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GREEN STAR
OVER BENGAL**WORLD 8**
LAWYER, OTHERS ARRESTED BY HONG
KONG NATIONAL SECURITY UNIT**SPORT 12**
INDIA'S CAMPAIGN ENDS
IN THAILAND OPEN

RANCHI, FRIDAY JANUARY 15, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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PREITY HINTS
AT NEW
BEGINNINGS
10 VIVACITY

Vaccine makers liable for damages

No indemnity for manufacturers in Govt's vaccine purchase deals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has refused to give in to the request of Indian companies, particularly the Serum Institute of India (SII) which had publicly sought protection against all lawsuits for vaccines in case of any report of health risk or complication following inoculation of jab against Covid-19.

The purchase order executed by the Government with the vaccine makers stipulates that the companies will have to inform the Government authorities immediately in case of reports of any health risks or complications arising from the vaccine. It reads "Company shall be liable for all adversities as per CDSCO/ Drugs and Cosmetics Act/DCGI policy/approval."

Last month, Adar Poonawalla, CEO of SII whose Covishield vaccine has been given emergency use authorisation (EUA), had said that manufacturers needed protection against all lawsuits for vaccines, especially during the pandemic. Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech also has been given EUA to supply Covaxin which initially the Government had said was being kept as a "backup plan".



Medics during the launch of a first-of-its-kind Splicehealth Genome Sequencing Laboratory for all positive samples from international travellers at the airport in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

Vaccine makers need to be protected against liability for serious adverse reactions to their shots during a pandemic scenario, Poonawalla had said. The Pune-headquartered company head during a virtual panel discussion on the challenges to vaccine development last month had also shared that he planned to propose this to the Government.

This is because such issues could potentially increase fear of getting vaccinated and also works to "bankrupt" or "distract" the companies making them, according to him.

"We need to have the Government indemnify manufacturers, especially vaccine manufacturers, against all lawsuits. In fact, COVAX and other countries have already started talking about that," he said during Carnegie India's Global Technology Summit.

On Thursday too at an event, Poonawalla asserted that the lawsuit against the firms

will hit the vaccine supply.

However, the Government seems to not be keen to take up their request. "Indian vaccine makers will be held liable for any complications or adverse effects that arise from the administration of their jabs. The Government has not accepted their demand that they be indemnified against mishaps," said sources in the Union Health Ministry.

"The Government can act: the US, for example, has in fact invoked a law, to say that during a pandemic — and this is especially important only during a pandemic — to indemnify vaccine manufacturers against lawsuits for severe adverse effects or any other frivolous claims which may come about. Because, that adds to the fear and also will bankrupt vaccine manufacturers or distract them if they have to just all day just fight lawsuits and explain to the media what is happening," Poonawalla had said.

Exercise, enough sleep must for vaccine efficacy: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Depression, stress and loneliness can weaken the body's immune system, and lower the effectiveness of certain vaccines, like those against the Covid-19, scientists have said and suggested simple interventions, including exercise and getting a good night's sleep in the 24 hours before vaccination to maximise the job's initial effectiveness.

The researchers in their report accepted for publication in the journal Perspectives on Psychological Science noted that even though rigorous testing has shown that the Covid-

19 vaccines approved for distribution in the US are highly effective at producing a robust immune response, not everyone will immediately gain their full benefit.

Environmental factors, as well as an individual's genetics and physical and mental health, can weaken the body's immune system, slowing the response to a vaccine, they said.

"In addition to the physical toll of Covid-19, the pandemic has an equally troubling mental health component, causing anxiety and depression, among many other related problems," said Annelise Madison, a researcher at the Ohio State University in the

United States.

"Emotional stressors like these can affect a person's immune system, impairing their ability to ward off infections," said Madison, lead author on the paper.

The report sheds light on vaccine efficacy and how health behaviours and emotional stressors can alter the body's ability to develop an immune response.

Vaccines work by challenging the immune system. Within hours of a vaccination, there is an innate, general immune response on the cellular level as the body begins to recognise a potential biological threat.

Modi to launch Covid vaccination drive tomorrow

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch India's Covid-19 vaccination drive on January 16 via video conferencing and adequate doses of the two made-in-India vaccines have been delivered across the country to all States and Union Territories, the Government said on Thursday.

3L healthcare workers to get shots on day 1

New Delhi: Around 3 lakh healthcare workers will be inoculated at 2,934 sites across the country on the first day of the massive nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive which is set to begin from January 16, official sources said. Each vaccination session will cater to a maximum of 100 beneficiaries.

Jabs four times a week in Delhi: CM

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said the Delhi Government is fully prepared for the Covid-19 vaccination roll-out starting January 16, with over 8,000 healthcare workers to be immunised every scheduled day in the city. The vaccine will be administered on four days of the week — Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, he said.

Recoveries outnumber fresh cases for 2nd consecutive day

PNS ■ RANCHI

Covid recoveries outnumbered fresh cases for the second consecutive day in Jharkhand on Thursday, bringing the number of active cases of Covid-19 infection closer to 1300, figures compiled by the health department highlighted.

Over 144 people were found infected by the lethal virus in Jharkhand in the past 24 hours, while 173 patients suffering from the infection recovered during the same period, a bulletin released by the National Health Mission (NHM) stated.

Ranchi, the district with highest number of Covid cases, accounted for more than half of the cases that surfaced across Jharkhand on the day. The district reported 77 cases against 84 recoveries, which brought the number of active cases here down to 653, the NHM bulletin revealed. Apart from Ranchi, only East Singhbhum reported a double-digit-spikes in cases on the day. The number of active cases shot up at 166 on Thursday as the district reported 27 fresh cases against 17 recoveries. Dhanbad reported nine cases, while Bokaro



A medic collects swab samples from a child for Covid test at a centre in Ranchi Pioneer photo

reported six cases on the day.

At least seven of 24 districts in Jharkhand did not report even a single case of Covid-19 infection on the day. After Thursday's test results, only Ranchi and East Singhbhum had more than 100 active cases of Covid-19 infection in Jharkhand.

The Government on Thursday tested swab samples of 12133 people and more than 1 per cent of them were found infected. So far, the government has collected swab samples of 50.16 lakh and tested 50.06

lakh of them, highlights data with the health department.

As per Government data, as many as 117384 people have been infected by the Covid-19 virus so far in Jharkhand and 97.97 per cent of them have recovered. However, at least 1048 people could not survive the viral infection in the state.

No Covid-19 casualties were reported in Jharkhand on the day. As per the NHM bulletin, the growth rate of the virus in Jharkhand was 0.12 per cent against the national average of 0.13 per cent.

Trump makes history, 1st US Prez to be impeached twice

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump became the first president in US history to be impeached twice when 10 of his fellow Republican Congressmen joined Democrats in the House of Representatives to charge him with inciting an unprecedented insurrection at the US Capitol last week.

In a bipartisan vote, the Democratic-controlled House on Wednesday impeached Trump by 232 to 197 votes, exactly one week after pro-Trump rioters forced lawmakers to flee from the very chamber in which they cast ballots during the fourth presidential impeachment in US history.

Ten Republicans, including the House's No. 3 Republican, Liz Cheney, joined all Democrats to impeach 74-year-old Trump for "incitement of insurrection" for his actions on January 6, when he delivered a speech inciting his supporters to storm the US Capitol.

The violence temporarily halted the counting of Electoral College votes and resulted in the deaths of five individuals, including a police officer. Trump will now face a trial in the Senate, where if convicted he could face being barred from ever holding office again. The Senate is adjourned till January 19, a day before the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States.

All four Indian-American Democratic House members — Ami Bera, Ro Khanna, Raja Krishnamoorthi and Pramila Jayapal — voted in favour of the impeachment. The House went ahead with the move after Vice President Mike Pence on Tuesday refused to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove Trump from office.



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi displays the signed article of impeachment against President Donald Trump in an engrossment ceremony before transmission to the Senate for trial on Capitol Hill in Washington on Wednesday

AP

Can give befitting reply to any 'superpower': Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Striking a tough posture against China, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said India is always in favour of peace but its soldiers are capable of giving a befitting reply if any "superpower" hurts the country's pride. His stern remarks came against the backdrop of the ongoing face-off between India and China in eastern Ladakh.

Underlining the point that India is a peace-loving country and does not want conflict, Rajnath, however, said, "We don't want war and we are in favour of protecting everyone's security but I want to say this in clear terms that if any superpower wants to hurt our pride then our soldiers are capable of giving them a befitting reply."

Making this point, he also reiterated that India has always maintained that it wants peace and friendly ties with its neighbours. "It always wanted peace and friendly ties with its neighbours because it's in our blood and culture," he said at the fifth



Armed Forces Veterans' Day at the Headquarters Training Command of the Indian Air Force in Bengaluru.

On the ongoing tension at the border, Rajnath said the Indian soldiers displayed exemplary courage and patience and if that can be narrated then every Indian will feel proud.

He hailed the Indian soldiers who showed extraordinary courage in "eliminating terrorists on the Pakistan soil". Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat was present on the occasion.

The Defence Minister's observations came at a time when several rounds of military and diplomatic-level talks between India and China have

so far failed to break the logjam.

The Corps Commanders of the two armies have met eight times in the last few months to find ways to disengage and de-escalate. Similarly, the diplomatic-level talks are also on but no headway was made.

At present, more than one lakh troops from both sides are facing each other at the 1,700-km long Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. The Indian Army has ensured that its troops now manning the border in temperature dipping to minus 30 degrees are adequately provided with winter clothing and prefabricated heated huts to withstand the cold.

In a first in over 50 yrs, R-Day to be celebrated without a chief guest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There will be no chief guest this year at the Republic Day parade at the Rajpath. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was earlier supposed to be the main guest but had to withdraw later due to emergency situation created by the new strain of corona in his country.

Incidentally, it will be the first time since 1966 that the Republic Day parade will have no chief guest. As it is, the celebrations this year will be on a subdued note due to the pandemic. The parade route is shortened and will now end at the National Stadium instead of the Red Fort in previous years. Moreover, there will be restrictions on number of spectators desirous to see the parade

at the Rajpath and not more than 25,000 people will be able to attend it. In previous years, more than one lakh people used to throng the venue besides scores of them lining on each side of the parade route.

Addressing a Press conference, the External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said due to the situation arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has decided that this year there will not be any foreign head of State or Government as the chief guest for India's Republic Day event.

The last time the parade did not have a chief guest was in 1966 when Indira Gandhi was sworn in as the Prime Minister on January 24 after the demise of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri on January 11.

Key accused in Ormanjhi murder case held

Police takes Sheikh Bilal to crime scene

MRITUANJAY KUMAR ■ RANCHI

In a major breakthrough Ranchi Police on Thursday arrested the main accused in the Ormanjhi murder case — Sheikh Bilal.

Ranchi, Rural Superintendent of Police (SP), Noushad Alam informed that on the basis of information received from sources, Bilal has been arrested from Kute village in Sikidari. Bilal's first wife and son are already in police custody in the Sufia murder case for interrogation, he added.

Alam said that the Special Investigating Team (SIT) took Bilal to the spot where he had killed Sufiya Parveen and recreated how he had given the result to the crime. "Police raided Kute village after getting a tip off that Bilal was trying to escape from the place. Police reached the spot and arrested him when he was travelling by an auto rickshaw," he added.



Prime accused of the Ormanjhi murder case, Sheikh Bilal (Yellow jacket) after being arrested by police, at Ormanjhi forest near Ranchi on Thursday



woman's identity and find the skull, which was hidden in the farm of Bilal. Sheikh Bilal is a resident of Chandve, Ranchi. The head of the woman was recovered on January 12 from a farm located some distance away from her house. The deceased Sufia was the second wife of accused Bilal.

Ranchi Police recovered the woman's naked and beheaded body from the bushes behind Sainath University on January 3. Neither the police was able to identify the deceased nor there was any information about the severed head. Teams of dozens of policemen were constantly looking for the forest and surrounding areas, but

they could not find any clue in connection with the case.

Amidst the allegations and counter-allegations, the Ranchi police was under tremendous pressure to find out the killers. SSP Surendra Kumar Jha and his entire team toiled hard to get leads about the killed young woman and the killers. All the sources were explored. Information was collected about missing cases of girls from police stations of nearby districts including Ranchi.

The SSP asked his sources to identify the girl, who may be missing but her case has not been reported at the police station. On January 10, the police source found a family, whose married daughter was missing for the last few days, but they did not inform the police about this. The family is a resident of Chatwal in Chanhoni police station area. Police brought family members to Rajendra Institute of Medical Science (RIMS) in Ranchi to identify the woman's body. After seeing the body, the family members accepted that it was the body of their daughter Sufia Parveen. The family members confirmed the identity on the basis of an old burn mark in one foot of the dead body.

CAPSULE

DELHI'S AIR QUALITY TURNS 'SEVERE'

New Delhi: Delhi's air quality turned "severe" on Thursday due to the prevailing "extremely unfavourable" conditions for dispersion of pollutants. Government agencies said.

41 WB MLAS READY TO JOIN BJP: VIJAYWARGIYA

Indore: BJP general secretary Kailash Vijaywargiya claimed on Thursday that he has a list of 41 MLAs "who support" the Mamata Banerjee Government in West Bengal but are ready to join the BJP.

DEVOTEES TAKE DIP IN GANGA ON SANKRANTI

Haridwar: Lakhs of devotees from different parts of the country took a holy dip in the Ganga at Har ki Pauri and other ghats here on Thursday on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.



COVID -19 Vaccination control room comes up in Jamshedpur

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

The health department has come up with a COVID-19 control room in the district surveillance office. A circular to this effect was issued by the Health Department on Thursday.

District Additional Chief Medical Officer Dr. Sahir Pal informed that the control room comprises of senior officials of the health department. The team members will meet daily in the evening to monitor the storage and transportation of the vaccine. He went on to inform that the room has been at the forefront of compiling COVID-19-related data.

"The team has been given different sets of responsibilities, it will become easier for them to focus on specific challenges and take up the matter during the meetings," said another official.

He informed all members of the Control Room will meet every week and plan the future course of action in the vaccination programme. The members of the control room will



also identify various challenges in running the immunization programme.

The team will create a database of beneficiaries, arranging cold chains for proper maintenance of the Covid-19 vaccine, extensively disseminating the vaccination work, checking the suitability of the vaccination session site, one day before vaccination all the designated vaccination centers and related cold chain centers will be inspected and cells have been formed for successful implementation of the vaccination and to maintain law and order and peace during the vaccination session.

The vaccine, it said, will generate protective levels of

antibodies in the body in two weeks after taking the second dose.

The district administration is all set to administer the COVID -19 vaccines to health workers from January 16. The drive will first start from MGM Medical College and Hospital. About 8000 health workers have been registered for the initiative. According to the district administration, eight centres have been set up for the initiative. These include MGM Medical College, Tata Main Hospital (TMH), Urban CHC Birsnagar, Sadar Hospital Khasmahal, CHC Potka, CHC Bahragora, CHC Patmada and CHC Ghatshila.

Latehar, Garhwa to get Covishield vaccine from Palamu

PNS ■ DALTONGANJ

Latehar and Garhwa districts have to take Covishield doses from Palamu where the consignment has arrived from Ranchi. District reproductive child health officer Anil Kr Singh said Garhwa is to get 6,350 doses of Covishield vaccine while Latehar is to get 3,820 doses of the same.

Singh said the respective officers of these two districts have been asked to collect the doses on Thursday. Pregnant women and children below eighteen years of age are not to be given the dose right now.

The Covishield vaccine vial has no VVM. It is vaccine vial monitor. The Covishield vaccine vial is to be utilized within four hours of the opening of the vial.

Singh reminded that Covishield vaccine vial will be opened for administering injection only when ten beneficiaries will be around.

He said one vial contains ten doses and when ten beneficiaries will be around its use will be proper and accurate. He

Pregnant women and children below eighteen years of age are not to be given the dose right now

said it is to minimize any loss of the vaccine as it is costly.

Asked if there are just five or six or seven beneficiaries around and vaccination session site gets over for the day at 5 PM then how to handle these people to which Singh said these will be requested to come next day.

He said every single drop of the vaccine is precious. A little co operation from the beneficiaries will mean a lot to help health team.

There will be no Covishield administration on the days earmarked for the routine immunization which are Thursday and Saturday said Anil Kr Singh.

Vaccine reaches Bokaro

PNS ■ BOKARO

The Covid-19 vaccine brought from RCH, Namkum, Ranchi, reached Bokaro finally, where the Civil Surgeon in charge Dr. NP Singh along with the magistrate on duty received the vaccine and placed the vaccine in the refrigerator of the store in the ANM center located at Sadar Hospital Complex, where 24 x 7 electricity has been properly arranged. According to the information, dosage of 10,700 vaccines has been provided.

Vaccination will start nationwide on January 16, 2021. All formalities related to this will be completed on 14 and 15 January. A total of 12 cold chain points have been built across the district, vaccination will be done at Covid Center in all the blocks including the subdivision hospital.

It is to be noted that about 7500 health workers are to be



vaccinated. About 100 people will be vaccinated daily. The information of all the people taking the vaccine has been uploaded on the portal. There will be a helpdesk, waiting area, vaccination room and observation room per vaccine center. Also, after the verification of the photo ID, an individual would be vaccinated. On the other hand, bio-waste management has also been strengthened.

8,000 health workers to be administered vaccines

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

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The task force committee, which will be overlooking the vaccination programme, had met, and the modalities were finalised. "The vaccines have

reached Ranchi and it will reach the city tonight and will be stored in the freezers at the Leprosy Department at Sakchi, thereafter they will be dispatched to the respective session sites in frozen containers. The challenge is to maintain the temperature between 2° and 8° Celsius, said RN Jha Civil Surgeon.

In the first phase, the vaccines will be administered to health workers, including doctors, nurses, paramedic staff, lab assistants, ministerial staff, ANM and Aasha workers. The vaccine will be administered in two shots of 0.5 ml of dosage per injection. The second dosage will be given in 28 days or after three weeks.

After the vaccination process, everyone will be kept under observation for 30 minutes and if there is any adverse reaction, he or she will be

shifted immediately to the nearest biggest hospital, which has already been identified.

The district has also constituted an AEFI (Adverse Event Following Immunisation) committee, comprising a cardiologist, neurologist, neurosurgeon, general physician and anaesthesiologist, and the observation process will be monitored by them. The district administration and the Health department had conducted two rounds of Covid-19 vaccination dry run successfully. The dry run is an 'end to end testing' of the Covid vaccination process. The district administration has also come up with an action plan for easy administering of COVID-19 vaccine. The action plan involves transportation, storage and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine in the district.

MLA demands stoppage of trains at Katras

PNS ■ DHANBAD

As the members of the divisional railway users consultative committee demand for more train and rationalization in fare, Baghmara MLA Dhullu Mahto in a memorandum to Dhanbad divisional

railway Manager (DRM), has demanded for stoppage of important trains running now at Katras station. Mahto met the DRM Asish Bansal and advocated for the stoppage claiming that the stoppage may help thousands of population residing in rural areas for

reaching to Ranchi, Deoghar and other parts of the country.

He placed demand for stoppage of Dhanbad Ranchi intercity, Mandar express, Ranchi-Dumka express besides others. Mahto said that if trains have resumed operation then stoppage must

be given at Katras station in larger interest of passengers.

DRM Asish Bansal assured that Dhanbad division would send a letter with strong recommendation to the Zonal headquarters at Hajipur for allowing a stoppage.

Meanwhile, the DRUCC

members also raised similar demand during a virtual meeting with the railway authorities. Besides they also have demanded for withdrawal of charging tatkal fare from passengers for the presently operating trains in different parts of country.

Tribals celebrate Tusu, cockfight under vigil

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

The district police have deployed 1500 forces along with around 200 women cops at different places in view of Makar Sankranti and Tusu festival at different places of the city.

An official said that they have deployed a large number of police personnel at Domuhani, the meeting point

of rivers. All the police station OCs have been directed to increase vigil along approach roads to major ghats and also to picnic spots as people will also throng picnic spots.

Tusu festivities were held at Domuhani, Bhillaipahari, Ghaghidhi, Parsudhi and even in Ghatshila drawing thousands of tribals.

Special vigil is being held at

crowded places which witness cockfights to avoid any law and order situation. For those offices going professionals who avoid street food and prefer to binge at eateries inside the market areas will have to compromise.

Tusu festivity gripped the city as the tribals in and around the city celebrated the harvest festival, with traditional fanfare.

Bangladeshi prisoner sent back after completion of term

SHAILESH SHARMA ■ HAZARIBAG

The jail administration of Jai Prakash Narayan Central Jail has handed over a Bangladeshi prisoner to the officials of Border Security Force of Meru to hand him over to the Bangladeshi officials on the India-Bangladesh border after completion of his jail term in India.

Jamil Choudhary was in the detention center of

Hazaribag jail for the past six months. The Jail Superintendent Kumar Chandrasekhar said that Choudhary had entered India without VISA and passport. He was in jail for this act. He was in the detention center in the Dumka jail. The detention center was prepared according to the direction of the Central Government. From Dumka detention center Jamil Choudhary was transferred

to Hazaribagh central jail.

The Superintendent said that after completion of all the formalities he was handed over to the BSF training center Meru. He said that the BSF officials will hand over him to the Bangladeshi officials on the India-Bangladesh border.

The jail Superintendent greeted him with a rose and conveyed him best wishes for the future.

The Chinese Future Plan

■ DR BANSHIDHAR RUKHAIYAR

President Xi Jinping, the most powerful leader of China after Mao Zedong, laid out his future plan for China in the next thirty years starting with the 14th Five Year Plan (2021-25) period while addressing the leading cadre of the Communist Party of China on Monday. He emphasized on four points as reported by the Hong Kong based Chinese mouthpiece, South China Morning Post. He said that "time and momentum are on China's side". Secondly, he underlined the implementation of new development philosophy in the new development phase of the country. Thirdly, he warned his countrymen of dangers lurking in the wings on the path of Chinese ambitions and finally building a modern socialist society full of affluence and prosperity.

Xi's assertions are statement of a leader who is not apologetic of creating a mess of the deadly Corona virus, even if we do not call it the Chinese virus out of diplomatic courtesy. He is literally laughing at the miseries of the people of the world and has the audacity to tell that it was an opportune moment to make the hay. New development philosophy is really needed for China because it has lost the faith of the people all over the world and it would have serious ramifications on her economy. What has saved China so far is the vested business interest of capitalists in China cutting across nations. Economic leverage that China enjoys has saved the day for it. But this cannot last long as the upsurge of nationalist sentiment would overpower this economic leverage and force the dollar hungry capitalists to fall in line with the nationalist sentiments of their countries.

Xi Jinping has correctly realized the potential threat which China has created for



itself because of its continued belligerence and hegemonic advances in its vicinity which is thoroughly illegal and uncalled for. The Covid trauma would pass off like all other maladies that afflicted the world in the past. The West led by America would definitely make a powerful alliance against China thereafter which would be highly detrimental to Chinese interests. The days of support for One China Policy are over. The process has already started with Japan abandoning her policy of peaceful economic growth. It has passed a huge defence budget with a fifteen year plan to enhance its defence capabilities specially aimed against China. Australia has refused to be browbeaten by China and the Chinese economic blockade of Australian goods and minerals is equally hurting China, if not more. Four Eyes Group, which shares logistics, is going to be joined by Japan, which would make it extremely strong in terms of information sharing because of strategic location of Japan in the Pacific with a close proximity to China. The Chinese war of attrition with India is on and China is not likely to come out of it without losing some sheen.

The Chinese spokespersons have done their best to buy trouble for China by putting their foot in their mouth time and again. Their tall talks would not lead them anywhere. The political commentary published in Mandarin in China clearly reflect their nervousness. These articles speak about "manag-

ing" America and India. It clearly means that both Covid and misadventure on the Indian border have landed them in a soup they had not anticipated. Still, the language of these articles is lewd and loud.

Xi Jinping is facing serious problems at home. Jack Ma is not only critical of Xi, but his criticism of economic policy has possibly landed him in trouble as he has not been seen for the last two months since he spoke his mind. Similarly, a big property dealer is missing for quite some time after he criticized govt. policy. Covid has broken the supply chain of China and it cannot be substituted by domestic demands. No developmental model can be successful for China without the active participation of the western economy.

Therefore, China is in a bad condition and Xi's address is simply to lift the sagging morale of the people which is being dubbed by Chinese commentators as a sign of confidence and conviction. If it was so, there was no need to speak of a new phase and model of development. The western economies would gradually close their doors for China. They would not enter into any defence deal of highly advanced fighter planes and weapons for the fear of reverse engineering.

Hence, the Chinese plan cannot be executed as Xi has planned. The international community is wary of this country and there is no love and trust that has not been lost between China and the world. The Chinese economy is slowing down too. There is growing unemployment and restlessness in the youth as per the reports filtering out of China. These problems are difficult to handle and the spirited address of Xi would not suffice.

The author is the Registrar of Vinoba Bhawe University in Hazaribag. The views expressed by the author are his own.

The Capitol Siege is symptomatic of a deeper malady

■ DR BANSHIDHAR RUKHAIYAR

The capital damage inflicted upon democracy by the Capitol siege is symptomatic of a deeper malady and the proverbial tip of the iceberg. It is really astonishing that the police and intelligence agencies of New York City failed to anticipate such an unprecedented and unfortunate incident that was hanging in the air for a quite few days. It is now revealed that bureaucracy and intelligence agencies had some input regarding such a possible flare up but they did not take any pre-emptive action. Trump delivered an inflammatory speech in the morning of the day of catastrophe, challenging the electoral outcome, and it was clear by then that some serious trouble was in the offing.

There was no difference between Trump and Vice President Mike Pence till the last. It was common knowledge in the corridors of power that Mike Pence had no guts to stand up to Trump and he had been hanging around the Oval Office uninvited for all his term as Vice President. Pence changed his stance only after he had no option but to convene the meeting of the Senate and certify the victory of Biden much against the will of Trump.

Trump had been pressurizing Pence not to facilitate the certification of the victory of Biden. Pence took legal opinion which clearly said that he could not do so. Thereafter, he had no option but to convene the meeting of the Senate and certify the victory of Biden. It became clear after Pence tweeted the legal opinion. This turn of events enraged Trump and the Republican supporters ran after the blood of Pence and placards with slogans "Hang Mike Pence" were flaunted at the Capitol Hill.

Pence could have broken down but he didn't and saved his place in history. In the process, he lost the constituency of voters in the Republican Party and his chances of running for presi-

Trump had been pressurizing Pence not to facilitate the certification of the victory of Biden. Pence took legal opinion which clearly said that he could not do so. Thereafter, he had no option but to convene the meeting of the Senate and certify the victory of Biden.

dency as a Republican candidate. It is noticeable that only a few Republican Senators supported the impeachment of Trump. Democrats wanted to impeach Trump so as to seal his chances of running for presidency for the second term in 2024. The number of Republican senators increased from five to ten in the second impeachment. However, no Republican senator was vocal in condemning Trump and his supporters save and except Liz Cheney, who said that there had "never been a greater betrayal."

It goes to the credit of Pence that he did not cave in to the pressure of Democrats either and refused to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove Trump a few days before the completion of his term as the provision empowers him to remove the President on the grounds of ill health or infirmity alone.

It is really a cause of concern that Trump and his team explored the possibility of turning down the popular verdict till the end and almost all the Republicans stood by him. It is also indicative of the conviction of a large number of Republican Senators and supporters that there was some sort of rigging in elections. It does not bear well for democracy in America. It is also a bad omen for democracy across the world that social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have developed such a clout that they can lock the account of a person like President of America at will. Just imagine what they can do to the freedom of speech of a common man. The time has come that a proper mechanism should be put in place to con-

trol these social media platforms, otherwise they could wreck havoc on popular mandate.

The controversy is not going to die down easily as Trump supporters have vowed to continue their fight in hundreds of conversations on a range of internet platforms other than Facebook and Twitter. Also, the alternative social media platforms like Signal would gain in popularity in due course of time because of these developments.

The American establishment will have to examine the support base of the hardliners as well as the causes of their dissatisfaction with the system. The uneducated American youth who leave studies after schooling find it hard to compete with educated immigrants and feel that these immigrants snatch their job opportunities. So, they demand the abolition of birthright citizenship for immigrants. Somehow and somewhere the White Race superiority syndrome also works. These issues may be debatable but they need to be addressed to. The policy of open arms welcome for those immigrants who are in distress or persecuted is good, but many of them come to America in search of a quality life and discretion need to be applied in such cases.

Let us hope and pray that this storm passes off peacefully and the transition takes place smoothly. It is necessary for democracy all over the world.

The author is the Registrar of Vinoba Bhawe University in Hazaribag. The views expressed by the author are his own.

Daytime flights to resume from Jan 16

20 flights daily from Ranchi

PNS ■ RANCHI

The Birsamunda Airport in Ranchi will resume regular flight services from Saturday after keeping daytime flights suspended for two months due to maintenance of the runway, airport authorities said on Thursday, adding that at least 20 flights will fly from the State capital daily from January 16.

Flights remained suspended from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm here from November 16 to keep the runway free for "carpeting". The suspension of flights during the aforementioned period led to rescheduling of several flights and left travelers with no option but to either take early morning flights or flights post-sunset, officials said. Besides, many connecting flights via Kolkata or other nearer airports were rescheduled and passengers had to take connecting flights from New Delhi instead, sources said.

"Around 17 flights took off from Ranchi and landed here every day during the past two months. From Saturday, the number of flights will increase to 20, and we are expecting more flights from Ranchi in the days to come," said Deputy General Manager



A flight at Birsamunda International Airport in Ranchi

Pioneer photo

(Air Traffic Management) at Birsamunda Airport, Wilfred Kerketta.

However, the largest airport in Jharkhand was yet to achieve the pre-lockdown air traffic. "We had at least 30 flights before the lockdown was enforced. The number had increased gradually, but we are still 10 flights short of our pre-lockdown traffic," Kerketta added.

Last month, Ranchi started new direct flights to Chennai and the response has been positive, airport authorities said. "We are in talks with the state government to increase the number of flights from Ranchi and we are hopeful of getting more flights soon," Kerketta said.

The passenger footfall at the Birsamunda Airport in Ranchi has tripled since June, the Airport Authority of India (AAI) stated in December. However, the passenger footfall here was still less than half of what it used to be in pre-Covid

times, local airport officials said.

The AAI stated that the passenger traffic at the Ranchi airport had dropped down to 57,749 in the month of June, when travel restrictions were relaxed after strict lockdown since March. The passenger traffic shot up to 1,41,268 in November this year when more flights were allowed to ply, the AAI stated, lauding the airport staff here for their dedication.

The airport has expansion plans in the pipeline. It is likely to extend its runway, increase the length of the basic strip and construct an isolation bay on extra land that will be allotted to the AAI once the Cabinet gives its nod to the expansion plans, officials said.

The Ranchi airport also bagged the top position in India in Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI), as per a survey conducted by the Airport Authority of India (AAI) through a third-party surveying body in October last year.

Cong, BJP at loggerheads over DVC power dues deduction

PNS ■ RANCHI

The Jharkhand Government has expressed its displeasure over deduction of ₹714 crore as power dues of Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), with ruling parties (JMM, Congress) planning to reach out to people to 'expose the highhandedness of Centre'.

The Union Power Ministry on Wednesday deducted ₹714 crore from Jharkhand's account with the Reserve Bank of India towards clearing the dues of power generation company Damodar Valley Corporation.

State Congress spokesperson, Alok Dubey said, "We will fight Centre's highhandedness on two fronts—both in the Supreme Court and people's court. The State Government has decided to raise the issue at Supreme Court, also we will reach people with plea how centre is penalizing and creating problems for State Government."

Dubey said that Central Government subsidiary Central Coalfield Limited (CCL) owes more than ₹8000 crores as coal royalty to State, but despite several reminders the Coal Ministry has failed to pay the dues to State Government, on the other hand Union Power Ministry has deducted money twice from Jharkhand's account with the Reserve Bank of India towards clearing the dues of power generation company Damodar Valley Corporation.



The Jharkhand Government last week decided to make an exit from 'Tripartite Agreements' between Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the Central Government (through Union Power Ministry) and State Governments/UTs on power dues.

Jharkhand decided to withdraw from the agreement as in October last year a sum of Rs 1417.50 Crore, was auto debited from Jharkhand's account with the Reserve Bank of India without consulting the State.

Dubey also claimed that Congress will reach out to people informing people about the Centre double standards in helping and cooperating State Governments. "The Centre has different policy for NDA ruled states and non-NDA ruled states, as BJP government primary focus is to penalize non-NDA ruled states," added Dubey.

However, the BJP claimed that the State Government is politicizing the issue to hide its incompetence. State BJP spokesperson Pratul Shahdeo said, "The Energy department in the month of November and December made revenue collection, but when it comes to paying back the dues to DVC the State Government is giving the excuse of lack of funds."

Shahdeo also said that there is part of lack of communication channel between State Government and Power Ministry in clearing the dues as on Power Ministry on several occasions had asked state government to clear its dues, but the state government has not taken any initiative.

Sources said the Union power ministry had on September 11 written to the state government, putting it on notice of 15 days for payment of the outstanding dues to the DVC.

'Final' hearing on Marandi's case likely on Jan 19

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Assembly speaker Rabin Nath Mahto on Thursday pleaded at the High Court that he will not proceed further on suo-moto notice to Babul Marandi attracting the 10th schedule of the Constitution—which deals with defection.

The divisional Bench of Jharkhand High Court comprising Chief Justice, Dr Ravi Ranjan and Justice SN Prasad on hearing the pleas of both the sides fixed the next hearing on January 19. From the Speaker's



BJP legislative party leader Babul Marandi

Pioneer photo

side, senior advocate Kapil Sibal was appearing, while from Marandi's side senior advocate RN Sahay appeared.

Sibal arguing for the Speaker said that the speaker has decided not to proceed further on suo-moto notice to Marandi under the 10th schedule of the Constitution which deals with defection.

Marandi's counsel RN Sahay pleaded that when a wrong has been detected in rule it should be decided whether it will remain or not; it is the Court that will decide. The

hearing began at 2.15 pm and continued till 4 pm, with the Court hearing the arguments of both the parties.

The Court after hearing the arguments of both the parties fixed the next hearing on January 19. Sources said that Jharkhand High Court is likely to pronounce its judgement on January 19 as Speaker's petition to the Supreme Court in this case has been dismissed.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain a special leave petition filed by the Speaker of Jharkhand Assembly challenging the stay

order by the Jharkhand High Court on the disqualification notice served on Babul Marandi.

A bench headed by the Chief Justice of India had said that the bench was not inclined to entertain the plea as the High Court is set to hear the writ petition filed by Marandi.

The Apex Court while disposing of the SLP, also requested the High Court to dispose of the matter 'peremptorily'.

On December 17, last year the high court had stayed the show cause notice served on Marandi for alleged violation of

10th schedule of the constitution till January 13 and has asked the Speaker to not to take any coercive action against him.

Marandi, an MLA from Dhanwar constituency of the State has contended before the High Court that the Assembly Speaker has no jurisdiction to initiate proceedings against him as the merger of his party--Jharkhand Vikas Morcha-Pragatantrik (JVM-P)--into the BJP and his joining the BJP were not at all connected with anti-defection laws.



JPCC President cum Finance Minister Rameshwar Orao, Rural Development Minister Alamgir Alam and other party workers during Makar Sankranti festival at Congress Bhawan in Ranchi on Thursday

Ratan Lal | Pioneer

Minimum temperature drops across State

PNS ■ RANCHI

Several parts across the State including the Capital city witnessed a drop in the minimum temperature levels on Thursday owing to chilly winds blowing in from the higher parts of the country.

According to the bulletin shared by the Meteorological Centre, Ranchi, the minimum temperature in Ranchi on January 14 was recorded at 8.5 degree Celsius which is 1.5 degrees below normal. However, on January 12 the minimum temperature in the City was recorded at 12.8 degree Celsius which was 2.8 degrees above normal.

Similarly, the minimum temperature in Daltonganj and Bokaro was also recorded at 7.5 and 7.1 degree Celsius which is 1.8 and 4.6 notches below normal.

Jamshedpur and Chaibasa were at 12.6 degree Celsius each which is 1.6 and 0.3 degrees above normal respectively.

"Presently the wind pattern across the State is normal and



People warm themselves around a bonfire on a cold winter evening in Ranchi on Thursday

Pioneer photo

north westerly winds are flowing. Cold chilly winds blowing in from the mountainous regions are bringing in the chill which is being felt across the State. In the next 48 hours, the minimum temperature in the southern parts of Jharkhand will drop by two-three degree Celsius. After that a slight change in the wind pattern is also expected in the next few days due to which the minimum temperature could increase by two- four degree Celsius," said Deputy Director, MET Centre, Ranchi Abhishek Anand.

The weathermen further stated that clear weather conditions are likely to prevail across Jharkhand in the coming days. The weather will also continue to remain dry and no cold wave like condition is expected across Jharkhand.

As per the communiqué shared by the Met Observatory Centre, Ranchi on January 14, from January 15 to January 18 the minimum temperature in Ranchi and its surrounding areas will be between 8 to 12 degree Celsius while the maximum temperature will be around 25-26 degree Celsius.

'Medical student was thrown alive in Patratu dam'

Police yet to get breakthrough in Pooja Bharti murder case

PNS ■ RANCHI

Even after two days, when Pooja Bharti's body, student of Hazaribagh Medical College, was found at Patratu Lake police is yet to get a breakthrough in the case. Till the time of filing of the report the district police said that the investigation is going on and very soon the police will reach any conclusion.

Bharti was a resident of Godda district of the State. Ramgarh Superintendent of Police (SP), Prabhat Kumar said that the investigation is going on to find out the reason of Bharti's death and the police will very soon crack the case and find out reason of her death. At present the police can't give information in con-



File photo of Pooja Bharti

Pioneer photo

nection with the case, he added.

The body of a medical student was found with tied hand and foot on Tuesday in Patratu Dam in Ramgarh. Kumar said that the post mortem report after finding the dead body, that showed that the Bharati died due to drowning in water.

"After the post-mortem report, it is being speculated that Pooja was thrown alive in the water with her hands and legs tied. Doctors said that no injury marks have been found on the body. This shows that the medical student was not

assaulted," said Kumar.

Hazaribagh DIG has formed a 16 member Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the leadership of Ramgarh SP. Hazaribagh Medical Hostel was also thoroughly investigated by Hazaribagh SP and Ramgarh SP, so that the case could be disclosed.

On Wednesday night, Agriculture Minister Badal reached the house of Pooja Bharati, in Godda. While meeting with her family members, Badal said that in every situation, the family of the deceased will get justice. The police are determined to find the reason for her with full vigor, he added.

The Minister's latter said that this incident is unfortunate. He claimed that the police will solve the murder case within 48 hours. "Hemant Sarkar is committed to women's safety. In view of the seriousness of the case, a 16-member investigation team has been formed," he added.

RMC continues cleanliness campaign across city

PNS ■ RANCHI

In order to make Ranchi a cleaner city, a campaign called 'Chalo Ranchi ko Ramnik Banayen' has been launched by the Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC) January 8 to January 15.

The campaign, launched as per the directives of Municipal Commissioner Mukesh Kumar, will focus on collecting garbage dump from various places across the State capital.

In this regard, on January 13, piles of long standing garbage was collected from Lalji Hilji Road, Project Building Road, Argora Chowk Kokar and various other places. The civic body has also started a toll free number- 0651 2200011 for Ranchites to lodge



A pile of garbage being lifted by RMC workers during a special drive, in Ranchi on Thursday

Pioneer photo

their complaints regarding garbage collection.

"The campaign launched by the Municipal Commissioner aims to clean the long standing

garbage found at various places across the City. As per the directives any calls received on the toll number also need to be addressed at the earliest," said

an RMC requesting anonymity.

The campaign is being monitored by Deputy Municipal Commissioner

Shankar Yadav and Kunwar Singh Pahan along with Assistant Municipal Commissioner Jyoti Kumar Singh. The entire campaign is also being monitored using drone cameras.

In this regard, beautification work of popular public places across the City has also been initiated by RMC. Steps of Pahari Temples and walls of Bada Talab have been painted with graffiti art by local artists in bright colours.

"Earlier the walls surrounding Bada Talab had posters and advertisements regarding various products and services. The walls have now been cleaned and painted with graffiti art highlighting the importance of cleanliness, stated the official.

INBRIEF

RAILWAYS REFUTE 'EXTRA FARE' REPORTS

The Indian Railways has refuted some of the news reports in sections of the media that Railways has been charging extra fares from passengers as misleading and not based on all the facts. A press communiqué stated that Festival / Holiday special trains were started as per the long standing practice to clear the rush. Festivals have been continuing and even today the harvest festival is being celebrated. This year there has been pent up demand on many sectors on which the festival trains were running. These festival trains have been continued to clear the rush. The fare for such trains has been kept little higher since 2015. Nothing new is being done this year. This is an established practice. It may be noted that Passenger operations have always been subsidized by railways. Railways bear loss for travel by passenger. Railways has been running trains in Covid times in most challenging circumstances. Running in low occupancy in many sections and still operating in public welfare.

IRCTC OFFERS INNOVATIVE AI SOLUTIONS

As a step towards development and application of latest technologies, the Indian Railway Catering And Tourism Corporation Ltd. (IRCTC), the professional catering and tourism arm of Railways and also the owner of one of the largest e-commerce and ticketing website in Asia-Pacific is now offering its successful Artificial Intelligence (AI) based solutions to various government organizations and corporate sectors across various disciplines and businesses. IRCTC was one of the premiere organizations in the country to develop and apply latest customer facilitation solutions in its internet ticketing site in the form of AI powered chatbots and virtual assistants using the technologies of Machine Learning (ML) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) in addition to AI. Through the 'ASK DISHA' chatbot the users can now get authentic, correct and instant answers to their queries that saves time and certainly enhances the user experience. IRCTC is now aiming to create artificial intelligence based solutions to help in seamless automation of customer engagement services for organizations across travel and tourism, retail, transportation, media, healthcare services, banking and financial services

BSNL, JHARKHAND CELEBRATES MAKAR SANKRANTI

Makar Sankranti function was organized on Thursday in Jharkhand Telecom Circle under the chairmanship of Neetu Singh, Chairperson of TWWO (TWWO) and Supriya Jaishwal, Director, TERM Jharkhand. On this occasion, blankets were distributed among all the cleaning workers, security guards and personnel working in the maintenance of the premises. Kite flying was also organized on this occasion. In this, mainly members of Poonam Kumari, Secretary TWWO, Babita Prasad, Anita, Neesi, Patricia, Sanjana, Namita etc. contributed mainly.



SAIL PENSION SCHEME PHASE-2

SAIL has introduced the SAIL Pension Scheme for its ex-employees and applications were invited covering ex-employees till 31.3.2015. The phase-2 of the SAIL Pension Scheme has been approved and Applications are now invited from the eligible ex-employees/beneficiaries under the SAIL Pension Scheme for the ex-employees separated till 31.3.2019. The process of receiving application has commenced on SAIL website (www.sail.co.in). The Applications from the eligible ex-employees/beneficiaries for the ex-employees separated till 31.3.2020 shall commence in due course. Release of Pension would be based on the seniority of the ex-employees in terms of date of separation. All ex-employees/dependents (where ex-employee is no more) are requested to visit the SAIL Web-site (<https://www.sail.co.in/en/sail-pension>) or the nearest SAIL Offices in your cities to ascertain the Eligibility, Nomination, Pension Options and other Terms & Conditions in terms of the SAIL Pension Scheme and for filling up of the application form under the SAIL Pension Scheme.



VIRTUAL MAKAR SANKRANTI AT SBPS

Sarala Birla Public School celebrated the onset of harvest festivals of Makar Sankranti, Lohri, Bihu, Pongal, Tusu and Sohrai with great enthusiasm. A number of fun filled activities and competitions were organized for all the classes. As kite flying is an intrinsic part of Makar Sankranti, tiny tots of KG I and KGII showcased their innovative and artistic side by making kites in vibrant and glittering colours. Children of Std. I and II made collage and paintings whereas students of Std.III to V made kites used in different countries during kite flying festivals like dragon kite, bird kite, leaf kite etc. The kites with magnificent designs and amazing patterns reflected the tradition around the world.



DPS STUDENTS SHINE IN COMPETITIONS

Students of DPS, Ranchi secured first position in the 50th Annual Quiz And Recitation Competition organized by Ramkrishna Mission Ashram Ranchi on the basis of points earned and also grabbed the second position on the basis of overall participation. A total of 250 students from the school had enrolled their participation in the Competitions. Due to constraints of Covid 19 the competitions were held on the Virtual Platform during the first week of January 2021 where thousands of students from across the state of Jharkhand had registered their active and ardent partaking. The Prize winners were lauded and applauded sufficiently by Principal Ram Singh, who said that such accomplishments always serve as a source of motivation and inspiration for other students.



Investigation trade-off

CBI raids 14 locations, 4 of its own officials



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday conducted searches at 14 locations including Delhi, Ghaziabad, Noida, Gurgaon, Meerut and Kanpur on the premises of four of its own officials, including two Deputy Superintendents of Police, an Inspector and a Steno besides private persons, including advocates, on allegations of compromising the investigation of certain cases on "extraneous pecuniary considerations".

In Ghaziabad, the searches were conducted at the CBI's premier training academy.

The four CBI personnel, including two DSPs were booked for allegedly receiving bribes to compromise investigation against companies accused of bank fraud.

While the agency did not give out much details about the case in which its own personnel are under probe, sources said the accused personnel are being investigated for allegedly taking huge amounts of

bribe from the accused companies in bank fraud cases being probed by the CBI.

The CBI officials booked by the agency are DSPs R K Rishi and R K Sangwan, Inspector Kapil Dhankad and Steno Samir Kumar Singh, they said.

The searches led to an embarrassing situation for the agency as it had to even search the premises of Rishi, who is posted in the CBI Academy, Ghaziabad where the Central anti-corruption agency trains and prepares its officers for future roles in the organisation.

In addition to CBI officers, cadets from foreign countries are also trained at the state-of-the-art academy in Ghaziabad.

Meanwhile, in a separate development the CBI conducted searches in an ongoing investigation of two separate cases which led to recovery of incriminating documents including alleged fake/forged ST certificates.

It was alleged in the first case that the accused Ramesh

Chand Meena, son of Chiranjil Lal obtained job for the post of Lower Division Clerk in Employees Provident Fund Organisation on July 24, 1985 at the strength of alleged fake/forged ST certificate purportedly issued by Sub Divisional Magistrate, Hindaun, Sawai Madhopur. However, the accused was allegedly hailing from Mathura (UP). It was further alleged that he was promoted to the post of Account Officer/Enforcement Officer after his joining by using benefits of the said ST certificate, the agency said.

In the second case, it was alleged that the accused Ramesh Chand Meena, son of Govind Ram got a job with MTNL under ST quota on the basis of an alleged forged/fake certificate purportedly issued by Sub Divisional Magistrate, Deeg (Rajasthan). However, he was allegedly a native of Hathras (UP).

It was further alleged that the accused joined MTNL and was appointed as Junior Telecom Officer (JTO) through departmental examination under ST Category. He retired as Senior Manager (Telephone) on July 31, 2018 from MTNL, New Delhi. It was also alleged that the accused had managed to get allotment of a DDA Flat under the benefits of ST quota in the year 1987.

Investigation in both the cases is continuing, it added.

Owaisi helped BJP in 2020 Bihar Assembly poll, claims Maharaj

Will do the same in upcoming UP, Bengal polls

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Notwithstanding the denial of Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, BJP MP from Unnao, Sakshi Maharaj, has created a political controversy by claiming that All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi had helped the BJP in the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections and that he would do the same in the coming elections in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

Owaisi had contested the Bihar elections winning five assembly seats in the Muslim majority areas, denying advantage to the RJD-led opposition against BJP-JDU-VIP combination that won the assembly poll.

The outspoken Unnao MP said as in Bihar, AIMIM's decision to contest the Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal elections will help the BJP register victory in both the States.

Opposition parties, including the Congress, had long alleged that AIMIM has been playing the role of 'BJP's B team'. The BJP MP's comments have apparently confirmed the suspicion and the charges leveled by the opposition against the Owaisi and the BJP.

"Khuda unko taakat de" (May God give him strength),



said Sakshi Maharaj adding "he helped us in Bihar and will help us (BJP) in Uttar Pradesh panchayat and Assembly polls and also in West Bengal," he said at Kannauj while on way to the National Capital.

Owaisi had earlier denied the charges of collusion with the BJP and made his intent of contesting Assembly poll in Bengal and UP quite clear. He had said that the opposition should "look within" to find reasons for its electoral defeats instead of blaming his party for it.

The AIMIM is presently all set to contest the upcoming panchayat polls in UP in alliance with the Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party.

Asked about the BJP MP's admission of AIMIM tactically helping BJP, Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi denied saying "tired and fatigued people are not helping BJP win as the party is scoring victories on its own strength".

Owaisi's party had recently contested Hyderabad Municipal elections and emerged as the third largest party winning 44 seats with TRS leading with 55, BJP second with 48 and Congress winning only two seats.

Polio drops plan delayed due to mega Covid jab drive

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the country gears up to launch the mega anti-Covid-jab drive for health workers on January 16, children in the age group of 0-5 years will have to wait to get their share of polio drops with the Government rescheduling the polio immunisation programme from earlier January 17 to January 31 across India.

"The massive country-wide COVID-19 vaccination drive will be rolled out by the Prime Minister from January 16. This would be the world's largest immunisation exercise. Therefore, it has been decided by the Health Ministry in consultation with the office of the President of India to reschedule the Polio vaccination day, also known as the National Immunisation Day (NID) or 'Polio Ravivar' to 31st January," the Ministry said in the statement.

The decision is in keeping with the stated policy of the Union Health Ministry to ensure that COVID management and vaccination services as well as non-Covid essential health services proceed in tandem without adversely impacting each other, said the Union Health Ministry in a statement here on Thursday.

The President will launch the Polio National Immunisation Day on 30th January by administering Polio drops to some children at the Rashtrapati Bhawan at 11:45 am, the statement said.

SC Bar body president Dushyant Dave resigns with immediate effect



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president Dushyant Dave resigned from his post with immediate effect on Thursday saying he has forfeited his right to continue.

Acting SCBA Secretary Rohit Pandey confirmed the development that the senior advocate has resigned with immediate effect.

Dave in his brief letter stated that the tenure of the Executive Committee of SCBA has already ended and it may not be possible to hold virtual elections as per schedule "due to reservations held by some lawyers".

"Following recent events, I feel that I have forfeited my right to continue as your Leader and so I hereby tender my Resignation from the post of the President of the SCBA with immediate effect. Our term has already come to an end.

"We sincerely decided to hold virtual election to elect a



new body. Now I find it may not be possible to hold them as per the schedule declared by the Election Committee due to reservations held by some of you. I understand their position and have no quarrel with it but to me any further continuation as the President in these circumstances will be morally wrong," the letter said.

Dave also expressed his gratitude to all the members of the SCBA.

"I must place on record my deep gratitude to each of you for being part of this EC and contributing immensely during Covid 19, perhaps the greatest challenge to mankind we will ever see in our lifetime. You have done proud to this Institution, the SCBA. It was a privilege to be with you. I wish you all lots of good luck for a better future," Dave said in his letter.

Priyanka appointed board member of Youth Innovation



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chaturvedi's appointment was done at the Board Meeting of the Commonwealth Youth Innovation Hub held virtually on January 6, 2021 from Kuala Lumpur

Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi was on Thursday appointed as Board Member of the Stakeholder Panel, Commonwealth Youth Innovation Hub, for a two-year term.

The Commonwealth Youth Innovation Hub is a platform to develop human capital to drive economic and societal innovation, foster unity and transform societies through sustainable impact. The Commonwealth Youth Innovation Hub was launched by the Prince of Wales during the 2017 Commonwealth Youth Summit in Malaysia. The hub also seeks to ensure that policy and government institutions are more effective contributors to development through the influence of youth voices.

The Commonwealth Youth Innovation Stakeholders Panel consists of Heads of Government, High Commissioners, Heads of International and Intergovernmental agencies. The stakeholder panel consists of Board Members, including the Chairperson of the Stakeholder Panel and Secretary of the Stakeholder

Panel.

As a Board Member of the Stakeholder Panel, Priyanka Chaturvedi will participate in meetings of the Commonwealth Youth Innovation Hub, represent the hub at meetings and events, and serve as an ambassador for the Commonwealth Youth Innovation Hub to promote the hub's vision and values.

Chaturvedi's appointment was done at the Board Meeting of the Commonwealth Youth Innovation Hub held virtually on January 6, 2021 from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and was attended by Dr. Kishva Ambigapathy, Esq - Global Chair - Commonwealth Youth Innovation Hub & Sumedh Gaikwad - Country Head, Commonwealth Youth Innovation Hub - India.

Chaturvedi is national spokesperson of Shiv Sena and was earlier in the Congress party.

Review policy of ban on supply of poultry from other States, Centre asks States



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has asked States to review policy of banning supply of poultry and poultry products from other States as there is no scientific report available that infection of Avian Influenza or bird flu viruses spread through processed products as this would add to the negative impact on the poultry industry.

"Further, there is no scientific report available. Consumption of well-cooked chicken and eggs does not pose any risk to humans," the ministry of animal husbandry and dairying said in its latest advisory to state governments urging state to review policy of banning supply of poultry products from other states amid scare of bird flu or avian influenza in 12 states across the country.

"Additional cases of avian influenza among crows have been confirmed in Dangs district of Gujarat. After successfully finishing the culling operations, Maharashtra and

Madhya Pradesh have completed sanitization activities. In Haryana, samples from four poultry farms have been confirmed to be positive for avian influenza (H5N8). The farms are: Maharaja poultry farm in Khatauli; Tara poultry farm, Batour and Singla poultry farm in Mauli village of Panchkula district of Haryana; the ministry said.

The ministry of animal husbandry and dairying has also requested Ministry of Civil Aviation to allow uninterrupted transportation of samples for expeditious testing of Avian Influenza in designated laboratories.

Meanwhile, Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Giriraj Singh on Thursday said the Delhi government's decision to open Ghazipur poultry market will send a positive message throughout the country, even as it asked states to ensure that all precautions are taken to curb the spread of bird flu. Bird flu outbreak has been confirmed in Delhi, Maharashtra,

Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat so far. Singh said: "Hope the decision to lift the ban on Ghazipur mandi will send a positive message throughout the country. I urged them to take precautions and not to panic."

He said the Centre had issued an advisory in October 2020 on bird flu and also set up control room."Had the advisory been followed, there would not have been panic in Delhi or other states," the minister said. Singh said he had a meeting with Delhi Deputy Chief Minister earlier in the day.

"There was positive discussion. Three mayors were also there in the video conference. The Delhi government has taken decision to open the Ghazipur mandi," Singh said, adding that it was decided that the MCDs will also take back their direction issued on banning sale of chicken and eggs in hotels and restaurants.

Annual adaptation cost to climate change for developing countries at \$70 billion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Annual adaptation costs in developing countries, including India, to the climate change are estimated at USD70 billion, but the figure could reach up to USD 300 billion in 2030, and whopping USD 500 billion in 2050.

However, while almost three-quarters of nations have some adaptation plans in place, most of them face financial and implementation fall "far short" of what is needed, said a UN report here, even as it called for stepping up public and private finance for adaptation on an urgent basis.

Though cumulative investment for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects under the four funds—the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund, and the International Climate Initiative (IKI)—stands at USD 94 billion, only USD 12 billion was spent on nature-based solutions, a tiny fraction of total adaptation and conservation finance, it added.

"Though countries have made progress in planning for climate change adaptation, significant gaps remain in financing such initiatives and bringing them the stage where they bring real protection against climate change impacts such as droughts, floods and sea-level rise," said the United Nations environment report.

Released on Thursday by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the 2020 Adaptation Gap Report, pointed out that as temperatures rise and climate change impacts intensify, nations must urgent-



ly step up action to adapt to the new climate reality or face serious costs, damages and losses.

"The hard truth is that climate change is upon us," Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director, said in a news release announcing the findings.

"Its impacts will intensify and hit vulnerable countries and communities the hardest, even if we meet the Paris Agreement goals of holding global warming this century to well below 2 degrees Celsius and pursuing 1.5 degree Celsius."

Annual adaptation costs in developing countries are estimated at USD70 billion, but the figure could reach up to USD300 billion in 2030, and USD 500 billion in 2050. Almost three-quarters of nations have some adaptation plans in place, but financing and implementation fall "far short" of what is needed, said the report.

Adaptation is a key pillar of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It aims to reduce countries' and com-

munities' vulnerability to climate change by increasing their ability to absorb impacts.

The UNEP report also underscored the importance of nature-based solutions as low-cost options that reduce climate risks, restore and protect biodiversity, and bring benefits for communities and economies.

The UNEP has now urged all nations to pursue the efforts outlined in its December 2020 Emissions Gap Report, which called for a green pandemic recovery and updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that include new net-zero commitments.

"However, the world must also plan for, finance and implement climate change adaptation to support those nations least responsible for climate change but most at risk," the UN agency said adding that "while the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to hit the ability of countries to adapt to climate change, investing in adaptation is a sound economic decision."

Modi to address Startup India Int'l Summit tomorrow

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Saturday interact with startups and address a global summit being organised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, according to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The Prarambh: Startup India International Summit is being organised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on January 15-16.

Prime Minister Modi will interact with startups and address the summit on January 16 at 5 PM via video conferencing, the PMO said in a

statement.

The two-day summit is being organised as a follow-up of the announcement made by the prime minister at the fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu in August 2018 wherein India committed to host the BIMSTEC Startup Conclave.

The summit marks the fifth anniversary of the Startup India initiative, launched by the prime minister on January 16, 2016.

With participation from over 25 countries and more than 200 global speakers, the summit will be the largest startup confluence organised by the Government of India since the launch of the Startup India initiative, the PMO said.

UK new Covid strain cases in India reach 109

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of people infected with the new UK variant of SARS-CoV-2 in India has reached 109 at present, the Ministry of health and family welfare said on Thursday. On Wednesday, the number was 102 while till January 11, 96 people were found infected with the new strain which is said to be more lethal.

"The total number of persons found infected with the new UK variant genome stands at 109 on Thursday," the ministry said in a statement here. All these people have been kept in single room isolation in designated healthcare facilities by respective state governments, it said.

"Their close contacts have also been put under quaran-

tine. Comprehensive contact tracing has been initiated for co-travellers, family contacts and others. Genome sequencing on other specimens is going on," the ministry said.

Meanwhile, the ongoing trend of contraction of India's daily new Covid cases continues with India recording less than 20,000 daily new cases since the last seven days.

In the last 24 hours, only 16,946 persons were found to be infected with COVID in India. In the same period, India also registered 17,652 new recoveries ensuring a net decline of 904 cases in the Active Caseload.

Daily deaths in India are on a sustained decline. Less than 300 daily deaths have been registered for the last 20 days.

India's Case Fatality Rate stands at 1.44 per cent with 22

Portable testing laboratory for genome sequencing at IGIA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To ensure early detection of new mutant variants of Covid-19, SpiceHealth in collaboration with CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB) has set up a portable testing laboratory for genome sequencing at Delhi's Indira

Gandhi International airport for all positive samples from international travellers. The lab was inaugurated by Dr VK Paul, Member (Health)/NITI Aayog in the presence of Dr Anurag Agrawal, Director, CSIR-IGIB, Ajay Singh, CMD, SpiceJet and Avani Singh, CEO, SpiceHealth.

States/UTs have cases fatality rate less than the national average.

The active caseload of the country stands at 2,13,603. The share of active cases in the total positive cases has further shrunk to 2.03 per cent.

India's Total Recoveries

stand at 10,146,763 on Thursday. Kerala has reported the maximum number of single day recoveries with 5,158 newly recovered cases. 3,009 people recovered in Maharashtra in the past 24 hours followed by 930 in Chhattisgarh.

India airs concern over violence in Afghanistan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday described the targeted killing of journalists and civil society members in Afghanistan as an attempt to suppress freedom of expression and pitched for an "immediate and comprehensive" ceasefire to lay the ground for a meaningful peace process in the country.

Expressing deep concern over the killings, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said India stands with the people of Afghanistan in their journey towards peace and these attacks are contrary to the spirit of the peace process and should immediately stop. Asked about National

Security Adviser Ajit Doval's two-day visit to Afghanistan, Srivastava said at a media briefing that his discussions with Afghan leaders focused on bilateral relations and the Afghan peace process.

Doval called on President Ashraf Ghani, and held talks with Afghan peace negotiator Abdullah Abdullah, Afghan National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib, Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar and former president Hamid Karzai.

"In the past few weeks, we have received inputs of several attacks on journalists and civil society activists in Afghanistan. The targeted

TMC MP Shatabdi joins rebel ranks

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Banners of rebellion continue to unfurl and flutter in Mamata Banerjee's Bengal with actor-turned TMC parliamentarian Shatabdi Roy becoming the latest in the line of rebels to sing in rebellious note.

The three-time MP from Birbhum has written on her Facebook handle that she might take the final decision in a couple of day's time citing reasons of being ignored in her own party.

If she quits the TMC she will be the fourth heavyweight leader to leave the party in a month's time. Roy's declaration comes within a month of Bengal Ministers Suwendu Adhikari and Laxmi Ratan Shukla and TMC MP Sunil Mandal quitting the party.

Expressing displeasure at being constantly ignored by a section of the leadership Roy has said that she would "take a decision about my future in a couple of day's time."

Rahul hails Tamil tradition of Jallikattu in Madurai

CHENNAI: An unprecedented crowd gathered at Avaniyapuram near Madurai to greet former Congress president Rahul Gandhi who paid a day's visit to the State on Thursday to witness the traditional bull taming sport of Jallikattu.

Addressing the thousands who had turned up to welcome him, Rahul Gandhi said that watching the taming of bulls was like 'experiencing' Tamil culture and history in action.'

The Congress in its election manifestos in 2009 and 2014 had assured the people that if voted back to power, the party would ban once and for ever the jallikattu sports.

While on his way back to the airport, Rahul Gandhi told media persons that he would continue to stand by the farmers of the country who are agitating against the Farm Bills. He lambasted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his indifference to the woes of the farmers.

PNS

Bengal polls may be declared in Feb

Kolkata: The dates of Bengal Assembly elections may be declared as early as in the month of February, Election Commission sources said adding theelection process might be wrapped up by the end of April.

A full bench of the Commission will visit Bengal anytime after January18 during which it will take stock of situations before taking a finaldecision, sources said. Deputy Election Commissioner Sudip Jain onThursday held meeting with Bengal Health Secretary and seniorofficials of the Education Department sources added. PNS

Mohan Bhagwat attends Pongal fest

CHENNAI: It was a Pongal with a difference for residents of Ponniammanmedu village, far away from Chennai city. An ordinary RSS worker in the village had a special guest for breakfast and it turned out to be none other than the Sarsangchalak Dr Mohan Bhagwat who turned up dressed like a Tamilian in veshti, shirt and angavastram (shawl). Dr Bhagwat exchanged Pongal greetings with the family and had an interaction with the three-year old daughter of the RSS worker who was surprised by the fluency with which the Sarsangchalak spoke in Tamil.

PNS

NCP Min refuses to defend son-in-law held in drug case

Mumbai: A day after his son-in-law Sameer Khan was arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Maharashtra's Minority Affairs Minister and NCP chief spokesperson Nawab Malik said that "no one is above law"

"Nobody is above the law and it should be applied without any discrimination. Law will take its due course and justice will prevail. I respect and have immense faith in our judiciary, Malik tweeted.

Malik's daughter Nilofar is married to Bandra resident Sameer Khan, who was arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Wednesday night after day-long grilling.

Khan was produced before a Magistrate's court, which remanded him in NCB's custody till January 18.

Coming to Malik's defence, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said: "There are no personal allegations against Nawab Malik. The person converted (Malik's son-in-law) must cooperate with the concerned agency".

Sasmeer's arrest came a day after it arrested Ramkumar Tiwari, one of the brothers who own "Muchhad Paanwala" shop at Kemps corner in south Mumbai, in connection of cannabis-related drugs.

PNS

Jammu school education directorate to set up digital studio for teachers to deliver online lectures

Jammu: The Directorate of School Education (DSE) will set up a digital studio in Jammu division for teachers to deliver online lectures, a senior official said on Thursday.

The Union Ministry of Education has sanctioned establishment of the digital studio under the Samagra Shiksha scheme, Director of School Education in Jammu Anuradha Gupta said.

"While the directorate will set up the studio very soon, various measures to improve quality of education through digital interventions need to be put in place for making learning more efficient and effective," she said.

"Delivering best online lectures through a control room at the studio shall soon be made possible. Besides, keeping in view the National Education Policy 2020 for art-integrated learning and holistic

development of school children, they need to be exposed to art, culture, sports and other activities which are now perceived to be part of curriculum," she said.

The directorate will also launch an official YouTube channel -- 'shiksha darpan' - - to broadcast video content and e-magazine 'shiksha patrika' for written content contributed by students, teachers and other stakeholders.

As information technology-enabled platforms are increasingly becoming an important medium of information dissemination and will continue to be so in the post-COVID-19 scenario, the Directorate of School Education intends to use various social media platforms to reach out to students, their parents, staff members and other stakeholders in an effective manner and provide them a platform to showcase their talent, she said.

PTI

Scanning laptop, hard disk of expelled BJP leader held for sexual abuse of children: Police

Jalaun (UP): Police are looking into the laptop, DVD and hard disc recovered from an expelled BJP office-bearer who was arrested on charges of sexually exploiting two children, an official said on Thursday.

Police said they have recovered several video clips in which Ram Bihari Rathore, who was removed from the post of the Konch BJP vice-president after his arrest on Wednesday, is allegedly seen sexually exploiting children. Some 15 to 20 videos have so far been found from the seized laptop, DVD and hard disc, in which the accused is seen exploiting young children, Konch SHO Imran Khan said on Thursday.

The SHO said Rathore used to lure young children by giving them money and made their obscene videos to blackmail them. He used to threaten and exploit them sexually, the SHO

said, adding that teams of the cyber-crime cell are looking into the matter in detail.

To a question, Khan said it would be premature to link this case with the Irrigation Department junior engineer, who was arrested in November last year for alleged sexual exploitation of children and selling their videos and photographs of nefarious acts on dark net to paedophiles across the globe.

The arrested junior engineer, a resident of Chitrakoot district, is alleged to have victimised about 50 children in the age group of 5-16 years in the districts of Chitrakoot, Banda and Hamirpur.

According to police, they had seized a laptop, hard disk, sex toys, eight mobile phones, Rs 8 lakh in cash and other digital evidence carrying huge amount of child sexual abuse material from the engineer.

PTI

Cabinet expansion: Take up grievances with BJP high command, says Yediyurappa

Bengaluru: Amid simmering discontent post His cabinet expansion, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Thursday asked such sulking BJP leaders to take up the matter with the national leadership and urged them to refrain from making any remarks affecting the party.

The chief minister had expanded his cabinet on Wednesday after much deliberations and the exercise already saw some aspirants who could not make it publicly air their displeasure.

"If the BJP MLAs have any objection they can go to Delhi, meet our national leaders and give them all the information and complaints they have. I won't object to that but I ask them not to damage the party's reputation by talking ill," Yediyurappa told reporters in Bengaluru.

Noting that the central leaders will take a call on their complaints, he said the seniors in the party are aware of the facts.

Later, speaking to reporters in Davangere, he insisted he could do what was within his limits, on the matter and warned those speaking ill about him.

Yediyurappa, however, did not respond to queries on the non-induction of Rajarajeshwari Nagar MLA Munirathna, a former Congress man who joined the saffron party, despite the former's promise to induct him in his council of ministers.

Yediyurappa on Wednesday expanded his 17-month-old government by inducting seven new Ministers and dropping Excise Minister H Nagesh.

The other aspirants-- Basanagouda Patil, M P Renukacharya, Sathish Reddy, Thippa Reddy, S A Ramadass and A H Vishwanath, who could not make it have been quite vocal in expressing their displeasure.

Yatnal in particular has been critical of the chief minister and even alleged his family of 'hijacking' the party.

He had requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to end dynastic politics from Yediyurappa's family in Karnataka, which has a chief minister, an MP (B Y Raghavendra) and a BJP state vice president (B Y Vijayendra).

The CM has made those who are black-mailing him as Ministers.

PTI



Commuters move slowly on a street amid dense fog during a cold winter morning in Lucknow on Thursday

PTI

Ganga conservation to be part of UP syllabus

Lucknow: Students of the Uttar Pradesh Secondary Education Board (UPSEB) will now study the Ganga conservation subject at the high school and intermediate level.

This has been included as a subject at the initiative of the Namami Gange Department and Uttar Pradesh will be the first state to do so.

According to the government spokesman, a proposal to include Ganga conservation and prevention of water pollution in the curriculum has been prepared and the UPSEB has sent it to a committee of

Hindi experts for consideration.

Once the committee approves the proposal, the subject will be included in the syllabus. Students will learn ways to save the holy water of the Ganga from getting polluted and the journey of the Ganga from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal.

The idea is to link the Ganga cleanliness campaign with the youth and spread Prime Minister Narendra Modi's concept of 'Nirmal and Aviral Ganga' among children.

IANS

UP woman goes missing, cops lodge case against man under anti-conversion law

Gorakhpur (UP): Police have lodged a case against a Karnataka man for allegedly kidnapping a 19-year-old woman after befriending her, hiding his religious identity, police said on Thursday.

A missing report was lodged by the woman's father on January 5 after she did not return home from college, Station House Officer, Chiluatal police station, Neeraj Kumar Rai said.

"During an investigation and with the help of call records of the woman's mobile phone, it was found that she used to frequently talk to the man

whose name in the Truecaller app was mentioned as Mehboob and the location as Karnataka," he said.

A case was lodged against the man on January 11, following which a three-member police team was sent to Karnataka to trace the man and the kidnapped woman, Rai said.

On the basis of these inputs, the woman's father lodged an FIR against the man and accused him of allegedly kidnapping his daughter and hiding his Muslim identity, he said.

The woman's father, who is

a retired Army man, has mentioned in the FIR that last year the man had befriended his daughter through social media and wooed her on the pretext of providing a job.

Police said that everything would be clear once the accused and the kidnapped woman are traced.

The case was lodged under sections 366 (kidnapping, abduction or inducing woman to compel her into marriage) and 363 (kidnapping) of the Indian Penal Code, besides the new anti-conversion law of the Uttar Pradesh government, the SHO said.

PTI

Is Bihar entering a phase of Jungle Raj 2.0?

Patna: While the police in Patna are facing criticism over the sensational murder of an Indigo state head, a section of people in Bihar are apprehensive that they might be entering into a phase of 'Jungle Raj 2.0'.

Indigo airlines station manager, Rupesh Kumar Singh (40), was allegedly shot dead by criminals near the Shastri Nagar police station area in Patna on Tuesday.

The murder of the Indigo state head brings back the fearful memories of Airtel GM's murder at Bahadurpur Gumti in Patna in 2005, the kidnapping of Bharat Singh and a series of criminal acts which took place during the Lalu Prasad-Rabri Devi regime between 1990 and 2005. The high crime rate during that period even led to the downfall of the RJD in 2005.

Now, the Nitish Kumar government is facing similar criticism over the growing crime graph in the state ever since he returned as Bihar Chief Minister for a seventh time in November 2020.

In a bid to bring down the crime graph, the Nitish Kumar government had started operation 'Ganga Snaan' during 2005-2007 when several notorious criminals were silently eliminated by the police or were put behind bars. On may recall the famous encounter of dreaded gangster Amresh Singh in Khagaria, or the killing of gangster Guddu Sharma in an encounter in Delhi. Many of Bihar's most notorious gangsters, such as Surajbhan Singh, Anant Singh and Mohamad Sahabuddin, were put behind bars during that period.

It was a secret operation

carried out by the Bihar police and the STF to eliminate the criminals, when the government had given a free hand to the police. Hence, there are no official records of the encounters that took place during that period.

Sources say that due to the impact of the operation, Nitish Kumar managed to attain the image of 'Sushashan Babu' in Bihar. Now the question is whether the Nitish Kumar government would again adopt a similar modus operandi to check the rising crime graph in the state.

The Chief Minister, who also holds the home portfolio, is under immense pressure following the murder of Rupesh Singh. The leaders of his alliance partner BJP in particular are making aggressive statements to corner the CM.

Janardan Sigrwal, BJP MP

from Maharajanjan, said: "Killers of Rupesh Singh should be hanged at the busy chowks of the city in broad daylight. If any amendment is required to do this, the government should proceed with it. Criminals cannot allowed to be let off. In the case of Rupesh Singh, Patna police have to expose the planner."

Earlier, Nitin Naveen, BJP MLA from Bankipur, had asked the Bihar government to endorse the Uttar Pradesh model of encounter.

Union Minister R.K. Singh said that the Bihar government should suspend callous police officers who have failed to control law and order in Patna.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav has already said that Nitish Kumar has failed to control the law and order situation in Bihar and should resign from his post or give the home port-

folio to some other minister.

Retaliating to Tejashwi Yadav, Nikhil Anand, the chief spokesperson of BJP, said: "Law and order is a concern for us and the NDA government is capable of handling it. This is the same government that managed to put breaks on crimes between 2005 and 2007. During the Lalu-Rabri regime, criminals like Mohamad Sahabuddin operated freely"

Meanwhile, the Bihar police have claimed that they have got some leads in the Indigo case and the criminals will be apprehended very soon.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Rajesh Kumar Prabhakar said: "We have some clues about this case. Several teams of Patna police and STF are raiding different premises at the moment. The accused will be put behind bars soon."

IANS

Study in Goa flags alarming levels of microplastics in seafood

Panaji: The levels of microplastics found in fish and other seafood samples from the Sal Estuary in Goa is worrisome, a study by researchers of the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) here has said.

The study, led by senior scientist Dr Mahua Saha, indicated presence of microplastics in water, sediment and biota (local animal and plant life) from the estuary.

A paper based on the study, result of two-year-long research by scientists from CSIR-NIO, was published in the prominent scientific journal "Chemosphere".

During the study titled "Microplastics in seafood as an emerging threat to marine environment: A case study in

Goa" the researchers collected samples of four species of finfish from two sites. Three species of shellfish were collected from local fishermen.

The estuary is a valuable source of oyster, finfish and shellfish species, the study said.

"The average abundance of microplastics in the Sal Estuary is significant which is comparable to the microplastic abundance in water from the Netherlands and China and in sediments from China and Nova Scotia (Canada)," it said.

"The significant presence of microplastics in the gastrointestinal tract of finfish may pose an additional threat to these fishes due to the leaching of chemicals," the study said.

Further, "profound abun-

dance" of various microplastics in bivalves (shellfish) poses risk to humans because bivalves are mostly consumed as a whole, it noted.

"A similar signature of polymers in water and sediment, and in seafood suggests that human activities in the densely populated area around the estuary might be the leading source of microplastic contamination," the paper said.

Fishing activities may also contribute to the microplastic pollution in the estuary, it said.

"The study overall adds to the increasing evidence that ubiquitous contamination by plastic particles is seriously impacting the coastal marine biota," the researchers said, calling for "robust management strategies" to stop it.

PTI

Kerala reports 5,490 new Covid cases, 4,337 recoveries

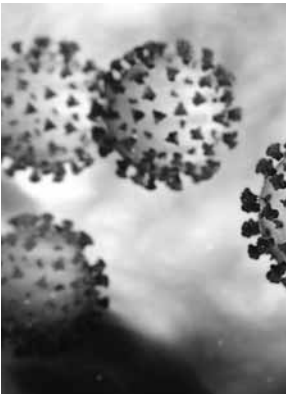
Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Thursday reported 5,490 new Covid-19 cases with a test positivity rate of 8.11 per cent, a press statement issued by the office of state health minister K.K. Shailaja said. On a positive note, 4,337 people recovered from the disease on Thursday.

Malappuram reported the maximum number of cases on Thursday at 712, while Kasargod reported the least number of cases at 72. As many as 67,712 samples were tested on Thursday.

Meanwhile, 19 deaths in the last 24 hours took the state's Covid death toll to 3,392.

Among those who tested positive on Thursday, 92 people had come from outside the state, 4,911 got the disease through contact while the source of contact of 435 people is unclear.

Fifty-two health workers tested positive on Thursday, 14 in Kozhikode, followed by Pathanamthitta (9), Kannur (7), Thrissur (5), Ernakulam and Wayanad (4 each), Idukki and Palakkad (2 each), and



Thiruvananthapuram, Malappuram and Kasargod (1 each).

At present, there are 2,01,293 people under observation in the state, including 10,904 at various hospitals.

Meanwhile, 6 new hotspots on Thursday increased the state's tally to 420.

IANS

Wild buffalo kills man in Assam, angry mob sets forest office on fire

Guwahati: An irate mob on Thursday set a forest department office on fire after a wild buffalo killed a young man in Biswanath district in northern Assam bordering Arunachal Pradesh, officials said.

According to the police, hundreds of locals, including women, turned violent after Jayanta Das, a villager, was killed by a wild buffalo at Muttackgaon in Biswanath district. Accusing the forest officials of not taking adequate steps to prevent wild animals from entering into the human habitations and villages from the nearby forests, the angry villagers set on fire the office of the Central Range of the Biswanath Wildlife Division.

"A wild buffalo came to the Biswanath Ghat early on Thursday morning and tried to attack the villagers. We immediately informed the forest officials, but they reached the spot after the buffalo had attacked and killed Das," Prashanta Sharma, an eyewitness, told the media.

The villagers have demanded a compensation of Rs 50 lakh for the victim's family. The police and forest officials had a tough time in pacifying the angry mob.

IANS



Devotees perform rituals on the bank of Ganga river during 'Makar Sankranti' festival celebration, in Varanasi on Thursday

PTI

Go, India!

As the last Test of the Australia tour gets underway today, here's hoping that Team India will vanquish its demons



Courage and heroism are not restricted to the battlefield; there are times when these prized characteristics spill onto the cricket field too, among other unlikely arenas. Just as the valiant Indian cricket team showed with a great win in the face of adversity in Melbourne, especially coming as it did after the humiliation at Adelaide when India's vaunted batting line-up was bowled out for a truly embarrassing 36. And though we didn't register a win in the Sydney Test, India fought tooth and nail, battled pain and a hostile Australian bowling attack to prevent the hosts from moving up in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series that's currently tied 1-1. "...This one is a tough one to swallow. Our bowlers were superb but..." Australian skipper Tim Paine said after the match. By the time you read this, the Brisbane Test — the last Test of the series, an ultimate decider that will test the resilience, composure and physical fitness of the players — would have got underway. Australia need a win to regain the trophy but a draw will suffice for India to retain it for another couple of years. So what's in store for the Indian cricket fan? Of course, time alone will deliver the result but one thing we can be confident of: That the Indian players will leave nothing to chance to win this one and, will not only perform the best their bodies and spirit allow but hopefully go beyond, into the realm of the surreal. The Indian team's hotel may have turned into a mini hospital but the players, as well as members of the Indian diaspora, are walking with a lot of pride at their team's showing, especially since the time the atmosphere was soured by racist chants and abuses from a section of the spectators.

The injuries to key players are a clear and present threat. The list of prominent players who are nursing their wounds comprises pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, Ravichandran Ashwin, Mohammed Shami, Ravindra Jadeja and Hanuma Vihari. Till late on Thursday, Team India had delayed naming the playing XI and there was word that the names would be announced only in the morning, just ahead of the beginning of the Test, thus giving the injured players the maximum time to recuperate and allowing them to take the field after assessing their condition. Notably, Ajinkya Rahane has been performing consistently in his new role after skipper Virat Kohli returned to India on paternity leave to be at the side of his wife Anushka Sharma for the delivery of their first child. Rahane was pushed into a leadership position he did not necessarily want but one where he has since been conducting himself brilliantly. Most importantly, all of India's players have dealt with the emotional deprivation of the 'bubble' well, steering clear of breaking it no matter what the temptations. They have battled it all in the ongoing Test series, within themselves and with the world outside: Issues with facilities, racial slurs, losing key players at crucial junctures, injury after injury, issues with bubble life for multiple months et al. Irrespective of the result, therefore, Team India can return with their heads held high. Meanwhile, Australian skipper Tim Paine urged the home fans to refrain from causing "any trouble". Gabba has been a fortress for the Aussies where they haven't lost a game since 1987-88.

Virushka set the bar

The star couple has politely asked the paparazzi not to take pictures of their newborn daughter



One of the most photographed couples in the country, cricketer Virat Kohli and actor Anushka Sharma have laid down the rules for the paparazzi and asked the pesky photographers, who often cross the line between the demands of "profession" and intrusion of privacy, to stay away from their newborn child. On Wednesday, in a sweetly-worded note, they urged the paparazzi to refrain from taking pictures of their baby girl. Anushka and Virat sent a note to the paparazzi fraternity in Mumbai, which read: "Hi, thank you for all the love that you have given us all these years. We are happy to celebrate this momentous occasion with you. As parents, we have a simple request to make to you. We want to protect the privacy of our child and we need your help and support." The couple clearly established that they will ensure that the paparazzi get the content featuring both the stars but requested them to steer clear of their child. "While we will always ensure that you get all the content you need featuring us, we would request you to kindly not take or carry any content that has our child. We know that you will understand where we are coming from and we thank you for the same." To their credit, the paps agreed to leave the child alone, in turn winning the appreciation of veteran actor Raveena Tandon who took the opportunity to thank them for respecting her wishes too when she was trying to protect her children, who were minors at the time. By reaching out to the paparazzi, Virushka, as the couple is popularly known, have shown the celebrity world how it is done because the relationship between famous people and the paparazzi has been tumultuous, to say the least. While most of the time the celebrities are fine with photographers clicking them as it increases their visibility, like every other human they, too, cherish their private moments and don't want them splashed on the front pages of tabloids and on websites.

Fame, they say, has a price but most A-listers don't want their children to pay the price for their parents' celebrity status. But there are always exceptions to the rule. Like Saif Ali Khan and Shah Rukh Khan don't have any issues with pictures of Taimur and AbRam being splashed all over the media and the internet. Even though the older children of both the actors were almost never photographed when they were growing up, both the fathers seem to have no reservation where these latest additions to the family are concerned, thanks to the changing times, one can suppose. As a result, Taimur and AbRam have become social media influencers at such a tender age, as have Aaradhya Bachchan, Misha Kapoor and Inaaya Naomi Kemmu. How these star kids will deal with the pressure of the paparazzi always following them, or maybe the lack of attention once they grow up, only time will tell. At the moment, they are obviously too young to be aware of the repeated violation of their privacy and the danger it entails to their well-being. After all, we live in a country where the five-year-old daughter of a cricketer got a rape threat just because her father was not performing well on the field. It is well that Virushka have decided to keep their private life private for the safety of their child. In fact, many celebrities around the world guard their children zealously from photographers and there have been instances where the paparazzi have been sued for crossing the line. A case in point is Hollywood actor George Clooney, who sued a pap and his publication for climbing over the walls of his villa and clicking photos of his child. Traditionally, the paparazzi are looked down upon as being a thorn in the side of celebrities. However, they alone cannot be blamed for what they do because the public has created a demand for such pictures. If people did not get voyeuristic pleasure out of the candid photos of celebrities and their families, the demand for such pics would not exist and publications would stop paying hefty sums to intrusive photographers.

Green star over Bengal

As Mamata Banerjee's domain West Bengal is Asaduddin Owaisi's next election stop, the State can expect explosive electioneering



PRAFULL GORADIA

Asaduddin Owaisi is a politician with blue blood, which has turned crimson by barristery, a surname imported from Arabia and the leadership of a century-old party founded by Nawab Mahmood Nawaz Khan. In 1944, Razakar leader Qasim Rizvi was selected as the party's leader, to also become the extra military force of the Nizam of Hyderabad.

In 1957, Rizvi was exiled to Pakistan but, before departing, he handed over the Majlis-e-Itehadul-Muslimeen (MIM) to his right-hand man, Janab Abdul Wahid Owaisi. His son Sultan Salahuddin took over the party in 1975, and it was inherited by his illustrious son Asaduddin. The party headquarters are based in an impressive building, called Dar-us-Salam, near the famed Charminar.

Asaduddin inherited a single Lok Sabha seat, the Hyderabad city constituency. It is to his credit that the MIM is today an all-India name. It now threatens to bite off some Assembly seats in Bengal. Owais means "little wolf" in Arabic and, therefore, he is likely to hunt voraciously. By a stroke of coincidence, he was fielded against me in a television channel's programme. Our debate was on a communal controversy. The anchor asked for his comments first, to which I reacted that Owaisi's views might be coloured by those prevailing in a neighbouring country. His counter-reaction was explosive.

Thus, West Bengal can expect explosive electioneering. Mamata Didi too will not let Owaisi go quietly. She must know that for Muslim voters, there are no insiders or outsiders. Languages, other than Urdu, are unimportant. The sacred thread of Islam binds them all. Muslims are *mominis*; the others, however neighbourly, are "different". Hindu arguments do not cut ice with Muslims. The main fight between Didi and Janab will be in the eastern districts of West Bengal.

I imagine that the Hyderabad appeal will be: "Come and vote for me, because I shall do everything for you. I have no loyalty other than towards the *bandas* of Allah the Merciful, whereas my opposition has other communities too to cater to. My party will be exclusively for you while the opposing kitchen will have to cook vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian; '*niraaamish*' as well as '*saamish*'."

The result of their secular duality has been the Tareekh-e-Intekhab, or the history of elections in India: Flatter the Muslim, occasionally



frighten him with a riot and then protect him, going back to flattery. In the eyes of Allah the Merciful, he may be a *momin* but in the view of the vote harvester, he is a tiger in a circus cage; the only grouse being that he is too sparingly fed to attack. Jawaharlal Nehru once said that he was a Hindu only by accident; he was a Muslim by culture and an Englishman by upbringing. He, therefore, knew how to make a Muslim tick. And tick he had to, for the Congress was dominated by the Patelites. Nehru had to build his own support base. Muslims, traumatised by Partition, were his first choice. Reputedly, they voted nearly 90 per cent whereas, in the early elections, the rest of the voters polled not more than 45 per cent. The net result was that one Muslim voter was worth two Hindus.

With the passage of time, things have changed; more Hindus go to the polling booth now. Late Syed Shahabuddin once wrote in a national daily that for his community, if there were a choice between development and identity, it would go for identity. In Nehru's days, by electing him, the Muslim love for identity won. Although they were poor, India was a wonderful country. Lately, Hindu candidates are winning more because their community votes more. India has, therefore, become an "insecure" country.

For all these reasons, the Muslim clusters, wherever they be, are in search of new heroes; the parties of old ones appear to be folding up. One such superhero is Asaduddin, literally the

MAMATA MUST KNOW THAT FOR MUSLIM VOTERS, THERE ARE NO INSIDERS OR OUTSIDERS. THE MAIN FIGHT BETWEEN DIDI AND JANAB WILL BE IN THE EASTERN DISTRICTS OF WEST BENGAL.

lion of religion. Didi's straight reply would be that Muslims alone cannot form a Government; they are too few. They have to combine with others and only then can they win a majority. Go back to the days and years of Babu Jagjivan Ram, who ended up as the Deputy Prime Minister. Never in his political career did he publicly discuss his caste. Had he done so, he might have got a maximum of

18 per cent votes. Wherefrom would he have gathered a minimum of another 33 per cent? The same will be the problem with Owaisi. Can he form a Government in West Bengal? Therefore, why waste your vote on such a party? As soon as the election is over, he would pack his *achkan* in a suitcase and take a flight to Hyderabad, bidding goodbye to the Bengalis and promising to see them in the next election. By all means, give him a *bhand/kulhad* of tea, but don't waste your vote. I have neither an *achkan* nor suitcase, nor any flight to catch. Therefore, vote for me. It is undeniable that the *umma* has given some votes in Bihar to Owaisi and elected five MLAs. It remains to be seen what these MIM MLAs do in Bengal.

After, say, one or two elections, in the event of an ascending path, whether Owaisi and his party could pose a threat to the integrity of the country, has to be seen. After all, we should not forget Partition. Soon after August 1947, HS Suhrawardy, former Premier of undivided Bengal, wrote to Chaudhry Khaliqzaman in UP that the strategy for the Muslims staying behind in India should be to gather in clusters or mega ghettos. Incidentally, Khaliqzaman became the president of the Muslim League in Pakistan after MA Jinnah passed away. This advice might imply that if several clusters gathered together, in due course, more partitions could be engineered. The Government of India should discourage cluster formations from now on.

There is one consolation that Owaisi hails from a land of

dreamers, like Nizam Mir Osman Ali. He had Ali Yavar Jung, then Secretary (Constitutional Affairs), give the view that the Portuguese considered Marmagao to be a dead-weight and would be willing to sell it at a reasonable price. The idea of buying Goa was too attractive to be dissipated by realism. When the World War ended, the prospects of success brightened. On Hyderabad's side, the prime mover was Sir Mirza Ismail with Sir Walter Monckton as a close second.

The parleys in Lisbon had become known in India. Once India gained Independence, it was unlikely to acquiesce for long to Portugal's rule over Goa, just as it rejected Hyderabad's claim to independence. Still less would it permit Hyderabad's transit rights over land or air space. If only Hyderabad had a port like Marmagao, it would add enormously to its political and economic importance.

The meeting between the Portuguese and Hyderabad negotiators, on November 1, 1947, was attended by Portuguese Prime Minister Salazar, Sir Alexander Roger and Antonio Bastroff Silva. In bitter retrospect, the devoted Hyderabad writer Zubeida Yazdani made two points. One was about Mir Osman Ali Khan's "megalomaniac notions" which caused him "to lose the balance of his mind". Her other grievance was that "the Nizam depended too strongly on the Muslim League for the achievement of his goal", an independent Muslim State in the south of India.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

Many congratulations to the countrymen on Makar Sankranti. I wish Uttaraayan Suryadev to bring new energy in everyone's life.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

With the new state of emergency starting on Friday, the rule is to stay in a home-based retreat. However, schools will remain open as usual.



Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa

I wasn't loving myself in the way that I should from 20 to 40 — that's 20 years. I feel so sad that I did that to myself, just not loving yourself the right way.



Actor Rebel Wilson

I think Lyon has bowled okay. I thought in the first Test match at Adelaide, he created heaps of chances and didn't get a hand.



Australian cricketer Tim Paine

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Make affordable EVs

Sir — It refers to the editorial 'Welcome, Tesla' (January 14). Indeed, it is a positive move for the automobile industry in the country not only from the Electric Vehicle (EV) and environment perspective but also from the point of view of auto ancillary and suppliers chain.

Though it would be too early to predict Tesla's future in India, if it remains confined to its research and development unit in Bengaluru, it may not serve the purpose we want it to for the country.

Needless to mention that cost is one of the most critical parameters for Indian buyers and before launching an India-specific product, Tesla had better conduct a thorough market research to arrive at an acceptable price point; otherwise this entire exercise will be futile. India's commitment to environment is second to none and Indian buyers will happily accept green cars. But even after factoring in the Government's tax incentives to set up an industry here, products have to be economically viable for Indian buyers.

Bal Govind Noida

Resume normal services of Mumbai local trains

The Maharashtra Government should allow resumption of the Mumbai local train services for all categories of commuters without further delay. The local train services are the city's lifeline and Mumbaiers rely on these for their daily commute.

It seems that Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray is least bothered about the difficulties facing the citizens while they go to their workplaces, offices, schools and so on. Even the famous *dabbawalas* who deliver lunch-boxes to people, use local train services. We all have suffered a lot due to the Coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown but citizens have rendered their full cooperation to the Government in the fight against the pandemic. It is the responsibility of the State Government to take care of citizens now and take a decision in the larger public interest.

However, after its initial shutdown in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the suburban train services have been partially resumed. As of now, the suburban railway system is open only for certain categories of commuters, including those providing essential services, lawyers and women. Railway officials



claim that they have not received any directives from the State Government regarding the opening of services for general public. Any further delay in allowing the full-scale operation of suburban trains will prove counterproductive to the image of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi Government and a setback to the popularity of Thackeray.

Jubel D' Cruz Mumbai

COVID threat persists

Sir — It was indeed a welcome sight to see the excitement and joy of movie buffs returning to cinema halls in Kerala after many months since the theatres stopped screening movies due to the pandemic. The crowd really welcomed, celebrated and enjoyed Tamil actor Vijay's

movie 'Master' which is the first to hit the silver screen after several months.

But what gives the real jitters is the way the crowd behaved at the theatres. They completely forgot COVID-related precautions and, at many places, social distancing went for a toss as fans arrived in huge numbers and had all sorts of celebration inside

and outside the cinema halls. Many persons were not even wearing masks. We must not forget that we are still fighting the contagion and there is no way to keep it at bay other than taking precautions and wearing masks. The vaccination drive has not yet started.

M Pradyu Nagarjuna Kannur

Improve bank services

Sir — The Union Government and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should take note of the malpractices by banks with respect to credit card payments.

Banks are levying extraordinary interest rates on credit card payments. Many banks also don't send credit card statements and any shortfall in payment attracts heavy penalty. The penalty imposed for over-the-limit use of credit cards should not be allowed. Instead, banks can refuse payment on reaching the limit. It is ridiculous that an over-payment of just ₹100 may attract a heavy penalty of ₹500 plus the GST.

The Centre and the RBI should bring necessary amendments to make uniform rules with respect to credit cards, including interest rate and penalties. These malpractices by the banks will eventually spoil the image of the Government and also have an adverse effect on customers' faith in the banking system.

Subhash Chandra Agrawal Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

There has to be some equity

The UN has failed to acknowledge the rise of atrocities against Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs. Till this selectivity exists, the world can never truly foster a culture of peace, says **KOUL JALALI**

In yet another incident of human rights violations 11 Hazara coal miners in Baluchistan province of Pakistan were abducted by terrorists and killed recently. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for this heinous act and the relatives of the miners have refused to bury them till their demands for justice are met. The Hazaras are a Persian-speaking ethnic group whose homeland is Hazarajat in Central Afghanistan. In Pakistan they live mostly in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. They are Shia Muslims and in Pakistan they are suspected of loyalty towards Iran.

These latest atrocities have again drawn the attention of the global community towards the persistent killings of Hazaras and have been condemned widely. There have been protests at many places in Pakistan. Because of their somewhat Mongolian features the Hazaras are easily identifiable and in recent years thousands of them have been murdered in Pakistan. However nobody has been ever punished for these persistent ruthless crimes.

Atrocities against the minorities in Pakistan began soon after the country came into existence in 1947 but got intensified once Islamisation started there under General Zia-ul-Haq. Initially, persecution was mostly confined to the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians. But later these rights violations got extended to the Shias, Ahmadiyyas, Sufis, Hazaras, Seraikis and other similar sects and groups living in different parts of Pakistan.

These persecutions assume the form of abductions, murders, mass murders, bombings, suicide bombings, forceful conversions to Islam, extrajudicial killings, threats of violence and killings on allegations of blasphemy that are mostly based on personal vendettas and religious bias. The motivating force behind atrocities against these minorities almost in all cases is faith. Whereas the Ahmadiyyas have been declared heretics long back, there is a deep religious divide between the majority Sunni population and the Shia minority.

The worst is that attacks on and desecration of places of worship of minorities have turned into recurring incidents. For instance, on December 31, 2020 a Hindu temple including the Samadhi of a religious leader in Karak District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province were set on fire by a mob led by some clerics and supporters of radical Islamist Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party (Fazal ur Rehman group). According to the police, 100 people including seven leading clerics were arrested. India lodged a strong protest against this act and sought strict action against the perpetrators of the crime.

This heinous incident draws attention to the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement arrived at between the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru and the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan in New Delhi in April, 1950. The Partition had resulted in exchange of populations between the two countries. Under the agreement, among other matters, minority rights in both the nations were confirmed and both the States set up their minority commissions. But seeing the plight of the minorities in Pakistan, it is obvious that the minority commissions have not worked.

Rejecting the Opposition's criticism of the Citizenship Amendment Bill in the Indian Parliament in December 2019, Union Home Minister Amit Shah clearly stated that the pact has failed. He said that had the spirit of the agreement been followed by Pakistan there would have been no need to bring the Bill.

In any case, the obvious fact cannot be contended that after the Partition the population of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians who lived in areas which later became a part of Pakistan has dwindled drastically whereas the population of Muslims who lived in areas which later became a part of the Indian Union has grown exponentially. The reasons for this are not far to seek. While in India rights and security of the minorities have been continuously and effectively safeguarded, Pakistan has persistently contravened the provisions of the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement through consistent neglect and persecution of members of minority communities. This is despite the fact that the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement required each country to ensure that its minorities enjoyed complete equality of citizenship with others and received treatment identical to that available to other nationals of their country.

In another such incident trampling on the rights of the minorities, ignoring the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution, the Pakistani Government decided to transfer the management of the Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara to a non-Sikh body. India strongly protested and the incident has been resented all over the world. In a speech at the UN session on 'Culture of Peace' in December 2020, the First Secretary to India's Permanent Mission to the UN agreed with the fact that anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and anti-Christian acts need to be condemned but stated that UN resolutions on such important issues speak only of three Abrahamic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He said that the august body has failed to acknowledge the rise of hatred and violence against Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs and referred to the shattering of the iconic Bamyan Buddhas by the Taliban in 2001 and the killing of 25 Sikh worshippers in a terrorist bomb attack on a Gurudwara in Kabul in March 2020. He said that in such resolutions these religions also need to be added to the list because till this selectivity exists, the world can never truly foster a culture of peace.

(The writer is a journalist, producer and director. The views expressed are personal.)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WE WANT TO KNOW WHETHER THE GOLD SMUGGLING CASE ACCUSED, SWAPNA, HAD ATTENDED YOUR DAUGHTER'S MARRIAGE.
 —CONGRESS LEADER PT THOMAS



THE MARRIAGE WAS CONDUCTED IN A BIG HALL IN CLIFF HOUSE AND ONLY CLOSE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES PARTICIPATED. SWAPNA WAS NOT THERE.
 —KERALA CHIEF MINISTER PINARAYI VIJAYAN

Make cyberspace safe for kids

Online harassment can take a serious toll on their mental health. The words, pictures, video clips or any form of data stored on the internet stay forever, haunting the victim



ROBIN RATNAKAR DAVID

The nationwide lockdown necessitated by the pandemic forced people to work from home. Schools and colleges, too, shifted to remote and online functioning. While this protected children/teenagers from exposure to the Coronavirus, migration of classrooms to remote learning environments increased the time they spend online, both for education and entertainment purposes. Prolonged online presence during the lockdown exposed minors to unsupervised interaction with strangers and third parties. Consequently, within a few months of the lockdown in India, the Bois Locker Room scandal broke out on social media where a group of teenagers accessed photos of women and girls from social media pages. The group posted lewd comments on the photographs on an Instagram group and issued rape threats to women/girls who demanded action against them. Fortunately, Delhi Police and its Cyber Cell took action against the group under the Penal Code and Cyber laws.

Cyberbullying, cyberstalking, online impersonation, catfishing, doxing, trolling, revenge porn, sexting, grooming and sexual exploitation are some common forms of online harassment. According to a study published by Child Rights and You, 9.2 per cent of 630 adolescents surveyed in Delhi-NCR experienced cyberbullying and half of them did not report this to either their teachers, parents or guardians. Further, it found that children aged 13-18 years, who use the internet for more than three hours in a day, are more prone to risks. Online harassment can take a serious toll on their mental health. The words, pictures, video clips or any form of data stored on the internet stay forever, haunting the victim. This spreads fast and cannot be erased or forgotten.

In October 2020, the Delhi High Court (HC) while directing Google, YouTube and Facebook to remove objectionable material posted by a woman's former schoolmate without her consent, also ordered the police to use the protocols and resources available with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and other agencies to identify people sharing/viewing the offensive content in India and take action against them. The victim said that in 2012, as a 16-year-old, she was emotionally blackmailed by the accused into sending him intimate photographs. He threatened to commit suicide if she did not comply with his demands. The harassment continued until 2017 in the UK where the Magistrate Court held him guilty of stalking and physically assaulting her. The court passed orders restraining the accused from contacting the victim by any means and banned him from entering the city of Bath for two years. In late 2019, the victim found that the accused had posted her intimate pictures on various social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and so on and reported the matter to the Cyber Crime Cell in Delhi. The cyber police registered cases against the accused under Sections 67 and 67A of the Information Technology Act. The victim also sent notices to Google and social media networks, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram urging them to remove her photographs. However, the URLs/webpages were not removed. The court acknowledged that the offending images had been widely distributed and that they were being uploaded by several people other than the accused. The court ordered the police to identify the people sharing the images.

According to the UNICEF, a child goes online for the first time in his/her life every half a second. The digital world provides easier access to child sex offenders in search of prey/potential victims and also

“YOUNGER CHILDREN ARE LESS LIKELY TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO ONLINE HARASSMENT AND KNOW THAT THEY MUST SEEK HELP. THE LACK OF SUPPORT NETWORKS IN SCHOOLS AND THE INCREASE IN THE TIME SPENT ONLINE, TOO, ARE REASONS FOR THE SPIKE IN CYBER CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN DURING THE PANDEMIC”



enable them to share information about victims with perpetrators of sexual crimes. Recent surveys reveal that at least one in four adolescents have seen a morphed image or video of themselves and, a half of them have not reported it to the police.

In 2019, Facebook published that it had removed 11.6 million posts related to child nudity and sexual exploitation from its webpages and 7,54,000 from Instagram. For the first time, Facebook published figures related to self-harm and suicide revealing that it had removed 2.5 million posts related to suicide and self-harm and 8,45,000 from Instagram. Among the users of the internet, children are highly likely to be exposed to violence since they have fewer opportunities than adults to leave the house and access help, according to a report published by the WHO on June 17, 2020. Smaller children are less likely to understand that they have been subjected to online harassment and know that they must seek help. The lack of support networks in schools and the increase in the time spent online, too, are reasons for the spike in cyber crimes against children during the pandemic.

Laws: The substantive equality approach adopted by India and expressed in Article 15(3) of the Constitution empowers the State to make special provisions for children. Article 39 provides that the State shall direct its policy towards securing children and ensure that they are not abused and their childhood and youth are protected against exploitation. It further emphasises the need to provide facilities for them to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

The international instrument, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) prescribes a set of standards to be followed by all parties to secure the best interests of children. States are required to undertake all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral

measures to prevent inducement or coercion of a minor to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual conduct and the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and material. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, is a gender-neutral law that came into force exclusively to protect children from sexual assault, harassment and pornography. The POCSO Act recognises the fact that minors are vulnerable to repeated abuse and at risk of secondary victimisation during the justice delivery process and hence, emphasised on the need for the establishment of special courts for them. Sections 13, 14 and 15 of the Act, particularly address the crime of using a minor for pornographic purposes and punishes any person who stores or possesses pornographic material in any form involving a child.

Human rights begin at birth, as envisaged in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' Human and child rights are inalienable ones, which means that no State-run entity or the State itself cannot deprive children of their rights. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the legislations that were promulgated in the member States have often been misconstrued as rights of children based on their needs. But these rights are independent in a true sense and recognise children as independent citizens with a voice.

Keeping children safe: Child rights are congruent with the obligations imposed on the State and caregivers and their accountability. Schools, parents and guardians must ensure that the online safety of children is not compromised and they don't befriend strangers online. The police, who are responsible for law enforcement must keep a watch out for offenders in cyberspaces and must strive to keep it safe for children. Schools and

caregivers must ensure that safety and security of children are of paramount importance. They must train children to report suspicious accounts. Electronic devices must be used under the supervision of a trusted adult, and the privacy settings of the devices must be checked regularly to keep minors away from online predators.

Children must be encouraged to take screenshots of any content that makes them feel uneasy and report it to the parents/authorities to take it down from the internet. They must be made aware by their parents/guardians that sharing of personal information such as location, phone numbers, date of birth and addresses must not be done. Children must be encouraged to seek help in times of distress. Parents and caregivers must assure minors that they are not alone and that the adults in their life are always available to address their worries and concerns.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched a toll-free 24-hour telephonic helpline service 1098, which operates in regional languages to reach out to children in distress across India. A trained contact officer answers the calls on the helpline and forwards the message to a field partner on the ground. The field partner sends a member to the rescue of the child within an hour or two from the time they receive the call and ensures the safety of the child.

Overexposure to the internet during the pandemic had resulted in the extension of child helpline services to children using the internet to ensure their online safety and psychological well-being. Schools and caregivers must take the responsibility to make children aware about the toll-free child helpline service. Counselling facilities, too, must be made available for children who have been subjected to online harassment and bullying.

(The writer is Advocate, Supreme Court of India and Partner, Dua Associates. The views expressed are personal.)

The Govt must clean up the mess

The demonstrating farmers have inadvertently pushed the ecosystem to its limits and the condition is only deteriorating day by day



KOTA SRIRAJ

In a healthy and vibrant democracy, people participate politically not only during but between elections by means of protests and sit-ins. These demonstrations usually play a vital role in influencing public opinion and altering the Government's viewpoint, which eventually has a bearing on policymaking and its implementation.

India being the largest democracy is home to a variety of protests that take place across the nation every now and then for one reason or the other. The ongoing farmers' protest against the three contentious farm-laws is one such instance, where lakhs of cultivators have laid siege at Delhi's borders for

the last 50 days. Their determination to make their voice heard forced the Government to come to the negotiation table.

Besides, the Supreme Court, too, has stayed the new legislation and has constituted an expert committee to comprehensively examine the three laws. However, the farmers are not satisfied and are adamant on their demand for the repeal of the laws and a legal guarantee on the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

However, amid all the attempts to reach a viable solution, the environment and the health of the protesters are suffering collateral damage. Inadequate sanitation facilities to cater to the needs of the sea of protesters, are not only causing a health crisis but also compromising the well-being of the ecosystem. It is having a cascading impact on the ambient environment of the region that suddenly finds itself subjected to mounting piles of garbage and unplanned disposal of sewage.

This rapid deterioration of the local ecosystem is evident from the fact that a large number of scavenging

birds can be seen hovering and circling in the sky in search of food. The flora and fauna of the region are under extreme pressure due to the sudden rise in human population and an increase in the waste and sewage generated. The demonstrating farmers have inadvertently pushed the ecosystem to its limits and the condition is only deteriorating day-by-day.

Spurred by the worsening situation on ground zero, the Jan Swasthya Abhiyaan (JSA) conducted a study that revealed that three out of five protesters or nearly 57.7 per cent have no option except to defecate in the open. This may eventually result in an outbreak of an epidemic if the authorities don't rectify the situation soon.

In the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the situation at the protest site is alarming as social distancing and other protocols are not being followed. Even the apex court enquired from the Government regarding the steps that are being taken to prevent the area from becoming a COVID-19 hotspot. Now, the pathetic sanitary conditions in the area are adding to the

woes of the farmers and the worries of the authorities.

The protest sites at Singhu, Tikri, Shahjahanpur, Palwal and Gazipur are facing an enormous human and vehicular influx. The air quality is fast deteriorating in these areas due to the cumulative effect of vehicular exhaust, smoke from open kitchens and bonfires lit by the farmers to protect themselves from the biting cold. As the deadlock between the growers and the Government continues, respite for the environment is nowhere in sight. The survey also noted that more than 50 per cent of the respondents said that sewage water stagnation is becoming a major problem.

The plight of the farmers who have travelled long distances to participate in the protests is deplorable, to say the least. According to the farmers, over 60 of them have died during the protests including those who have committed suicide. A few others succumbed to the cold.

The condition of women at the protest site is worse. They are actually forgoing food and water for long stretches in order to avoid going to the

toilets that are poorly provisioned. Ironically, such a situation exists in a democracy where the right to protest is as sacrosanct as the freedom of speech.

At a time when our economy is facing a serious crisis due to the contagion, the ongoing protest is adding to the country's problems. According to the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) the economies of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir are bearing a daily loss of ₹3,500 crore due to the demonstrations.

Given that the stakes are so high, the Government must provide better facilities to the cultivators and create a conducive environment on the ground so that neither the protesters nor the ecosystem remain at the receiving end. It should focus not only on resolving the deadlock but must give equal weightage to finding solutions to some of the pressing sanitation and environment-related issues at the protest sites.

First and foremost, effective, clean and adequate toilet facilities must be provided to the farmers at these locations. However, the Government should

bear in mind that the toilets provided or installed for the farmers should not have a poster or picture of any political party or a particular leader. For instance, the toilets supplied by the a particular party were left unused by the farmers as they bore its advertisement. This annoyed the already miffed farmers further as they have been trying to keep all politicians out of their protest. The objective of the Government should be to keep the environment clean and not to promote a party or a leader.

Similarly, garbage collection must be stepped up and the huge amounts of stagnant sewage water must be cleared with immediate effect before it starts polluting the groundwater.

The protesters themselves can take the lead and help the Government in cleaning up the protest sites and curtailing the damage to the environment. At the end of the day, the farmers are a simple and hardworking community that is close to nature. Their dedication to the environment is second to none.

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



A TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE

Globally, only six countries executed more people than the US last year: China, Iran, Egypt, Iraq, Somalia and North Korea. In Europe, Belarus is the only State to retain the death penalty. Russia imposed a moratorium in the 1990s. The federal execution of a woman who was mentally ill was the act of a morally bankrupt administration.

(The Guardian editorial)

Biden hopes Senate will conduct Trump’s impeachment among critical issues

Washington: Terming last week’s violence at the US Capitol a planned criminal act, President-elect Joe Biden has expressed hope that the Senate will be able to conduct the impeachment trial of Donald Trump while working on other critical issues after a House of Representatives vote made him the first American president ever to be impeached twice.

The House voted 232 to 197 on Wednesday to impeach Trump.

Ten Republican lawmakers joined the Democrats to impeach Trump for “incitement of insurrection” exactly one week after rioters stormed the US Capitol as the House certified Biden’s election victory, making him the first American president to be impeached twice.

Trump was impeached the first time in December 2019 for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress for his attempt to pressure Ukraine to investigate Biden’s family.

Biden, a Democrat, alleged

on Wednesday that the violence was carried out by political extremists and domestic terrorists, who were incited by Trump.

“This criminal attack was planned and coordinated. It was carried out by political extremists and domestic terrorists, who were incited to this violence by President Trump. It was an armed insurrection against the United States of America. And those responsible must be held accountable,” Biden said in a statement after the House of Representatives impeached Trump, a Republican.

The violence on January 6 temporarily halted the counting of Electoral College votes to certify Biden’s win in the November 3 election and resulted in the deaths of five individuals, including a police officer.

“Last week, we saw an unprecedented assault on our democracy. It was unlike anything we have witnessed in the 244-year history of our nation,” he said.

Windows and doors were destroyed. Offices ransacked. A Capitol Hill police officer was murdered. Another lost his life a few days later. Four other people died in the senseless mayhem of that day, said the next American president.

Biden said that the members of the House of Representatives exercised the power granted to them under the US Constitution and voted to impeach and hold the president accountable.

“It was a bipartisan vote cast by members who followed the Constitution and their conscience. The process continues to the Senate,” he said.

“This nation also remains in the grip of a deadly virus and a reeling economy. I hope that the Senate leadership will find a way to deal with their Constitutional responsibilities on impeachment while also working on the other urgent business of this nation,” Biden said.

“From confirmations to key posts such as Secretaries for

Homeland Security, State, Defense, Treasury, and Director of National Intelligence, to getting our vaccine program on track, and to getting our economy going again. Too many of our fellow Americans have suffered for too long over the past year to delay this urgent work,” he said.

“I have often said that there is nothing we can’t do, if we do it together. And it has never been more critical for us to stand together as a nation than right now. So we must remember who we are as Americans and what we stand for and believe. It’s time for us to be what at our best we have always been,” Biden said.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris said the storming of the Capitol Hill by supporters Trump last week marked an inflection point for America.

“Last week, of course, marked an inflection point for our country. I was horrified. As I know you all were by the attack on our Capitol, on our

nation’s Capital,” Harris said at a virtual finance event for the Presidential Inaugural Committee. Harris said the President-elect Biden called it an attack on democracy.

“It was an attack on the rule of law itself. And one of the lessons I hope that all of us take away from it is that our democracy is only as strong as our willingness to fight for it, our ideals are only as strong as our willingness to make them real,” she said hours after Trump’s impeachment.

“At that time, that meant certifying the results of this election, and to send a message, strong and clear that we will not be deterred, that our democracy will not be derailed. My hope is that the bipartisan spirit, the patriotic spirit that prevailed that night, will mark the beginning of a new era for our country,” Harris said.

She said that the American people had been through difficult moments like wars, depressions and great upheavals before. **PTI**

Capitol investigators try to sort real tips from noise

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Potential threats and leads are pouring in to law enforcement agencies nationwide after the insurrection at the US Capitol. The challenge is now figuring out what’s real and what’s just noise.

Investigators are combing through a mountain of online posts, street surveillance and other intelligence, including information that suggests mobs could try to storm the Capitol again and threats to kill some members of Congress.

Security is being tightened from coast to coast. Thousands of National Guard troops are guarding the Capitol ahead of President-elect Joe Biden’s inauguration.

Governors and lawmakers are stepping up protections at statehouses after an FBI bulletin this week warned of

threats to legislative sessions and other inaugural ceremonies.

A primary concern is the safety of members of Congress, particularly when they are travelling through airports, according to two U.S. Officials briefed on the matter.

The FBI and other federal authorities use their substantial resources to prepare. But smaller local police departments lack the staff to hunt down every tip.

They must rely heavily on state and federal assessments to inform their work, and that information sometimes slips through the cracks — which apparently happened last week.

A day before the deadly attack on the Capitol, the FBI sent an intelligence bulletin warning of potential violence to other agencies, including the Capitol Police.

But officials either did not receive it or ignored it — and instead prepared for a free-speech protest, not a riot. It took nearly two hours for reinforcements to arrive to help disperse the mob. Five people died, including a Capitol officer.

“There are some grammar schools that are better protected than the Capitol,” said Brian Higgins, a professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and the former chief of a northern New Jersey police force.

Since last week, the FBI has opened 170 case files and received more than 100,000 pieces of digital media. The threats have ranged in specificity and complexity, according to officials briefed on them, making it difficult for authorities to determine which could be credible.

UN watchdog confirms another Iranian breach of nuclear deal

Berlin: The United Nations’ atomic watchdog agency confirmed on Thursday that Iran has informed it that the country has begun installing equipment for the production of uranium metal, which would be another violation of the landmark nuclear deal with world powers.

Iran maintains its plans to conduct research and development on uranium metal production are part of its “declared aim to design an improved type of fuel,” the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency said.

Uranium metal can also be used for a nuclear bomb, however, and research on its production is specifically prohibited in the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action signed with world powers in 2015.

The ultimate goal of the deal is to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb, something Iran insists it does not want to do. Iran now has enough enriched uranium to make a bomb, but nowhere near the amount it had before the nuclear deal was signed.

IAEA inspectors visited the Isfahan plant where Iran has said it plans to conduct the research on Jan. 10, and officials were informed by Tehran on Jan. 13 that “modification and installation of the relevant equipment for the mentioned R&D activities have been already started,” the agency said.

Iran’s ambassador to the IAEA, Kazem Gharibabadi, repeated that in a tweet on Wednesday, adding that “natural uranium will be used to produce uranium metal in the first stage.”

He told Iran’s official news agency IRNA that the move will elevate Iran to the level of “progressive nations in production of new fuels.” It was the latest in a string of violations of the JCPOA that Iran has undertaken since President Donald Trump pulled the United States unilaterally out of the deal in 2018, saying it needed to be re-negotiated.

Tehran has been using the violations to put pressure on the other signatories — Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia — to provide more incentives to Iran to offset crippling American sanctions reimposed after the U.S. Exited the deal.

President-elect Joe Biden, who was vice president when the JCPOA was negotiated, has said he hopes to return the U.S. To the deal. Britain, France and Germany said last week, however, that Iran “risks compromising” chances of diplomacy with Washington after Tehran announced another violation — that it was starting to enrich uranium to 20 per cent purity, a technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90 per cent. **AP**

13 WHO scientists arrive in Wuhan to probe Covid origins; 2 barred after testing positive

Beijing/Wuhan: Thirteen international experts of the WHO arrived in Wuhan on Thursday for the long-awaited probe into the origins of the deadly coronavirus pandemic, while two others did not board the flight from Singapore to the central Chinese city after they tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies.

“The international team of 13 scientists examining the origins of the virus that causes #COVID19 arrived in Wuhan, #China, today. The experts will begin their work immediately during the 2 weeks quarantine protocol for international travellers,” the World Health Organisation said in a tweet.

“Two scientists are still in #Singapore completing tests for #COVID19. All team members had multiple negative PCR and antibody tests for COVID-19 in their home countries prior to travelling,” it said.

“They were tested again in #Singapore and were all negative

for PCR. But two members tested positive for IgM antibodies. They are being retested for both IgM and IgG antibodies,” the WHO said.

The two experts failed to clear the screening procedures and were blocked from travelling to China, the Wall Street Journal reported. “Chinese officials involved in the screening process blocked the two delegation members from boarding their plane to the central Chinese city of Wuhan after both tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies in blood-based serology tests during transit in Singapore” the report said.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian defended the denial of permission to the two scientists saying that “relevant epidemic and control requirements and regulations will be strictly enforced.”

“We will also support and offer convenience to WHO experts’ travel to China,” he told

a media briefing replying to a question about the denial of permission to the two scientists and referred the media to competent authorities for details.

China requires passengers flying from Singapore to take a nucleic acid test and an IgM antibody test up to two days before boarding China-bound flights.

The 13 WHO experts would go through a 14-day quarantine. They are set to interview people from research institutes, hospitals and the seafood market linked to the initial outbreak.

The WHO team includes virus and other experts from the US, Australia, Germany, Japan, Britain, Russia, the Netherlands, Qatar and Vietnam. The United States and Australia have led the charge in criticising China’s handling of the initial stages of the pandemic, accusing Beijing of downplaying its severity and preventing an effective response until too late. **PTI**

12 police officials dismissed for negligence in protecting Hindu temple from vandalism in Pak

Peshawar: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government in Pakistan has dismissed 12 police officials following an enquiry report that found them guilty of “negligence” in protecting a Hindu temple in the province, which was torched by a mob led by members of a radical Islamist party.

The government also forfeited one-year service of 33 police officials in connection with the incident.

The temple in Terri village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Karak district was attacked on December 30 by the mob after members of the Hindu community received permission from local authorities to renovate its decades-old building. The mob demolished the newly constructed work alongside the old structure. Deputy Inspector General of Police, Kohat Region, Tayyab Hafeez Cheema had appointed Superintendent of Police (Investigation Wing) Zahir Shah as enquiry officer to probe the incident and submit its report within a week’s time.

Shah conducted the probe against 73 police officials and recommended to dismiss 12 of them from service on charges of negligence and irresponsibility in the discharge of their official duties.

“Keeping in view of the available record and facts on file, perusal of enquiry papers and the recommendations of the Enquiry Officers, they are found guilty of the charges. They show cowardice, negligence, and irresponsibility in the discharge of their official obligations.

They failed to protect the Hindu Temple which caused disrepute for the Police department in the eyes of the general public,” the report said. **PTI**

Vaccines and masks: Biden plan aims to break pandemic cycle

Wilmington (US): A coronavirus action plan being unveiled by President-elect Joe Biden centers on a mass vaccination campaign and closer coordination among all levels of government.

The Biden plan comes as a divided nation remains caught in the grip of the pandemic’s most dangerous wave yet. So far, more than 380,000 Americans have died.

Biden hopes his multidimensional strategy, expected to be detailed in a Thursday evening speech, will put the country on the path to recovery by the end of his first 100 days. “It’s going to be hard,” Biden said Monday after he got his second vaccine shot.

“It’s not going to be easy. But we can get it done.” A more disciplined focus on vaccination is the new and widely anticipated game-changing element, but that’s far from the whole story.

Biden is asking Americans to override their sense of pandemic fatigue and recommit to wearing masks, practicing social distancing, and avoiding indoor gatherings, particularly ones. **AP**

Europe’s rights court accepts Ukraine case against Russia

Moscow: Europe’s top human rights court agreed on Thursday to look into Ukraine’s complaint against alleged human rights violations in the Russia-annexed Crimean Peninsula.

The Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights, or ECHR, concluded that Ukraine’s case against Russia is backed by sufficient evidence and decided to start looking into the case. It wasn’t clear when the court would deliver a verdict. Ukraine has argued in its complaint that Russia was responsible for a variety of human rights violations in the Black Sea peninsula. Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea hasn’t been

recognized by a vast majority of nations and drew U.S. And EU sanctions against Moscow. International human rights groups have pointed at numerous rights abuses in Crimea, including restrictions of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and harassment of pro-Ukraine activists and members of the Crimean Tatar community.

Moscow has charged that it rightfully took over Crimea after an overwhelming majority of local residents voted to secede from Ukraine and join Russia in a referendum. It has continuously rejected accusations of human rights violations in the region. **AP**

Lawyer, others arrested by Hong Kong national security unit

Hong Kong: Hong Kong police on Thursday said they arrested 11 people on suspicion of assisting offenders who are believed to be the 12 Hong Kong activists detained at sea by mainland Chinese authorities while attempting to flee the city last year.

District counselor and lawyer Daniel Wong Kwok-tung posted on his Facebook page early Thursday that national security officers had arrived at his home. He was later taken to his office, where police conducted a search.

Wong, a member of the Democratic Party, is known for providing legal assistance to hundreds of activists arrested during antigovernment protests in 2019.

The fresh wave of arrests comes a week after 55 activists were apprehended in the largest move against Hong Kongs democracy movement since Beijing imposed a new national security law last June to quell dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

The clampdown has intensified concerns that Beijing is asserting more control over the city and breaking its promise of Hong Kong maintaining separate civil rights and political systems for 50 years from the handover from Britain control in 1997.

Police said in an emailed statement that those arrested Thursday were eight men and three women aged 18 to 72. The identities of those

arrested were not revealed.

Local media reports said those arrested are suspected of helping the 12 Hong Kong activists who were detained at sea by mainland Chinese authorities while attempting to sail to Taiwan last August.

Some of the fugitives were wanted in Hong Kong for offenses related to the 2019 protests.

Last month, 10 of the activists detained at sea were sentenced to prison in Shenzhen for illegally crossing the border, with sentences ranging between seven months to three years. The two other detainees, who are minors, were handed over to Hong Kong and could face further charges in the city for absconding, authorities said. **AP**



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R.O. No.: 39 Dt: 13.01.2021

e-Tender Notice

Office of the Executive Engineer (E&M-II), BBGPP, UJVN Ltd., Kashipur, invites online tenders from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below :
NIT No: 02/NDH/2020-21
Name of work : _Project Management Consultancy for 16 MW Co-Generation Power Project along with concurrent modernization of Sugar Mill at Nadehi. **Estimated cost :** ₹ 134 Lac (GST extra)
Date of availability of bid document on website : 14-01-2021 from 18.00 hrs., **Last date for submission of bid on website :** 05-02-2021 up to 18.00 hrs.
For downloading tender documents and other details, kindly visit e-procurement portal “<https://uktenders.gov.in>”
(Executive Engineer E&M-II, Kashipur)


“Avoid wasteful use of Electricity”



UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

General Public is hereby informed that one person **Namely: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, Address: Unknown** was found dead near Shop No. 51, Bagichi Madho Dass, Red Fort, Delhi on **10.01.2021**. The body has been preserved in Sabzi Mandi Mortuary, Delhi for 72 hours. In this regard a case has been lodged vide **DD No. 37A, dated 10.01.2021** at P.S. Kotwali, Delhi. The description of the dead person is as under-
Age: About 30-35 years, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Oval, **Hair:** Black, **Built:** Normal, **Wearing:** White-blue colour T-shirt, grey colour coat & pant and bare feet. If any one having any information about this dead person please inform undersigned.

SHO
P.S. Kotwali, Delhi
DP/881/N/2021
Ph.: 011-23977100, 8750870121



Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh Delhi- 110005

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to rule 8(6)]
Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on “As is where is”, “As is what is”, and “Whatever there is”, as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s) /Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Sharad Mahawar (Borrower) Neha Mahawar (Co- Borrower) LBDEL00003103265	Flat No.8-E, 4th Floor, Pocket- C, Sector-3, Phase-I, Dwarka, New Delhi- 110075, Area- 307Sq.Ft.	Rs. 16,29,835/- (as on January 5, 2021)	Rs. 12,45,000/- Rs. 1,24,500/-	February 02, 2021, From 12:00 Noon To 02:00 PM	February 15, 2021, From 12:00 Noon Onwards
2.	Bijsender Kumar (Borrower) Sunita (Co- Borrower) Lan LBSNP00002385175	LIG Flat No. 16, 3rd Floor, Sec-G-2, Pocket- 2, Block A-5, Narela Delhi. Area is 344 Sq.Ft.	Rs. 17,75,343/- (as on January 5, 2021)	Rs. 11,16,000/- Rs. 1,11,600/-	February 03, 2021, From 11:00 AM To 01:00 PM	February 15, 2021, From 12:00 Noon Onwards

The online auction will be conducted on website ([URL Link-https://disposalhub.com](https://disposalhub.com)) of our auction agency **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited**. The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **February 12, 2021 before 05:00 P.M** else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh Delhi- 110005** and there after they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before **February 12, 2021 before 05:00 P.M** along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, incase prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh Delhi- 110005** on or before **February 12, 2021 before 05:00 P.M**. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of “**ICICI Bank Limited**” payable at **Delhi**.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact **ICICI Bank Limited on 8584874809/ 8657476284** or **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited on 9710029933/ 9810029926/ 01244233933**

Please note that Marketing agencies1. **NexXen Solution Private Limited 2. Augoe Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Props AMC** have been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date: January 15, 2021
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Search expands for victims of Indonesian plane crash

Jakarta: An aerial search for victims and wreckage from a crashed Indonesian plane expanded on Thursday as divers continued combing the debris-littered seabed looking for the cockpit voice recorder from the lost Sriwijaya Air jet.

The Boeing 737-500 disappeared Saturday minutes after taking off from Jakarta with 62 people aboard. The other black box containing flight data was recovered Tuesday, and search personnel have also recovered plane parts and human remains from the Java Sea.

The aerial search is being expanded to coastal areas of the Thousand Island chain “because plane debris and victims may be carried away by sea currents,” said Rasman, search and rescue mission coordinator for the National Search and Rescue Agency, who uses one name.

Navy officials have said the two black boxes were buried in seabed mud under tons of wreckage between Lancang and Laki islands in the Thousand Island chain north of Jakarta. At least 268 divers were deployed on Thursday, almost double the previous figure.

Rescuers increased to 4,100 personnel, supported by 13 helicopters, 55 ships and 18 raft boats.

So far, searchers have sent 141 body bags containing human remains to police identification experts. Families have been providing DNA samples to the disaster victim identification unit, which on Wednesday said it has identified six victims, including a flight attendant and an off-duty pilot.

The 29-year-old flight attendant, Okky Bisma, was buried on Thursday. Relatives and friends carried his coffin to the cemetery in eastern Jakarta, followed by dozens of people, most wearing masks and maintaining social distancing because of the pandemic.

The airline said both pilots flying the plane were experienced and had good safety records.

Capt. Afwan, who uses one name, began his career as an air force Hercules pilot and had several decades of flying experience. He was known as a devout Muslim and preacher. The co-pilot, Diego Mamahit, was equally qualified.

Nurchahyo Utomo, an investigator with Indonesian National Transportation Safety Committee, said the crew did not declare an emergency or report any technical problems before the plane nosedived into the sea. **AP**

Bangladesh: Fire destroys hundreds of homes in Rohingya refugee camp

Dhaka: A fire raged through a sprawling Rohingya refugee camp in southern Bangladesh on Thursday, destroying hundreds of homes, officials said. No casualties were reported.

The UNHCR said more than 550 homes sheltering about 3,500 people as well as 150 shops were either totally or partially destroyed in the fire.

The fire broke out early Thursday in Nayapara Camp in Cox’s Bazar district, where more than 1 million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar are staying. Nayapara is an old camp that was started decades ago.

Mohammed Shamsud Douza, a senior refugee official, said firefighters took two hours to bring the blaze under control. No serious injuries were reported, and the cause of the fire was not immediately known.

A video showed many refugees searching through charred corrugated iron sheets for valuables. “This is another devastating blow for the Rohingya people who have endured unpeppable hardship for years,” Save the Children’s country director in Bangladesh, Onno van Manen, said in a statement. **AP**

Wholesale inflation moderates to 1.22%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The wholesale price-based inflation moderated to 1.22 per cent in December as prices of kitchen staples onion and potato eased, as per a government data released on Thursday.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation was 1.55 per cent in November 2020, and 2.76 per cent in December 2019.

"The rate of inflation based on WPI Food Index decreased from 4.27 per cent in November 2020, to 0.92 per cent in December 2020," as per the data released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.

The rate of price rise on wholesale basis in the vegetables basket declined to (-) 13.2 per cent in December, as against 12.24 per cent inflation in the preceding month.

The data showed onion prices contracted by 54.69 per

cent in December, as against a decline of 7.58 per cent in November. The inflation in potato eased to 37.75 per cent in December from 115.12 per cent in November. According to the data, rate of inflation in cereals, paddy, wheat and pulses, also eased in December over the previous month. The wholesale prices of fruits were however higher in December compared to November. While inflation in food prices eased, the rate of price rise in manufactured goods rose to 4.24 per cent in December. It was 2.97 per cent in November. Manufactured products, include food products, beverages, textiles, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and cement.

The WPI-based inflation in fuel and power segment too increased marginally during the month under review.

It is to be noted that retail inflation too had dropped sharply to 4.59 per cent in December, mainly due to

declining food prices.

Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, Principal Economist, ICRA Limited said WPI inflation recorded a pull-back in December 2020, driven by a disinflation in primary food items and lower inflation for primary non-food articles, even as core inflation spiked to a 24-month high of 4.2 per cent, injecting concern regarding the trajectory of the WPI going forward. "The sharp 1.5 per cent rise in the core-index in month-on-month terms, partly reflects higher commodity and metal prices, as well as a rise in pricing power, in line with the revival in global demand with the COVID-19 vaccines roll out," she said.

The surge in the core-WPI inflation has completely doused any lingering hope that the dip in the December 2020, CPI inflation would be adequate for rate easing to recommence in the upcoming policy review, she added.

Sensex, Nifty dart up to record highs; TCS stands tall amid IT selloff

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex resumed its record-setting streak on Thursday after a day's pause as gains in index major TCS offset profit-bookings in the IT pack following strong results by Infosys and Wipro. A broad upmove in global equities and a recovering rupee further propped up the bourses, traders said.

Recovering from a shaky start, the 30-share BSE Sensex gained momentum during the day to end at its new lifetime high of 49,584.16, up 91.84 points or 0.19 per cent.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 30.75 points or 0.21 per cent to finish at a record 14,595.60.

TCS topped the Sensex gainer's chart, spurring 2.89 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, L&T, ITC, Reliance Industries, HUL and Sun Pharma.

On the other hand, HCL Tech, Axis Bank, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Infosys and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards, declining up to

2.63 per cent. Infosys on Wednesday posted a 16.6 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 5,197 crore for the December 2020 quarter, and increased its revenue growth guidance for FY21 to 4.5-5 per cent on the back of large project wins and strong deal pipeline. Wipro posted an about 21 per cent jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,968 crore for the December 2020 quarter, and said the demand environment is improving steadily. Domestic equities witnessed a brisk recovery from the day's low mainly led by a rebound in FMCG and pharma stocks, said Binod Modi, Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities. IT index has been the most surprising as profit-bookings was visible in many IT stocks despite strong Q3 numbers and upbeat guidance shared by the managements, he added. "We believe underlying strength of the market remains intact and any correction in the market is likely to be bought out. Sustained recovery in key economic data for Dec'20, better-than-expected Q3.

Rupee logs 3rd straight gains, up 11 paise against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee gained for the third straight day and closed 11 paise higher at 73.04 against the US dollar on Thursday, supported by sustained foreign fund inflows and weak American currency.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 73.18 and hit an intra-day high of 72.97 and a low of 73.18. It finally finished at 73.04, higher by 11 paise over its last close.

Over the last three days, the rupee has added 36 paise in its valuation against the American currency. Rupee caught another bid by logging its third green finish in last four days moving closer to monthly highs.

Modi to address Startup India International Summit on Saturday

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Saturday interact with startups and address a global summit being organised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, according to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The Prarambh: Startup India International Summit is being organised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on January 15-16.

Prime Minister Modi will interact with startups and address the summit on January 16 at 5 PM via video conferencing, the PMO said in a statement.

The two-day summit is being organised as a follow-up of the announcement made by the prime minister at the fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu in August 2018 wherein India committed to host the BIMSTEC Startup Conclave.



The summit marks the fifth anniversary of the Startup India initiative, launched by the prime minister on January 16, 2016.

With participation from over 25 countries and more than 200 global speakers, the summit will be the largest startup confluence organised by the Government of India since the launch of the Startup India initiative, the PMO said.

It will witness 24 sessions with focus on enhancing multilateral cooperation and engagement with countries from around the globe to collectively develop and strengthen the startup ecosystems, it said.

Unsold housing in Noida, Greater Noida down 12% in 2020, reports Anarock

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid restricted new supply in 2020, unsold housing inventory in Noida and Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh reduced by 12 per cent in the year, a report by Anarock Property Consultants said.

The unsold inventory declined from 64,010 units at 2019-end to nearly 56,620 units at 2020-end.

In contrast, Gurugram saw its unsold stock increase by 7 per cent in the same period to around 61,880 units at 2020-end.

From a new launch perspective, the whole of National Capital Region saw launch of around 18,540 units in 2020, of which Noida and Greater Noida accounted for a mere 15 per cent share, or around 2,800 units.

While Gurugram saw supply of nearly 11,180 new units during the year, denoting a significant 60 per cent overall share.

Faridabad saw launch of more new housing units in the year -- around 3,050 units -- compared with both Noida and Greater Noida.

Trump admin announces final rule that will raise prevailing wage rates for H-1B workers

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Trump administration has announced a final rule that will significantly raise the minimum wages the employers in the US must pay to foreign workers on visa programmes like the H-1B as part of the efforts to protect American workers from being undercut by cheaper labour from abroad.

Days before the exit of the administration of President Donald Trump, the US Department of Labor said that the final rule would help protect the wages and job opportunities of American workers by reforming the wage method-

ology it uses to set prevailing wage rates to prevent potential abuses of its Permanent Employment Certification, H-1B, H-1B1 and E-3 Visa foreign worker programmes. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The final rule will improve the accuracy of prevailing wages paid to foreign workers by bringing them in line.

Coal India's supply to power sector drops 5% to 318 MT in Apr-Dec

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coal supply by state-run CIL to the power sector declined by 5.3 per cent to 318.04 million tonnes (MT) in the April-December period of the ongoing fiscal.

The state-owned company had supplied 335.92 MT of coal to the power sector in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, according to official data. In December 2020, the fuel supply by Coal India (CIL) dropped to 40.25 MT against 43.04 MT in the same month last fiscal year.

India's automobile exports drop 18.87 pc in 2020: SIAM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile exports from India declined 18.87 per cent in 2020, a year marked by coronavirus pandemic induced disruptions across the globe, according to the latest figures

by Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), Overseas shipments of vehicles in the January-December period last year stood at 38,65,138 units as against 47,63,960 units in the same period in 2019, SIAM

said. One of the main reasons for the drop in automobile exports was the dip in shipments of passenger vehicles, which were down 39.38 per cent last year at 4,28,098 units as compared to 7,06,159 units in 2019.

INBRIEF

FIRST MILLET PROCESSING UNIT IN KEONJHAR

First millet processing unit in Keonjhar inaugurated by Collector and District Magistrate in Keonjhar town. "The unit is being managed by Krushna SHG supported by Mission Shakti. The unit has a capacity of cleaning about 2 qtls per hour and can clean over 500 qtls in a month, thus providing a consistent source of livelihood to the SHG. The unit has been established to ensure supply of clean Ragi for the flagship ICDS Ragi Laddu programme of the District Administration. The unit has been provided under the Odisha Millets Mission, supported by the District Mineral Foundation. Technical support is being provided by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment and WASSAN.

NFL PROVIDES COLD STORAGE EQUIPMENTS FOR COVID VACCINE

Noida: Under its CSR initiative, National Fertilizers Limited (NFL) provided 8 Nos. Cold Chain Equipments to State Health Department, Chandigarh to strengthen the Government's efforts to develop cold storage facilities for anti-Corona Vaccine. The equipments include 4 Ice Lined Refrigerators and 4 Deep Freezers, which are designed to store the COVID-19 vaccine. Under this project, one more Deep Freezer shall also be delivered by the Company shortly. On behalf of NFL, Sh. Dilbag Singh, DGM (Marketing), Chandigarh handed over these COVID Vaccine storage equipments to Dr. V K Nagpal, Medical Superintendent, Government Multi Specialty Hospital, Chandigarh. The company acted promptly to cater to the urgent need for cold storage devices for Government's vaccination programme and delivered the equipment well within the timelines.

FARIDABAD CIVIL HOSPITAL GETS ANTI-COVID FACILITIES AS CSR INITIATIVE

Faridabad: As part of its corporate social responsibility initiative during the Covid-19 pandemic, Goodyear India Limited, in association with AmeriCare India Foundation, is donating Faridabad Civil Hospital with PPE and quarantine equipment. The equipment includes bedside ventilators, multipara monitors, pulse oximeters, PPE kits, N95 mask. "Our objective is to help enable a safer and healthier country. These are indeed challenging times and therefore, a collaborative and participatory approach is needed to address the challenges that this pandemic has unleashed upon us," Goodyear India MD Sandeep Mahajan.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk confirms India entry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tesla CEO Elon Musk has confirmed the company's plans to enter the Indian market, within days of the electric vehicle maker registering its arm in the country.

"As promised," Musk tweeted in response to a thread linked to a blog that analysed how India could still be a market to be developed for Tesla cars despite its high prices.

Earlier this week, it emerged that US electric car maker Tesla has registered its Indian arm amid indications that the company is set to enter the country's automobile market.

According to a regulatory filing, the firm has registered Tesla India Motors and Energy Pvt Ltd with Registrar of Companies (RoC) Bangalore.

The company has been registered as an unlisted private entity with a paid-up capital of Rs 1 lakh.

Public Issue of Debentures amounting to ₹5,000 crores by Power Finance Corporation Limited opens on Jan 15

Mumbai: Power Finance Corporation Limited, is one of the leading financial institutions in India, focused on the power sector will open its Rs 5,000 crores public issue of secured, redeemable Non-Convertible Debentures on January 15, 2021. The base issue size is Rs. 500 crores with an option to retain oversubscription of up to Rs. 4,500 crores aggregating up to 5,000 crores which is within the shelf limit of Rs 10,000 crores. The NCDs are of face value of Rs 1,000 each. The Tranche I Issue

is scheduled to close on January 29, 2021 with an option of early closure or extension as decided by PFC's Board of Directors or a duly constituted committee thereof.

The Tranche I Issue offers options for tenures of 3, 5, 10 and 15 years. The 3-year tenure NCD in Series I will offer a fixed coupon rate of 4.65% p.a. to 4.80% p.a., while the 5 year tenure NCD in Series II will offer fixed coupon rate of 5.65% p.a. to 5.80% p.a. depending on the category of investors.

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Khushboo**, D/o Shri Sonu, R/o House No. B-7, Gopal Vihar, Vijay Vihar, Phase-2, Delhi. Age 18 yrs., Height 4'2", Shallow complexion, Medium built, Long face, wearing black colour suit salwar and black colour chappal in feet has been missing since 24.12.2020 from the area of **PS Vijay Vihar, Delhi**.

In this regard a DD No. 32-A, Dt. 25.12.2020 has been lodged at **PS Vijay Vihar, Delhi**. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing girl may kindly inform to the following.

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
 Fax: 011-23011334
 Ph.: 011-23014046
 011-23015218
 DP/601/RD/2021

**S.H.O.,
PS Vijay Vihar, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27061294, 27061295**

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता का कार्यालय,
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमण्डल, बगहा
(eeefdbagaha@gmail.com)

शुद्धि-पत्र - 2

सूचित किया जाता है कि इस प्रमण्डल के पत्रांक-696 दिनांक-30.12.2020 द्वारा निर्गत निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या-01/2020-21 जिसका पीओ आरओ नं०-010421(WRD) 2020-21 है, में निम्न प्रकार आंशिक संशोधन किया जाता है-

क्रमांक	कड़िका	पूर्व की तिथि	संशोधित तिथि
03	निविदा कागजात डाउनलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय।	दिनांक 08.01.2021 से 11.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।	दिनांक 08.01.2021 से 15.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।
05	निविदा कागजात अपलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय।	दिनांक 12.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।	दिनांक 16.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।
06	तकनीकी बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय।	दिनांक 14.01.2021 के 15:30 बजे तक।	दिनांक 19.01.2021 के 15:30 बजे तक।
15	अग्रघन की राशि की मूल प्रति जमा करने की तिथि एवं समय।	दिनांक 13.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।	दिनांक 18.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।

इसे इस हद तक संशोधित समझा जाय। निविदा की अन्य शर्तें पूर्ववत् लागू रहेगी।
(लाल बहादुर गुप्ता)

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता,
जल निस्सरण प्रमण्डल, बेतिया

PR No. 11178(W.R.D) 2020-21

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमण्डल, बगहा

PR No. 11179(W.R.D) 2020-21

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमण्डल, बगहा

PR No. 11179(W.R.D) 2020-21

पत्रांक-55 / बेतिया
**कार्यपालक अभियन्ता का कार्यालय,
जल निस्सरण प्रमण्डल, बेतिया।**

Mail I.D - ee.drainagedivision.bettiah@gmail.com
 Mob - 7463889644

शुद्धि पत्र-02

सूचित किया जाता है कि इस प्रमण्डल के पत्रांक 1445 दिनांक 30.12.2020 द्वारा निर्गत निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना सं०-2/SBD/2020-2021 जिसका पीओ आरओ नं०-010489(WRD)2020-2021 है, में निम्नप्रकार आंशिक संशोधन किया जाता है-

क्रमांक	कड़िका	पूर्व की तिथि	संशोधित तिथि
03	निविदा कागजात डाउनलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय।	दिनांक 08.01.2021 से 11.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।	दिनांक 08.01.2021 से 15.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।
05	निविदा कागजात अपलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय।	दिनांक 12.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।	दिनांक 16.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।
06	तकनीकी बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय।	दिनांक 14.01.2021 के 15:30 बजे तक।	दिनांक 19.01.2021 के 15:30 बजे तक।
15	अग्रघन की राशि की मूल प्रति जमा करने की तिथि एवं समय।	दिनांक 13.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।	दिनांक 18.01.2021 के 15:00 बजे तक।

इसे इस हद तक संशोधित समझा जाय। निविदा की अन्य शर्तें पूर्ववत् लागू रहेगी।
(लाल बहादुर गुप्ता)

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता,
जल निस्सरण प्रमण्डल, बेतिया

PR No. 11178(W.R.D) 2020-21

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमण्डल, बगहा

PR No. 11179(W.R.D) 2020-21

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमण्डल, बगहा

PR No. 11179(W.R.D) 2020-21

The Executive Engineer, Udaipur Division, PWD(R&B), Udaipur, Gomati District, Tripura invites e-tender against press NIT No.16/EE/UDP-DIVN/UDP/2020-21 DATED 11.01.2021.

For Package No:7

- Improvement of road from Udaipur Killa Road to Maharani Barrage via Badarmokam Bridge, Pitra & Photamati under Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure in 2020-21.
- Brick soled Roads to be converted to all weather road by paver blocks/U-J road to Thanda cherra under scheme for special Assistance to states for capital expenditure in 2020-21.
- Brick soled Roads to be converted to all weather road by paver blocks/Nitya bazar to Bampai Bari road under scheme for special Assistance to states for capital expenditure in 2020-21.

With Estimated cost: ₹ 276698084.00, Earnest Money : ₹ 27,66,981.00

Time of Completion - 18(Eighteen) months.

Last Date of bidding for bids - 11.02.2021, upto 15.00Hrs.

For more details kindly visit: <https://tripuratenders.gov.in>

Note:-
NO NEGOTIATION WILL BE CONDUCTED WITH THE LOWEST BIDDER

**Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Udaipur Division, PWD (R&B)
Udaipur, Gomati District, Tripura**

ICA/C-2793/2020-21

UJVN LIMITED

H.O. : 'UJJWAL', Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun - 248006
 Tel.: 0135-2763508, 2763808 Fax: 0135-2763507
 CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

Ref. No.: 47 **e-Tender Notice** **Dated : 14.01.2021**

For and on behalf of UJVN Limited, office of the Executive Engineer, PCM(GV), Mayapur, Haridwar invites online bids from interested bidders. Brief summary of tender is given below-

NIT No.- 15/2020-21/EE/ PCM(GV)/Mayapur :- Construction of 6 Nos. 2BHK (Type-II) Residences at Mohammadpur Power House Colony.

Estimated Value of Tender:- Rs. 1,74,60,008.82 only.

Date of availability of bid document on website :- 14.01.2021 from 17:00 Hrs.

Last date for submission of bids on website :- 04.02.2021 upto 17:00 Hrs.

For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal "<http://uktenders.gov.in>"

Executive Engineer, PCM (GV)

"Avoid Wasteful Use of Electricity"

Himalaya Food International Ltd
(Formerly, Himalaya International Limited)

CIN: L70102DL1992PLC047399

Regd. Office: 118, 1st Floor, 12 Gagandeep Building, Rajendra Place, New Delhi-110008

Tel. +91 11 45108609, Fax: +91 1704 225178

E-mail id: cs@himalayainternational.com | website: www.himalayafoodcompany.com

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 that the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 4.00 p.m. at Company Head Office at Shubhkhera, Paonta Sahib, H.P. - 173025, arrangement is made for participation of Board members electronically through video - conferencing facility, inter-alia, to take on record the Unaudited Standalone Financial Results of the Company for the Quarter ended 31st December, 2020.

In terms of the Code of Conduct for Prevention of Insider Trading in Securities of Himalaya Food International Limited, the Trading window is closed from 1st January, 2021 to 23rd January, 2021.

The said notice may be accessed on the stock exchanges websites at www.bseindia.com.

For Himalaya Food International Ltd.

**Sd/-
Surabhi Maheshwari
Company Secretary**

Date: January 14, 2021
Place: Delhi

PARADIP PORT TRUST

e-Tender Call Notice

No.TD/TM/GEN-235(Vol-IV)/2053 dtd.11.01.2021

Name for the work "Allotment of 10 (Ten) nos. of Mechanical Iron Ore / Iron Ore Pellet plots at IOHP". License fee : Rs.2,76,66,870/-, **Warranty Charge : Rs.15,20,430/-, Last Date & time of Bid submission : Dt.01.02.2021, 1700 Hrs., Bid Opening Date and time : 02.02.2021, 1600 Hrs.** Refer our Website for details : <https://eprocure.gov.in>

Sr. Asst. Traffic Manager
PPT/PR/368/20-21, Dt.14.01.2021

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - I, DELHI

4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001.

OA No. 715/2016

ICICI Bank Limited vs. Applicant
 Sh. Arun Kumar & Ors. vs. Defendants

To,
 Sh. Arun Kumar
 S/o. Sh. Brahm Deo Singh
 R/o: House No. C- 44, Krishna Park, Devil Road, New Delhi-110062.

And also at:
 Flat No. 502, 5th Floor, Tower- 01, KSB Royal Height, Group Housing Colony, Sector- 126, Greater Mohali (Kharar), Mohali- 160055 (Punjab)

2. Smt. Madhuri Singh, W/o. Sh. Arun Kumar
 R/o: House No. C- 44, Krishna Park, Devil Road, New Delhi-110062.

And also at:
 Flat No. 502, 5th Floor, Tower- 01, KSB Royal Height, Group Housing Colony, Sector- 126, Greater Mohali (Kharar), Mohali- 160055 (Punjab)

3. M/s K. Soni Builders & Promoters (P) Ltd.
 Having its Zonal Office at: KSB Royal Homes, SCF- 13- 14, Chhajaj Majra Road, Sector- 126, Greater Mohali (Kharar), Mohali- 160055 (Punjab)

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of **Rs. 32,72,255/-** (Rupees Thirty Two Lacs Seventy Two Thousand Two Hundred And Fifty Five Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is Given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Hon'ble. on **24.02.2021 at 10:30 A.M.** (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.drtbun.gov.in Phone Number: 011-23748473).

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/ Software;

(ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by "Registrar/ recovery Officer- I/ and Recovery Officer- II" shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. "drt.gov.in" under the Public Notice Head.

(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/ Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-23748473.

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 07th day of January 2021

By Order of this Tribunal
For Registrar

Trend Slazer

Aahana to make her podcast debut

Actor **AAHANA KUMRA** is all set to make her podcast debut. She will narrate a story on the audio web series titled *MnM Talkies*.

"I have recently started working on this podcast, which is produced and directed by Mantra," said Aahana, about the audio story called *I Hear You*, which tells the story of a detective named Priyamvada Parmar.

"I am entering the voicing industry and I think Mantra is the best person to hold my hand through this. Am excited to enter the new phase of my life. This is a new chapter and I am happy to begin 2021 with this," she added.



'I have had a lot of second seasons this year. It's been interesting to revisit them and experience

how they might have changed as people. Reprising a character for a new season is like meeting an old friend — you basically know them and understand how they are wired, but they are not exactly who they were when you met them last.'

—Rasika Dugal

Bollywood actor **PREITY ZINTA** teased fans saying lots of exciting news was coming up in the year ahead. She asked fans to take a guess.



The Los Angeles-based actor shared a throwback photo where she poses with a cricket bat.

"This is definitely the year of new beginnings. Lots of exciting and interesting news coming up. Any guess folks? Watch this space for more.... till then keep guessing aur *bolo kya?*," she captioned the image.

Reacting to her post, netizens started speculating about what new beginning the actor was referring to.

Shakira sells rights of her songs

Singer **SHAKIRA** has become the latest artiste to sell publishing rights of all her songs. The Grammy winner's catalogue includes 145 songs.

Shakira's catalogue includes hits like *Hips don't lie*, *Whenever, wherever*, *She wolf* and *Waka waka* (This time for Africa), and the Board of Hipgnosis Songs Fund Limited, a UK-based investment company, has acquired 100 per cent of her music publishing rights.

In the year 2020, the world has seen people shifting from offline to online for many life requirements. The year somewhat became the watershed moment for various digital platforms like Video OTT, Edutech, Pharma, Fintech etc., which saw an unexpected surge in numbers. As a country, we are brilliant at adapting to change, look at how we embraced fintech & edu-tech both so important for our survival. The adaptation which was slowly happening in 2019 got expedited due to the spread of pandemic and the followed lockdown.

The most significant need for the bottom of our social pyramid has always been 'roti, kapda aur makaan' or succinctly put, education (read knowledge) and financial stability, even more so when pandemic was reaping havoc.

Today, learning is the fastest-changing landscape with a virtual race among various organisations to deliver knowledge and up-skilling content through latest and complex technologies. However, this approach may only work well for the metros of India with upwardly mobile TG. If we consider the TG living in tier two, three and four towns and villages, the requirement might be very different. Bharat makes up the most significant part of Indian digital users accessing the internet on mobile devices. The real issue is not the availability of high-quality content and implementation of complex/fancy tech to deliver it to TG but the ease with which the TG can consume the content on devices. To summarise, the key challenges would be:

- Increased screen time on low-end devices with battery challenges.
- Patchy internet to be able to watch videos seamlessly.
- Not truly vernacular.
- Cost of content and hence the high subscription.

NEED OF THE HOUR

What is more relevant and need to be made available to young India is a platform/medium which will make it spontaneous for people to access decent quality content (even if it is non-exclusive) effortlessly with minimal tech and underlying infrastructural requirements. It is only then, we will be able to see the next billion users using digital learning platforms to learn and get empowered to achieve their learning goals.

AUDIO IS THE ANSWER

Audio is the only way to provide all of the above without compromising the quality of learning except for a few specific subjects requiring live/visual session for better understanding. Audio will democratise the learning ecosystem from every aspect. It will allow the masses to acquire knowledge and learn the subjects of their interest without paying beyond their financial capacities

FUTURE OF KNOWLEDGE

In the fast-changing landscape of education, we shall soon see audio taking over traditional and video learning to educate young India

or compulsive buying of high-end devices/data packs.

NOT SHOOTING IN THE DARK

Looking at the global trend from the biggest audio markets — US and China, audio will take over as most preferred media by masses across India.

For instance, in the US, Spotify has spent \$400mn to acquire Gimlet, Anchor and Parcast to acquire podcasting capabilities. Apple acquired Scout FM in Sep 2020. Simultaneously, in China audio platforms like Ximalaya FM, Lizhi FM (US IPO), DeDao is serving more than 500mn users. De Dao, another Chinese audio content platform, contracts high-profile experts to record podcasts teaching topics in their field. Listeners navigate a marketplace of audio courses and subscribe to the ones they believe will get them (or their children) an "edge" There are various courses like workplace communication, investing, accent reduction, Chinese history and many more.



Last year the company had served seven million customers, and none of the content was free. Audio courses drive more than 50

per cent revenue for Ximalaya FM and QingTingFM. Screen-based learning competes with distractions like

Facebook and Netflix for users' attention. By making audio their primary learning consumption mode, people can fit courses into busy lives and easily allow for a habit.

FUTURE TRENDS IN KNOWLEDGE AND AUDIO

India is the youngest country with 850mn people below the age of 35 years. For this young population, the most significant need is education and financial security. To get better economic opportunities, people need to up-skill, but being engaged in the daily job they have limited time to learn and up-skill themselves.

For example, Uber driver or Swiggy delivery person work eight to 10 hours a day and have no time to learn and upgrade themselves. While their hands and eyes are engaged, they can leverage their ears to boost their skills by converting their non-learning time into learning time.

Audio has its merit over other mediums without imbibing the negatives of respective mediums like video and print. It provides various benefits to the user, some important ones are as follows:

- Reduces screen time without reducing learning.
- Passive listening provides for more extended content consumption throughout the day.
- Creation and consumption of content are both much easier in audio format.
- Minimal hardware and connectivity required.

YEAR 2021 WILL BE A YEAR OF AUDIO PROVIDING FOR:

Reduction in screen time: Students would not sit in front of screen for long hours to gain knowledge. Parents & teachers both have been concerned with excess screen time for their kids.

Easy access to knowledge in local languages: Users across India will be able to get easy access to the best of educators, that too in their local language.

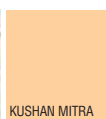
Offline to online classes: Local and small-time educators will reach millions and teach them in their local language. Thanks to the ease of content creation with audio.

Up-skill with one click: Small courses targeted to unlocking better financial opportunity will become a trend.

User convenience and ease: People will not migrate to larger cities to gain or share knowledge, creation of content and consumption as both are much easier in audio format.

We shall soon see audio taking over traditional and video learning and will have a much larger mass appeal and usage to educate young India users this year.

(The writer Pulkrit Sharma is CEO & Co-founder of Khabri.)



A great drive

At the conclusion of *The Pioneer's* leg of Hyundai's 'Great India Drive,' a word of thanks to the all new Hyundai i20

This is not about our adventures in and around Bhopal visiting some tremendous historical sites at the heart of India and then discovering that Madhya Pradesh's capital has some of India's finest museums and collections of artifacts. But this is about the car we took there, the third-generation Hyundai i20 and a sort-of re-evaluation of the car. I owned a first-generation i20 and it was a superb drive but it was never asked to do what we made this little car do, driving close to 2,000 kilometres over six days, a total of nearly 36 hours of drive time.

Usually, a little hatchback like the i20 is not the ideal car for a long road trip, with luggage and for those like us trying to document the journey. Not only did the car surprise me with its spaciousness, it was more impressive in the way it tackled the roads. Now, the roads, both, those run by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the state government

in Madhya Pradesh are excellent but during one of our days exploring historical sites near Bhopal, a local friend advised us to see Gayaspur and Satdhari, the former an ancient temple carved into a hill and the latter a collection of ancient Buddhist Stupas. The problem is that the sun was setting and to get from point A to B in short order didn't mean just driving quickly, (we also visited Heliodorus' Pillar inside the town to Vidisha) but also depending on Google Maps.



Now, I love Google Maps and I sometimes wonder how on earth we managed before Brin and Page did their thing. That said, on this particular day and possibly for one of the first times, it was asked to plot a route between these three sites. And it did so not with any aplomb. It plotted a route through the narrowest alleys of Vidisha, which despite being the Chief Minister's constituency, has some really narrow passages inside town and like else-

where in small towns of India nobody follows any rules. And to make matters worse after Vidisha, for a long time we were on a love road constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, which suddenly ended. One minute tarmac, next minute a path which wasn't really a road but where tractors went. It was barely in between the fields, in fact, the mustard and rice crops on either side of this path often had the odd group of plants growing between the ruts. And it was rutted and wet. It was not a path that a small SUV-shaped vehicle let alone a hatchback. But somehow, this i20 with its dual-clutch gearbox, an automatic gearbox isn't the ideal way to go through such paths, but it made it, and not once did I hear the heartbreaking 'clank' of the

car bottoming out. Again, there was never a struggle for grip in muddy and rutted roads, other than maybe once or twice but within a second or two, the traction control kicked in and the car effortlessly lifted itself out.

I believe that 99.9 per cent of the i20s in this generation that will be sold in India over the next four-five years will never be able to do what this particular car has seen and done in the past week. And it did these in the crowded roads of Vidisha, the narrow lanes of the old city in Bhopal, the broad boulevards of the new city, the state highways with some crazy drivers and the most entitled people in India, wrong-side motorcyclists and tractor drivers, as well as in some brilliant highways. A big shout-out to NHAI for the brilliant

Strongly opinionated about my choices: Mithila



Actor Mithila Palkar says she is aware that she has the freedom to make her own choices, adding that she is strongly opinionated about the choices she makes.

These are traits that helped her relate to her character of Masha in the forthcoming film *Tribhanga: Tedhi Medhi Crazy*, says Mithila, although she doesn't think she is similar to Masha at all.

"The choices that Masha made were the ones that I would never make, but having said that I won't judge her for that because I know where she came from and why she made those choices," Mithila said.

The actor continued: "I think the one thing that binds us together is that whatever decisions we take, we are going to be judged for some of them. I feel we both are aware that we have the freedom to make a choice and are

very strongly opinionated about the choices that we make — whether or not they fit in anybody else's build or is in sync with anyone else's ideas, principles or values."

"We know that it's a choice that is going to make us happy and we've taken this call being very self-aware of what may or may not happen. I think that is the one thing that binds us together but otherwise I don't think there is anything similar. She is quite peaceful actually and a quiet person to herself. I am quite the opposite of that — (I am) loud," she added.

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

(The film releases on Netflix on January 15.)

—IANS



There is no need to be a master in the kitchen or an expert pastry chef to create a tasty and appetizing dish. Most of the time, the best cakes are also the simplest to prepare. Kick start a brand new year with some delectable breakfast options that are light and nutritious. Lavazza India shares new recipes:

Treccia with ginseng coffee
Aromatic, fragrant and very tasty. The braid with ginseng coffee is a sweet bread with a single large 5-ply braid. For this special recipe, use Lavazza ginseng coffee, the perfect soluble preparation for a healthy and energizing breakfast.

- Ingredients:**
- ◆Flour: 700 gm
 - ◆Water: 300 gm
 - ◆Brewer's yeast: 1 stick
 - ◆Honey: 50 gm
 - ◆Ginseng coffee: 30 gm
 - ◆Coarse ground coffee: 4 gm
 - ◆Butter: 80 gm
 - ◆Salt: 11 gm
 - ◆Yolk: 1
 - ◆Milk to taste

Preparation:
Dissolve the coffee and sugar in 100 gm of hot water. Proceed with the dough by adding to the flour, water with coffee, brewer's yeast, honey and salt. Mix all the ingredients until the liquid is absorbed, then add some butter. Work the dough with your hands until it is uniform and smooth. Let it rise for about one hour.

How to make a bread braid
Once risen, separate the dough into five equal parts to get a large braid. Now we need to weave! Those who manage to braid their hair can also follow the same procedure with bread dough. Take the outermost

BAKE IT EASY

Most of the time, the best cakes are also the simplest to prepare. Here are some delectable options that are light as well as nutritious



yolk and milk.
Another half an hour of leavening, a final brush and you are ready for the final touch: sprinkle the coffee powder along the entire length of the braid.
Bake at 180 degrees for about 40 minutes.

Coffee pancakes
Do you want to surprise your family or friends with a tasty and original breakfast? The pancakes at the cafe are the perfect sweet, as light and nutritious. Of Anglo-Saxon origin, the golden pancakes have also entered Italian homes for some years. In the classic American breakfast, pancakes are prepared with maple syrup or fresh fruit.

- Ingredients:**
- ◆Lavazza coffee: 150 ml
 - ◆Eggs: 2
 - ◆Milk: 150 ml
 - ◆Flour: 150 gm
 - ◆Sugar: 50 gm
 - ◆Salt: 1 pinch
 - ◆Butter to taste

Preparation:
First of all: prepare the coffee with the mocha and, once ready, pour it into a container and let it cool. At this point, take the eggs, separate the yolks and egg whites in two different containers. In the one that contains the egg yolks pour the sugar and with a whisk try to mix well until you

get a uniform cream. Then add the flour, milk, and coffee, salt and continue mixing.

Beat the egg whites until stiff and pour them into the mixture you just made. Combine everything thoroughly, taking care to mix from the bottom up to prevent the egg whites from falling apart. Cover the container with a cloth or cling film and let it rest for at least 30 minutes in the refrigerator.

To cook the pancakes, take a medium-small non-stick pan: melt a knob of butter and pour the mixture a little at a time with the help of a ladle. Bake these yummy pancakes on both sides until they turn a golden colour. Place three or four stacked pancakes on the plate and add icing sugar, dark chocolate flakes, whipped cream, jams or honey to taste.

Plumcake without eggs
Most of the time, the best cakes are also the simplest to prepare, such as egg-free coffee plumcakes. Greedy, healthy and genuine. Ideal for a light and nutritious breakfast or snack.

- Ingredients**
- ◆Flour: 250 gm
 - ◆Potato starch: 50 gm
 - ◆Sugar: 120 gm
 - ◆Milk: 300 ml
 - ◆300 ml Milk
 - ◆Crema-e-Gusto Espresso coffee: 1 cup
 - ◆Dark chocolate: 60 gm
 - ◆Baking powder for cakes: 1 sachet

Preparation
Prepare the coffee and pour it into a cup. Turn on the oven bringing the temperature to 180 static.

In a bowl, combine the flour, yeast, starch and sugar and mix with the help of a spoon. Now heat the milk and add the coffee. At this point, combine the liquid and solid ingredients. Mix everything with the electric mixer until the dough is smooth and homogeneous. Then add the chocolate flakes to the mixture, incorporating it with a spatula.

Grease the loaf pan. In order not to get your fingers dirty, take a card and grab the butter. Spread the fat all over the inner surface of the pan, being careful not to miss any areas. Continue like this until you have greased the entire pan. Now sprinkle the pan with a little flour and shake off the excess. If you are unfamiliar with flour and butter, you can always use parchment paper. Then, pour the dough into it.

It's time to bake! You have already preheated the oven to 180 static, right? Perfect. Now let the coffee plumcake cook for about 30 minutes. Remember to do the toothpick test to check its cooking. It is a simple and fool proof method to understand if a cake is cooked to the right point or not. After the necessary cooking time, before enjoying your delicious masterpiece, let it cool. The egg-free coffee plumcake is ready!

—IANS



With a pinch of fruity element

Don't settle for your usual soft drink when you can prep up something fancy in little to no time! Here are a few lip-smacking healthy mocktails



seeds to garnish and add sweetness to your mocktails. The best part is that you don't need any added sugar as the natural flavour of pomegranate makes it a wonderful delight!

Tangy orange
In this citrusy mocktail, you can mix up multiple citrus fruits to flavour up the taste. Oranges are abundant during winter, so make full use of this tangy winter fruit! The fresh orange pulp is a healthier escape from your regular soft drinks or alcohol. A thin slice of orange on the brim will surely make it an insta-worthy click!

Blissful blueberry
Go all blue with your winter theme! The delicious blueberries have always been a sweet delight. Crush and blend them into a smooth mixture. This is something new that you can easily try for your next family get-together. Pair it up with blueberry cheesecake and get into the celebration mode!

Winters call for some warm exotic dishes, but what about the drinks? Don't settle for your usual soft drinks when you can prep-up for something fancy in little to no time! As we enter the new year, why not add some lip-smacking healthy mocktails to the list?

Yes, with a pinch of the fruity element, your mocktails can be safe and healthy! The key is to use high-quality ingredients and fresh fruit pulp. Most of these mocktails require similar ingredients like lime juice, mint leaves, ice cubes, soda or sparkling water. And trust us; it's as easy as you could think of! So, make a toast, with these easy-peasy mocktails, shared by Kimaye Health, INI Farms.

Here's how to go about it in four simple steps:

- Muddle the fruit and lime juice with a few mint leaves.
- Pour the mixture in a glass with two to three ice cubes, and honey if needed.
- Add soda or sparkling water to the brim and mix.
- Garnish them with a fruit slice and mint leaves to make them festive ready!

Some of the fruits that go well are:

Peppy pomegranate
Goes perfectly with the winter vibe as the blend of maroon with soda looks splendid for a celebration drink. Along with pomegranate juice, you can also throw in a few

Cucumber lemonade
While cucumbers are most adored in summers for their cooling effect and they also make a refreshing drink during the winters. The freshness of cucumbers with lime soda is surely something you wouldn't want to miss. Don't just slide them into your salads, instead turn them into a sweet fresh mocktail!

Striking strawberry pineapple
Blend in two fruits for some incredible flavour. Pineapple and strawberry go well together because of their sweet and soft nature. With these two fruits, there's barely any need for added sugar. You can play with the quantity of each fruit to get the desired shade of the drink.

These are some of the best and easy combinations to try for that random get together. Always go for fresh and good quality fruits for better results. Additionally, you can also freeze some small fresh-fruit chunks in ice cubes and drop them in to give your mocktails a flattering look. With these ingredients and tricks in mind, you can add a unique charm to simple parties!

—IANS

R E C I P E S



ALMOND & SESAME PINNI

WHAT YOU NEED

- Wheat flour: 2 cup
- Semolina: 2½ tbsp
- Roasted almond slivers: ¼ cup
- Roasted white sesame powder: ¼ cup
- Pure ghee: ¾ cup
- Gram flour (*besan*): 1½ tbsp
- Sugar: 1 cup
- Water: ½ cup
- Green cardamom powder: ½ tsp
- Roasted white sesame: 1 tbsp
- Roasted whole almonds: 3 tbsp

METHOD

- Heat ghee in a pan, add semolina

and wheat flour to it. Roast the mixture till a golden colour is achieved.

- Mix the sugar and water in a pan, and put it over low heat. Cook till single string sugar syrup is formed.
- Mix the sugar syrup with the wheat flour mixture. Add the green cardamom powder.
- Cook the mixture till it becomes a little dry. Add the roasted almond flakes and ground white sesames to the mixture and mix well.
- Allow the mixture to cool. Divide the mixture into equal parts and shape it into rounds.
- Cut the roasted almond into halves and place it over the pinnis and roll the pinnis gently in roasted white sesame.

Courtesy: Chef Manish Mehrotra.

VEG BIRYANI

WHAT YOU NEED

- Basmati rice: 3 cups
- Whole green cardamom (divided): 18
- Cloves (divided): 12
- Salt: 3 tsp
- Ghee: 4.5 tbsp + 1 tsp
- Red onion (thinly sliced): 6
- Broken cashews: 6 tbsp
- Potato (cubed): 3
- Cauliflower florets: 150 gm
- Carrot (diagonally cut): 3
- Green beans (diagonally cut): 20
- Mil: 30 ml
- Saffron strands
- Ginger and garlic paste: 2 tbsp
- Green chillies: 6
- Oil: 30 ml
- Cumin seeds: 2 tsp
- Cinnamon stick
- Bay leaf: 3
- Whole black peppercorns: 13
- Curd: 1 cup
- Biryani masala: 4.5 tsp
- Red chilli powder: 1.5 tsp
- Water: 1 cup
- Cilantro (chopped): 8 tsp
- Mint (chopped): 7 tsp
- Rose water or kewra water: 3 tsp
- Garam masala: 1 tsp



METHOD

- Soak the rice in three cups of water for 35 to 40 minutes. Drain the water later.
- Heat a pot full of water. Add one black cardamom, three green cardamom, four cloves and 3/4 teaspoon salt to it. Let it come to a boil.
- Put rice and stir with a spoon.
- Let it cook uncovered (don't lower the heat) until it's almost cooked. This takes around six to seven minutes.
- Remove the pan from heat

- and drain the rice in a colander. Add a teaspoon of ghee to the rice. Set aside.
- Heat 1.5 tablespoon of ghee in a pan on medium heat. Once hot, add one sliced onion and cook until they turn golden brown and caramelise. Remove on a plate.
- To the same pan, now add cashews and cook until golden brown. Remove and set aside.
- To the same pan, add potato and cook for two minutes until light brown. Remove on a plate.

- To the same pan, now add cauliflower, beans and carrots. Sauté for two to three minutes until veggies appear light brown. Remove them on a plate.
- Heat two tablespoons of milk in a pan. Once warm, add saffron strands (crush it before adding). Set it aside.
- Crush ginger, garlic and chilli using a mortar and pestle. Set aside.
- Heat 1.5 tablespoons of oil in a pan on medium heat. Add cumin seeds, cinnamon stick, bay leaf, peppercorns, remaining three cardamom and remaining two cloves.
- Stir and let the spices sizzle for a few seconds. Add the sliced onions and also add 1/4 teaspoon of salt.
- Cook for three to four minutes until onions turn light brown. Then add the crushed ginger, garlic and green chillies paste. Cook for two minutes until the raw smell goes away.
- Remove the pan from heat and whisk in the yogurt, whisking continuously until it's all absorbed.
- Put the pan back on heat. Add all the veggies and toss to combine.
- Add the biryani masala and red chilli powder.
- Add 1/4 cup of water. Let it cook for around six to seven minutes until veggies are

- almost cooked but not overcooked. They should be firm to bite. Remove from heat.
- Now take a heavy bottom pan. First grease it with ghee.
- Then add a layer of rice (half of the rice). Top with half of fried onion, half of fried cashews and half of cilantro and mint. Add 1/2 teaspoon of rose water. Now place the veggies on top (all of it).
- Then add another layer of rice on top of the veggies. Then top it with remaining with fried onion, cashews, cilantro and mint.
- Add the prepared saffron milk and the remaining one teaspoon of rose water on top.
- Finally drizzle one teaspoon ghee on top. Sprinkle some biryani masala.
- Cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil. Then cover with a fitted lid.
- Heat a flat pan on medium heat. Once hot, reduce the flame to lowest. Place your biryani pot on top of the pan and let it cook for 25 to 30 minutes on lowest heat.
- Scoop out the biryani from the bottom of the pan so that each serving has both the veggies and the rice.
- Serve hot vegetable biryani with raita.

Courtesy: The Biryani House.

Bruised India face temperament test

PTI ■ BRISBANE

After denting the ego of mighty Australians with their bruised and battered bodies in a Sydney epic, Ajinkya Rahane's wounded India will take no prisoners in a 'winners take all' fourth Test, starting Friday on the liveliest of tracks in the series.

Australia need a win to regain Border-Gavaskar Trophy but a draw will be enough for India to retain it for another couple of years.

There are times when the human body responds differently to the adrenaline rush and the likes of Ravichandran Ashwin, Rishabh Pant and Hanuma Vihari have given their million fans a reason to believe in their gumption that was on display in Sydney.

Jasprit Bumrah played with an abdominal strain and didn't want to come out even though the experience was painful and Ravindra Jadeja with a broken thumb was ready to do what Malcolm Marshall did with a fractured wrist three decades back.

They battled against everybody — the racist ones in the galleries, the abusive one behind the stumps and those lethal ones with the shiny red nut that broke a few bones but could not shake the steely resolve of the Indians.

The new India that Virat Kohli so raved about is now ready to battle a whole new set of adversaries at a venue where Australia hasn't lost a Test since 1988.

There won't be a Jadeja and Bumrah and on one of the most difficult tracks, it couldn't have gotten more worse for India. And insult to injury is Mayank Agarwal being hit on the forearm in the nets and Ashwin battling back spasms.

"We will take a call tomorrow. The medical team is working with all the injured players. If Bumrah is fit, he plays, if he is not fit, he doesn't play," batting coach Vikram Rathour



Indian players chat during warm-up session on the eve of fourth Test against Australia at the Gabba

BCCI/Twitter

said at the pre-match conference.

For Tim Paine, the series-decider couldn't have been played at the better venue than the bouncy Woolloongabba or Gabba for fans around the world.

"From a distance it looks like it always does," you could gauge the confidence in Paine's voice even as he gave the news of young Will Pucovski's shoulder injury ruling him out of playing eleven.

"We love playing here, and one of the main reasons is because that wicket. This is a good place to come and play, because I don't have to go and look at it, I know what is going

to be like," he said and it was like warning to Indian team that looks more like a second string A team save three senior batsmen.

But Ajinkya Rahane will still smile, Cheteshwar Pujara will be uncomplaining and trust Rohit Sharma to still go for the pull shot if Pat Cummins digs one short.

There will be no Vihari in Sydney but he has set a different bench-mark for the 'walking wounded' and expect Rishabh Pant to play another blinder in the only way he can.

The combination has all gone for a toss and Rahane would only understand that discretion is the better part of val-

our.

India might just want to use the option of playing only four bowlers instead of a regular five in order to take the game deep with their batting.

If Agarwal is available, expect him to go in at number three after Rohit and Shubman Gill with Pujara and Rahane coming a notch down.

There is an option of playing Prithvi Shaw or Wriddhiman Saha in place of Ravindra Jadeja but off-spin all-rounder Washington Sundar's name is also doing the rounds.

It's the bowling attack that India will be worried about. Navdeep Saini and Mohammed Siraj with just three Tests in

their kitty and Shardul Thakur, who bowled all of 10 balls in his debut Test two years back, do not exactly inspire confidence.

While Rathour kept cards close to his chest, it's more about trying to deny opposition psychological advantage by playing the guessing game on Bumrah when world knows that his participation is highly unlikely.

That too against a batting line-up where three of the top four batsmen respond to the name of David Warner, Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith.

The second and third batters have shown what they can do with Indian attack and Warner is not known to fail in too many innings.

TEST MATCHES AT GABBA						
Team	P	W	L	T	D	Success%
Australia	62	40	8	1	13	75.80
India	6	-	5	-	1	08.33

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS		
India	409 in 120.1 overs vs Australia	2003-04
Australia	645 in 158.6x8 overs vs England	1946-47

TOP INDIVIDUAL SCORES		
India	144 Sourav Ganguly vs Australia	2003-04
	144 Murali Vijay vs Australia	2014-15
Australia	259* Michael Clarke vs South Africa	2012-13

BEST BOWLING (INNINGS)		
India	6-104 Erapalli Prasanna vs Australia	1968-69
Australia	8-71 Shane Warne vs England	1994-95

Faisal Features

4th Test, Day 1
Live from 5:00am IST
SONY TEN 1, 3 & SIX

It's a very difficult task at hand and whatever the result, this Indian team under Rahane

has covered itself in glory with bare minimum resources.

"The toughness that you see has come after years of preparations. From coaching staff perspective, we keep telling them that, you can't let doubts

creeping after one bad innings (36 all out in Adelaide)," Rathour said.

In end, "No Guts, No Glory, No Stress, No Story".

There is a story to be told and Indians are scripting it.

TEAMS

Australia XI: Tim Paine (captain), David Warner, Marcus Harris, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Matthew Wade, Cameron Green, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon and Josh Hazlewood.

India (from): Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Rohit Sharma (vc), Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Navdeep Saini, Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, T Natarajan, Washington Sundar.

‘Overworked’ Bumrah should be given a breather during Eng series: Gambhir

New Delhi: Former opener Gautam Gambhir believes the Indian team management needs to take good care of its pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and if required, the right-arm pacer should be given a break during the upcoming home series against England.

On the road for nearly five months since this year's IPL, Bumrah has finally succumbed to the rigours of non-stop international cricket as he has been ruled out of the series-deciding fourth and final Test against Australia after suffering an abdominal strain during the preceding match in Sydney.

And Gambhir feels it would be unfair to force Bumrah to play in all the matches against England, starting February 5.

"... You got to look after him (Bumrah) as well, because he is going to be the leader of the attack for a very long time, so him being fit is very important,"



the World Cup-winning left-handed batsman told *Star Sports*.

"So when India plays England in the 4-Test match series... I know, yes, Mohd Shami is unfit, Ishant Sharma is unfit, Umesh Yadav is unfit but you can't afford to play Jasprit Bumrah in all the 4 Test match-

es, it will be very unfair on him," he added.

Gambhir, however, feels Bumrah will be more menacing in Indian conditions. "See again, he (Bumrah) hasn't played a Test match in India till now, Has he? He hasn't. So, I'm sure the Indian team management has looked after Jasprit Bumrah reasonably well. They have actually used him in places like England, South Africa and Australia, where he has got to be even more threatening.

"I'm not saying he is not going to be threatening in India. He is going to be even more threatening in India, where wickets can get low and slow and he can reverse the ball really well," he said.

The former cricketer-turned-politician said Bumrah is a quality and dangerous bowler, who is threat for any batsmen at any given time of a match.

Bess' fifer puts Eng in control

AFF ■ GALLE

Off-spinner Dom Bess claimed five wickets to help bowl out Sri Lanka for 135 and give England the advantage on day one of a Test that took 10 months to start on Thursday.

Bess, who returned figures of 5-30, combined with paceman Stuart Broad, who took three wickets, as Sri Lanka were all out in two sessions as the two-Test series resumed in Galle after the original tour was aborted over the coronavirus in March.

England lost their openers early but skipper Joe Root, on 66, and Jonny Bairstow, on 47, steered the tourists to 127 for two at close of play. They still trail Sri Lanka by eight runs.

The batting duo put on an unbeaten partnership of 110 after Dom Sibley, for four, and Zak Crawley, for nine, fell to Lasith Embuldeniya's left-arm spin.

Root, who successfully reviewed an lbw call in his favour after being given out by the on-field umpire on 20, reached his 50th fifty in 98 Tests. He has 17 centuries.

Bess though remained the hero of the day with his second five-wicket haul in his 11th Test as the venue witnessed its lowest first-innings score, well



below Sri Lanka's 181 against Pakistan in 2000.

Sri Lanka suffered a pre-match jolt when skipper Dimuth Karunaratne was ruled out of the first of the two Tests with a fractured thumb.

Stand-in-captain Dinesh Chandimal scored 28 and put up some resistance in a 56-run stand with Angelo Mathews, who made 27 on his return from a hamstring injury.

Broad struck twice in an

over to send back opener Lahiru Thirimanne, who had scored four, and Kusal Mendis for nought — his fourth straight duck — to spell early trouble for the hosts.

Spin was introduced in the 11th over and Bess, with his second ball, got Kusal Perera for 20 when the batsman top-edged a reverse sweep to England captain Joe Root at first slip.

Sri Lanka had slumped to 25 for three but Mathews and Chandimal stood firm till lunch.

Broad came back in the second session to break the stand as he got Mathews caught at slip and Chandimal, who survived a dropped catch by debutant Dan Lawrence before lunch on 22, departed two balls later off Jack Leach.

Mathews, whose hamstring injury kept him out of the 2-0 Test series defeat in South Africa, went past 6,000 Test runs during his knock before Bess soon ran through the middle and lower order.

In reply, the tourists slipped to 17 for two after Sibley was caught at first slip and Crawley also back in the pavilion inside nine overs.

Root and Bairstow then batted cautiously to bring up England's best partnership for all wickets at the venue.

AFF ■ LONDON

Jose Mourinho slammed Tottenham's "avoidable" mistakes and lack of killer instinct after Fulham's Ivan Cavaleiro rescued a 1-1 draw on Wednesday.

Harry Kane had put the hosts ahead in the first half at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, but Cavaleiro struck in the closing stages to leave Mourinho frustrated.

Tottenham have won just two of their last eight league matches and sit in sixth place.

A win against third bottom Fulham would have taken them into third place above Manchester City, who made it four successive league victories

Spurs held at home by Fulham

when Phil Foden earned a 1-0 win over Brighton earlier on Wednesday.

Whether Spurs — six points behind leaders Manchester United — will be regarded as title contenders for much longer must be in doubt after this sloppy display.

"Once more we concede a goal that is completely avoidable. You have to keep a clean-sheet, not make mistakes. The markers are there. There wasn't even an advantage in terms of numbers," Mourinho said.

"We have lots of opportunities to kill off matches. In other

cases especially away we are winning but then don't have that ambition to get the goal and kill the game.

"There are things that are individual mistakes. We have had results and we should avoid these results."

Cavaleiro's leveller was a suitably dramatic end to the feud between Mourinho and Fulham manager Scott Parker, triggered when Aston Villa's coronavirus outbreak meant Spurs' scheduled trip to Villa Park on Wednesday was postponed.

Instead, Tottenham's game against Fulham — originally

called off in December because of Covid cases in the Cottagers squad — was moved on Monday to help ease a potential fixture pile-up for Mourinho's team.

Parker said it was "scandalous" for his team to be forced to play at such short notice.

Mourinho hit back, saying he would only feel sorry for Fulham if they played a weakened team.

So he would have noted with interest that Fulham named a strong team with nine of the 11 that played their last Premier League game on Boxing

Day. But it was Parker who had the last laugh and he said: "I'm very proud of this team for what we've been through. There's a lot of talk around, everyone assumes about what happened. I know what we've been through the last two weeks.

"This game was supposed to be scheduled 16 days ago — for 10 days some of these boys were locked up in their houses (self isolating). "We had players out there who had one day's training. What pleased me most was a desire and a real quality at times."

Bayern suffer shock German Cup exit

AFF ■ KIEL

Bayern Munich were knocked out of the German Cup on Wednesday as second division Holstein Kiel won a nail-biting penalty shoot-out 6-5 after the second round tie finished 2-2 after extra-time.

This is the first time holders Bayern have been knocked out of the cup by a non-Bundesliga club since losing to then fourth-tier Magdeburg in 2000/01.

After Bayern midfielder Marc Roca was the first player to miss with his team's sixth penalty, Kiel's former



Bremen forward Fin Bartels converted the winning spot-kick to spark

wild celebrations.

The upset means this is the first time European champions Bayern have been eliminated from a cup competition since head coach Hansi Flick took charge in November 2019.

Bayern were 2-1 up thanks to goals by Serge Gnabry and Leroy Sane, either side of a superb Bartels strike, before a last-gasp header by Kiel captain Hauke Wahl on 95 minutes took the game to extra time, then penalties.

Bayern fielded a near-full strength side with only top-scoring striker Robert Lewandowski and centre-back Jerome Boateng rested.

Ter Stegen saves Barca in shootout



AFF ■ CORDOBA

Marc-Andre ter Stegen's heroics measured Barcelona edged past Real Sociedad on penalties on Wednesday to reach the Spanish Super Cup final, without the injured Lionel Messi.

Messi was watching on as Ter Stegen did his best to fill the void in Cordoba, the goalkeeper immense both in the shoot-out and during normal time, which had finished 1-1.

Frenkie de Jong's header was cancelled out by a penalty from Mikel Oyarzabal, who then missed in the shoot-out, one of two crucial saves made by Ter Stegen before 21-year-old Riqui Puig hit the winning shot.

"I wasn't down to take one but we needed one more taker and I stepped forward," said Puig.

Barca advance to meet either Real Madrid or Athletic Bilbao in the final on Sunday, when Messi is expected to be available again, although coach Ronald Koeman was cautious at full-time.

"We have to wait," he said. Koeman's team have a mountain to climb in La Liga's title race but they are improving, now nine games unbeaten and with a trophy in their grasp.

This is the second year of the Spanish Super Cup's new format, which has four teams playing each other in a semi-final and final.

India's campaign ends in Thailand

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Star India shuttler Saina Nehwal was knocked out of the Yonex Thailand Open Super 1000 event after losing the women's singles second round to Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan here on Thursday.

In a battle of attrition, Saina managed to grab the opening game but ran out of steam in the end, losing 23-21, 14-21, 16-21 in a match that clocked 68 minutes. It was Saina's fourth straight loss to the world number 12 Busanan.

In the men's singles, former world number one Kidambi Srikanth was forced to give a walkover to his eighth seeded Malaysian opponent Lee Zii Jia after pulling up his right calf muscle.

Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also bowed out of the competition after suffering a 19-21, 17-21 defeat against second seeded Indonesian com-



bination of Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan.

Later, Satwik and his mixed doubles partner Ashwini Ponnappa went down 12-21, 17-21 to Hong Kong pairing of Chang Tak Ching and Ng Wing Yung to draw curtains on India's campaign.

Pochettino wins 1st trophy as manager

AFF ■ LENS

Neymar scored on his return to action for Paris Saint-Germain as they beat arch rivals Marseille 2-1 to win this season's Champions Trophy.

The Brazilian rolled home an 85th minute penalty to put PSG two goals ahead following Mauro Icardi's first-half opener to give new coach Mauricio Pochettino the first trophy of his reign in the French capital, and managerial career.

The Champions Trophy is the French equivalent of a Super Cup, usually contested at the start of the season by the league champions and French Cup winners.

With PSG winning both last season, Marseille had been selected as their opponents as the Ligue 1 runners-up.

Hopes were high for a feisty tussle in Lens after Marseille's

league win at PSG in September ended with five red cards and Neymar accusing Marseille centre back Alvaro Gonzalez of racism in the aftermath.

However it was a largely tame encounter in northern France, with the most noteworthy incident being substitute Neymar's goalscoring return after a month away.

The 28-year-old hadn't featured for the French champions since being stretchered off with an ankle injury during a 1-0 defeat to current league leaders Lyon on December 13.

Icardi thought he had given PSG the

lead with a 22nd minute tap-in, only to have the goal ruled out for offside after Kylian Mbappe strayed past Marseille's back line to collect Leandro Paredes' defence-splitting pass.

Seven minutes later it was Mbappe's turn to have a goal chalked off when he started his run too early to connect with a long pass from his captain Marquinhos.

Icardi finally put dominant PSG ahead six minutes before the break with a goal typical of his poacher's style, first meeting Angel Di Maria's raking long ball with a close-range header that Steven Mandanda pushed onto the post.

The Argentine was quickest to follow up as

the ball dribbled back out from the goal, and he tapped in his second goal as many games since returning from injury.

He almost doubled his side's lead in first half stoppage time when he hit a left-footed strike back off the crossbar.

Neymar returned to action in the 65th minute and was immediately targeted by Gonzalez, the Argentine fouling the superstar attacker several times in what looked like a continuation of the pair's spat.

However it was Neymar who had the last laugh when he stepped up to score the decisive second goal for PSG from the penalty spot after Icardi was brought down by Marseille's substitute keeper Yohann Pele.

Dimitri Payet pulled one back for Marseille with a minute remaining but it was too little too late for Andre Villas-Boas' side.