee of Rs. 500/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahlipara, Guwahati-19, Assam and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

Sd/-Executive Director,
SSA, Assam
Kahlipara, Guwahati-19

Shooter involved in Ajit murder case nabbed

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A sharp-shooter, allegedly involved in the murder of former block pramukh Ajit Singh, was nabbed by a joint team of crime branch and Vibhuti Khand police station. He was detained by a team from Ambedkar Nagar on Wednesday night. The accused, identified as Sandeep Singh aka Baba of Chandauli, was brought to Vibhuti Khand police station where he was thoroughly interrogated and arrested later. Sandeep owned up his crime and disclosed that he, along with Kanhaiya aka Giridhari, Ravi Yadav, Shivendra Singh aka Ankur, Rajesh Tomar aka Jai and Bunty aka Veeru aka Rajesh aka Mustafa, opened fire on Ajit Singh and his aide Mohar Singh on January 6 night.

As per his confession, the shooters got a tip-off about Ajit when he, along with Mohar Singh, was at Uday Tower at Kathauta crossing. At the time of attack, Giridhari and Ravi were on a scooter while Sandeep and Shivendra on a motorcycle. Rajesh Tomar and Bunty were on another motorcycle. For their back-up, Bandhan was waiting in a car which was parked close to the crime scene.

The group of shooters chased Ajit's SUV, whose windscreens was bulletproof, for some distance until Ajit took a halt at Uday Tower. Both Ajit and Mohar got down from the SUV and walked towards the shop to purchase some articles. The shooters waited for Ajit and Mohar to return to their SUV. When Ajit and Mohar were returning towards their SUV, which was parked on the other side of the road, the shooters opened fire. Ajit was peppered with bullets while Mohar was also injured in the attack. Mohar returned fire and a bullet hit Rajesh Tomar.

After executing the sen-

sational crime, Giridhari and Ravi left for some unknown destination while Sandeep, Bunty and Shivendra, along with a profusely bleeding Rajesh, reached Kamta bus stand by their motorcycles. They abandoned the bikes at the bus stand and sat in the car driven by Bandhan and reached Alaknanda Apartment, Awadh Vihar Yojana. Sandeep later boarded a bus and reached Ambedkar Nagar.

Sandeep further disclosed that Bunty, Shivendra and Bandhan took Rajesh to a flat at Alaknanda Apartment where Vipul joined them. Rajesh was administered primary treatment by a doctor who was arranged by Vipul. He said Bunty, Shivendra, Rajesh and Bandhan later left for another destination.

Sandeep confessed that he and other shooters had given the weapons to Shivendra before leaving for different places after committing the crime. The police said they raided a flat (No. 1,102) in P-block in Alaknanda Apartment and recovered a pistol and five live cartridges.

It surfaced that Sandeep is carrying a cash reward of Rs 10,000 on his arrest by Jaunpur police. He was named in a murder case in Kerakat police station area in Jaunpur in 2006. He is a history-sheeter from Chandauli district.

About Rajesh Tomar, the police said that the Baghpat police rounded up a man, identified as Virendra of Aligarh, on Tuesday after intercepting the phone numbers of some suspects. It also surfaced that Virendra is the brother of Rajesh Tomar. The police interrogated Virendra and he told them that he was treated at a Sultanpur hospital before moving to Aligarh via which he reached Noida. Rajesh is an active member of Sunil Rathis gang. Sunil Rathis is in jail at present.

Leopard scare on NBRI campus

Lucknow (PNS): Two leopards have been spotted on the Banthra campus of National Botanical Research Institute. According to NBRI director SK Barik, a security guard spotted two leopards in the forest area of the institute and the Forest department was informed thereafter.

"The pug marks were found to be of a leopard but the same were two days old. Our teams are already there and we have set up a camera trap. If the leopard is detected, we will put up a cage. Till now, no movement has been detected," he said.

"We have already written to the Forest department regarding this because pug marks have also been found in that area. We have asked the employees not to go towards the forest area. A Forest department team visited the campus and we

want them to do what is necessary at the earliest, as the leopards have been spotted," he said.

DFO, Awadh, Ravi Singh said they had sent an expert from Lucknow zoo to NBRI to check whether or not the pug marks are those of the leopard.

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Group of youths attacked, vehicles set on fire

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a brazen display of muscle power, a group of tipsy youths attacked their rivals and set fire to their vehicles near Daliganj bridge in Hasanganj police station area on Thursday afternoon. The attackers fled the scene unchallenged. Three youths suffered grievous injuries in the attack and a case was registered in this connection. Those injured were identified as Karan Dixit, Pappu Gupta and Chandra Prakash Sahu being thrashed by a group of youths near railway crossing (close to the vegetable market) at Daliganj bridge and he intervened in a bid to settle the dispute. However, Rahul was also attacked and he sustained injuries. They then set fire to the vehicles and fled the scene.

A police spokesman said a case under sections 323/506/435 (for thrashing, threatening and for mischief by fire or explosive substance) was registered and further probe was underway.

While the police were tightlipped about sharing details of the incident, sources said both the groups indulged in a verbal duel over an issue. "They had differences over

some issue for a long time and both the groups came face to face on Thursday," the sources said.

Meanwhile, a group of youths opened fire during a function in Jankipuram late on Wednesday night. However, police denied reports of firing and said the accused were being hunted. The complainant, Manish Rajput of Saraiyya Tola in the area, alleged that his cook and his assistant went to a deserted place to attend nature's call and his neighbour Rajesh Yadav, Abhay Yadav and Akash Yadav picked up a fight with them. He alleged that the above-named accused later reached the venue of the function and they started pushing the bike. "During this, one of them fired three shots in the air," he alleged.

Rashtriya Prema Sthal gets govt approval

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The state government on Thursday cleared the plan to design and develop Rashtriya Prema Sthal to come up on the bank of Gomti river at the cost of Rs 75 crore. Lucknow Development Authority has been asked to submit details of the plan within a week. The first installment of funds will be released immediately after the details are submitted. The LDA administration had submitted the proposal with the state government in September last year. The memorial will be in honour of paramilitary personnel and soldiers who laid down their lives for their motherland.

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash, who is also the acting vice-chairman of LDA, said the project is aimed at paying respect to the selfless services of paramilitary personnel and soldiers.

LDA has been entrusted with the task of designing and constructing the memorial. The project will be funded by the state government and the accounts office has been instructed to strictly monitor the use of funds to avoid any misuse. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath may announce the project before Republic Day.

CITYBRIEFS



IEO-2021

Students of various countries and India displayed their reverence for the mystical beauty of nature through their participation in various competitions held at the 3-day International Environment Olympiad (IEO-2021), organised online by City Montessori School, Gomti Nagar Campus II. They gave the message of environment conservation to the entire world. Participating students from around the world displayed their knowledge about environment through their participation in various competitions. The winners of various competitions were felicitated in the evening session.

DONATION OF WOOLLENS

The Lucknow police commissionerate has started a centre for distribution of woollens among those who cannot afford it at its office in Daliganj. Joint Commissioner, Law and Order, Naveen Arora said police officers, office-bearers of

different traders' unions, religious institutes and others donated 2,754 old and new woollen clothes and blankets to Police Vastra Sewa Kendra set up inside the Jt CP office in Daliganj. "As of now, the centre has given 1,427 woollen clothes and blankets to 895 people, including children," he said. He added those interested in charity but unable to do it due to lack of transport facility may contact head constable Kameshwar Tiwari (mobile number 6394271512) and head constable Brijbhan Singh (mobile number 9452179860). "The centre will send its vehicles to collect woollen clothes and blankets. The donors will also be given receipts," he said. Arora said those willing to donate woollen clothes or blankets less than 50 in numbers may also donate the same at their nearest police station. "They may get their mobile numbers and names noted at the police stations and they will be sent receipts," he said.

Metro train operation hit due to tech snag

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow metro train operations were impacted on Thursday because of a fault in signalling, which was later rectified. Some trains came to a halt for several minutes, causing inconvenience to the commuters while the speed of others was reduced till the operations were normalised.

Director (Operation), UPMRC, said the train operation was temporarily affected because of technical snag in signalling due to which trains were being reversed at the airport and Munshipula stations in manual mode instead of automatic mode, which took a little more time.

A senior official of UPMRC said the train operations were affected till the time they were able to locate the problem. Regarding reports of the train coming to a halt for a long period at the stations, he pointed out that one train was taking time in reversing, thus all the trains behind it were affected. "It took some time in the mechanical reversal which caused the delay," he said. He added that the passengers were informed when the trains stopped at the stations.

Traffic curbs announced for parade rehearsal

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Traffic diversions were announced on Thursday for the first rehearsal of Republic Day parade on Friday from 7 am till the time the programme concludes. A senior traffic official said that the area near Charbagh railway stadium will be closed from 8 am onwards.

All the vehicles coming from Alambagh, Mawaiyya will not be allowed to move from Latouche road towards Ravindralaya, and will be diverted towards Basmati crossing.

Vehicles coming from DAV College overbridge ramp and Basmati crossing will not be allowed to move towards Rana Pratap crossing, and will be diverted towards Natha crossing. Vehicles will not be allowed to move from Rana Pratap crossing towards Charbagh, and will be diverted towards Basmati crossing.

Traffic coming from Kaiserbagh will not be allowed to move towards Hussainganj crossing or Bapu Bhawan crossing, and will be diverted towards Basmati crossing or Parivartan Chowk.

From Hazratganj crossing, vehicles will not be allowed to move towards Mayfair and Parivartan Chowk crossing, and will be diverted towards Hazratganj via Sikandar Bagh crossing, and will be diverted towards Ashok Marg. All vehicles coming from Nishatganj,



Vidhan Bhawan decked up in tricolour in the run-up to Republic Day

Pioneer

Mahanagar will not be allowed to move from Sankalp Vatika towards Hazratganj crossing, and will be diverted towards Baikunth Dham. Traffic coming from Gomtinagar will not be allowed to move towards Hazratganj via Sikandar Bagh crossing, and will be diverted towards the Caper road.

Traffic coming from IT crossing will not be allowed to move towards Hazratganj from KD Singh 'Babu' Stadium, and

will be diverted towards Kaiserbagh. Buses coming from the side of Gomtinagar will not be allowed to move from Gandhi Setu to Hazratganj, and will be diverted towards Cantt or Paper Mill Colony. No traffic will be allowed to move from Press Club tri-crossing towards DM residence or Hindi Sansthan.

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Next phase of COVID-19 vaccination today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The district is all set for next phase of COVID-19 vaccination which will be held on Friday. District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma said that this phase of vaccination would be conducted in 30 sessions at 15 centres as the second consignment of Covishield vaccines has already been arrived in which there were 1.75 lakh doses, including 16,500 vaccines for the district. After this, vaccinations at these will also be held on January 28 and 29, later on. The DM directed the Health department to make necessary preparations at all the vaccination centres by appointing nodal officers. According to him, vaccines at all centres should be brought under the protection of police security and the COVID-19 guidelines should be strictly followed at the vaccination centres.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh said that in the first phase, a list of 18,000 people has been uploaded on the Co-Win portal by the Health department. According to him, 3,000 beneficiaries will be vaccinated on Friday which includes the beneficiaries who were left on the occasion of the first phase



Varanasi all set for next phase of COVID-19 vaccination on Friday

Pioneer

of vaccination on January 16. Vaccination at 15 centres will be held from 10 am to 5 pm. These centres are Community Health Centres (CHCs) Arajline, Cholapur and Gangapur Mangri (Pindra) apart from Primary Health

Centres (PHCs) Baragaon and Harahuwa in rural areas, while CHCs Shivpur, Narpatpur and Hathi Bazar, District Women's Hospital, Pt Deendayal Hospital, IMS BHU, BLW Railway Hospital, Heritage Medical College and

LBS Hospital Ramnagar in urban areas where two sessions each will be conducted. Nodal officers have been nominated for all the centres and necessary guidelines have been given to them, CMO added.

GI tag hallmark of trust: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Geographical Indications (GI) tag is the hallmark of trust and self-respect for any field, said the UP Minister of State for Small Scale Industries, Khadi, Textile Industries, Sericulture, Export Promotion Chaudhary Udaybhan Singh while going through the exhibition of GI products, being organised under the joint auspices of UP Export Promotion Council and FICCI at Deendayal Haskala Sankul, popular known as Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC) here on Wednesday.

On the occasion, the minister presented 300 tool kits each to the beneficiaries of Vishwakarma Shram Samman and One District, One Product (ODOP) trainees. 'The success of the exhibition can be gauged by reaching every stall and seeing every product. I feel very proud to see this event as it shows that the dreams of Prime Minister to make the country self-reliant are coming true,' he said, praising the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for working hard to fulfill the dream of the PM. According to him, in the country we respect the people on the basis of their karma, instead of birth and the country was once known as the 'golden bird' because everyone at that time used to fulfill the needs in their own homes.

He further said that the people of Varanasi are fortu-



UP Minister Chaudhary Udaybhan Singh presenting a tool kit to a beneficiary at TFC in Varanasi on Wednesday

Pioneer

nate to have found an MP whose ideas are believed by the whole world today. On the third day of the training session organised for GI products handicrafts and product makers, there was a detailed discussion on the importance of packaging and new methods of technology in packaging and the need for design development and upgrading, design improvement as per consumer demand and technological upgradation in the handicraft sector.

In the beginning, Assistant Commissioner

(Handloom and Textile) Nitesh Dhawan welcomed the guests and explained the importance of changes in packaging along with lifestyle due to GI products. Joint Director, Indian Institute of Packaging, Dr Baburao Guduri elaborated on the importance of packaging stating 'without packaging, no product can be sold or exported.' He also explained that packaging is a combination of science, art and technology, which preserves products for distribution, storage, sale and use. Sunita Kumari of NIFT

explained the need to upgrade in the field of design and handicraft. Earlier, Joint Commissioner (Industries) Umesh Singh welcomed the minister and gave information about the products displayed and the positive changes in the handicrafts business since the GI tag was received. Deputy Commissioner (Industries) Virender Kumar proposed the vote of thanks. Deputy Commissioner of UP Export Promotion Council Umesh Chandra and many senior FICCI office-bearers were also present.

IOC launches Saksham-2021

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Aiming at motivating the common people to preserve the environment by adopting green and alternative energy, the Indian Oil Corporation Limited has launched a mega campaign 'Saksham-2021' with theme of 'Green & Clean Energy'.

Launching the mega campaign at an automobile pump station in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW), here, the

Executive Director of the corporation Dr Uttiya Bhattacharya informed that the aim behind to launch the public-oriented fuel conservation mega campaign 'Saksham-2021' is to motivate the common people to adopt green and alternative energy for the environment preservation.

The mega campaign is to be run for a month till February 15 by all the oil companies, Dr Bhattacharya informed adding, under the

campaign various programmes are to be organised including interactive programmes, workshops, seminars, etc. The message about the benefit of the use of alternative energy, benefit of the use bio-fuel policy, producing the biodiesel from oil, utilisation of 2G ethanol, etc will also be conveyed to the common people, he informed further.

The green energy is a need of the hour and thus there is a need to adopt this energy, he

said adding, there is also a need to reduce carbon emission for energy conservation. He also inaugurated a sanitary napkin vending machine in order to its initiative to empower the women. A street play was also staged to generate consciousness among common people about the conservation of fuel and energy. The GM, LPG, UP Arun Prasad, DK Sinha, CDRSM, Senior Manager-RS Subodh Kumar and others were present on the occasion.

16 new Covid cases in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 16 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district on Thursday, increasing the total number to 21,821. No casualty has been reported during the day and the death toll remained at 375. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 17 and 15 of them have been recovered from home isolation while two from the hospitals, increasing the number to

18,350 and 2,963 respectively. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 21,313, leaving 133 active cases. The recovery rate is 97.67 per cent, while the mortality rate is 1.71 per cent.

In the first report of the day, 11 positive patients were found out of 2,313 reports received.

Till then, the total test reports received were 5,72,295 and the results of 3,439 are awaited. Out of them, 5,50,479

were negative while 21,816 were positive.

The total number of samples collected was 5,98,177. Earlier, with the addition of three new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,692 with 198 red zones.

One green zone has been converted into a red zone again. There are 2,494 green zones with seven new ones. Meanwhile, mass / group corona antigen tests continued

and all the 232 tests were found negative at SSPG Hospital Kabirchaura apart from 43 at CHC Shivpur, 67 at Vivekanand Hospital Belupur, 257 at LBS Hospital Ramnagar and 195 at SSH BHU.

Along with this, samples of 100 from SSPG, 200 from LBS Hospital Ramnagar, 12 from Vivekanand Hospital and 133 from SSH BHU have been sent for RTPCR investigation.

Tandav is poisonous: Maurya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Keshav Prasad Maurya said that bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan star web series 'Tandav' is poisonous. No one has the right to break social interests.

Outrage over the bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan star web series 'Tandav' is growing continuously in Prayagraj city. Saints and seers in the Magh Mela area have also expressed their displeasure over

the web series. Some saints also burnt effigies of the respective artists and rued that such freedom is going to break the society. There is a need to curb this.

In this regard, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said that such a series has been made to humiliate the Hindi society. The film makers should desist from making such web series. When its script was written, there was protest at the same time. Now it is also being screened. It is not in anyone's

interest to do so. It is the job of breaking the society. No one has the right to hurt any feelings in the name of expression or in the name of art.

The Deputy Chief Minister said in a statement to the media that the process to ban the web series has started. Those who indulge in such activities should also be alert for further. No one should do such an act which hurts anyone's religious feelings. There may also be an arrest of people associated with the Tandava

web series. No one will be given the right to end social harmony.

Similarly, MP Phulpur Kesari Devi Patel has also demanded a ban on the creation of such web series. She said that art is respected. Everyone's expression is also respected, but hurting the feelings of others is wrong. Such activities also damage the cultural tradition. We should also remain united to save the culture of our country, she pointed out.

Three held for murder of farmer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The Kheri police have arrested three accused, including a woman, in connection with the murder of a 55-year-old farmer Indradev Mishra which took place in Sirhali village under the Kheri police station of the district. The axe and logs purportedly used in the murder have been recovered from the possession of the arrested accused. The two accused are still absconding, the search for their lookout is being made. The police team is engaged to arrest the remaining two accused. Many places are being

raided for their arrest.

SP Yamunapar Saurabh Dixit said that a dispute ensued between the two parties over a piece of land on January 17. Then some people attacked Indradev with axe, 'Katwas' and lathi. He died of a serious injury. In this case, an FIR on the complaint of Indradev's son Nitesh Kumar Mishra was filed against five people. All the accused persons were on the run since the incident, for which the team comprising Inspector Kheri Santosh Singh and SI Masid Khan was pressed into service for the arrest. On Wednesday evening,

Nehru Medical College, Dr AK Bajaj is no more.

Prof Bajaj was a skin specialist of international repute and he had established dermatology department at MLN Medical College. After retirement he started private practice and continued the same for years together. His research papers were published in reputed medical journals, and he used to visit different countries to deliver expert lectures. Dr Bajaj was suffering from corona and was undergoing treatment at Medanta. The medical fraternity was shocked over the demise of Bajaj.

Prayagraj Chheoki-Itarsi Spl to run from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

There is indeed good news for those visiting Itarsi in Madhya Pradesh. Prayagraj Chheoki-Itarsi Special will be run as a special train from January 22. Railways have completed preparations for this purpose. This train will depart from Prayagraj Chheoki to Itarsi on January 23.

In fact, due to the Corona period, the operation of trains

was also stalled when the lockdown was implemented. However, trains started operating from time to time with the government guidelines. However, travelling on unreserved tickets is not permitted. After 10 months, the Railways has decided to make Itarsi-Prayagraj Chheoki-Itarsi special and run daily till further instructions. This will facilitate daily commuters plying on this route. 01117/01118

Itarsi-Prayagraj Chheoki-Itarsi will leave Itarsi from January 22 at 5:40 pm. Prayagraj will reach Chheoki at 9:55 am the next day. In return, this train will depart from Prayagraj Chheoki from January 23 at 8:15. Itarsi will arrive at 11:10 am the next day via Irrataganj, Jasra, Shankargarh, Manikpur, Satna and Jabalpur.

According to PRO Ajit Kumar Singh of North Central Railway, only eight general

class and four sleeper class trains can travel on reserved tickets.

Apart from this, travellers will also have to follow the Covid protocol. Implementation of the guideline is necessary for the elimination of the corona pandemic.

Passengers should also be careful while cooperating fully so that they can avoid infection.

NCR GM inspects crew lobby

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

General Manager NCR and GNER VK Tripathi inspected crew lobby of Prayagraj. A Contactless Breathalyzer Testing and Computer Based Counselling system implemented over NCR ensures structured counselling and performance assessment of crew which helps in better training inputs to running staff. GM commended efforts of Prayagraj

division in innovations like Contactless Breathalyzer testing and computer-based training system and advised that these good works done should be shared with all zonal Railways and Railway Board for wider implementation. General Manager also announced a group cash award for crew lobby Prayagraj. Tripathi also interacted with running staff, Loco Inspectors and other officials

involved in train operations and stressed that proper route learning of complex yard by crew is critical to safe train operations. He also instructed for physical survey of yards and making of yard diagram by crew for better understanding of each signal location and other important installations in yard for safe train operations.

General Manager inspected COVID-19 related arrangements in crew lobby and expressed satisfaction on overall efforts taken by crew lobby to protect our running staff from COVID-19 infection.

Later during the day GM also reviewed position of safety, punctuality, freight loading, mobility improvement works, revenue generation, scrap sale and other important performance parameters over North Central Railway.

25 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The reduced speed of corona infection spread is relieving to not only the common men but also the Health department. At the same time, the number of healthy people has decreased once again. On Wednesday night, a screening of 507 people was conducted in the district and of them, the report of 25 people, including an ADJ, came positive in 24 hours. As the same time, 34 people beat Corona. No death was reported on fifth consecutive day on Wednesday.

According to CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai, the scope of testing has been extended to identify the infected. Covid testing work has been started in the Magh Mela area. A total of 25 new cases of infection reported in 24 hours. Home isolation of 29 people was completed among 34 people who beat Corona. Five people were discharged from Covid hospital.

Along with this, samples of 100 from SSPG, 200 from LBS Hospital Ramnagar, 12 from Vivekanand Hospital and 133 from SSH BHU have been sent for RTPCR investigation.

now only 314 active cases in the district. The Covid testing report of three police personnel including the head wireless operator in the Magh Mela Police Lines has come positive. According to the Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, among the infected are a CRPF constable, Railway reservation supervisor and others.

VACCINATION TODAY: Along with the rule of observing the health workers who get the Corona vaccine for half-an-hour, there is also a system of taking care of them in their house through the registration card given to them. This is because nobody gets nervous when going home after getting the vaccine. On January 22, about 4500 health care workers

are to be vaccinated in hospitals. Vaccines will be installed in 23 hospitals. The respective ANM and the on-duty senior doctor's phone numbers have been written on the occasion of vaccination for the card being filled. Apart from this, phone numbers have also been pasted in the observation room, which will be taken by the vaccine's mobile phone. The purpose of giving these numbers is that even after reaching home, there will be talks from both sides. Suggestion will be given on how to get prompt treatment in case of any problem.

The vaccine will be sent amid police security from the Beli Hospital store this afternoon at selected community health centres in the district. The vaccine will arrive at the urban centres on the morning of the January 22. Nodal Doctor Rahul Singh for vaccination said that there has not been any adverse effect on the vaccinators so far, yet such arrangements have been made so that no one has any problem when they reach home. For a couple of days or even two weeks, if there is any reaction, then proper medical help will be reached by contacting the

phone numbers.

PRIN SECY INSPECTS MELA PREPARATIONS: Principal Secretary Urban Development Dipak Kumar inspected and reviewed Magh Mela preparations on Thursday morning and expressed concern over negligent attitude of the officials. Dipak Kumar arrived here on Wednesday night and reached mela area in the morning. The District Magistrate and the Chief Medical Officer also accompanied the Principal Secretary. The officer visited camps of different saints and seers to listen to their grievances and suggestions for peaceful completion of Magh Mela. His stress was on Covid precautions, and he physically checked the Corona test reports of the Kalpavas and those residing in tents. Possessing a corona negative report has been made mandatory for the Kalpavas and those residing in the camps of saints. The saints assured the officer that they would not allow any person in their camps without mask and sanitisation. The Principal Secretary also visited mela hospital. He was not happy over maintenance of mela roads.

Vaccination at 19 centres today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra, on Thursday, said that the next round of COVID-19 vaccination would take off on Friday and on the first day, vaccination would be carried out at 32 booths of the 19 vaccination centres.

He said as per the government directive, vaccination would be carried out on January 22, 28 and 29 and only two private hospitals had been accommodated in this phase.

The CMO said vaccine

The CMO said vaccine would be administered to 2,000 persons at each centre on the dates fixed by the government and not beyond that

would be administered to 2,000 persons at each centre on the dates fixed by the government and not beyond that.

He said this time the biggest centre would be at GSVM Medical College. He said this time there shall be six booths at the medical college and in each booth 100 health workers would be vaccinated.

He said on January 29,

priority would be given to the private sector hospitals.

Additional Director Health Dr GM Mishra said that 54,500 doses of Covishield vaccine had arrived from Pune and had been stored carefully in the centre where the cold chain was being maintained strictly.

He said though the vac-

cines had arrived, the directive for their distribution was still awaited from the government.

He said the vaccine would be administered at GSVM Medical College, Ursula Hospital, Dufferin Hospital, Kanshiram Hospital, Urban PHC Gujaini and Harjinder Nagar, Prakhar Hospital, Aryanganagar, Madhulok Hospital, Kidwai Nagar, CHC Sarsaul, Kalyanpur, Bidhnu, Ghatampur, Bhitargaon, Patara, Chaubeypur, Shivrajpur, Kakwan and Bilhaur.

Gang of mobile phone thieves busted, 4 held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Colonleganj police bust

ed a gang of mobile phone

thieves with the arrest of four

persons on Thursday.

The police recovered 30

smartphones, one laptop, two

tablets, one CPU and three

UMT PRO worth lakhs of

rupees from them.

Those arrested included a

shopkeeper of Rehmani Market

who is an expert in adding a

feature in the stolen phones

which prevented the cops from

tracing them with the help of

electronic surveillance.

Circle Officer of

Colonleganj, Dinesh Kumar

Shukla said that acting on a

tip-off, the police arrested

Amar Batham (22) of Jawahar

Nagar and Santosh Sani (29) of

FM Colony in Civil Lines and

recovered 30 mobile phones

from them. On the information

given by both during interro-

gation, the police later arrest

Bablu alias Hasmat Ali (36)

and Mohd Faizan alias Sibu

(27) of Colonleganj and recov-

ered two tablets, one laptop, a

CPU etc. From them.

During interrogation, the

accused revealed that Mohd

Faizan used to sell stolen

mobile phones and laptops at

cheaper rates after changing

their IMEI number at his

Rehmani Market shop.

The accused were being

grilled to ascertain the names

of other gang members who

would also be arrested soon

the CO said.

The police team, which

busted the gang, was led by

Sub-Inspector Ramsaran

Maurya who is incharge of

Chunniganj outpost and Sub-

Inspector Israr Ahmad, the

incharge of Chhote Miyan Ka

Hata outpost under

Colonleganj police station.

WOMAN KILLED: A

woman was killed in Behta vil-

lage under Sheoli police station

of Kanpur Dehat. Her body,

with the throat slit, was recov-

ered from a mustard field, 100

metre away from her house on

Thursday morning.

The victim's parents alleged

the involvement of her husband

in the killing. He was found

locked in his house. The vil-

lagers broke open the doors

and informed him about the

incident.

Ruby (35), wife of Sanjay

Kamal, was killed by a sharp-

edged weapon. The villagers

spotted her body on Thursday

morning. Whey they went to

her house, it was found locked

from outside. Suddenly, the vic-

tim's husband Sanjay informed

them about his being locked in

the house.

Superintendent of Police

Keshav Kumar Chaudhary and

ASP Ghanshyam Chaurasia

also reached the spot and car-

ried out investigations.

Sanjay said he was in love

with Ruby and had married her

about eight years ago. He said

on waking up on Thursday

morning, he found himself

locked in the house and Ruby

missing. Police suspect his

involvement in the killing. SP

Keshav Kumar Chaudhary said

the case would be worked out

soon.

NAC leaders demand hike in pension

KANPUR (PNS): A delega-

tion of EPS-95 National

Agitation Committee, led by its

national advisor Rajesh Kumar

Shukla and national secretary

Om Shanker Tewari, met

Bharatiya Janata Party Member

of Parliament Satyadeo

Pachauri and handed over to

him a memorandum of their

demands on Thursday. The

leaders demanded an increase

in the minimum pension with

dearness allowance to Rs 7,500

per month from Rs 1,000 as per

the recommendations of the

Koshiyari Committee and also

medical facilities. After giving

a patient hearing, Pachauri

assured the delegation that he

would write a letter to the

Union Finance Minister and

Union Labour Minister in this

regard and table the issue in

Parliament in due course. The

National Agitation Committee

(NAC) leaders reminded the

MP about their letter dated

December 31, 2020, sent to

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

through him in this respect.

The delegation comprised AN

Maheshwari, HP Shukla, DN

Shukla, RP Gupta, Shital Bajpai

Jai Roop Singh and Kripa

Shankar.

DM reviews progress of scheme

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR



DM Praveen Kumar Laxkar holding the meeting at collectorate on Wednesday

Awareness camp organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR



occasion He said that in case of recovery of small quantity of intoxicating substance if the accused confessed his or her crime the case might be decided early. During the camp the officer saw the cards of the prisoners and told them in detail about their rights and facilities provided by the court. The camp was conducted by Deepak Srivastava and arrangements for it were made by jailer Ashok Mishra, deputy jailer Jainarain.

Conference on open-cast mining tech from today

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

The Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Miniratna company of the Government of India, is organising an International Conference on Open-Cast Mining Technology and Sustainability 'ICOMS' on January 22 and 23. In this phase of clean energy-based change, this event will play an important role in ensuring the relevance of coal industry in the field of energy. In 'ICOMS' hundreds of research papers have been received

including United States of America (USA), Australia, Turkey, Korea and Iran. These research papers during the conference will be presented by the scientists, technical experts concerned etc by remaining present or through the virtual medium whose study and brainstorming will give the mining industry a new direction. Besides, in the exhibition more than 50 small scale industries and multinational companies will showcase the latest technology and innovations related to the mining sector. The exhibition

One apprehended

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

The Adalhaat police on Wednesday arrested an accused in a rape case. According to the police, a woman had on January 18 lodged a first information report in which (FIR) she had alleged that one person had raped her and on offering resistance the accused had thrashed her. Taking instant action Station House Officer (SHO) Abhay Singh formed a team for arresting the accused. On Wednesday the police team was informed about the presence of the accused at the culvert of Ranibag canal. Thereafter the police swung into action, raided the spot and nabbed the accused who was identified as Samsu, a resident of Tendua village under Adalhaat police station. After completing the legal formalities the police sent him to jail.

'Prakash Parv' observed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

The birth anniversary of the tenth Sikh Guru Gobind Singh was observed as 'Prakash Utsav' in the city with religious fervour on Wednesday. The main function was organised at Ratanganj Gurdwara where the function started with 'Akhand Sahib Paath' and was followed by 'shabad kirtan' and a discourse. Harijas kirtan w a s presented b y Hujuri Jattha o f Gyan

Self-reliance in Defence strategic necessity: Army chief



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Flagging the slow pace of modernisation of the Indian Armed forces as compared to its adversaries, Army Chief General M M Naravane said here on Thursday that imports lead to vulnerability. He also cautioned "one cannot afford to have operational voids when the enemy is at the gate."

His observations in a seminar came in the backdrop of the ongoing nine-month long stand-off with China at the Line of Actual Control(LAC)in Ladakh and Pakistan continuing to stoke terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Considering the quick pace of modernisation being undertaken by "our adversaries, we are lagging behind slightly," the Army Chief said in a webinar organised on the occasion of 25 years of Army and industry partnership. He also said

year 2020 threw up two challenges including the corona pandemic and the "belligerence on the northern borders." He was referring to the face-offs in Eastern Ladakh.

While assuring that the Indian Army is committed to procure locally made weapon systems, Naravane, however, cautioned "but one cannot afford to have operational voids when enemy is at the gate."

Enunciating this point, the Chief said, "An important issue one needs to keep in mind that indigenous development alone cannot fill existing... and operational voids due to lack of niche technology and manufacturing capability."

"Hence, there may be some inescapable need on certain percentage of imports. One cannot afford to have operational voids when the enemy is at the gates."

Stressing on indigenisation, he said, "The events of the past year have brought to the fore the vulnerability of global supply chains, underscoring the need for self-reliance," Naravane said.

NCC training in more than 1,100 schools located in border, coastal areas: Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the Government has identified more than 1,100 schools in the border and coastal areas where students would be given National Cadet Corps (NCC) training.

"Our Prime Minister has decided that NCC should be expanded."

The training of NCC should be provided in border areas and coastal areas. We have identified more than 1,100 schools in such areas

where NCC training would be given soon," Singh said.

While there were just 28 per cent girl cadets in the NCC earlier, their numbers have increased to be 43 per cent of the total cadets, the minister said in his speech at an NCC camp here.

A total of 1,000 cadets, including 380 girl cadets, drawn from all States and Union Territories of the country, are participating in this nearly month-long camp that will culminate on January 28.

On coronavirus vaccines, The minister said, "Two vac-



cines are being manufactured in the country. We consider the entire world as one family. We will do vaccination not only in India but also provide these vaccines to our neighbouring countries where it is required."

"Moreover, if it is needed, we will provide vaccines to other countries of the world too," he stated.

From Wednesday onward, India has been sending COVID-19 vaccines under grant assistance to Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles. India started its vaccination drive on

January 16 with Covishield, manufactured by Serum Institute of India, and Covaxin, manufactured by Bharat Biotech.

The Minister said, "The Government has decided that when it comes to employment, the NCC cadets would be given preference. As far as I know, this preference is being given. In the selection process, NCC cadets are given additional marks too."

The NCC, which comes under the Defence Ministry, is the largest voluntary youth organisation of the country which was raised in 1948.

Cong leaders to discuss ways to select party chief at CWC meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leaders are scheduled to discuss the strategy to elect the new party chief at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Friday. AICC sources said on the agenda of the CWC is also a discussion on the farmers' agitation and the strategy for the Parliament's Budget Session that begins on January 29.

The sources said that members of the CWC, which is the grand old party's top decision-making body, are expected to discuss and finalise the schedule for organisational elections and the AICC plenary session as was decided in a meeting of senior leaders with the interim chief Sonia Gandhi last month. The CWC meeting will be chaired by Sonia Gandhi on a virtual mode.

A tentative election schedule is ready but needs to be approved by the CWC before the party can complete the process of holding polls by February. Though a section of leaders has been pushing for former party chief Rahul

Gandhi to take back the reins, there is no clarity on whether he will contest the elections, a senior party leader said.

The CWC meeting has been convened following a report by the party's Central Election Authority (CEA) led by Madhusudan Mistry who has suggested the basics for election to the full time Congress president's post. Sonia had constituted a five-member CEA to conduct the internal polls in September last. Sonia took over as interim Congress president after Rahul Gandhi resigned in the wake of the party's Lok Sabha debacle in May 2019 and then finally gave an ultimatum in August 2020 to elect the full time party president within six months.

There have been demands within the party for having a full-time party president and also an organisational overhaul as soon as possible. The CWC had in its earlier meeting in December decided to hold organisational elections after some top leaders expressed their restlessness in the party and in August they had also shot off a letter to the president.

SC grants bail to actress Ragini in drug case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday granted bail to Kannada film actress Ragini Dwivedi in the drugs racket case.

A bench of justices R F Nariman, Navin Sinha and K M Joseph set aside the November 3 order of the Karnataka High Court refusing to grant bail to Dwivedi and others in the case registered under various provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

During the hearing conducted through video conferencing, senior advocate Siddharth Luthra appearing for Dwivedi said the 31-year-old actress is in jail while three other co-accused are on bail.



He said that on September 2 last year, acting on information allegedly received by the police, she was arrested but no recovery of contraband was made from her.

Luthra said it was alleged that she was involved in the

financing of the drugs network but there was no evidence besides the accusations of consumption of banned ecstasy drugs.

He referred to various case laws and said, bail could be granted to her.

SC to hear next week plea seeking removal of anomalies in adoption, guardianship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it would hear next week a plea seeking a direction to the Centre to remove "anomalies" in the grounds of adoption and guardianship and making them uniform for all citizens.

The plea came up for hearing before a bench, comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, which said that the matter be listed next wee. The plea, filed by advocate

and BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay,

has sought to declare that the "discriminatory grounds" of adoption and guardianship are violative of Articles 14, 15, 21 of the Constitution and also to frame "uniform guidelines" for adoption and guardianship for all citizens. Article 14 of the Constitution deals with equality before the law, Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and Article 21 deals with protection of life and personal liberty.

"Adopted child has the right to inherit property under the Hindu law but not under the Muslim, Christian and Parsi law. Adopted child by the Hindus can become a legal heir whereas adopted child by Christians, Muslim, Parsis cannot," the plea said.

Vardhan urges people to counter 'vested campaigns' on Covid vaccine misinformation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Thursday urged people to counter 'vested campaigns' on Covid vaccine misinformation, asserting that all eminent doctors of well-known hospitals have taken the vaccines and only a handful are interested in spreading rumours and encouraging vaccine hesitancy.

Launching the IEC posters to address the emerging issue of vaccine hesitancy in some sections of population in the country, he appealed to people to seek the correct information from credible and authentic sources such as the Health Ministry, PIB, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, My Gov website etc.

The posters were launched in the presence of Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Health and Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), Niti Aayog.

More than 8 lakh healthcare workers have been vaccinated till 7 am on 21st Jan 2021 since it was launched in January 16.

The Minister said, "India is one of the few countries to halt the march of COVID-19 and simultaneously develop a vaccine for Covid, thanks to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who bestowed his personal attention to get the country rid of the pandemic."

Today, the country is seeing a steady decline in the active cases. Around 15,000 daily new cases were reported yesterday, he added.

Explaining the role of the vaccination in eradicating dis-

eases, he noted, "The elimination of Polio and Smallpox was made possible by large scale immunization. Once immunized, not only that person is not capable of catching the disease, he/she is also unable to transmit the disease to others thus passing on the social benefit to the larger society he/she interacts with."

"This was also the logic of undertaking mass immunization of women and children against the twelve diseases under Mission Indradhanush. Vaccination against COVID will similarly create persons incapable of transmitting the disease and eradicate the disease altogether in some time."

Commenting on the safety and efficacy of the vaccines, he said, "All eminent doctors of well-known hospitals have taken the vaccine and praised the exercise for its desired end. It is only a handful of vested political interests who are interested in spreading rumour and encouraging vaccine hesitancy among those vulnerable to such propaganda in the population."

"The paradox is that countries across the globe are asking us for access to the vaccines while a section of our own is fomenting misinformation and doubt for narrow political ends."

Terming the Vaccination Drive as 'Antim Prahara' against COVID, Choubey said, "India has taken a revolutionary decision to provide the vaccines at the earliest." He also appealed everyone to not follow the campaigns of mistrust but help everyone by sharing the correct information.

Construction of 1.68L houses in urban areas approved

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has approved the construction of over 1.68 lakh houses in urban areas under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) taking the total number of houses sanctioned so far to 1.1 crore. This was decided at the meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee (CSMC) where officials from 14 States and union territories participated.

The houses sanctioned by the CSMC are proposed to be constructed in verticals like beneficiary-led construction, affordable housing in partnership and in-situ slum redevelopment under the PMAY (Urban).

"The states also put in their proposals for revision of projects due to various issues such as, of land, topographical hazards, inter-city migration and change of preferences of verticals among others," the ministry said. Under PMAY-U, 41 lakh houses have been completed so far while construction is in various stages in more than 70 lakh houses.

Construction of 1,68,606 new houses have been approved in the meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee (CSMC) under the PMAY (Urban)," the ministry said.

The PMAY(U), launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2015, aims to ensure "Housing for all by 2022". The government has set a target of 1.12 crore houses to be constructed in urban areas by the ministry's Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra was quoted as saying in a statement. Mishra



Average apartment size in residential projects increased by 10%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) saw the highest rise of 21 per cent to 932 sq ft in 2020 from 773 sq ft in the previous year while Pune witnessed a rise of 12 per cent to 986 sq ft last year from 878 sq ft in 2019.

The flat size rose 3 per cent in Bengaluru from 1,280 sq ft in 2019 to 1,320 sq ft in 2020. In Delhi-NCR, average apartment size was 1,290 sq ft in 2020, against 1,250 sq ft in 2019. Chennai saw average sizes increasing by 9 per cent from 1,100 sq ft in 2019 to nearly 1,200 sq ft in 2020. In Kolkata, the average apartment size increased by 10 per cent, from 1,000 sq ft in 2019 to 1,100 sq ft in 2020.

"The progress under the Mission (PMAY-U) has been steady. We have to move towards completion of houses with all the basic physical and social infrastructure," the ministry's Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra was quoted as saying in a statement. Mishra

said, "The states/UTs will focus on completion and delivery of houses to beneficiaries."

The secretary urged states and union territories to expedite the implementation of the Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) scheme.



Up, up, and away!

Has the stock market lost its mind, or is there some basis to the market boom?



The Bombay Stock Exchange's headline index, the BSE Sensex, crossed the 50,000-mark for the first time on Thursday. While the index of India's top 30 scrips crossing this psychological mark is being celebrated, there are those who are questioning why the stock markets are performing so well despite the economy declining this year and millions of Indians — both blue collar and white — losing their jobs and failing to meet their loan obligations. But this disconnect between the stock markets and economic reality is not just an Indian phenomenon. Across the world, despite economic headaches, stock markets have shot up. Certain scrips such as those in the aviation sector are trading at lifetime highs; even many scrips in the automotive sector are booming. Research heads attribute this breach at the opening bell on the back of better-than-anticipated corporate earnings and sustained buying by foreign institutional investors. Also, it is said, the market sentiment has turned positive largely due to the amalgamation of at least three developments that took place in the past couple of days. One, Joe Biden has been sworn in as the 46th US President without any untoward incident being reported, with the hopes of an entire country now riding on him, and his inauguration is largely considered to be good news for India; two, the Union Government has made an offer to the farmers agitating on the Capital's borders to suspend the three controversial farm laws for 18 months, which may likely result in some form of tranquility for the Government ahead of the Republic Day celebrations. Three — and this is apparently the most cheery aspect for cricket-crazy India and, by extension, for the bourses — Team India's recent and emphatic win over the formidable Australians at Brisbane which helped them retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. And there may be still better news on the horizon as market analysts feel that the Sensex can hit the 1,00,000-mark by the year 2025 as we've entered a super-cycle for Indian equities, just as the benchmark index had seen in the year 2003.

That said, one must not forget that the headline indices of the major stock exchanges have only the largest, most traded scrips on the markets. These large conglomerates — such as Reliance, ITC, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and Maruti — tend to outperform the markets even in bad times. The broader markets are still slightly weak according to some and many smaller scrips, particularly public sector enterprises, are still suffering when it comes to stock prices although demand is apparently picking up. So should one take the rise in the index as a precursor to economic recovery in the coming year? Maybe that is indeed the case; as the vaccination drive picks up speed and the demand for services and goods increases, 2021 might be a better year than the pessimists say. That said, the disconnect is also a reality and while punters still will make money on the markets, the general public should be wary. The markets are rising on a wave and waves have a bad habit of coming crashing down. Investors have to be very careful about putting their money down in the markets when several key sectors of the economy are far from recovery, particularly the real estate sector. If those who would like to invest want to enter the markets maybe going down the mutual funds route, they should be wary of the markets and be prepared to take the risk of losing money. So the 50,000-mark is huge, but celebrating in advance must be muted. Some people have made a lot of money in the markets but the public should be careful of putting in their money there.

The new POTUS

Joe Biden's inauguration paves the way for a new, friendlier chapter in Indo-US relations



A belligerent Donald Trump took his final bow from the White House, leaving the stage wide open in the world's oldest democracy for President Joe Biden and his Administration to take the centre stage. Global leaders, and the world at large, expectantly witnessed the inauguration of Biden and his Vice-President, the Indian-origin Kamala Harris who has made history by becoming America's first woman Vice-President, at the Capitol Hill early on Thursday. With Biden taking oath as the 46th President of the United States (US), the theme is now centred around "America United". Immediately after taking over, Biden overturned several of the controversial decisions taken by his predecessor and started working as per his own agenda. The President has already signed an executive order that will eventually provide relief and citizenship to migrants who have no legal documents: Of the 1.1 crore such population, there would be five lakh Indian beneficiaries. Biden also revoked the decision to ban citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries which had been clamped by Trump in 2017. The country being the largest economy, it goes without saying, its possible policy changes under a new President matter to all nations, and are keenly being looked forward to. Policy watchers have been waiting for President Biden to spell out the broad contours of the US policy on globalisation and international relations, especially with regard to India and China, emerging economies, besides an economic stimulus in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most expect a return to the pre-Trump era with the US playing a more active role in world dynamics. In the initial hours after taking over, of course, the Biden Administration has given an encouraging preview of what's likely to come. His top officials, such as Secretary of State nominee Anthony Blinken recently said that India had been a "bipartisan success story" of successive administrations, and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has also been batting for stronger Indo-US ties. Biden himself is a vocal proponent of friendly ties with India and has been a familiar face in New Delhi since his days as the Vice-President under Barack Obama.

The US and India see each other as key strategic partners and analysts expect the Indo-US relations to grow closer and become less strained. With the coalition against China likely to persist, America's ties with India and other Pacific nations, including Japan and Australia, may experience a further boost. The major policy changes India is hoping for are in terms of software exports, H1 visa policy, minimum compensation for engineers (via which Trump tried discouraging hiring Indian IT professionals). Bilateral trade between the two countries was at \$88.75 billion in 2019-20. In 2019, the US was the largest goods export market (17% share) for India and, in terms of goods import supplier, it was the third largest. In April-September 2020, the US was the second biggest source of FDI for India. It's likely that higher portfolio investments influenced by federal rates will flow into India. Now, Biden might not have a street-smart approach towards the other economic superpower — either by putting pressure on it to scrap the China-2025 plan, or initiating a trade war — but he might show a pragmatic attitude. With India focusing on becoming a manufacturing hub, there might be a rise in US funding influx and India would hopefully become the alternative choice.

Courage personified

As we celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji on Jan 23, it's time to give him and the INA their rightful place in the pantheon of freedom fighters



JS RAJPUT

On January 23, India begins year-long celebrations of the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, an illustrious embodiment of courage and commitment. Bose rose as a colossus during the freedom struggle. He was with the Congress Party during 1921-1940, endearing himself to the young and old alike, and was elected its president twice. A brilliant student, he qualified in the ICS examination in 1921 but resigned to serve the motherland. When he met MK Gandhi for the first time in Bombay's Mani Bhawan, the difference of approach was evident. Before this meeting, Gandhiji had declared that India should get *swaraj* within a year, and to get *swaraj* his stipulation was that 20 lakh spinning wheels should start working! The young and enthusiastic Bose also wanted this to happen but was not convinced that spinning wheels was the way. Afterwards, Bose met Deshbhauddh Chittaranjan Das, who was to become his political guru. Bose was, right from the beginning, for total independence; no dominion status, no prolonged delays. When the resolution for civil disobedience and the launch of salt *satyagraha* was being passed in the Lahore session, only one person — who else but Bose — proposed an amendment: It should not be civil disobedience but a parallel government. Narayan Desai puts it in these words: "The greatness of Subhas babu is that though he had proposed the amendment, when the salt *satyagraha* was launched, he said it was very good. We should put all our strength into it." This indicates the greatness of his persona, and also how much respect he had for Gandhiji and the party discipline. There were differences that eventually led to what could be termed parting of ways. However, the political maturity and single-minded focus of both on the "target" erased any possible bitterness.

After a couple of years, Bose and Vithalbhai Patel issued a joint statement from Geneva asserting that our country had progressed a lot using non-violence but now it had stopped; hence "a change of leadership is required"! The hint was obvious; it was aimed at Gandhiji. At Gandhiji's suggestion, Bose was elected the president of the Congress at the Vithal Nagar session. However, the working com-



mittee did not allow him to alter the path. Next year, things were strategically arranged against him but he won the election, defeating Pattabhi Sitaramayya. It was a sad moment in the freedom struggle when Gandhiji wrote that "Pattabhi's defeat is my defeat". Bose relinquished the post of the Congress Party president.

The story of differences in approach and attitudes between the stalwarts has certain other dimensions that emerged after Bose's great escape from house arrest to Afghanistan, Russia, Germany, and then to Japan. He raised the Indian National Army (INA) after successfully igniting the patriotic fervour among Indians in the South-East Asia. He founded the Government of India-in-exile. As Commander-in-Chief of the INA, he entered India from the Burmese border. It was for the independence of India and against the might not only of the British but the allied powers! Of the 60,000 INA personnel, 26,000 — as per the official history — were killed. Maulana Azad, in his book *'India Wins Freedom'*, writes about how Netaji's great escape and organisational acumen had impacted Gandhiji, who had different views on Bose: "Gandhiji did not express any opinion about the outcome of the war but, during the discussions with him, I felt that he was becoming doubtful about the Allied victory. I saw that Subhas Bose's escape to Germany had made a great impression on Gandhiji. He had not formally approved many of his actions, but now I found a change in his

outlook. Many of his remarks convinced me that he admired the courage and resourcefulness Subhas Bose had displayed in escaping from India. His admiration for Subhas Bose unconsciously coloured his view about the war situation." Maulana Azad also mentions how a report (which was later found false) about Bose's death deeply moved Gandhiji along with the entire country: "He sent a condolence message to Subhas Bose's mother in which he spoke of Subhas in glowing terms." Sir Stafford Cripps complained to Maulana Azad that he had "not expected a man like Gandhi to speak in such terms about Subhas Bose". But India endorsed this tribute as culturally and ethically appropriate from a person of Gandhiji's stature. India had fallen in love with Bose, had full faith in him, his strategy and the deep wisdom behind alliances, his countrymen endorsed his "neeti" and "niyati" without hesitation. Gandhiji's message to Bose's mother was picked up by the media, both nationally and internationally, for the obvious reasons. Louis Fisher, who wrote Gandhiji's much-claimed biography, told him that "all over the world, you have created the impression of being a person on the side of the Japanese". Gandhiji's answer must have shocked some of his near and dear ones as well: "Can you show me a greater patriot?" Is there another such example in contemporary history? Today's leaders could learn a great lesson from this: You may differ but don't go against each other. It is indeed necessary to understand the chemistry between the two top heroes of the freedom struggle who had diametrically opposite views and approaches, but each knew how valuable the other was for the nation. There was no let-up in the display of greatness from either side. When Bose was in exile and someone close to him was to come to India, he advised the visitor: "If you have any problem or are confused about something, I have just one piece of advice and that is you should go and meet Gandhiji." Bose had referred to Gandhiji as "Unhi aamader jater janak"; he is the father of our country.

Recently, India celebrated 150th birth anniversary of Gandhiji; India now prepares to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose. It is time to seriously ponder over the contribution of Bose and the INA in the freedom struggle. Those who claim the mantle of Gandhian legacy and came to power after Independence were, obviously, not as magnanimous as Gandhiji. The way the history of our freedom struggle has been presented to the young and old could only be cited as "one-sided" and ideologically constrained. Everyone knows what happened to history writing during the past five decades. Now that the official documents exchanged between top-level British officers serving in

India are easily verifiable, several new facts and details are emerging which have the potential to put the roles of Bose and the INA in the right perspective.

Was it all only *ahimsa*, civil disobedience and *satyagrah*? Was the role of revolutionaries, the young martyrs and the INA insignificant? People have made attempts to demand that history writing be freed from ideological constraints; it must re-examine facts that have been subverted and take note of details available through research, new technology and official documents being made public. An example of how important, relevant and necessary this change is could be comprehended by an incident cited in the book *'Bose: An Indian Samurai'* by Maj Gen (Retd) GD Bakshi. The final decision-maker on the withdrawal of the British rule from India was UK Prime Minister Clement Attlee. After demitting office, Attlee visited India in 1956 and was the guest of Justice PB Chakraborty, the then Governor of West Bengal. Justice Chakraborty asked Attlee that since the Quit India Movement had fizzled out by 1942, why did the British leave India after the war? Attlee replied that it was "because of Bose's INA and the mutinies it triggered in the British Indian armed forces". On what was the role of the Quit India Movement then, Attlee's face twisted in a sarcastic smile and he said "Minimal!" Does one need to say more to prove how pivotal was the contribution of Bose and the volunteers and martyrs of INA in expediting the attainment of Independence for India!

In a historic gesture, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is going to inaugurate a national museum devoted to Netaji and the INA in Kolkata. It would be a proud moment for all of us. The Netaji Subhas Bose-INA Trust — a leading national organisation devoted to spreading the message, commitment and courage of Netaji among the future generations — has grand plans to celebrate the anniversary. Its illustrious chairperson, Brig (Retd) RS Chhikara, repeatedly poses a query: "Why don't we have a suitable memorial for Netaji and the INA at a prominent place in New Delhi where visitors from India and other countries could pay their respects to this great son of India and the brave men who laid down their lives at his call?" I have no answer. Could we strive to get one?

(The author works in education and social cohesion. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUND BITE

It's illogical and without any rationale. Deferring implementation of the farm laws will not change the consequences that will follow once the law is introduced.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav

Islamabad greatly values its relations with the European Union (EU), which are based on shared values and common objectives of peace, prosperity and development.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi

It was such a pleasure to work with Naseeruddin Shah. He is like an institution. Working with him is easy because he doesn't carry baggage. He is informal, chatty and friendly on the sets.

Actor Tusshar Kapoor

My good intentions for my fellow competitors in Melbourne have been misconstrued as being selfish, difficult and ungrateful. This couldn't be farther from the truth.

Tennis player Novak Djokovic

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Data breach a big concern

Sir — The Centre's concern with data privacy is welcome but the onus of protecting the privacy or data of users cannot be put on social media companies alone. It is advisable for the users to switch to alternative platforms but certain conditions make this "switchover" difficult for the consumers.

WhatsApp has a huge subscriber base, with over 400 million people using its services in India. The platform is very popular and is even used by the Government departments and courts for official communications. Its importance has increased during the pandemic and it is highly unlikely that its popularity will decrease to such an extent so as to have a bearing on its subscriber base in the coming days.

However, the Government departments should also exercise extreme caution and avoid sharing classified files, notices, messages related to secret services and Intelligence through the platform and should use other means that are considered more safe and secure.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

US presidency is no cakewalk for Biden

U.S President Joe Biden will have to face many challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has killed over 4,00,000 citizens and the federal mismanagement has taken a big toll on the economy. Further, this month's attack on the Capitol is proof how much domestic polarisation has poisoned the American politics. The new Biden Administration has to correct the wrongdoings of the previous administration and plug the loopholes. It has also to achieve the target of 100 million doses of vaccine in the first 100 days. The priorities will be to emerge out of the economic damage caused by the pandemic and strengthening relationships with various allies abroad to take on China.

We saw that the 46th President paused in his inaugural address to pray for the people who have been killed by the contagion, which is a sign that the days of ignoring the COVID threat are over. Biden signed as many as 17 executive orders that represent the start of an aggressive plan to unpick the Trump presidency. He wore a mask to the Oval Office and mandated face coverings in all US federal buildings.

However, the progress on defence ties with India

should continue unabated. A more strategic and sensible approach is expected from the Biden administration as compared to his predecessor. India should not just aim at *status quo ante* but a comprehensive trade agreement with America. A lot of things are expected by India from the new President of the oldest democracy in the coming months.

N SADHASIVA REDDY
Bengaluru

the redoubtable Mamata. Actually, an opinion poll has predicted a resounding victory for Mamata's party though the BJP will make significant headway in the State. The name 'Nandigram' should bring back fond memories to Mamata. It was a movement of sorts from here that really pushed the TMC leader to the power podium

from where she has become difficult to dislodge. She is hoping to pin Suvendu Adhikari on his home turf, leaving him little time to fan the BJP's campaign across the State. The formidable Mamata is a street-fighter who can decipher the pulse of the people.

Ganapathi Bhat
Akola

Jab of no confidence

Sir — It refers to the editorial 'Let the leaders lead' (January 21). The kind of expectations we have had from these much-anticipated vaccines, seem to be diluted each passing day as healthcare workers, who are to get their first shot, are not volunteering. It is a worrying sign for a country that wants to develop herd immunity and at least 60-70 per cent of its population must get vaccinated.

Our Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and other leaders will have to show the way and get the jab to create confidence among people to come forward and get inoculated. With the kind of controversy that occurred before Covaxin was approved in haste, without phase III clinical trials, the general public will need the reassurance that it is as safe as the other vaccines. No vaccine is 100 per cent foolproof and by taking this proactive approach, the leaders will send out the message that Bharat Biotech's vaccine is as effective as the others developed in foreign countries.

Bal Govind
Noida

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



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FIRST COLUMN

A Budget for a new decade

Sitharaman will present the third Budget of her tenure in February, with major post-COVID aspirations of a country raring to make a mark

**KUMARDEEP BANERJEE**

In 2020, around this time of the year, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was busy trying to put together a Budget that would propel India into the \$5 trillion economy club. What happened post February last year is from here on going to be referred to as a critical turning point in human civilisation, altering in its course social, political, economic contracts of the pre-COVID era. Sitharaman will present the third Union Budget of her tenure in February, with humongous post-COVID aspirations of a country raring to make a mark. While the usual set of demands from various industry bodies, States and other stakeholders have already been documented, here are a few innovative tweaks to make the first year of the new decade a successful one for the nation's economy.

It may be recalled that last year's Budget had presented most taxpayers an "à la carte menu" along with the standard "thali." The idea was to put some more money into the hands of citizens, which they could then plough back into the economy by spending on goods and services. The pandemic-ravaged country tottered as businesses collapsed and households were thrown into poverty. Therefore, the first crucial step for Sitharaman should be to remove the bureaucratic turn of phrases in Income-Tax laws and make them truly "Saral (easy)" for citizens, while reducing rates and allowing higher exemptions on basic income slabs or savings. The second important dimension of the tax regime would be to ensure a fitter, lower-slab Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime. Retail, tourism, hospitality and aviation are some of the sectors which need urgent attention and providing them temporary time-bound relief through reduced GST rates or showing an intent to do so, could help.

The expected revenue loss could be offset by a robust disinvestment process that has been stalled for a long time. If the Government intended to divest its stakes in IDBI and list the largest public sector insurer LIC in 2020, it has, as a run up to the Budget 21-22, brought Air India, BPCL, the Shipping Corporation of India and Bharat Earth Movers Limited to the initial expression of interest stage. All of these are potential blockbuster "go to market" targets which could fill the Government's coffers if successfully implemented. The Centre is aware of the potential stalling of the process by political forces. Therefore, it needs to start utilising its efficiency in mass media communication to educate the citizens about the need and benefits of these disinvestments. An ironclad decision has to be taken by keeping employees of these large public sector undertakings (PSUs) in the loop, along with global roadshows to attract some of the best funds and corporates to run a 21st century-ready enterprise. Historically, every country that has prospered has done so by realising the wealth of its existing resources and rechanneling its efficiencies to adapt to a new world. It is time for the Government to get out of business and do so with conviction.

The third item on Sitharaman's list should be creating jobs, the targets for which now are more steep due to COVID-19 induced downward pressure on the economy. Construction, infrastructure and healthcare are some of the sectors which need incentivisation for creating more jobs. The Finance Minister can lay out a sustainable job creating road map for the healthcare sector, which was in focus in 2020 and is expected to remain so this year, too. It could provide tax incentives and other concessions for setting up healthcare training facilities or utilising existing Government-owned dispensaries and healthcare centres across the country. This has to be done with private investments and local community participation to keep a check on the progress made. Each Government healthcare centre can be put on a digital highway (of course data privacy issues will have to be dealt with separately) of cooperation and excellence.

Telemedicine and teleconsultation have emerged as another sunshine sector of opportunity for millions in India. It requires nuanced skills to be able to provide good quality healthcare over the phone to patients located far away. The training required for teleconsultation and regulatory frameworks need to be quickly developed to be able to cash in on the huge opportunity for job creation. The Finance Minister should set clear-cut policy objectives and targets in the Budget speech to help investments in the sector. Putting all State-owned healthcare infrastructure on digitally connected highways would require Information Technology backhaul spend which would come from private enterprises. Incentives provided to the Information Technology sector for the creation of this digital skeleton for healthcare could be this Government's biggest achievement in a post COVID-19 world. It goes with the Prime Minister's claim of India being the world's pharmacy and with the theme of nimble engineering for health equipment suitable for Indian conditions. One of the critiques of the Finance Minister has been that while many of her colleagues align themselves with stated policy drives towards Digital India, Sitharaman has generally kept away. It is time for the Finance Minister to give technology its due credit and dedicate a significant portion of the Budget on technologies that will take India into the next decade.

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

analysis

09

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE LOSS OF LIVES DUE TO A TRUCK ACCIDENT IN SURAT IS TRAGIC. MY THOUGHTS ARE WITH THE BEREAVED FAMILIES.
—PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



THIS TRAGEDY MUST OPEN OUR EYES. THE PM MUST WAKE UP TO THE REALITY OF POVERTY AND NOT REPEAT STATS ABOUT TOILETS, HOUSING AND ODF.
—CONGRESS LEADER P CHIDAMBARAM

The way forward

To enhance our share in global trade, we have to address issues that plague our industry and business. Even though the efforts are on to do this, they need steady acceleration

**SUBHASH CHANDRA PANDEY**

Ever since the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was founded in 1995, trade as a proportion of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has risen by about 50 per cent. But India's share in the global merchandise trade is less than two per cent and in services trade it is less than four per cent. The WTO conducted India's seventh Trade Policy Review (TPR) between January 6-8. Since the last TPR in 2015, India has implemented several measures to facilitate trade, simplified procedures and fast-tracked customs clearances for imports and exports. This earned us a substantial jump in global rankings in the World Bank's (WB's) Ease of Doing Business Index.

India has sought a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security purposes and offered to share its public stockpile of foodgrain to help poor countries. Big parts of the developing world will rely on Indian manufacturers to supply easy to administer, affordably priced Coronavirus vaccines in large quantities. In order to ensure equitable and affordable access to vaccines and COVID-treatment for all, India has asked for a short-term package of effective measures by the WTO, including a temporary waiver of certain Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) provisions to increase manufacturing capacity and ensure timely and affordable availability of new diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines for the virus. India has also sought a multilateral initiative to provide easier cross-border movement of healthcare professionals. Globalisation — liberal trade flows across national borders — has been a defining feature of the global economy after World War-II.

In the pre-World War-I era, Globalisation 1.0 was characterised by rather unrestricted immigration and cross-border capital and trade flows. Then the world became more interdependent and regulated in the 19th Century (Globalisation 2.0). This has been both, the cause and effect of booming economic activity and unprecedented increase in the global population.

Globalisation 3.0 is the phase from the late 1990s, characterised by the advent of the internet and the establishment of the WTO. Major advances in information and communications technology drastically altered the trade and investment world, solving some problems and creating new ones; creating new risks of fraud, manipulation, data privacy and security. Trade and capital liberalisation — particularly through regional free trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties — brought the integration of markets and cross-border expansion of global value chains, creating critical inter-dependencies.

Trade has been steadily growing since the early '70s with two major setbacks, one in 2008-09 as a fallout of the global financial crisis and the second in 2018-19 due to trade tensions and the economic slowdown, now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Needless to say, travel and hospitality industries have been the hardest hit, among other sectors of the economy.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) 2019 report highlights that international trade in physical goods has increased from about \$10 trillion in 2005 to more than \$18.5 trillion in 2014. It fell in 2015/2016 before rebounding to \$19.4 trillion in 2018. Trade in services increased between 2005 and 2018 from about \$2.5 trillion to \$5.5 trillion.

The relative importance of developed countries

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THE PROCESS OF OPENING UP THE INDIAN ECONOMY STARTED IN THE '90S BUT DESPITE SEVERAL REFORMS, BUSINESS IS STILL HEAVILY BURDENED AND HASSLED. THE REGULATORY AND TAXATION REGIME CONTINUES TO BE BURDENSONE, COSTLY, DILATORY AND ARBITRARY. UNFETTERED DISCRETIONARY POWERS FUEL CORRUPTION AND HARASSMENT
”



as suppliers in international markets is declining but they still account for about half of the value of exports of goods and about two-thirds of exports of services. In 2018, the export of goods from developed countries was almost \$10 trillion, while that of services added up to about \$3.7 trillion. In 2018, developing countries' exports touched almost \$9.5 trillion in goods and about \$2 trillion in services. Of these, BRICS exported about one-third, \$3.8 trillion in goods and about \$600 billion in services.

Roughly, in 2018 the global GDP was about \$80 trillion and global trade was about \$25 trillion. India's GDP of about \$2.5 trillion and exports of about \$0.5 trillion (around \$300 billion goods exports and \$200 billion services exports) is a small fraction of the global GDP and exports. The period of Globalisation 4.0 is marked by disruption in the idea of the whole world as a single market due to breach of trust and allegations of manipulative trade. This trust deficit is causing even regional groupings to unravel or freeze. Terror, immigration, data privacy and security, political/security implications of economic decisions on trade and investments and automation's impact on the future of work are some of the major concerns.

The last 20 years have seen turbulence in international relations caused by persisting concerns on terror and manipulative trade and investment undermining fair practices and trust. Last year saw great disruption in global trade and commerce and the COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated fault lines. The belief that every country will play by the rules of the game has been seriously dent-ed. During the pandemic, India emerged as a globally responsible nation and provided critical medical supplies to around 150 countries as the "pharmacy of the world", enhancing its credibility as a reliable supplier.

Multiple hurdles in access to medicines at affordable prices created by lopsided WTO rules for protecting intellectual property need to be removed. The TRIPS Agreement did not envisage a pandemic where demand for vaccines/medicines would surge. Intellectual Property Rights should not block access to critical medicines and other devices required for the treatment of the virus. These should be declared as public goods and made affordable with fair compensation to inventors.

The WTO is facing grave challenges in the form of unilateral measures and countermeasures, deadlocks in key negotiations and impasse. Preserving the WTO's fundamental principles and objectives is crucial to ensuring the credibility of the multilateral rules-based trading system. The WTO needs reforms to restore trust, fairness and responsibility in international trade.

Global economic partnerships must keep in mind the different size and population of each country, unequal levels of economic and human development and different political systems. India has placed humanity at the centre of its global engagement policy. Our democratic credentials, rule-based polity and a steadfast track record in sincerely meeting commitments under all treaties and conventions are appreciated by the world.

The pandemic has shown that the global economy needed to focus and brace itself against external supply shocks. Global economic resilience can be achieved by stronger domestic economic capacities, restoring the health of the financial system and diversification of international trade.

The pandemic has provided a window of opportunity for building capacities, expanding manufacturing as well as plugging critical gaps and vulnerabilities in global value chains. India has tradition-

ally enjoyed global goodwill and respect as a healthcare and technology services provider and holds immense promise to boost services export. With 'Make in India' and 'Assemble in India', a call has been given to global businesses to consider the country as an alternative manufacturing hub, producing not just for the large and growing domestic market but also for exports. Production-linked incentives have been rolled out across several sectors. India has a centuries old, rich tradition of international trade. The terms of global trade became seriously adverse during colonial rule. India was so scarred by colonial exploitation, started by a trading company that became a political power, that post-Independence India almost opted to develop as a closed economy.

The process of opening up the economy started in the '90s but despite several reforms, business is still heavily burdened and hassled. The regulatory and taxation regime continues to be burdensome, costly, dilatory and arbitrary. Unfettered discretionary powers fuel corruption and harassment. Although in some areas technological innovations like randomised risk-based selection of cases for scrutiny and inspections to detect non-compliance have been introduced, a lot more remains to be done. We have to change the cutting edge of administration, mired in inefficiency and corruption down the multi-layer structure of governance, up to the lowest level. This affects business and entrepreneurship. To enhance our share in global trade, we have to address issues that plague our industry and business. Even though the efforts are on to do this, they need steady acceleration.

(The writer is former Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The views expressed are personal.)

Delhi's neighbours must behave responsibly

However, the Delhi Govt, too, must adopt global best practices to upgrade water treatment facilities

**KOTA SRI RAJ**

The Delhi Government plans to start round-the-clock water supply in the Capital very soon. However, this is more of a necessity than a luxury, as the rapidly urbanising Indian population is expected to reach 1.51 billion by 2030. The Capital alone is projected to have 39 million inhabitants by 2030, up from its current population of 29 million. In fact, according to the estimates of the United Nation's Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the city is slated to become the world's largest and most populous one as early as 2028. This will

exert enormous pressure on natural resources and delivering potable water, clean air, housing infrastructure, drainage and sanitation facilities will be even more challenging than before. However, among these, supply of clean and pure drinking water seems to be the most difficult task as it is plagued by pollution and scarcity.

The Capital is supposed to be a model city for the entire nation. Be it infrastructure or maintenance of essential services like water supply, Delhi should set an example for State Capitals to follow. But unfortunately, the city is struggling hard to maintain its present water supply, courtesy, to the rising level of pollutants on one end and unexpected shortages at the other. Contamination that brought the water supply system in Delhi to a grinding halt recently was due to the excessive levels of ammonia which reached an alarming scale of 3.4 parts per million (PPM). This prompted the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), which is capable of treating only 0.9 PPM or below, to curtail the water

supply for three days in a row and issue an advisory to the residents pertaining to judicious use of water. The worrying part is that ammonia levels frequently shoot up above acceptable limits in the Yamuna River.

Interestingly, this condition is no

different from the recent power outage in Pakistan when our neighbour was plunged in darkness for quite a while before the supply was restored. Surely, after all these years of progress, India cannot be on a par with its failed neighbour. This is an unsettling aspect.

Consuming water polluted with ammonia can damage internal organs, lungs, the brain and cause anaemia, coughing fits, irritation in the eyes, a burning sensation and other health-related problems. The Wazirabad, Chandrawal and Okhla water treatment plants that cater to Delhi's needs are simply not equipped to treat the high level of ammonia and this means that nearly a third of the city's supply is impacted when these plants are not operating. Ironically, despite the problem not being new, no solution or remedial measures have been

taken by the Delhi Government to ramp up the technical capabilities of the water treatment plants nor have there been any efforts by Haryana to bring down its ammonia effluent quotient. This problem is traceable to the cloth dyeing industries in Panipat which release industrial waste into the sewage canal. In Sonipat, this canal runs parallel with the canal carrying drinking water for Delhi. This means, even a minor break in the wall between these two canals or overflowing of the sewage canal causes the clean water to get contaminated. This has happened multiple times in the past. Despite the DJB and Delhi Government's umpteen requests to the Haryana Government to remedy the situation by concreting the wall, all ples have fallen on deaf ears.

How long will Delhites have to suffer due to the apathy of the neighbouring States is still unclear. Stubble burning in Punjab is adding to the city's air pollution woes while water contamination by Haryana is making life miserable for the resi-

dents of the Capital. There seems to be a lack of political will to solve these problems.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government is left with the burden of having to clean up the water it receives. For this it must adopt the best of global practices to not only rejuvenate its natural resources but also upgrade the water treatment facilities. The Government can focus on cutting-edge technologies such as DynaSand filters that remove ammonia from water by creating favourable conditions for the bacteria in the sand filter. The Nitrification process is also a tried and tested method to remove ammonia from water.

The effects of elevated ammonia in drinking water can cause irreversible organ damage in humans. There are many measures available across the world to combat this problem, provided all Governments are determined enough to pursue these measures.

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

**FOREIGN EYE****SUCH BRAVERY NEEDS BACKING**

The Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny's decision to return from Germany to Moscow was an act of remarkable courage. Navalny has put his life on the line in the battle for Russian democracy. His predicament deserves a more vigorous response than the one that followed his near-death experience in the summer.

(The Guardian editorial)

Farmers' stir caused loss of ₹50K cr in Delhi-NCR: CAIT

New Delhi: Traders' body CAIT on Thursday said the ongoing farmers' agitation in Delhi-NCR has caused a business loss of nearly ₹50,000 crore.

Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Secretary-General Praveen Khandelwal said the government's fresh proposal to keep farm laws in abeyance for one-and-a-half year and constitute a joint committee with farmer leaders "is quite justified and reasonable which indicates its willingness to resolve the crisis".

Khandelwal said that therefore, now, the farmers should

Khandelwal said that therefore, now, the farmers should accept this proposal in the larger interest of farming community and those engaged in agriculture trade, and call off their agitation.

accept this proposal in the larger interest of farming community and those engaged in agriculture trade, and call off their agitation.

If farmers still do not accept the proposal of the government, it will be construed that they are not interested in solution but certain divisive forces are more willing to cre-

ate problems, he added.

Khandelwal appealed to the government that traders should also be given representation in proposed joint committee.

"If any agreement is achieved without taking the traders into confidence, the farm (law) issue will remain in controversy and all exercise of the government may prove to be futile."

"We look for a comprehensive solution of the contentious issue, and legitimate interest of all stakeholders needs to be protected," he said.

PTI

Institutional investment in real estate down 7% at \$ 5.03 billion in 2020

New Delhi: Institutional investment in the Indian real estate fell 7 per cent in 2020 at USD 5.03 billion due to an adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to JLL India.

Investments stood at USD 5.43 billion during the 2019 calendar year. Institutional flow of funds includes investments by family offices, foreign corporate groups, foreign banks, proprietary books, pension funds, private equity, real estate fund-cum-

report. The consultant said that the pandemic led to pull back in investments due to uncertainty over income stability and return to normalcy.

"Institutional investment in Indian real estate staged a smart recovery during Q4 2020 with USD 3.5 billion investments. As a result, 2020 closed with USD 5 billion investments, equivalent to 93 per cent of 2019 transactions (USD 5.4 billion), despite a sudden halt brought on by the pandemic," JLL India said in a

statement.

Commerce Ministry for imposing anti-dumping duty on a Chinese chemical

New Delhi: The Commerce Ministry has recommended imposition of anti-dumping duty on a Chinese chemical used in dye and pharma industries for five years to guard domestic players from cheap imports.

Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has recommended the duty after concluding in its probe that 'Aniline' from China has been exported at dumped prices into India, which impacted the domestic industry.

"Definitive anti-dumping duty is recommended to be imposed for five years...," the directorate has said in a notification.

DGTR had conducted the probe following a complaint from a domestic player. Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizers and Chemicals Ltd had filed an application for anti-dumping investi-

gation on imports of Aniline originating in or exported from China.

The recommended duty is USD 36.9 per tonne and USD 121.79 per tonne. The finance ministry takes the final decision to impose duty.

"The authority is of the view that imposition of anti-dumping is required to offset dumping and injury. Therefore, authority recommends imposition of anti-dumping duty on imports," the notification said.

Aniline is also known as Aniline Oil. It is essential for industries such as drugs, pharmaceuticals, dyes and dye intermediates.

In a separate notification, DGTR has suggested the continuation of the duty on imports of 'Methylene Chloride' from China for five more years. This chemical is also used in the pharmaceuticals industry.

PTI

Govt can look to provide tax deduction for employees working from home: PwC India

New Delhi: The Government could look at providing deductions for expenses incurred by salaried employees while working from home in the upcoming Budget as it looks to boost demand, consulting firm PwC India said on Thursday.

Addressing a pre-budget session, PwC India senior tax partner Rahul Garg said demand creation is particularly focussed on money being given or left in the hands of the individuals.

"One clear thinking is at the level of small to medium taxpayer can we look at, in view of the COVID, a deduction to them particularly for salaried employees when they work from home."

"So whatever expenditure they are incurring working from home, which expenditure in the typical case would have been incurred in office by their employers if they were using offices to work if you allow that to be treated as giving them an entitlement for deduction

and that saves tax for them. It will leave more money in their hands," Garg said.

Following the outbreak of COVID pandemic early last year, many companies adopted a work from home policy for their employees. Garg said such a measure would be "reasonably equitable" because if businesses were to incur that expense, that would have been a deductible expenditure in their books.

Today that deductible expenditure sits in the hand of the individual and therefore there is no tax base reduction or sacrifice of any revenue, he said.

"It creates a situation of shifting the money in the hands of individual by giving a concession or deduction in respect to COVID related expenses and they could look at few thousand rupees per month and every person who is employed can get deduction and tax relief in their hand and contribute to demand creation," Garg noted.

PTI

RBI remains net purchaser of US dollar in November

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) continued to remain a net buyer of the US currency in November after it bought USD 10.261 billion from the spot market, data showed.

During the reporting month, the central bank purchased USD 14.289 billion and sold USD 4.028 billion, according to the monthly bulletin released by the RBI for January.

In October this year, though the RBI had purchased USD 15.64 billion from the spot market, it did not sell

the US currency.

In November 2019, the RBI had bought USD 7.458 billion and sold USD 530 million in the spot market.

In FY20, the central bank had net purchased USD 45.097 billion.

It had bought USD 72.205 billion and sold USD 27.108 billion in the spot market.

In the forward dollar market, the outstanding net purchase at the end of November was USD 28.344 billion, compared to USD 13.556 billion in October, the data showed.

Nitin Gadkari inaugurates SIAM's virtual safety gallery to sensitize citizens about road safety

New Delhi: Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) marked the beginning of National Road Safety month with the inauguration of first ever Virtual Road Safety Educative Gallery.

Shri Rajnath Singh, Honorable Defense Minister and Shri Nitin Gadkari, Honorable Minister of Ministry of Road Transport & Highways inaugurated the virtual gallery. The inaugural event was also graced by Dr V K Singh, MP, Lok Sabha; Mr Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog and other senior leaders from Ministry and other eminent dignitaries.

The safety gallery is based on guidelines of United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, which is divided under five sectors capturing different aspects of road safety.

The gallery showcases the projects and awareness drives led by SIAM members, industry stakeholders and multiple other national and international organisations.

Road Safety education gallery is intended to help millions of common citizens of all age groups from across India access information related to road safety with click of a button sitting at place of convenience or home 24x7.

PTI

NIFTY 50

SCRP OPEN HIGH LOW LTP CHANGE

NIFTY 50	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
TATAMOTORS	14,730.95	14,735.55	14,517.25	14,590.35	-54.55
BAJAJFIN	4,993.00	5,225.00	4,990.00	5,114.30	132.35
RELIANCE	2,082.00	2,120.00	2,075.00	2,107.00	22.05
BAJAJ-AUTO	3,672.00	3,807.00	3,655.00	3,727.35	83.4
UPL	576.55	594	576.35	587	10.65
EICHERMOT	2,860.65	2,955.00	2,895.00	2,931.00	42.75
ASIANPAINT	2,726.95	2,816.95	2,695.00	2,740.00	42.75
BAJAJFINSV	8,995.00	9,388.85	8,950.50	9,063.00	163.0
BRITANNIA	3,604.75	3,666.55	3,626.00	3,637.00	45
WIPRO	451.65	454.55	442.3	447.65	2.7
HINDUNILVR	2,376.00	2,399.00	2,350.00	2,368.00	12.05
NESTLEIND	17,770.00	17,900.00	17,655.35	17,752.90	71.6
ICICIBANK	555	561	549.7	553.1	2.1
AXISBANK	680.75	695	669.75	676	2.25
DIVISLAB	3,650.00	3,650.00	3,590.00	3,615.00	9.3
ULTRACEMCO	5,599.00	5,647.00	5,511.40	5,560.00	45
INFY	1,350.65	1,360.05	1,335.00	1,339.25	1.25
HDFCLIFE	710	711.9	699	702	-0.95
DRRREDY	5,110.00	5,138.00	5,033.90	5,068.95	-1.25
AMBALI	264	265.3	252.5	252.5	
BHARTAARTL	600	604	574.5	580.95	-1.25
JKTCTYRE	116.9	124.9	111.45	115.6	-1.25
TATASTEEL	693	694.75	661.9	666.8	-2.25
MRF	9350.00	9645.63	9039.27	9,218.85	-188.95
ULTRACO	196.45	197.7	194.15	195.45	-3.25
HCITECH	1,009.00	1,020.00	982.95	991.5	-3.75
LT	1,395.00	1,396.00	1,361.05	1,374.85	-7.8
HDFC	2,687.95	2,698.00	2,621.25	2,671.75	-17.15
TITAN	1,533.10	1,549.85	1,512.05	1,521.55	-9.75
HINDALCO	252.85	254.55	246.45	250.4	
MARUTI	8,205.00	8,267.00	8,021.45	8,089.00	-55.95
POWERGRID	1,026.00	1,033.35	994.05	1,008.00	-11.45
ITC	219	219.5	212.2	215.15	-2.05
INDUSINDBB	957	966.75	918.3	926.25	-2.5
IOC	98.2	99.6	96.2	97.15	-1.15
GRASIM	1,036.00	1,046.95	1,012.50	1,022.30	-1.24
SBLIFC	907.8	908.7	875	886	-10.75
JSWSTEEL	402.5	405	388.95	395.4	-6.45
M&M	823	835	800.3	811.95	-12.55
SUNPHARMA	598	598.75	580.65	585.6	-9.1
ADANIPORTS	561.85	561.85	542.65	549.75	-15.15
CPILA	835	839.3	809	816.65	-15.15
BHARTAARTL	602.5	604.05	574.4	585.15	-11
INDUSINDBB	959.4	967	918.25	929.9	-2.75
SBIN	304	305.15	291.5	296.8	-2.25
NTPC	98.7	99.15	95.6	96.3	-2.25
GAIL	139.7	139.7	132.55	134.75	-3.25
COALINDIA	142.15	142.15	136.55	137.8	-3.7
TATASTEEL	691	694.75	661.6	666.28	-2.05
ONGC	99.05	100.2	93.9	95.55	-3.3
ASIANPAINT	2,625.00	2,629.00	2,590.00	2,630.00	-2.00
SRTRANSFIN	125.06	127.65	119.42	120.64	-2.25
BHEL	41.05	41.25	38.5	38.75	
AXISBANK	684	695	670	675.8	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3,688	3,807.75	3,656	3,706.6	
ADANIGREEN	1021.35	1055	1010	1040.05	
UPL	578.9	594</td			

32 dead as twin suicide bombings rock Baghdad

Baghdad: Twin suicide bombings ripped through a busy market in the Iraqi capital Thursday, killing at least 32 people and wounding dozens, officials said.

The rare suicide bombing attack hit the Bab al-Sharqi commercial area in central Baghdad amid heightened political tensions over planned early elections and a severe economic crisis. Blood smeared the floors of the busy market amid piles of clothes and shoes as survivors took stock of the disarray in the aftermath.

No one immediately took responsibility for the attack, but Iraqi military officials said it was the work of the Islamic State group.

Iraq's health minister Hassan Mohammed al-Tamimi said at least 32 people were killed and 110 others were wounded in the attack. He said some of the wounded were in serious condition. Iraq's military previously put the number of dead at 28.

The Health Ministry



People and security forces gather at the site of a deadly bomb attack in a market selling used clothes in Iraq on Thursday AP

announced that all of its hospitals in the capital were mobilized to treat the wounded.

Maj. Gen. Taha al-Khafaji, spokesman for the Joint Operations Command, which includes an array of Iraqi forces, said the first suicide bomber cried out loudly that he was ill in the middle of the bustling market, prompting a crowd to

gather around him — and that's when he detonated his explosive belt. The second detonated his belt shortly after, he said.

"This is a terrorist act perpetrated by a sleeper cell of the Islamic State," al-Khafaji said. He said IS "wanted to prove its existence" after suffering many blows in military operations to root out the militants. AP

World leaders looking forward to working with Biden

Washington: World leaders said they were looking forward to working with Joe Biden, as they welcomed the 46th President of the United States with praise and took parting shots at his predecessor Donald Trump.

Biden on Wednesday vowed to repair America's alliances and engage with the world once again.

In his inaugural speech after being sworn in as the President in a historic but scaled down ceremony, the 78-year-old veteran Democratic leader said: "We'll be a strong and trusted partner for peace, progress and security."

"America has been tested and we've come out stronger for it. We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again, not to meet yesterday's challenges but today's and tomorrow's challenges. We will lead not merely by the example of our power, by the power of our example. We'll be a strong and trusted partner for peace, progress, and security," Biden said.

Here is how the world leaders reacted to the inauguration of Biden and Kamala Harris as the Vice President:



Workers begin to remove a display of flags on the National Mall one day after the inauguration of President Joe Biden on Thursday AP

"Once again, after four long years, Europe has a friend in the White House," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

Charles Michel, president of the European Council, tweeted congratulations to Biden and Harris, adding: "It's time to bring back conviction & common sense and rejuvenate our EU-US relationship."

NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called Biden's inauguration "the start of a new chapter for the transatlantic Alliance."

"NATO Allies need to stand together to address the security consequences of the rise of China, the threat of terrorism, including in Afghanistan and Iraq, and a more assertive Russia," he said.

"At a time when the grave crises facing our human family call for far-sighted and united responses, I pray that your decisions will be guided by a concern for building a society marked by authentic justice and freedom," Pope Francis said.

Prime Narendra Modi

tweeted: "My warmest congratulations to Joe Biden on his assumption of office as President of the United States of America. I look forward to working with him to strengthen India-US strategic partnership."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel also offered her "warmest congratulations," adding that she looks forward to a "new chapter" in Germany's relationship with

the US, according to a tweet from her spokesman Steffen Seibert.

French President Emmanuel Macron marked the day with a tweet welcoming the US back into the Paris climate agreement. "We are together. We will be stronger to face the challenges of our time. Stronger to build our future. Stronger to protect our planet. Welcome back to the Paris Agreement," Macron said. PTI

Biden's inaugural address written by Indian-American earns praise for its powerful message

Washington: US President Joe Biden's powerful inaugural speech, penned by Vinay Reddy, has received glowing tributes for its meticulous crafting and emphasis on the importance of democracy, unity and hope in the midst of challenging times.

Reddy — an Indian-American from Telangana who wrote the speech that outlined Biden's goals for his administration, focusing on healing from the current state of division in national politics — has been praised for his "calming" and "inspiring" words.

Here is a quote from Biden's speech:

"This is America's day, this is democracy's day, the day of history and hope. Today we celebrate a triumph, not of a candidate, but of a cause. We have learned again that democracy is precious, democracy is fragile. At this hour my friends, Democracy has prevailed." PTI

Mongolian PM resigns after protests over Covid-19 mother's treatment

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: Mongolia's prime minister resigned on Thursday following protests and public outrage over the treatment of a coronavirus patient and her newborn baby.

Landlocked Mongolia reported just a handful of Covid-19 cases last year after imposing strict border controls, but in November its first domestic transmissions caused a new wave of lockdowns and restrictions.

Anger mounted this week after TV footage showed a



After protests outside government buildings on Wednesday, the Mongolian politician apologised on behalf of the government and said he would stand down immediately.

"Unfortunately, we made mistake during relocating that mother," admitted Prime Minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa Thursday. "It was heartbreaking to see how she was treated."

"As a prime minister, I must take the responsibility."

The video of the woman in an ambulance clutching her

woman who appeared to have recently given birth being moved to an infectious disease centre wearing only hospital pyjamas and plastic slippers, despite temperatures dipping to minus 25 degrees Celsius.

Fauci lays out Biden's support for WHO after Trump criticism

Geneva: President Joe Biden's top medical adviser on Covid-19, Dr Anthony Fauci, on Thursday announced renewed US support for the World Health Organisation after it faced blistering criticism from the Trump administration, laying out new commitments to tackle the coronavirus and other global health issues.

Fauci, speaking by video-conference from pre-dawn United States to WHO's executive board, said the US will join the UN health agency's efforts to bring vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to people in

need, whether in rich or poor countries. He said the US will also resume full funding and staffing support for WHO.

Fauci's quick commitment to WHO — whose response to the coronavirus outbreak was repeatedly berated by the Trump administration — marks a dramatic and vocal shift toward a multilateral approach to fighting the pandemic.

"I am honoured to announce that the United States will remain a member of the World Health Organisation," Fauci said. AP

Biden revokes Trump report promoting 'patriotic education'

Washington: President Joe Biden on Wednesday revoked a recent Trump administration report that aimed to promote "patriotic education" in schools but that historians mocked and rejected as political propaganda.

In an executive order signed in his first day in office, Biden disbanded Donald Trump's presidential 1776 Commission and withdrew a report it released Monday.

Trump established the panel, which included no professional historians of the United States, complained of "false and fashionable ideologies" that depict the country's story as one of "oppression and victimhood." AP

ences of slavery in America. In its report, which Trump hoped would be used in classrooms across the nation, the commission glorifies the country's founders, plays down America's role in slavery, condemns the rise of progressive politics and argues that the civil rights movement ran afoul of the "lofty ideals" espoused by the Founding Fathers.

The panel, which included no professional historians of the United States, complained of "false and fashionable ideologies" that depict the country's story as one of "oppression and victimhood." AP

China announces sanctions against Pompeo, key Trump officials

Beijing: Minutes after Joe Biden was sworn in as the new President of the United States, China imposed sanctions against former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and 27 others associated with the previous Trump administration for promoting and executing "crazy moves," which "gravely" undermined its interests.

The sanctions were announced late Wednesday night by the foreign ministry.

Besides Pompeo, the list included Trump's economic advisor Peter K Navarro, national security advisor Robert O'Brien, former White House chief strategist Stephen K Bannon, human services secretary Alex M Azar and UN ambassador Kelly DK Craft.

The list also included David R Stilwell, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs; former Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger; Keith J Krach, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment; and former national security advisor John Bolton. PTI

China backs Guterres for 2nd term as UN Secy-General

Beijing: China on Thursday announced its backing for United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres who is seeking a second five-year term as the chief of the world body.

Guterres, 71, whose current term ends on December 31, in a letter to General Assembly President Volkan Bozkir has expressed his wish to continue for another five years, Chinese official media here reported.

"I am available to serve a second term as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, if that will be the will of member states," Guterres said in a letter to Bozkir. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hu Chunying told a media briefing here that since Guterres took office as the Secretary-General, he has led the UN to play an active role in maintaining world peace and security, promoting sustainable development and pushing forward international cooperation in combating the pandemic, asserting that China highly appreciates it. "China believes that Guterres is a suitable candidate for the next secretary-general. We are ready to work with the international community to continue to support the work of the United Nations and Guterres, to jointly promote the cause of world peace and development and to

build a community with a shared future for mankind," she added.

Guterres, the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations, took office on January 1, 2017. Prior to his appointment as Secretary-General, Guterres served as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from June 2005 to December 2015, heading one of the world's foremost humanitarian organisations. PTI

authorities say Wine can only leave his home under military escort because his presence in public allegedly threatens public safety. They are preventing visitors, including the US Ambassador, from seeing him.

While lawyers argued for Wine's freedom, President

Yoweri Museveni was making a triumphant return to Kampala from his country estate, with stopovers where he waved at cheering crowds.

The detention of Wine has angered his supporters, who see it as an extension of the harassment he faced from security forces who frequently broke up his campaign events, citing measures to control the spread of the coronavirus. AP

Uganda faces pressure to end Bobi Wine's house arrest

Kampala (Uganda): Calls grew on Thursday for Ugandan authorities to free opposition presidential challenger Bobi Wine from house arrest a week after the country's longtime president won a sixth term in a disputed election.

A judge will rule next week on a petition by Wines attorneys seeking an end to the deployment of soldiers outside his property on the outskirts of the

capital, Kampala. Wine, whose real name is Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, says he has been detained there for eight days.

Authorities say Wine can only leave his home under military escort because his presence in public allegedly threatens public safety. They are preventing visitors, including the US Ambassador, from seeing him.

While lawyers argued for Wine's freedom, President

PPE comes in handy for thief, but CCTV footage gives him up

AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

A thief who entered jewellery shop in Kalkaji area, disguised in a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kit, to steal 25 kilograms of gold worth ₹13 crore has been arrested. The police have claimed to have recovered 25 kg of gold from his possession.

A sequence of the heist captured on a CCTV camera installed in the jewellery store showed that the accused, identified as Mohammed Sheikh Noor, entered the place wearing a PPE kit. Noor made his way to the shop using ropes and a gas cutter. The sequence of his heist captured on camera was shared by news agency ANI on Thursday.

He jumped from the terrace of the adjacent building, police said. Five armed guards were on duty at the showroom at the time of theft. However, they were unaware when the theft took place in the early hours of Wednesday.

In another footage from the surveillance cameras, he can be seen searching for jewellery items as he climbs over a desk to go to the other side.

Soon after the incident, the manager of the three-storeyed Anjani Jewellers store informed Kalkaji police about the burglary and showed the footage of the thief wearing a PPE kit.

Soon, Delhi Police officials visited the store and recorded statement of all the employees and security guards. A forensic team was also called to the spot to get fingerprints.

Deputy commissioner of police (southeast) R P Meena said the showroom owner was yet to tell the cops the exact worth of the stolen items.

FROM PAGE 1

SII PLANT INFERNO KILLS 5

"I have taken information from the Pune Municipal Corporation about the incident and instructed local officials to carry out a detailed probe into the fire," Ajit Pawar said.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray told reporters that as per initial information, an electrical fault caused the fire. "As per initial information, the fire did not erupt at the unit where the COVID-19 vaccine is being produced, but in the unit where the BCG vaccine is produced," Thackeray said.

The SII is the world's largest maker of vaccines and has been contracted to manufacture a billion doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford University vaccine. Of the more than 12 billion coronavirus vaccine doses expected to be produced this year, many countries have already bought about 9 billion, and many have options to buy even more.

SC PANEL TALKS WITH NON-PROTESTING FARM UNIONS FROM 8 STATES

According to the committee, 10 different organizations which held the discussions were from eight States which include Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh on Thursday.

The participating farmer organizations' were asked to give their views on the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers' Empowerment and Protection Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Currently, there are three members in the panel - president of Maharashtra-based Shetkari Sanghatana Anil Ghansawat and agri-economists Ashok Gulati and

Pramod Kumar Joshi. Bhartiya Kisan Union president Bhupinder Singh Mann has recused himself from the committee. The committee will have to submit its report within two months and until that time the implementation of the farm laws will be stayed, the Supreme Court had ordered.

The committee is keen to understand the opinion of all concerned on the subject so that it can give suggestions which will definitely be in the interests of the farmers of India," said a committee member Anil Ghansawat earlier.

In its previous meeting on Tuesday, the panel discussed the roadmap of activities for two months to prepare their recommendations after discussion with farmers, their unions and other stakeholders. The committee will also set-up a portal for farmers where they can share their views about the contentious farm laws.

In the 10th round of talks with farmers unions, the Government has offered that three bills will be kept in abeyance for the 18 months and formation of a joint committee involving farmers unions to resolve the pending issues including the MSP if the protest is lifted.

Farmers are agitating against Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; the Farmers' Empowerment and Protection Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

According to the committee, 10 different organizations which held the discussions were from eight States which include Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh on Thursday.

The participating farmer organizations' were asked to give their views on the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers' Empowerment and Protection Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Currently, there are three members in the panel - president of Maharashtra-based Shetkari Sanghatana Anil Ghansawat and agri-economists Ashok Gulati and

AP VILLAGE: CHINA SAYS IT'S WITHIN ITS TERRITORY

The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi said India has stepped up the construction of border infrastructure, including roads and bridges for the improvement of livelihood of its citizens.

Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's security and takes all the necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity," it said.

The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The report about China setting up a new village in Arunachal Pradesh comes amid a military standoff in eastern Ladakh for over eight months.

India and China have held several rounds of military and diplomatic talks to resolve the face-off in eastern Ladakh, but no significant headway has been made so far.

Trend Blazer

Sushant's sister sets up SSR memorial fund

On Bollywood actor SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT'S birth anniversary, his sister Shweta Singh Kirti took to social media to announce a scholarship fund at the UC Berkeley for physics students in memory of the late actor.

She said that with this special fund, a step has been taken towards fulfilling one of Sushant's dreams. "I am happy to announce that on 35th Birthday of Bhai, a step has been taken towards fulfilling one of his dreams.

The Sushant Singh Rajput Memorial Fund of \$35,000 has been set up in UC Berkeley."

She added, "Anyone interested in pursuing Astrophysics at UC Berkeley can apply for this fund."



'I play a cop in Maarrich, who is not very senior but is not new in his profession either. He is a seasoned cop who has his ideology about things and is street-smart. He has to solve a double murder mystery, which changes his life and outlook. It is a character with shades of grey. Hopefully, the film will release in theatres.'

—Tusshar Kapoor

Oscar and Grammy-winning Indian composer AR RAHMAN is proud to see the response to the BAFTA Breakthrough initiative in India, and says he wants to encourage more individuals from across film, games and television to get involved in the project.

On Thursday, it was announced that British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) has extended the deadline for submission of applications for BAFTA Breakthrough India by two weeks, from January 25 to February 8.

"We have received applications from all across, proving that talent can be found in all corners of India," said Rahman.

'Thrilled to shoot with live audience'

Hollywood star ELIZABETH OLSEN says shooting in front of a live audience really messed with her brain.

Olsen along with Paul Bettany shot the first episode of their web series, *WandaVision*, in front of a live studio audience.

"It was so nerve wracking and there was a lot of adrenaline. There were a lot of quick changes and it totally confused me," Olsen said recalling the experience.

Eleven centimetres may not seem like much. Indeed, it's almost as long as your typical ballpoint pen. But sitting in the back seat of the new BMW 3-Series Gran Limousine, whose wheelbase is 11 centimetres longer than the traditional 3-series, you feel the additional space and realise that even small changes can make a big difference.

The 3-series Gran Limousine is the latest launch from BMW India, and even though January has not ended, this is the Bavarian carmaker's second launch of the year after the petrol engine variant of the 2-series Gran Coupe. The company's President for India, Vikram Pawah, told me that there will be 25 new vehicles launched by the company this year. Despite 2020 being rough for the luxury segment, Pawah said that the sales have recovered. "This year will see much improved numbers because we

SOCIAL DISTANCING: CHECK

ALCOHOL-BASED HAND SANITISERS: CHECK

MASK: CHECK

Life, since the time the pandemic hit us, has revolved around these basics. With the COVID-19 vaccine rolling-out, can people finally hope to get rid of these mandatory norms once they get vaccinated? Or rather, is it essential to wear a mask even after getting vaccinated?

Well, getting the vaccine is definitely a major step in the right direction but it doesn't mean the pandemic is over. Wearing a mask and maintaining good hygiene continues to be important for several reasons.

Dr Suranjit Chatterjee, Senior Consultant Internal Medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals says, "While people who have got vaccinated are now immune to the COVID-19 virus but they can still possibly spread it. For instance, if a vaccinated person is exposed to the virus, it won't impact him but he is still carrying that virus which can be easily transferred to others (non-vaccinated people) around him, through sneezing, coughing and non-sanitised hands." Hence, a vaccinated person is immune to the virus but he can still be a carrier and a cause of further spread.

Therefore, adhering to all the necessary precautions that we have been following for the past 10 months remain important. "This will have to continue for a long time unless everybody develops herd immunity against the virus or it gets eradicated, which right now is a far-fetched goal," adds Chatterjee.

Dr. Vikas Maurya, Director and Head of Department, Pulmonology, Fortis Hospital Shalimar Bagh, agrees to it and adds that we need to know more about how the shot works in the long term.

Another important aspect that we need to pay heed to is that no vaccine will be effective right after it is taken. Kapil Bhatia, CEO, UniMask says, "It takes at least two weeks for the immune system to make the antibodies that block viral infections. These vaccines will take a little longer than other inoculations because it requires two doses and one has to wait for three to four weeks to get the second shot of the vaccine." In simpler terms, full protection against COVID-19 infection won't arrive until five or six weeks after the first shot or the vaccine.

"In most respiratory infections, including the Coronavirus, the nose is the main entry port. The virus



IS A SHOT ENOUGH?

It is important to wear a mask and maintain good hygiene, even after getting vaccinated, to control the spread of the virus. By SAKSHI SHARMA



rapidly multiplies majorly there, jolting the immune system to produce a type of antibodies that are specific to the mucosa, the moist tissue lining the nose, mouth, lungs, and stomach. If the same person is exposed to the virus again, those antibodies, as well as immune cells that remember the virus, rapidly shut down the virus in the nose itself before it travels to take hold somewhere else in the body. Some of those antibodies will circu-

late to the nasal mucosa and stand guard there, but it's not clear how much of the antibody pool can be mobilised or how quickly. It is possible that the viruses could bloom in the nose only — and be sneezed or breathed out to infect others," adds Bhatia.

Not to forget that, as the vaccine rollout begins with plans to vaccinate as many people as possible, the fact of the matter is that not enough doses to vaccinate all popula-

tions exist till now. It's going to take months or longer for a fair amount of people to be vaccinated. Hence, it is vital to not only wear masks but also ensure that you are wearing the right one. Dr Chatterjee says, "Both N-95 and surgical three layered masks are recommended to protect people against the virus. But ideally, N95 masks are for people dealing with COVID positive patients or conducting procedures on the patients, such as

frontline workers — healthcare professionals, hospital staff etc. Otherwise, one can use a surgical three-ply mask. Additionally, while using N-95 masks, it is important to ensure that those masks shouldn't have a valve. In case an asymptomatic patient of COVID 19 wears an N-95 mask with a valve, that increases risk of him transmitting the infection to people around him."

Now that wearing a mask is a part of our everyday routine, it sometimes becomes an uncomfortable experience leading to sore ears and fogged glasses. To avoid this and further spread of the virus, it is important to wear it correctly. Dr Chatterjee lists some ways: It should fit you properly and cover your nose, mouth and chin. It should neither be very tight nor too loose. Ensure that the fabric masks are washed with soap every time they are worn and discarded in closed bins.

"One can also go for N95 respirator as it is made of a special material that removes 95 percent of the droplet that we emit while coughing, sneezing or talking," suggests Dr Puneet Khanna, HOD and Consultant — Respiratory Medicine, HCMCT Manipal Hospitals, Dwarika.

Trend tool

Love is in the hair

Five styles to glam-up your look



The walls are decked and new year happiness is still settling in. While the winter season brings in the warmth of festive shopping and celebration of togetherness, here is how can double-up the joy of dressing up with the right hairstyle.

Samay Dutta, director, Noir salon lists some interesting hairstyles that will keep up your spirit while you plan your look for 2021.

Curl it up in style:

Let your locks open and set some stylish waves to add the glam. Softly curl-up the ends or simply crunch your curls and let them loose. For extra glamour, you can also pin back some section of your hair with a sparkling pin or hair accessory.

Braid the French way: Side French braids are super stylish and can instantly glam-up your simple party look. Simply, French braid one side of your hair and pin it up toward the back, along the nape of your neck.

The glamorous fishtail: A glamorised version of classic ponytail, the fishtail ponytail is perfect for dressing up this party season. If a neat, tidy and stylish look is on your mind then go for the fishtail.

Twist a bun: Here is an easy yet extremely glamorous hairstyle for your next party. The twisted bun can be best complemented with loose strands on the face and some volume in the crown area.

Accessorise your hair: Now is the time for you to unbox those elegant headbands and stylish hair accessories that has been long ignored. Accentuate your glamorous look by pairing a headband with a simple bun or back-combed hair.

Let your hair be the face of your stylish look this party season. Glam them up and get set to live this year in style.



When size matters

The luxury sedan segment is on an upswing with Audi, BMW and Volvo all hitting the market



are confident in the fact that there will not be another lockdown in India. Keep in mind that in 2020 we effectively lost an entire quarter," he said.

The Gran Limousine is surprisingly comfortable. The ride quality, in fact, feels superior to the regular sedans. As much as I'm not a fan of extended wheelbase cars to drive, this car does not in any way feel compromised compared to the regular 3-series. Sure, most people who will consider this vehicle would sit at the back and see the success of the extended wheelbase Mercedes-Benz E-Class in India, this should do very well. But if you actually drive, it is quite fun.

I drive the 260PS 330Li Luxury Line petrol engine variant, which at ₹ 51.5 lakh is a great combination of power and luxury. As it comes with all the toys such as wireless smartphone connectivity, it possibly makes more sense to buy

this over the standard 3-series. Although if you're always driving yourself and don't have many rear seat passengers, stick to the regular car.

The Gran Limousine creates a major problem for the other new players in the segment — the refreshed 'Made In India' Audi A4 and the second-generation Volvo S60. I loved the Swedish car, sure the key fob is slightly esoteric and it lacked paddle-shifters, and this was the first time I actually missed them on a car. It features a petrol engine with an output of 190PS. But the Swedish car is an esoteric choice. It looks nice and if you want a different choice from the Germans, it is a great car to have, especially if you have a young family. I took my family out in the Volvo and the hard sell the company does on safety, does stick inside your head. My seven-month old child was safely tucked in its seat and the overall light colour scheme and panoramic sunroof appealed to me and even the baby I guess. It isn't the most enthusiastic vehicle out there, yeah you could make a call for it at around ₹ 46 lakh.

The refreshed Audi A4 is likewise a fun car to drive. Unlike their rivals, Audi has made their speed alarm audible but not deafening and for that alone, they should be complimented. The new car looks good but could have done with nicer wheels. It gives a positive indication for the carmaker from Ingolstadt. The new A4 lacks a diesel option much like all other products from the Skoda-Volkswagen group in India and features the same 190PS two-litre petrol that does service on the Q2 and the Tiguan. The top-end technology version is ₹ 46.7 lakh, and while 70,000 rupees isn't all that much, putting the S60 and A4 next to each other does make you wonder — which is the better car to buy.

Sure, the German car is better to drive but as a day to day commuter in an urban environment? Honestly, I'd spend a bit for eleven centimetres. Size isn't everything but it isn't a bad thing either!

PANTONE ON YOUR PLATE

The inclusion of colourful food in daily meals is the key to boosting immunity. Chef DAVID EDWARD RAJ lists how

Ever wondered what is so fascinating about the freshly cooked *Palak Paneer*, exotic vegetable salad, or the enticing garnishing on a vanilla ice cream? Is it just the bold and colourful arrangement of food which attracts us or the taste and health benefits too?

Well, the inclusion of colourful food in daily meals is the key to boost immunity and remain in the pink of health. Colourful foods, which are generally fruits and vegetables, contain various vitamins and antioxidants we need, with few calories. Besides sustaining good health, the nutrients in vegetables and fruits work together to protect us against cancer, heart disease, vision loss, hypertension and other diseases. Increasing fruits and vegetables in your diet is a great step to improve your health. This can be done by adding VIBGYOR foods to at least one meal a day. This arrangement mainly includes fruits and vegetables that contain flavonoids (natural pigments) which give them their distinct colour and are the powerhouse of antioxidants.

These naturally occurring colourful vegetables and fruits protect the cells from oxidative stress caused by various factors. While the millennials are now realising the importance of eating healthy, there is a need for constant innovation in food recipes that makes it further interesting. Going by the Pantone colour of 2021, here are a few benefits of activated charcoal and yellow vegetables and spices in our food.

GRAY IS THE NEW GREEN

Activated charcoal can be used as a detox component in fresh fruit juices, *Kadha* and shakes. Whole wheat bread and buns have also started with a black variant. Similarly, sushi, grilled chicken/fish, pizza base, and dimsums are available in a black version. Last but not the least, there are a plethora of desserts and ice creams too available in charcoal flavour.

Food grade charcoal can be obtained by burning the coconut shell at extreme temperatures. Adding this to food is the new trend. This can be achieved by adding/sprinkling the activated charcoal in the food/beverage/dessert preparations. Activated charcoal can be used while making bread and other confectionaries with eye-appealing garnishing like black cup-cake with strawberry frosting and so on. Moreover, health experts believe that organs like the liver and kidneys carry out detoxification effectively, therefore deeming the need for external detoxification redundant. Even so, studies have been conducted to determine the potency of activated charcoal when consumed with food. While the results may not be completely scientifically accurate, they were positive. Hence, activated



charcoal can be induced anywhere and everywhere till the creativity continues; but overindulgence of the same shall be avoided.

THE POWER OF ORANGE & YELLOW

As kids, we were always told to eat carrots to protect our vision. While that's not entirely true

(unless you're deficient in vitamin A, a problem most often seen in third-world countries), it does mean most people haven't heard of beta-carotene. The antioxidant is

converted to vitamin A in the body and maintains eye health (preventing macular degeneration and improving night vision), fights cancer, and is necessary for healthy skin. The yellow-orange citrus fruits are rich in Vitamin C, another antioxidant that boosts immunity. These include carrots, pumpkins, corn, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, yellow-orange peppers, oranges, malt, sweet lime, lemon, papaya, dried apricot and peach.

These yellow foods can be included in form of salads, juices, infused water, sautéed vegetables, side dishes and so on. Dishes like Carrot *Poha*, Carrot fingers, Pumpkin Soup, Pumpkin *Puris*, Carrot and Pumpkin Salad, Juices, Corn *Chat*, Corn pizza, and many more. Other nutrients found in orange and yellow fruits and veggies include potassium, folic acid, and bromelain. For folic acid, eat carrots, cantaloupe, summer squash, and corn. And make sure you eat plenty of pumpkins, sweet potatoes, and butternut squash, they're all high in blood pressure, lowering potassium. (Again, people with kidney disease may need to limit their potassium intake.) Last but not least, bromelain, an enzyme in pineapple, can help in digestion and curtail swelling and infection. It may also fight atherosclerosis, though the research is still inconclusive. And yellow grapefruit has lycopene, although the pink variety and tomatoes have higher levels. Lycopene is especially good for men because it's helpful for the prostate.

The bright illuminating turmeric has a bioactive compound called curcumin that has antioxidant properties. Indian food is majorly cooked with turmeric neutralising the free radicals caused due to the oxidative stress. This spice has been used for ages to treat infection, cold and inflammation.

Eating a diet high in antioxidant-rich food is always a smart choice. Antioxidants and phytochemicals present in the food neutralise the free radicals that create havoc in your body by damaging membranes, DNA and enzymes caused due to many factors like UV rays, poor lifestyle, cigarette smoke and environmental pollution called oxidative stress. Many areas are vulnerable to oxidative stress but immune system is extremely sensitive to these free radicals. Due to ageing as well as in some cases the free radicals outnumber the concentration of naturally occurring antioxidants in your body. Hence, to ensure you have a good immune system you need to continuously pump your body with antioxidant-rich foods found in all bright-naturally occurring fruits and vegetables. Red peppers, tomatoes, carrots, yellow zucchini, corn, greens. That variety ensures that you're getting those antioxidants, which can be beneficial.

(The writer is Director of Culinary Innovation, Elixir India.)



Toast to a treat

A food report reveals trends, which include oat-based milk chocolates and ice cream fries, that will reign this year

In the midst of so much uncertainty in 2020, 'treating' took centre stage as it delivered our daily dose of happiness. So, what better way to celebrate this year than by revealing all the delicious and tantalising treats that will emerge over the next twelve months.

The latest Baileys report, prepared along with food futurologist Dr. Morgaine Gaye and a cohort of global treat makers and lovers, captures the exciting insights from the global food industry and forecasts the delicious dessert trends for 2021.

The Treat Report 2021 top dessert trends are:



Oat everything: The humble porridge oats will go centre stage as oat-based milk chocolates, ice creams, cheeses, yoghurts and even double cream are coming our way.

I should cacao: Cacao pulp, the bit you don't see as it's generally discarded when making chocolate, is a sweet and fruity flesh. You can also expect to see it as a flavourful alternative to coconut water, topped with eye catching edible flowers for the perfect non-alcoholic refresher.

Japanese indulgence: Japan is a haven for delicious, whimsical treats that will put a smile on your face, and we'll be seeing a massive influx of Japanese inspired wonders including wobbly, fat, pillow-like pancakes and the Taiyaki fish, a soft waffle-like cones in the shape of a fish is stuffed to the gills with ice cream, sprinkles, sauces and wafers.

Spread the love: Savoury spreads are getting a makeover as they turn to treats. Add a touch of luxury to toast as sloe gin spreads and champagne butters will make the humble piece of bread into a meal fit for royalty.

How's this for a glow-up? We're talking completely edible algae that will find its way into our favourite cocktails, giving them an incredible other-worldly appearance that will be hard to ignore. Will someone pass us a Glowtini?

As light as air: On the coattails of the whipped Dalgona coffee, this treating trend is only growing popular.

in 2021. Air will be whipped, injected and stuffed into everything from ice cream to candy floss, giving a light texture that leaves us craving for more.

Extra sweets: They've been around for a few years but this year some classics get a gloriously adventurous treating make-over as the macaron and Danish pastry get whimsical. Introducing the Macaron Ice Cream Sandwich and the Nougat Crown, with all the muted tones and flavours getting set aside for over the top colour and tastes.

Clashing combos: We've been a big fan of sweet and salty for a while now. This year it's ramping up into something even more indulgent and creative with ice cream fries, Danish dessert pizza, potato snacks covered in milk chocolate and caramel flavour to name a few.

Munch on mochi: This year there's going to be a mochi for everyone, from ice cream with a mochi textured top layer, mochi pancake mixes, mochi doughnuts and even savoury skewers of stuffed mochi balls all on the horizon.

Alongside the future of treating, the report looks back over 2020 to see how world events impacted how we treated. A visual discovery engine delved into search trends through 2020 and showed how treating changed as home baking, quarantine cocktails and banana bread took over.

R E C I P E S

CHOCOLATE AND HAZELNUT CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Water: 100 ml
- Sugar: 75 ml
- Dark chocolate: 150 ml
- Butter: 75 gm
- Egg: 3
- Hazelnut paste: 10 gm
- Hazelnut: 15 gm

For Ganache:

- Dark chocolate (callebaut): 500 gm
- Fresh cream: 650 gm
- Butter (unsalted): 20 gm
- Hazelnut paste: 10 gm

METHOD

- In a thick bottomed sauce pan, boil water and sugar to soft ball stage.



- In a separate bowl, melt chocolate and butter and keep it aside.
- In a table top kitchen aid mixer, whip the eggs with the help of wire whisk. Once, the
- eggs are a little pale, add in the soft ball stage sugar syrup slowly.
- Add the melted chocolate and butter syrup to the egg mixture and mix well.

LAMB DONNE BIRYANI

WHAT YOU NEED

- Jeera samba rice: 1 kg
- Lamb curry cut: 1.5 kg
- Onions (sliced): 500 gm
- Tomatoes (sliced): 300 gm
- Ginger garlic paste: 200 gm
- Curd: 150 gm
- Mint leaves: 1 bunch
- Coriander leaves: 1 bunch
- Ghee: 200 ml
- Oil: 100 ml
- Bay leaf: 2 gm
- Cloves: 2 gm
- Mace: 2 gm
- Cardamom: 2 gm
- Star anise: 2 gm
- Turmeric Powder: ½ tbsp
- Chilli powder: 2 tbsp
- Garam masala powder: 1 tbsp
- Salt to taste

METHOD

- Soak Jeera samba rice for at least 20 minutes.
- Make fine paste of mint and coriander, half bunch each and remaining half chopped and reserved.
- In a heavy bottom pan, add oil and ghee together. Once hot, add all the whole spices.
- As soon as the whole spices release the aroma, add sliced onions and cook until it turns golden brown.
- Then add ginger garlic paste and cook until the raw flavour is gone.
- Add some chopped mint, coriander leaves and fresh green chillies.
- Add lamb curry cut and cook until the meat is sealed.
- Add turmeric powder, salt, garam masala powder and cook for about 15 to 20 minutes.
- Add sliced tomatoes and cook until the tomatoes gets completely mushy. Then add curd and cook until the oil is released at the corners of the pan.
- Add the reserved mint, coriander paste and cook for another 15 minutes.
- Then add lemon juice and check



- for seasoning.
- Add water and bring it to boil. Then check if the lamb is properly cooked.
- Add in the soaked rice and stir well gently. Then cook until the rice absorbs about 80 per cent of water.
- Switch off the flame, add ghee, chopped coriander and mint on top. Cover it with silver foil and lid.
- Place the cooking pot on hot grill under medium heat for about 20 to 30 minutes.
- Once done, portion it in a serving bowl and serve hot.

Courtesy: Chef Jagadish Purushothama, Academy of Pastry & Culinary Arts.



MICHELADA

WHAT YOU NEED

- Tomato juice: 90 ml
- Lemon juice
- Worcestershire sauce: 2 dashes
- Tabasco or any hot sauce: 2 dashes
- Bee Young Beer (to top up.)
- METHOD**
- Mix all the ingredients in a wide glass over ice, and top up with beer.
- Serve garnished with a chili.



TENNESSEE TODDY

WHAT YOU NEED

- Jack Daniel's Old No. 7: 60 ml
- Honey: 15 ml
- Lemon juice: 15 ml
- Cinnamon stick
- Hot water: 120 ml
- METHOD**
- Pour Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 into a heavy mug.
- Add honey, cinnamon stick and lemon juice
- Top with hot water and stir.

Courtesy: Jack Daniel's.

Red carpet welcome for Rahane



India stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane, center left and head coach Ravi Shastri, second right received by Mumbai Cricket Association President Vijay Patil at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport after winning the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, in Mumbai on Thursday



T Natarajan receives a grand welcome by his villagers at Chinnappampatti in Salem district on Thursday; (right) Shardul Thakur parents welcome him upon arrival

PTI ■ MUMBAI/NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Chants of 'aala re aala Ajinkya aala' headlined a red carpet welcome for Ajinkya Rahane on his triumphant return from Australia with some other teammates but the mood was sombre in Hyderabad as one of his warriors, Mohammed Siraj, headed

straight to his father's grave.

The chants (meaning here comes our Ajinkya) were heard amid the beating of the traditional *dhol tasha* and showering of flower petals at Rahane's residential complex.

Besides stand-in captain

Rahane, also arriving in Mumbai were coach Ravi Shastri, star batsman Rohit Sharma, pacer Shardul Thakur and opener

Prithvi Shaw, while Brisbane Test hero Rishabh Pant landed in the national capital early this morning.

T Natarajan, who was originally picked as a net bowler but became the first Indian cricketer to make his international debut across all three formats during the same tour, landed in Bengaluru and then took off for his village in Tamil Nadu's

Salem. Once he reached his native Chinnappampatti village, Natarajan was accorded a festive welcome, complete with garlands and a chariot ride through the streets where people gathered in good numbers to acknowledge the new star.

The players from Chennai, including veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, rookie Washington Sundar and bowl-

ing coach Bharat Arun are currently in Dubai and are expected to reach the country early morning on Friday.

On arrival in Mumbai, Rahane, Shastri, Rohit, Shardul and Shaw were felicitated by Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) officials, including President Vijay Patil and Apex Council members Ajinkya Naik, Amit Dani and Umesh Khanvilka.

Rahane also cut a cake to celebrate the team's win.

However, more surprises awaited the reticent batsmen after he drove straight to his housing society in suburban Matunga, where residents had made elaborate preparations to accord their hero a royal welcome.

Rahane was welcomed with the beats of *dhol*, while others showered the cricketer with flower petals.

Rahane was also joined by his wife and two-year-old daughter in the celebration.

Soaking in the carnival-like atmosphere, Rahane acknowledged the love and adulation showered on him by the people of the city, many of whom waited for his team at the airport wearing masks amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

In his society, residents and videographers jostled to capture the moments and the unassuming batsman posed happily for them.

Rahane was then greeted in a traditional manner as he walked towards the entrance of the building.

Dhol tasha is usually played to celebrate special achievements and during joyous occasions.

Stepping in after the catastrophe in Adelaide but young Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant on Thursday said he wants to carve his own identity in the game after playing a key role in the side's historic Test series win in Australia.

Pant is often compared with the two-time World Cup winning former captain and wicketkeeper batsman, who retired last year after a glorious international career.



"When I entered home my mother started crying, but I tried to be strong in front of her. I consoled her and gave her support. It was a different feeling," he added.

The 26-year-old pacer dedicated his stellar performance on his maiden tour to his departed father.

"I dedicated my every wicket to Dad. Mine and Mayank Agarwal's celebration (in Sydney) was dedicated to him," he said.

Have to be at our absolute best against India: Root England include Stokes, Archer for Chennai Tests

PTI ■ LONDON

Explosive all-rounder Ben Stokes and pacer Jofra Archer on Thursday returned to a 16-member England squad named for the first two Tests of the upcoming four-match series against India.

The England selectors also named six travelling reserves for the first and second matches, to be held at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai from February 5.

Both Stokes and Archer missed the ongoing two-match Test series in Sri Lanka as part of England's policy to rest their all-format players, while Rory Burns was at home for the birth of his first child.

Surrey's Ollie Pope will travel to India and will be added to the squad when passed fit. Pope is recovering from a shoulder injury sustained in September during the Test series against Pakistan.

All-rounder Moeen Ali, who was the only cricketer to return Covid-19 positive on arrival in Sri Lanka, has fully recovered and was included in the team.

The fast bowling department

will be spearheaded by

veteran James Anderson in the

company of his seasoned

teammate Stuart Broad,

Archer and Chris Woakes.

Squad for first two Tests: Joe

Root, Jofra Archer, Moeen

Ali, James Anderson, Dom

Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory

Burns, Jos Buttler, Zak

Crawley, Ben Foakes, Dan

Lawrence, Jack Leach, Ben

Stokes, Olly Stone, Chris

Woakes.

3rd-div Alcoyano upset Real in CDR

AP ■ MADRID

Third-division club

Alcoyano came from

behind to eliminate Real

Madrid 2-1 in the round of 32

of the Copa de Rey.

The small club from east-

ern Spain scored in the 80th

minute to force extra time and

again in the 115th to make it to

the last 16.

Alcoyano had gone a man

down because of a red card just

minutes before Juanan

Casanova scored the winner

from close range after a quick

counterattack.

Based in eastern Spanish

city of Alcoy, the small club of

Alcoyano made it to the Copa

quarterfinals in 1946. It has

played four seasons in the first

division, but not since 1950-51.

Madrid was seeking its first

Copa title since 2014, which

was the last time it reached the

final. It was eliminated by

Zaragoza in the round of 16 last

season. It hadn't been eliminat-

ed in the round of 32 since it

lost to Cádiz in 2015-16.

Crosstown rival Atlético

Madrid had already been elimi-

nated by a third-division club

in the second round, losing to

Cornellà, which will host

Barcelona on Thursday.

Sindhu, Sameer sail into Thai last 8

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Indian shuttlers P V Sindhu

and Sameer Verma stormed

into the quarterfinals of the

Toyota Thailand Open after

registering straight-game wins

but HS Prannoy bowed out of

Super 1000 tournament here on

Tuesday.

Olympic Silver medallist

Sindhu expectedly outclassed

Malaysia's worldNo 92 Kisona

Salvaduray 21-10, 21-12 in a lop-

sided second-round contest that

lasted just 35 minutes. She will

now face Thailand's Ratchanon

Inthanon, who beat Korea's Sung

Ji Hyun 19-21, 24-22, 21-17.

World No 31 Sameer also

continued his impressive run,

stunning world No 17 Rasmus

Gemke 21-12, 21-9 in just 39

minutes for his third victory over

the Danish player.

The Indian, who had

shocked Malaysia's eighth seed

Lee Zii Jia in the opening round,

will face third seed Anders

Antonsen, who received a walkover, in the quarterfinals.

"I was very confident before

the match. I came prepared.

Next up I have Anders Antonsen

from Denmark. I'm feeling very

confident, so let's see. It will be

tough but I will play my best,"

Sameer said.

The mixed doubles pair of

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and

Ashwini Ponnappa also made it

to the quarterfinals with a stun-

ning 22-20, 14-21, 21-16 win

over world No 17 German duo

of Mark Lamsfuss and Isabel

Herttrich in a match that last-

ed close to an hour.

Satwiksairaj also paired up

with Chirag Shetty in the men's

doubles to notch up an upset

21-18, 23-21 win over seven seeds

Korean combination of Choi

Solegyu and Seo Seung Jae.

"We served and received

monkey" by some spectators,

had reported the matter to

Rahane, who brought it to the

notice of on-field umpires

Paul Reiffel and Paul Wilson

during the match.

"I faced abuses in

Australia. The case is going

on, let's see whether I get jus-

tice or not. My job was to

report the incident to the

captain," the 26-year-old, who

was India's highest wicket-

taker with 13 scalps during the