

OPINION 6
PROFESSIONS VERSUS
SELF-EMPLOYMENT

WORLD 8
CHINESE MILITARY PRESSURE ON TAIWAN
THREATENS REGIONAL PEACE, STABILITY: US

SPORT 12
SUNDAR WISHES
TO OPEN IN TESTS

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

*Late City Vol. 14 Issue 24
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

RANCHI, MONDAY JANUARY 25, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



CINEMA
CAN BRING
CHANGE: RANI
10 VIVACITY

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

Resolution eludes India-China talks

But both sides agree to meet soon to find mutually acceptable agreement to disengage, de-escalate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and China held the ninth round of military-level talks on Sunday to defuse tension at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh and reaffirmed their commitment to resolve the issue through dialogue. There was no breakthrough but both the sides agreed to meet soon to find mutually acceptable agreement to disengage and de-escalate.

The talks came amid reports that the Chinese Army has built a village inside Arunachal Pradesh and consolidated its positions in eastern Ladakh by bringing in more troops at the friction points along the LAC.

The parleys lasting more than seven hours beginning at 10 am between the Corps Commanders of the two armies were held at the Chushul-Modo border meeting point on the LAC in Ladakh. The Indian side was led by 14 Corps chief Lt General PK Menon and the delegation also included a Joint Secretary from the Ministry of External Affairs.

Incidentally, at least six rounds of the diplomatic level talks under the aegis of the

Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) were also held since the face-offs began between the two armies in May last year. However, these interventions also failed to end the impasse. The last WMCC talks were held on December 18.

The latest round of Corps Commander talks came more than two months after the eighth round was held on November 6 between the two Commanders. While no positive result came out from the latest episode, both the sides focused on thrashing out a mutually acceptable timeline for disengagement from friction points and ultimate de-escalation, sources said here on Sunday.

In a joint statement issued after the last round of talks, the two countries agreed to implement the "important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, ensure their frontline troops exercise restraint and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation." The two Commanders on Sunday took stock of this agreement and decided to sustain it till an amicable solution was found, officials said.

Though reiterating its stand on finding a way out through dialogue, India is not taking any chances. Against this backdrop, it had so far turned down the Chinese insistence on withdrawing its troops from strategic heights on the south and north banks of the Pangong Tso (lake).

Instead, India in all the rounds held so far stuck to its stand that China had to first withdraw its troops from all the friction points, including "Finger 4 to 8" at the same time. The Chinese have intruded more than four km in this region near the Pangong Lake. India was of the firm view that China had to reduce its troop strength in depth areas besides tanks and artillery guns.

At present, more than one lakh troops from both the sides were facing each other at the 1,700 km long LAC in Ladakh.

Moreover, the entire LAC from west in Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh in the east was on heightened alert. The Indian Army and IAF have deployed its frontline troops and fighter jets at all the important forward bases all along the 4,000 km long LAC.

Certified health report must to attend Kumbh

PEOPLE ABOVE 65, KIDS BELOW 10 YRS, PREGNANT WOMEN NOT ALLOWED TO VISIT HARIDWAR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior citizens above 65 years of age, pregnant women, and children below the age of 10 will not be permitted to visit Haridwar during Kumbh Mela at Haridwar in Uttarakhand. Patients with health conditions and comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiac disease, chronic lung disease, cerebrovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, immune-suppression, and cancer will be "discouraged" to visit.

These are part of the guidelines (SOP) issued by the Centre on Sunday for Kumbh Mela amid Covid-19, asking all devotees desirous of attending the "mela" to register with the Uttarakhand Government. They will also have to obtain a compulsory medical certificate from Community Health Centre/District hospital/Medical college in their State.

According to the Centre's guidelines, RT-PCR test should be taken not more than 72 hours prior to their visit to Haridwar during the Kumbh Mela. The reports will also be required to be uploaded on the Uttarakhand Government's official web portal.

Considered to be the biggest Hindu religious festival, the "Maha Kumbh" is celebrated every 12 years and draws a huge crowd.

308 Pak Twitter handles trying to disrupt tractor rally: Police

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

After several rounds of talks between the Delhi Police and farmers' unions, the police on

Sunday allowed their proposed tractor rally inside the national Capital on January 26. Police said the proposed tractor rally of farmers on Tuesday will begin amid

tight security after Republic Day celebrations conclude. Police also said there are intelligence inputs suggesting that there are elements, which pose threats to the proposed

rally and they may disrupt it. "After analysis of Twitter handles revealed that there are 308 such accounts created in Pakistan which are attempting to create confusion and thus disturbances during farmers rally," said police.

Sea of farmers marches along Maha's Kasara Ghat

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Setting the stage for a massive show of strength in Mumbai on Monday in support of the farmers agitating on the outskirts of the national Capital to demand the repeal of three farm laws, more than 15,000 farmers — marching through the stretch of Kasara Ghat by

foot — congregated at the historic Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on Sunday.

Farmers from as many as 21 districts of Maharashtra, who had arrived at the Kasara Ghat by vehicles from their homes, covered by foot the 7-km long stretch of the Kasara Ghat which joins Nashik and Thane districts.

The marching farmers were followed along the Kasara Ghat by hundreds and thousands in their vehicles.

The Kasara Ghat march and the vehicle jatha were spearheaded by the national president of All India Kisan Sabha (AKIS) Dr Ashok Dhawale, State president Kisan Gujar and State general secretary Dr Ajit Nawale.

After the jatha entered Mumbai at the Mulund Check Naka, the farmers were accorded a rousing reception at the Kannamwar Nagar in Vikhroli in north-east Mumbai by hundreds of activists of the CPI(M), CITU, DYFI and AIDWA in Mumbai, led by party CCM Mahendra Singh.

NEPAL PM OLI OUSTED FROM NCP BY FACTION LED BY PRACHANDA

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

The ruling Nepal Communist Party's splinter faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" on Sunday expelled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli from the party's general membership.

The decision to remove Oli from the party's general membership was taken at the Standing Committee meeting of the faction led by former prime ministers Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal after Oli failed to produce explanation to his recent moves as sought by party leadership, sources said.

Earlier in December, the splinter group had removed Oli, one of the two chairmen of the ruling party, as the party chair.

Bengal BJP: New induction won't belittle importance of old-timers

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Amid a spate of defections from the ruling TMC to the saffron camp in Bengal ahead of the Assembly polls, State BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Sunday allayed apprehensions of the turncoats getting more importance than the old timers, saying switching political allegiance doesn't always guarantee leadership positions.

Ghosh, however, insisted that the party, in order to expand its base for coming to power in Bengal, needs to induct people from other political outfits.

Covid-19: Over 74% of State's cases from Ranchi

2 MORE DIE

PNS ■ RANCHI

More than 74 per cent of the 54 people found infected by the Covid-19 virus in Jharkhand on Sunday were residents of Ranchi, a district that reported 70 per cent of state's Covid cases on Saturday, figures compiled by the health department revealed.

As many as 40 of the 54 people found infected were from Ranchi, while no other district in Jharkhand reported a double-digit-spike in Covid cases on the day. As per a bulletin released by the National Health Mission (NHM), Ranchi also accounted for more than half of the active cases of Covid-19 infection in Jharkhand. Of the 821 people bat-

ting the viral infection in the State, at least 428 were from Ranchi.

Two more Covid-19 patients died during treatment in Jharkhand on Sunday, taking the Covid toll in the State up at 1,063, figures compiled by the state health department highlighted.

Ranchi and West Singhbhum reported one Covid casualty each in the past 24 hours. The total count of Covid fatalities reached 230 in Ranchi on the day, the second highest among the 24 districts in Jharkhand. East Singhbhum has reported 356 Covid casualties so far, stated a bulletin released by the National Health Mission (NHM).

At least 16 of 24 districts did not report fresh Covid cases on the day, the bulletin stated.

Continued on Page 2



A medic inoculates the dose of Covishield vaccine at RIMS in Ranchi on Sunday. Pioneer photo

UIN: 512N279V02 PLAN NO: 915

Enjoy twin benefits of FULL PAYOUT on maturity & continued LIFELONG COVER thereafter

- Minimum Basic Sum Assured: ₹1,00,000
- Age eligibility: 18-50 years
- Maximum maturity age: 75 years
- Loan facility available
- Accidental Death & Disability Benefit Rider available

Follow us on: YouTube, LIC India Forever

Contact your agent/branch or visit our website www.licindia.in Or SMS 'YOUR CITY NAME' to 56767474 (eg. 'MUMBAI')

LIC भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

Har Pal Aapke Saath

मतदाता सूची विशेष संक्षिप्त पुनरीक्षण 2021 के दौरान मतदाता सूची में नाम दर्ज कराने वाले नये मतदाता 25 - 31 जनवरी 2021 के दौरान एवं 1 फरवरी, 2021 उपरान्त आम मतदाता अपना ई-मतदाता पहचान पत्र डाउनलोड करें

ई-मतदाता पहचान पत्र

e-EPIC यहाँ से डाउनलोड करें

वोटर कार्ड हुआ डिजिटल

1

वोटर पोर्टल पर रजिस्टर/लॉग इन करें।

2

EPIC नंबर या कार्ड नंबर पर प्रविष्ट करें।

3

रजिस्टर्ड मोबाइल नंबर पर प्रेषित ओटीपी की पुष्टि करें।

4

e-EPIC डाउनलोड करें।

“सभी मतदाता चने : सशक्त, सतर्क, सुरक्षित एवं जागरूक”

किसी भी प्रकार की शिकायत अथवा सहयोग के लिए टोल फ्री नम्बर 1950 पर सम्पर्क करें

मुख्य निर्वाचन परदापिका, प्रारम्भ द्वारा जनहित में जारी

Website : www.ceo.jharkhand.gov.in
E-mail : ceo_jharkhand@eci.gov.in

Sadar Hospital gets its first newborn care centre

Minister assures better health facilities

NITYANAND DUBEY ■ GARHWA

Drinking Water and Sanitation Minister, Mithlesh Kumar Thakur, on Sunday inaugurated a Special New-Born Care Unit (SNSU), a High Ultrasound Machine and a police room at Sadar hospital in Garhwa.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that in absence of SNCU facility in the district, babies younger than a year, were facing various difficulties during treatment and referred to bigger cities for better treatment. With the inauguration of the SNCU, the newborns will get the best possible medical attention in the district itself.

He said that along with SNCU, a high level ultrasound machine was also inaugurated on the same day which will prove to be very beneficial for people. He said that earlier an ICU equipped with high-level infrastructure was also inaugurated at Sadar Hospital, which is currently fully functional.

He said, "I am constantly engaged in trying to discharge all the responsibilities for which the people of Garhwa have chosen me. My goal is to get not only the Garhwa assembly constituency but also the entire Garhwa district as the leading district in the state."

"We are working towards



making Garhwa Sadar Hospital as a model hospital in the state. The day is not far when Sadar Hospital Garhwa will be appreciated in other districts as well. Continuous work is also being done in this direction, and for this the entire department like district administration, police administration, public representatives and health representatives are constantly working."

Regarding the police camp room in Sadar Hospital, he said that for a long time a police picket was being sought in Sadar Hospital.

The Minister reiterated that it is not possible to solve all problems only by providing facilities. It also requires skilled doctors and nursing staff for which the present government is constantly working. He appealed to the doctors and general public to work for better Garhwa with mutual respect and harmony.

Deputy Commissioner,

Rajesh Kumar Pathak, while referring to the Special New-Born Care Unit, said that Garhwa was lagging behind in the NITI Aayog ratings due to absence of a SNBC. He said that the NITI Aayog, closely monitors the health facilities being provided in the district. The SNCU will prove to be beneficial for improving Garhwa's ranking. "Gradually, we are doing better in various indexes of NITI Aayog and it is expected that similarly with the health facilities including SNCU in the district, health sector will be able to perform better," he said.

On the occasion, the Superintendent of Police Shrikant S. Khotre said that some criminal incidents were reported from Sadar Hospital lately and the police picket will reduce the response time of the police here. It will also make people feel safe and health workers can work fearlessly, he added.

Tata Motors Hosp to start Covid-19 vaccination drive

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

After MGM Medical College Hospital and Tata Main Hospital (TMH), the Tata Motors Hospital will start Covid-19 vaccination drive.

Dr. Sanjay Kumar, head, medical services - Tata Motors Hospital, said "We are pleased to inform you that from Monday, 25 January Tata Motors Hospital will start the process of the first round of vaccination drive for the city of Jamshedpur. The vaccination drive will be carried out in batches. The first set of vaccines will be given to the health care workers of Tata Motors Hospital. We are extremely thankful to our Government and Tata Group for the fastest implementation of the process and serving mankind better. COVID-19 isn't over and I am sure this vaccine has bought the ray of hope amongst the mankind."

Another official said that the hospital had played a key role in treatment of Covid-19 and now the hospital has been chosen for vaccination.

City's leading health hub, Tata Motors Hospital is catering to the growing needs of the patients. Tata Motors Hospital recently also opened the doors to a new state-of-the-art facility eye-operation theater. The facility is catering to the local residents.

He added that the eye-



operation theater enables the hospital to offer the best and the latest in technology. All the components of the theatre system are fully integrated and designed to carry out advance surgeries with a quality which can be benchmarked with any international standard.

Tata Motors Hospital is a 404 bedded multi-specialty hospital in Jamshedpur, which was established in 1968. This hospital has been continuously striving to offer the highest standard of services to patients with great empathy and humanity.

"We have a wonderful team of doctors in all departments who give the best possible clinical care to our patients. We have state of the art Pathological and Radiological units having equipment like 3/5 port Hematology Analyzer, Color Doppler, CT scan etc. to support our clinicians," noted the official.

BSL holds SAIL Day run

RAHUL SHARMA ■ BOKARO

On the occasion of SAIL Foundation Day on Sunday, a SAIL Day Run was organised by Bokaro Steel Plant at the MKM Stadium in the morning. Apart from Director In charge BSL Amarendu Prakash, EDs and Chief General Managers of BSL, this year's event was also graced by DC Bokaro Rajesh Singh, DIG (Police) Prabhat Kumar, DIG(CISF) Sitanshu Shekhar Mishra, SP, Bokaro Chandan Jha, DDC and SDO Chas.

Director In charge first administered the SAIL Day Oath to all for maintaining fitness for the service of the nation. Balloons were then released by the dignitaries as a symbol of promoting health awareness on the occasion of SAIL Day.

The 5 km SAIL Day Run was then flagged-off by Director In charge and DC Bokaro in which around 30 persons participated including senior officials and BSL employees. L Soren stood first, CB Chandra stood second and Pankaj Kumar bagged the third position. For other BSL officials, a run was also organized inside the stadium.

After completion of the SAIL Day Run, Director In charge BSL along with other officials present released the Annual Sports & Cultural Activities Calendar-2021. The Sports Calendar has been specially prepared in view of Bokaro being granted the status of the first Global Active Partner City of the country.



After completion of the SAIL Day Run officials present released the Annual Sports & Cultural Activities Calendar-2021



town and nearby areas to acquaint residents of the spe-

cial status bestowed upon Bokaro, the first in India.

BOKARO PLEDGES PLANTATION OF 1 LAKH TREES

PNS ■ BERMO

On the occasion of SAIL day, the officials and employees of Bokaro Steel Plant took an oath to set a target of planting one lakh trees in Bokaro and its surrounding areas.

Under the Global Active City, an awareness vehicle has been flagged off to keep the people of the city active and healthy. This awareness vehicle will go to all the squares of the city and make people aware to keep them active.

Giving hearty congratulations and best wishes for all the SAIL days, Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Singh said that everyone should remain active and fit only then a healthy society can be built and also said that if SAIL race is organized on this occasion,

then it is a very good initiative. Amalendu Prakash, Director-in-charge of Bokaro Steel Plant, said that the Bokaro Steel City will also be provided with a roundabout arrangement under "Healthy Bokaro".

He said that preparations are underway to make Bokaro Steel City the best city in times to come. Apart from repairing the quarters, Bokaro General Hospital is also aiming to improve its services. Due to the expansion of the airport, good doctors will also come here and treat them. Doctors are also being reinstated and there is complete focus on education also. During SAIL Foundation Day, Deputy Development Commissioner Jaikishor Prasad, Sub-Divisional Officer Chas Shashiprakash Singh and SAIL officials were present

Book on Covid 'Battle with the invisible' released

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Tata Motors Hospital launched a book of its own kind, titled 'Battle with the invisible' on Sunday. Chief guest Vishal Badshah, head Jamshedpur plant - Tata Motors along with Manish Jha - plant head, Tata Cummins and Sanjay Kumar, head medical services - Tata Motors Hospital, launched the book. All the dignitaries of Tata Motors and Tata Cummins attended the event.

Speaking on the occasion Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Head Jamshedpur Plant - Tata Motors "It gives me immense pride to stand here in the book launch event of the most awaited book of the year. 'Battle with Invisible' is a book about strength, struggle, together-



ness, teamwork, and above all helping humanity. Team Tata Motors and our incredibly talented doctors bring to you the first ever book of its own kind. We are still fighting with the Invisible but our biggest ray of hope has arrived in the name of Vaccine.

The book aims to capture the experiences of all the authors who also were a part of different teams involved in managing the pandemic. The book has limited copies and will be circulated to all Tata Group of Companies.

Bokaro on world map for fitness initiative

39 Sports Centers to be developed in and around Bokaro

ASHIS SINHA ■ BOKARO

To promote sports and events for the well being of masses, around 39 sports centers will soon be developed in the Bokaro Steel's township area and its periphery.

All these sports centers would be developed for the sports activities including volleyball, badminton, handball, cricket, football, hockey, kabaddi and for the walking tracks, informed Jaideep Sarkar, Lead Officer and Project Director, of the Global Active City Programme Bokaro.

"Our vision is to build a healthy city and healthy society through sports so that our citizens and the coming generations can become the toppers in every field," he added. Bokaro Steel City is a

planned city established and maintained by Bokaro Steel Plant (BSL) and well known as 'Educational' and 'Steel' hub. Now the city is turning as 'Sports Hub'; got the place in the worldwide list of 'Active Well-being Initiative Network' sponsored by the IOC Committee.

On 19 January last year, Bokaro received the "Global Active Partner City" (GAC) standard, and is the first city in India and second in Asia to get this prestigious standard. After Karasiyaka in Turkey, Bokaro is the second city in India to get the prestigious tag, he said.

Bokaro Steel City is now connected to the Global Active City (GAC) network under the 'nucleus mission' protected and supported by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and destined by the United Nations standards of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This core project (through the IOC) attempts to give the community a fresh direction by

linking the Bokaro city to the Olympics to enable the local residents to be prepared by a healthy and functional environment in many areas he said.

Meanwhile, the district administrations in co-ordination with Bokaro Steel Plant (BSL) management are at work to promote sports for the well being of the people residing here.

Today, on the eve of SAIL Foundation Day, BSL management launched a 'Calendar of Events' to promote sports for the well beings of the residents. The management released a consolidated action plan to promote sports on the grass-roots level.

Implementation of the sports activities released by the BSL management and district administration will prove to be a milestone that will illuminate every section of the society and will become an example for the entire Indian sports world, said Jaideep.

"The world's largest youth population will definitely

strengthen India numerically and qualitatively in the times to come," added Jaideep.

"Especially during 2021 plant management is on move to promote sports amid maintaining Coronavirus protocol and social distancing norms. Several sports events, including Marathon, Cycle Race, Online Chess Competition, Gramin Athletics Meet including other events would be organised very shortly," informed M K Dhan COC of BSL.

"We appealed to all residents of the city to come forward to take part in all sports events for wellness," he said. Under the Global Active Partner City programme, an awareness vehicle was flagged off today from MKM Stadium to keep the people of the city active and healthy.

Giving heartfelt greetings and best wishes to all for the SAIL Day, Deputy Commissioner Bokaro Rajesh Singh said that everyone should remain active and fit only then a healthy society can be built.

Three live bombs defused in Dhanbad

THE BOMBS WERE KEPT IN A CARTON IN A LOCKED HOUSE THAT HAS BEEN ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED BY SELECT "CRIMINAL TYPE" PERSONS OF THE LOCALITY

PANKAJ KUMAR ■ DHANBAD

Bomb disposal squad from Jaguar Ranchi on Sunday defused three live bombs that were recovered from old railway quarters under Dhanbar police station area.

The bombs were kept in a carton in a locked house that has been illegally occupied by select "criminal type" persons of the locality, told Jairam Prasad officer - in-charge of the Dhanbar police

station. Bombs were recovered following tip off from a criminal who was arrested on Saturday night.

As the bombs were recovered, the Dhanbar police called the disposal squad from Ranchi that disposed off the bombs and also checked for more such bombs in surrounding but nothing was found.

Prasad said, interrogation of the criminal arrested is on by senior officers.

One ASI suspended, One dismissed from service

In another move, the Senior superintendent of police (SSP) Ashim Vikrant Minz ordered suspension of an ASI Satyam Kumar who was found guilty of realising money from coal laden trucks in the name of paper verification during night patrol.

The SSP said, an inquiry was conducted and after that it was decided to suspend the ASI for his misconduct.

In a separate move, the SSP has recommended dismissal of ASI Santosh Rajak who was found guilty of murder of a truck driver and tried to prove it an encounter.

The incident took place four years ago while Rajak was in-charge of Hariharpur police station and had shot dead a truck driver from his service revolver under Rajgung police for passing cattle laden truck within his police station's jurisdiction. The CID team had held inquiry into the incident and had found Rajak guilty.

The dismissal order that was passed by the Bokaro Range DIG Prabhat Kumar has been sent to Garhwa police headquarters where Rajak was sent during the ongoing departmental proceedings.

Nilgai menace hits 'sugar-free' potato cultivation

PNS ■ DALTONGANJ

Eight progressive farmers of Eumar Hata village under Hussainabad sub division of Palamu, who are cultivating sugar free potatoes in two acres of land, face invasion of the blue bulls called nilgai.

These farmers said the nilgai problem is too acute and severe. Nilgais come in herd of 50 to 60 in numbers and destroy

crop and vegetables as well. These farmers said this problem is beyond their control. The farmers have set up an organisation called Veer Kurni Singh Krishak Sahkari Samiti limited.

A popular farmer of this organisation, Priya Ranjan Singh said farmers have raised fence around two acres of land where the sugar free potatoes are being raised. He said this is extra cost

that the farmers are bearing.

He said seeds of the sugar free potatoes have been brought from Kufri in Shimla where there is a Central Potato Research Institution which supplies them.

A kilogram of seed of sugar free potato comes for Rs100, said



Singh. He said farmers have brought in 350 quintal of the seeds of the sugar free potatoes.

Its cultivation is near identical to the cultivation of the paddy, he said.

Sources said potatoes are the fourth most consumable crop in

Northern India after paddy wheat and maize.

Singh said farmers were in Barabanki in UP for the seeds of peppermint there where our farmers learnt of the seeds of the sugar free potatoes.

Singh said this sugar free potatoes will be consumed by them and a good chunk of it will be preserved for the seeds next season so that our dependence on Kufri in Shimla gets over.

खोया-पाया Covid-19: Over 74% of State's cases from Ranchi

From Page 1 While East Singhbhum reported six cases against 16 recoveries, Dhanbad reported only one case against 10 recoveries. Three people were found infected in Bokaro, while seven patients recovered there. The Government tested swab samples of 12,019 people and around 0.5 per cent of them were found infected. So far, health workers have collected swab samples of 51.48 lakh people and tested 51.39 lakh of them. As per govern-

ment data, of the 1,18,286 people infected by the virus so far, more than 1.16 lakh people have recovered.

As per data with the NHM, the Covid recovery rate in Jharkhand was 98.40 per cent on Sunday, while the Covid mortality rate in the state was 0.89 per cent. The national Covid recovery rate was 96.80 per cent, the NHM bulletin stated.

As per the bulletin, the growth rate of the viral infection in Jharkhand was 0.06 per cent against the national average of 0.11 per cent. The doubling rate of cases in the state was 1145.42 days against the national average of 620.71 days.

Paradise Group gifts sewing centre for women empowerment

PNS ■ RANCHI

The Paradise Group on Sunday inaugurated a sewing and training centre in Ranchi and Left Wing Extremism-affected Khunti district in order to empower the rural women of the areas. On the occasion, 55 women came to learn tailoring at the centre. Besides Munni, Kachhap, Seema, Jayanti, Preeti, Parvati, Sumanti, Urmila, Devki, other members of the Panchayat also visited the centre.

The sewing centre will benefit the women and youth of Bhandra, Muri, Khunti and Butjora Panchayat. Paradise vol-

unteers said that the total project cost was Rs. 1.5 lakh.

The space for setting up the sewing training center has been provided by the Sakhi Saheli organization and 20 sewing machines and two pico machines and 20 sets of caches, tapes and cloth marking chalk were provided by the Paradise Group.

Sakhi Saheli is a social organization working in the Khunti district of Jharkhand on the issues of human trafficking, witch-hunting, child labour, child marriage, and domestic vio-



the members of the organisation are survivors of social evils and organised crimes against women and children in Jharkhand.

During the programme, Sudeep Sudeep Bajoria, a member of Paradise Group, also provided warm clothes including blankets and jackets among the poor residents of the village.

Founded by like-minded friends in May 2019, the society works to provide relief to the poor in India. It provides medical relief, education and any

other item of general public utility, irrespective of religion, caste, colour, creed, or gender to the needy. No religious, no internationally funded trust and no community-based activity are undertaken by the group.

The group uses WhatsApp's only digital platform to connect with its members and raise money through online payments. Event invitations, updates etc. are sent only on WhatsApp. Technology is being used to affect the lives of many underprivileged.

Every month, the members of the group make donations to different NGOs in Jharkhand.

R-DAY TABLEAU

Covid 19 battle to be theme

PNS ■ RANCHI

This Republic Day various Government departments in the State will showcase the development work done amid various challenges arising due to Covid-19 pandemic outbreak and how it ensured best health facilities and social security for its citizens in the 2021 Republic Day parade in the State capital.

As the Republic Day function is held amid Covid 19 pandemic, the tableau participating in the Republic Day parade will have importance of corona vaccines, wearing masks, using sanitizers and social distance through theme based design. This year theme of Republic Day parade is 'Swastha Bharat'. Government department tableau will create awareness on corona vaccines at the same need of wearing masks, using sanitizers and maintaining social distance.

The tableau of Khadi board will have a message of using Swadeshi products during corona pandemic. The Khadi board which is preparing Swadeshi masks and sanitizers will be depicted. Not only, health awareness be created through the government tableau, but the need to become economically viable and strong will also be depicted in the Republic Day parade.

The rural development department tableau will have themes of increasing employment opportunities through village and cottage industries



Jharkhand police contingent during the full dress rehearsals ahead of the Republic Day parade 2021, at Morhabadi Ground in Ranchi on Sunday
Vinay Murmu | Pioneer

such as production of silk through cocoon.

Similarly, the tableau of forest and environment will focus on production of forest products such bamboo handicrafts, medicines and food products extracted from forest. The forest and environment department tableau will also stress importance on protecting natural and ecological balance. The Republic day main function will be held at historic Morhabadi ground. Governor Droupadi Murmu will unfurl the national flag in presence of various dignitaries on January 26 (Tuesday).

Meanwhile, the district administration has made elaborate arrangements for 72nd Republic Day function. Ranchi

SSP Surendra Kumar Jha said, "The district administration has made elaborate security arrangements for Republic Day. On Sunday, dress rehearsal of Republic Day parade was held at Morhabadi ground where officers were assigned task and duties in the function amid Covid pandemic."

Jha said, "As part of security arrangements, the Ranchi police for past few days are carrying out vehicle checking. All hotels and lodges have been checked. Police personnel will be deployed at important roundabouts."

Also as the Republic Day function is held during the corona pandemic, this time less number of people have been

invited to the function. Rajesh Kumar Singh proprietor of Sona Tent House which has been asked to make arrangement of Republic Day function at Morhabadi ground said, "This year we have sitting arrangement of around 2500 people which includes 2000 general public and around 500 VIPs. Sitting arrangements have been made at the distance of three feet due to corona protocol." Singh said, "There will be four entry gates, two for the common public and one for VIP and one gate for Governor Madam." As per district administration direction arrangements have been made keeping corona protocol in mind.

CM lays foundation for grid substation at Barhait

ASSURES DEVELOPMENT IN AREA

PNS ■ RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Sunday laid the foundation for a 132/33 KV Grid Sub Station at Barhait-Kitajor in Sahibganj and 132 KV Pakur-Rajmahal transmission lines and claimed that power generation will pave the way for development in the otherwise underdeveloped Barhait block.

"The Barhait block of Sahibganj falls in backward area, and many basic facilities have not reached this area. In view of this, the Government has identified problems that would be addressed for the overall development of the region. Now with the foundation stone of this scheme there will be no obstruction in power supply in Sahibganj," said Soren. For a long time, the people of Barhait have been looking forward to many Government schemes, but were left disappointed, said the CM, adding that the current government was committed in providing the best of facilities to the people of Santhal Pargana.

"Concrete work is also being done to make Barhait a subdivision. If the state has to move forward, then road, water and electricity are very important," Soren said.

The Chief Minister said that the Jharkhand government has prepared a new devel-



Chief Minister Hemant Soren presents Pension Card to a beneficiary during the laying of the foundation stone of 132/33 KV Grid Sub Station at Barhait-Kitajor, Sahibganj district on Sunday
Pioneer photo

SOREN SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING THE WORK OF PROVIDING GREEN RATION CARD TO THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DEPRIVED OF RATION CARD. THE BENEFIT OF THE PENSION SCHEME IS BEING EXTENDED TO ABOUT SIX LAKH NEEDY PEOPLE

opment strategy through several schemes for development. The foundation stone for construction of 100 MW Sub Station has been laid, which will be ready in about two years. About 500 kilometer of power line will be laid, he added.

Soren said that the government is doing the work of

providing green ration card to the people who are deprived of ration card. The benefit of the pension scheme is being extended to about six lakh needy people. "The beneficiaries of Dhoti-Sari will soon get the benefit of the scheme. We are ready to bring changes in the state," he said.

The Chief Minister said

that as the Covid-19 virus was constantly changing its nature, the people of the state need to be more cautious. Soren said that with the aim of promoting quality education, it has been planned to start model schools in every district, as well as to start CBSE education from first to 12th standard.

Rural Development Minister Alamgir Alam, Rajmahal MP Vijay Hansda, Principal Secretary Energy Department Avinash Kumar, Deputy Commissioner Sahibganj Ram Niwas Yadav, Press Advisor to Chief Minister Abhishek Prasad and others were present on the occasion.

Para teachers gherao Finance Min Rameshwar Oraon's residence

PNS ■ RANCHI

Para teachers across the State have been continuously agitating for their demand for regularisation of their job. Under the pre-announced programme, hundreds of mercury teachers under the banner of Integrated Para Teachers' Sangharsh Morcha gheraoed Finance Minister Rameshwar Oraon's residence at Bariatu on Sunday.

The police forces were already present at the residence on the information of the agitation. As para teachers started moving towards the Minister's residence, the police stopped them about 200 meters away from the main gate of Oraon's bungalow. After this, all the teachers sat on the dharna at the DIG ground.

The agitating teachers said that the Government is not fulfilling its promise. Before forming the Government in the State, Chief Minister, Hemant Soren had said in all the election meetings that Para teachers would be unconditionally regularized within three months of the formation of the Government. But even after a year, the Government is not considering the demand for regularization of their job, the agitators said.

The teachers sitting on the protest also said that Chief Minister Hemant Soren's



Para teacher members submit a memorandum to State Congress Committee spokespersons Alok Kumar Dubey, Lal Kishore Nath Shahdeo and Rajesh Gupta Chhotu during their protest at Bariatu in Ranchi on Sunday
Vinay Murmu | Pioneer

promise was not fulfilled. In such a situation, the teachers union is forced to agitate. They said that one by one, all Ministers will be gheraoed. Even after this, if the demand is not met, on February 10, more than 60 thousand Para teachers will gather at the Chief Minister's residence in support of their demand.

During the agitation Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee (JPCC) Spokespersons Alok Kumar Dubey, Lal Kishore Nath Shahdeo and Rajesh Gupta reached the dharna site of the teachers and talked to the protestors, and conveyed the message of agitating teachers to the Finance Minister.

The party Spokesperson told the teachers that the

Government is serious about the teachers, the departmental Minister Jagannath Mahato has been late in the decision due to his prolonged illness and the Corona pandemic has also caused problems but now the Government is striving for a complete solution to the problem. Despite the busy schedule of the Chief Minister, he met the delegation of Para teachers and assured them that the demands would be considered very soon.

Oraon assured the agitating teachers that their problems will be resolved soon. The delegation of the party Spokesperson assured the teachers that in the month of February there is a possibility of finding some solution to the problem.

SAIL Ranchi celebrates SAIL Day

PNS ■ RANCHI



Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)'s Ranchi units celebrated SAIL Day at Ispat Bhawan Ranchi on Sunday.

At the Research and Development Center of Iron and Steel (RDCIS), Chief General Manager (Personnel) welcomed all the participants and their family members. After this, eight personnel were awarded the Long Term Service Award. Among them were KS Saha, PK Maini, SK Jha, SM Majumdar, ST Selvam, Manjushri, Prabha Devi. After this, scholarships and meritorious prizes were presented to the children of SAIL Ranchi units, which included Spandan Mitra, Anushka Gupta, Adrija Sarkar, Animesh Pandey, Shambhavi Priya and Aprameya Ansh.

Executive Director, Ajay Arora encouraged all the awardees to further excel in

their goals. Participants, Children and Association President A Nag also expressed his thoughts. At the end, the vote of thanks was proposed by Captain RK Jha.

At the Centre for Engineering and Technology Center (CET) under the leadership of Executive Director Jagdish Arora several programs were held. At first CM Chugh welcomed everyone. Thereafter, P Horo distributed the Long-Term Service Award to C Venkateswara, Madan Kumar, PK Mishra, RK Gupta, S. Pradhan, MK Singh, P Mohanty, Ruma Bharti, Jyoti Dayal. MK Lal cheered the film production team of CET. After this, the contributions of two retired heads of the department, BL Agrawal and Neeraj Kumar, were appreciated. From the SAIL Corporate Office, New Delhi films on all SAIL Plants and Units were broadcasted through social media channels.

Tusker kills man in Tamar



PNS ■ RANCHI

A 40-year-old tribal man was trampled to death by a herd of wild elephants on Sunday intervening night at Kundala village under Tamar police station of Ranchi district about 50 km from district headquarter.

Kundala is also one of the panchayats of Ranchi under Tamar block.

While the local police and officials of the state forest department were informed about the incident, villagers said that they live under constant fear of wild elephants attacking people and damaging houses and standing crops.

Sandey Munda, brother of the deceased said that the incident took place around 1.30 AM when Budhram ventured out of the house to attend nature's call. He was unaware that elephants were roaming in the area and he was suddenly attacked by elephants.

The incident has left villagers angry as they said that the forest department has yet not developed a mechanism to inform villagers about the movement of tuskers

He was hit and pulled in air by elephants many times causing serious internal and external injuries causing his death. Local residents somehow managed to rescue Budhram and he was rushed to hospital at Tamar where he died during treatment.

The incident has left villagers angry as they said that the forest department has yet not developed a mechanism to inform villagers about the movement of tuskers and the department officials take no

action to divert movement of tuskers in the residential area.

They further alleged that tuskers often damage property and kill people but the department seldom gives compensation.

About 10 months back a dozen wild tuskers had damaged standing crops and a few houses at Dimra village situated close to Kundala village.

In December last year also one Devashish Sahu lost his life after he was attacked by an elephant at Salgadih in Tamar.

Tamar along with Bundu, Silli, Rahe and Angara is the part of elephant corridor which elephants use to move between Jharkhand to Bengal. Notably, Kundala and surrounding localities are the part of the elephant corridor connecting with Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary.

Ashish Pramanik a resident of Tamar said on an average more than a dozen incidents of tuskers damaging properties and lives are reported in Tamar.

Smart City Corporation to hold Investors summit in Dhanbad today

PNS ■ RANCHI

In a bid to attract real estate investors, Smart City Corporation will organise an investors Summit at New Town Hall in Dhanbad on Monday to interact with the investors of Dhanbad.

The smart city, which is being developed in the State Capital under the Smart City Mission, is going to provide a golden opportunity for the investors of Jharkhand, officials said. The construction of the city with world class infrastructure on 656 acres of land is going on fast and Infrastructure work is in the final stages. This is the reason why the process of auction of plots has been started by Smart City Corporation, currently in the areas of residential, commercial, educational, health, hospitality, hotels, mix use and others. The process of 52 big plots has started.

According to information provided by the Urban and

Housing Development Department of the State Government, a total of 37 per cent of the Green Field Smart City, located on 650 acres of land, will remain as open space where there will be roads, drainage, sewerage, parks and plantations. The remaining land will be separated into different areas like educational, residential, commercial, hotel and others.

Construction of GIS substation and 4 additional power substations is underway to provide 24-hour uninterrupted power. For uninterrupted water supply, 12 MLD water supply dedicated pipeline, water reservoir and an additional filter bed have been constructed at the Water Filter Center located at Dhurva Dam. New city roads will be 9 meters to 45 meters wide.

There will be no overhead wires in the city, for this, provision has been made to supply utility services by constructing ducts on the roads.

River front development plan is underway for conservation of two rivers passing through the area. In order to conserve water, water harvesting facilities will be mandatory in all buildings. Apart from this, treatment of drain water coming out of the house has been made.

The role of construction companies will be important in the development of this sector and it is also a golden opportunity for construction companies. The company or developers who want to develop real estate, educational institutes, hospitals, malls, hotels and others in the Ranchi Smart if one qualifies to participate in the auction process initiated by the corporation, then they can participate in the online auction process. The auction process has been made completely contactless. Complete information of e-auction is available on the website of Ranchi Smart City Corporation, rscl.in and e-auction.rscl.in.

Marandi slams Mamata over her protest against 'Jai Shri Ram' chants

PNS ■ RANCHI

BJP legislature party leader Band former Chief Minister Babul Marandi on a two-day visit to West Bengal on Sunday addressed a rally in North Bengal Raiganj district. Marandi, addressing a sizeable rally targeted Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for her appeasement policies. He said, "Didi is so deep rooted and cautious of her appeasement policy that she starts hating lord Rama and Krishna. The chants of Jai Sri Ram don't please her. It is high time that people of Bengal should show her door from power."

It may be noted that Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee irked by Jai Shri Ram slogans raised by a section of audience on Saturday walked off the podium refusing to deliver a speech at an event attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi—to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Kolkata.

Marandi said, "The people of Bengal are upset with Manta



BJP Party legislative leader Babul Marandi addresses a public meeting ahead of the Bengal elections at Raiganj, West Bengal on Sunday
Pioneer photo

Banerjee's divisive politics. People of Bengal want freedom from Didi's rule. I have come from Jharkhand to appeal to the people of Bengal, that this time the people of Bengal should support the BJP after seeing Modi's actions and form a BJP government in Bengal."

Targeting the TMC government, he said law and order situation in Bengal has wors-

ened as reports of group clash have become a routine affair. He said, "The entire government is surrounded by corruption and scam. The state is dominated by criminals. The administrative system has collapsed. Many welfare and beneficial schemes of the Centre have been closed by TMC government." He further said that poverty, unemployment in on

rise, farmers' condition is pitiable. "The Left and TMC goons have looted Bengal exchequer," added Marandi.

He appealed to the people of Bengal to give a chance to the BJP for the all-round development of the state as BJP has prepared a road map for the development of Bengal.

In rally, popular social worker Krishna Kalyani of

the party workers are constantly fighting against government and this fight has to be intensified. He also said that the welfare schemes of the central government and the anti-people decision of the present government of the state have to be conveyed to the people.

Raiganj joined BJP. The rally was also addressed by union minister Deboshree Chaudhary, MP Arjun Singh, MP Khagendra Murmu among others.

Meanwhile, in other development at the day-long meeting of the district president and district in-charge of BJP was held at party office in Ranchi under the chairmanship of state president, Deepak Prakash. Addressing the meeting, Prakash said that organizational road map with time frame is necessary for organization expansion and strengthening. The BJP undertakes organization building and expansion for the service of the nation. The party serves people all over the state due to better organisation during the Corona period.

He said that the party workers are constantly fighting against government and this fight has to be intensified. He also said that the welfare schemes of the central government and the anti-people decision of the present government of the state have to be conveyed to the people.

Rangdum monastery gets national importance tag

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The 18th-Century Rangdum monastery, a Buddhist shrine that lies in the Kargil district of the newly formed Union Territory of Ladakh housing several artifacts like conches and scriptures from Tibet, has got the tag of 'national importance'.

This is the first monument to be accorded the ASI tag after Ladakh was given the UT status in October 2019 when Jammu and Kashmir was officially divided into two UTs — J&K and Ladakh.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) recently issued a notification in this regard bringing it under its fold which would enable it to get central funds for its upkeep.

Situated more than 130 km away from Kargil, the monastery is a tourist's delight perched atop a mountain and looking like a citadel that overlooks and guards the serene Rangdum valley.

A section of historians says that the gumpa was established in the 8th century while many believe it to be of the 18th century. This shrine has a central prayer hall, which is equivalent to a museum due to the rich assortment of Tibetan antiques and other precious artefacts.

It is also the residence of about 40 Buddhist monks.



Belonging to the Gelugpa sect, the imposing monastery is a tourist's delight for being abandoned by colourful hills on the one side and glacier-coated Rocky Mountains on the other. It is next to the Julidok village, and about 25 km from the 14,436 ft (4,400 m) Pensi la (pass) which leads into Zaskar in the head of the Suru Valley in Ladakh in J&K.

ASI officials say that this is the only living monastery in Suru Valley except a few, indicating that the Buddhist flourished in this part of Ladakh. Currently, the monastery is being looked after by Rangdum Gumpa Culture and Welfare Society, Rangdum, Zaskar.

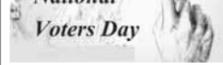
"The monastery has two courtyards giving the visitors a clear view of the artifacts and other collections of Tibetan paintings. The available wall space of the portico is embellished with paintings of cardinal kings, wheel of life, Buddhist mystic monogram Namchu Wangdan.

"Also, there are images of thousand armed Dugar and mummified statues of vulnerable blo-bZang dG-legs Yshes Grags Pa is of exceptional sacred value for pilgrimage visiting this monastery. Also a giant thangka of lord Buddha kept in Tsazin Khang is unfurled once every year during the fifth day of the sixth month of the calendar," as per the details available on the websites.

A few other ASI historical monuments of national importance in Ladakh region are Sculpture at Drass, Rock Cut Sculpture at Mulbekh, lamayuru Monastery, likir Monastery, Alchi Monastery, Phyang Monastery, Hemis Monastery, leh Palace, Old Castle Tsemo Hill, Stupa at T-Suru and Shey Palace.

Voter identity cards to go digital with e-EPIC launch today

7 officials, NGO from Delhi get 'Best Electoral Practices Awards-2020'



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Voter identity cards are all set to go digital as the Election Commission (EC) will launch the e-EPIC (Electronic Electoral Photo Identity Card) on January 25, which is the National Voters Day. The digital version of voter identity card can be downloaded on a mobile phone or a personal computer and can be digitally stored.

The digital version e-EPIC is a non-editable secure portable document format (PDF) version of the EPIC and will have a secured QR code with image and demographics like serial number, part number, etc. This is in addition to physical IDs being issued for fresh registration. The digitalisation of voter-ID card will have a special significance in the upcoming polls in five states — Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

In a statement, the EC said that a function will be organized at Ashok hotel where Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad will launch the e-EPIC programme, and distribute e-EPICs to five new voters. President Ram Nath Kovind will be the Chief Guest at the national function.

Under the e-EPIC programme, new voters will get the facility after downloading the



Dr. Eish Singhal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India has selected seven officials and an NGO from Delhi for the "Best Electoral Practices Awards-2020". They will be honoured here on the occasion of National Voters Day on January 25.

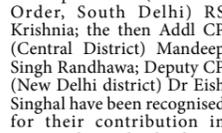
The officials who have bagged the awards are State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Dr Ranbir Singh and DEO (South East) Harleen Kaur for best election management while Special CP (Crime and



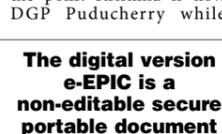
Dr. Ranbir Singh



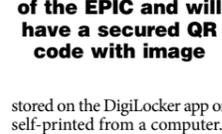
Harleen Kaur



RS Krishna



Praveer Ranjan



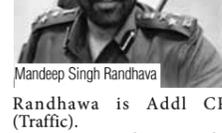
Mandeep Singh Randhawa



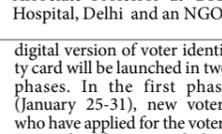
Dr. Satendra Singh



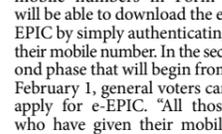
Praveer Ranjan



Mandeep Singh Randhawa



Dr. Satendra Singh



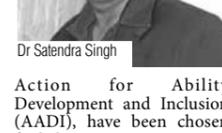
Praveer Ranjan



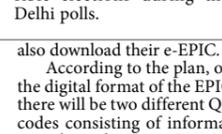
Praveer Ranjan



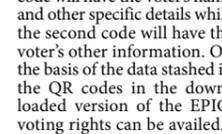
Mandeep Singh Randhawa



Dr. Satendra Singh



Praveer Ranjan



Mandeep Singh Randhawa

Dr Satendra Singh, Associate Professor at GTB Hospital, Delhi and an NGO, Randhawa is Addl CP (Traffic). Dr Satendra Singh, Associate Professor at GTB Hospital, Delhi and an NGO, also download their e-EPIC. According to the plan, on the digital format of the EPIC there will be two different QR codes consisting of information about the voter. One QR code will have the voter's name and other specific details while the second code will have the voter's other information. On the basis of the data stashed in the QR codes in the downloaded version of the EPIC, voting rights can be availed.

Shah seeks another term for BJP to make Assam free from flood

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday urged the people of Assam to give five more years to the BJP to make the State free from flood too, just as it had done from bullets and agitations.

While addressing 'Vijay Sankalp Samaroh' rally in poll-bound Assam's Nalbari, Shah also attacked the Congress and its ally All India United Democratic Front-AIUDF led by Badruddin Ajmal.

"A flood of development came here. Hospitals, new roads, colleges are being constructed. Industries are being set-up here. In the coming days, only BJP can solve the biggest problem of Assam — floods. We have made Assam free from bullets and agitations. Give five years more to BJP and we will make Assam free from flood too," he said.

Attacking the Congress, Shah said Congress cannot stop infiltrators in Assam as they are its vote bank. Shah said the Congress rule in the state gave only bloodshed, in which thousands of youths lost their lives.

"Can Congress and Badruddin Ajmal stop infiltrators in Assam? They will allow infiltrators since it is their vote bank. Only the Narendra Modi-led BJP government can free Assam from infiltrators," he said.



The Congress has formed Grand Alliance with AIUDE, CPI, CPI(M), CPI(ML) and Anchalik Gana Morcha (AGM) to fight the upcoming Assembly election, likely to be held in March-April.

"Many times, the Congress has accused the BJP of being communal, while the Congress is with the Muslim League in Kerala and is in alliance with Badruddin Ajmal in Assam. In which direction will the Congress take Assam? I want to ask the people who were in power for years, what you did for Assam's culture? What did you do for the development of Assam?" he added.

Attacking the Congress, Shah said, "Congress continued the British policy of divide and rule. They created a divide between Adivasis and non-Adivasis, Assamese people and hill peoples, Bodos and non-Bodos."

"In 20 years there was only bloodshed and 10,000 Assamese youths were killed by bullets fired by the Congress," he said. Listing out some of the developments in Assam by the BJP government, Shah said that in the 13th Finance Commission, the state was given only ₹79,000 crore. "In the 14th Finance Commission, the BJP government gave ₹1.55 lakh crore to the State. We opened bank accounts of about 7.20 lakh people in the tea garden area. BJP has done the work of giving ₹5,000 to about 60.20 lakh people in 26 districts of Assam," he added.

Shah is in Assam as part of a two-day visit to the region. Earlier in the day, he addressed a public rally to mark the first anniversary of signing the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Accord at Kokrajhar in Assam.

The term of the 126-member Assam Assembly is ending on 31 May 2021.

CBI arrests Regional Labour Commissioner for ₹30,000 bribery

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Sunday arrested a Regional Labour Commissioner (Central) Madurai and a private person in an alleged bribery case of ₹30,000.

A case was registered against the Regional Labour Commissioner (Central), Madurai, P Sivaranjan and private person N Murali, resident of Triplicane, Chennai.

The duo was arrested on the allegations that the said public servant was demanding undue advantage from the private person, representing a private company for issuing labour licence. The CBI laid a trap and both the accused were intercepted while exchanging the undue advantage/bribe amount of Rs 30,000.

Searches were conducted at five places in Chennai and Madurai (Tamil Nadu), the CBI said in a statement here.

Both the accused were produced in the court of Principal Special Judge for CBI Cases, Chennai and remanded to judicial custody till February 4, it added.

Not sexual assault under POCSO if there is no 'skin to skin' contact: Bombay HC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Groping a minor's breast without "skin to skin contact" cannot be termed as sexual assault as defined under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the Bombay High Court has said.

Justice Pushpa Ganediwala of the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court, in a judgement passed on January 19, the detailed copy of which was made available now, held that there must be "skin to skin contact with sexual intent" for an act to be considered sexual assault.

She said in her verdict that mere groping will not fall under the definition of sexual assault. Justice Ganediwala modified the order of a sessions court, which had sentenced a 39-year-old man to three years of imprisonment for sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl. As per the prosecution and the minor victim's testimony in court, in December 2016, the accused, one Satish, had taken the girl to his house in Nagpur on the pretext of giving her something to eat.

Once there, he gripped her breast and attempted to remove her clothes, Justice Ganediwala recorded in her verdict. However, since he groped her without removing her clothes, the offence cannot

be termed as sexual assault and, instead, constitutes the offence of outraging a woman's modesty under IPC section 354, the high court held.

While section 354 entails a minimum sentence of imprisonment for one year, sexual assault under the POCSO Act entails a minimum imprisonment of three years.

The sessions court had sentenced him to three years of imprisonment for the offences under the POCSO Act and under IPC section 354. The sentences were to run concurrently. The high court, however, acquitted him under the POCSO Act while upholding his conviction under IPC section 354.

"Considering the stringent nature of punishment provided for the offence (under POCSO), in the opinion of this court, stricter proof and serious allegations are required," HC said.

"The act of pressing of breast of the child aged 12 years, in the absence of any specific detail as to whether the top was removed or whether he inserted his hand inside the top and pressed her breast, would not fall in the definition of sexual assault," it said. Justice Ganediwala further said in her verdict that "the act of pressing breast can be a criminal force to a woman/ girl with the intention to outrage her modesty".

Left parties seek repeal of farm laws



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The five Left parties on Sunday issued a joint statement reiterating the demand for repealing the controversial three farm laws in the forthcoming budget session of Parliament and urging the Government to hold discussions with all stakeholders for agrarian reforms.

In a statement, the leaders of CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML), Forward Bloc and RSP said that suspending the laws are not enough and must be repealed in the Parliament even as they hailed the determination of the farmers' unions.

"We demand that the central government must stop being obstinate and immediately convey to the farmers unions that these agri laws will be repealed in the forthcoming budget session of parliament that is meeting this week. Already the Government has conveyed its willingness to suspend these laws for eighteen months. Acts that are legislated by parliament, signed by the

President of India and notified by the Gazette are law of the land. "They cannot be suspended. Unless they are repealed, they are enforceable. Hence, the Government must be reasonable, repeal these laws, hold discussions regarding agrarian reforms with the farmers and other stakeholders including State Governments and then bring proposals before parliament, if any, for their consideration and due deliberations," said the statement issued by Sitaram Yechury, D.Raja, Dipankar Bhattacharya, Debabrata Biswas, and Manoj Bhattacharya.

Govt eyes seaweed cultivation in a big way to boost fishermen's income

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Though bestowed with more than 8,000 km coastline enriched with seaweeds (macro algae) which has huge potential as a sustainable food source and provide livelihood to coastal communities hit by climate change vagaries, India's share in global production is negligible at .01 per cent when compared to China and Indonesia which have grabbed 80 per cent of the market pie.

Now, keen to be not left behind, the Modi Government is leaving no stone turned and taking a series of measures like providing subsidy, capacity building and awareness through webinars and interaction among others with the interested cooperatives and entrepreneurs to take up seaweed cultivation in a big way, business of which is projected to hit USD 26 billion by 2026.

India's present seaweed value is estimated to be around just USD 500 million ie 50 crore and the officials feel that there is a huge opportunity to exploit the potential of the seaweed business.

To spur the sector, the gov-

ernment has already allocated ₹ 637 crore for the cultivation of these nutrition-rich marine plants, as part of the ₹20,050-crore central scheme Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)—to be spent over the next five years, mainly as subsidy support.

In fact, seaweed cultivation has been the pet project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who since his days as Chief Minister of Gujarat, had been stressing on its promotion for the fishermen and coastal communities looking to double their income by 2022 and boost the rural economy.

In this direction, to create awareness and deliberate on the strength, opportunities and challenges, an international webinar is being jointly organized by the Department of Fisheries, Union Ministry of Animal Husbandry, LINCAC-National Cooperatives Development Corporation (NCDC), and NEDAC, Bangkok next week ie January 28, 2021.

At the webinar, the stakeholders including scientists, government officials and entrepreneurs from India and countries like Canada, Thailand,



Philippines and Vitenam will share their views, brought on one platform and steps will be taken work towards forging alliances for promotion of entrepreneurship in the sector through cooperatives. At the same time, the webinar will identify bottlenecks at various levels and will aim at evolving options.

"Much of India's coast is ideal for seaweed cultivation with suitable tropical weather, shallow waters and a rich supply of nutrients. In total, as many as 841 species of seaweed thrive along the region, though only a few are cultivated. The seaweed is not only destined to be a food source, but also a source of bio-fuels, bio-fertilisers and other products like in pharma and cos-

metic," said Sundeep Kumar Nayak, MD of the NCDC. He said the webinar is the part of series of steps planned to promote seaweed cultivation among the cooperatives in the country.

While Dr. Rajeev Ranjan, Secretary of the Department of Fisheries from the Animal Husbandry Ministry will be the chief guest at the webinar, Manoj Joshi, Additional Secretary from Union Ministry of Food Processing will dwell on his Ministry's support for seaweed based food and Dr. Thierry Chopin, Prof of Marine Biology, University of New Brunswick, Canada will talk about 'Seaweeds, a key component of Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) providing important ecosystem services,

which should be valued." The other topics that would be taken up during the webinar will be 'Seaweed based Sagarika for farmers' by Dr. US Awasthi, MD IFFCO, India, Dr. Blossom Kochhar, Chair, Blossom Kochhar Group, India will touch upon 'Seaweeds in the cosmetics industry in India'.

Others who will participate include Kavita Nehemiah, Snap Natural & Alginate, India, Dr. Nguyen Van Nguyen, Dy Dir, Res Inst for Marine Fish, Vietnam, Dr. Anicia Q Hurtado, University of the Philippines Visayas, Philippines, Prof Krishna R Salin, Director, NEDAC Bangkok and Dr. Atul Patne, Commissioner Fisheries, Gov of Maharashtra, India among others.

It has been estimated that

India can produce one million tonnes of dry seaweed providing employment to nearly 2 lakh fishers with an annual income of ₹1 lakh per individual.

Nayak further said that seaweed farming is one of the few sectors in developing countries that allow a certain level of flexibility besides tackling climate change threats. As a result, women can work in this business and gain an independent income without neglecting their traditional household work. For instance, Tanzania has seen women emerge as leaders in the seaweed world, and they have even moved onto producing seaweed flour in addition to farming, he added.

As per the PMMSY guidelines, seaweed farming will be promoted in a mission mode and supported through financial, marketing and logistical support to ensure income and welfare gains to small fisher population especially women and fisherwomen headed households.

Seaweed seed banks, nurseries, tissue culture units, processing and marketing units, etc. would be supported.

Over 16L healthcare workers receive Covid-19 vaccine jabs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 16 lakh healthcare workers across the country have received Covid-19 vaccine jabs till the evening of the ninth day of the nationwide immunisation drive, as per provisional reports, the Union health ministry said on Sunday.

The ministry said that 31,466 beneficiaries were vaccinated on Sunday till 7:30 pm in five states -- Haryana (907), Karnataka (2,472), Punjab (1,007), Rajasthan (24,586) and Tamil Nadu (2,494) -- through 693 sessions.

"The cumulative number of healthcare workers vaccinated against COVID-19 has crossed 16 lakh (16,13,667) till 7:30 pm today through 28,613 sessions, as per the provisional report," the ministry said, adding that the final report will be completed by late in the night. "Only 10 adverse events



following immunisation have been reported till 7:30 pm on the ninth day of the vaccination drive," it stated.

The inoculation drive was launched on January 16 with over three crore healthcare and frontline workers prioritised to get the jabs initially.

The total number of beneficiaries, who were vaccinated till 7:30 pm on Sunday since the launch of the drive, include 1,47,030 in Andhra Pradesh, 76,125 in Bihar, 53,529 in Kerala, 1,91,443 in Karnataka, 61,720 in Tamil Nadu, 25,811 in Delhi, 78,466 in Gujarat and 84,505 in West Bengal, according to provisional reports.

ASHA worker's death after Covid jab triggers protest

Amaravati: A woman public health worker, who had taken Covid vaccine on January 19, died at a government-run hospital in Guntur in the early hours of Sunday while undergoing treatment for alleged reactions.

While family members of Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) worker Vijaya Lakshmi (44) alleged that she died due to the adverse effect following vaccination, the officials said the cause of the death was under investigation.

Health officials said the cause of the health worker's death would be known only after receipt of her autopsy report.

The officials said the death does not appear to be related to vaccination. They pointed out that over 10,000 people were given the vaccine in Guntur district so far and not a single Adverse Event

Following Immunisation (AEFI) was reported.

ASHA worker's death sparked protest by the family members and ASHA workers at Government General Hospital, Guntur. They demanded Rs 50 lakh compensation. Guntur district collector Samuel Anand announced that a government job will be provided to the son of the deceased. "If the family is eligible to get a house under the government scheme, the same will be allotted to them," he told reporters at the hospital.

The collector, who faced angry protests by the deceased's relatives and others, said he would send a proposal to the government for compensation to Vijaya Lakshmi's family.

However, not satisfied by the collector's response, the ASHA worker's family members sup-

ported by the leaders of opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) began a sit-in at the hospital.

Raising slogans of 'we want justice' the protestors squatted at the main entrance of the hospital. Police forcibly lifted the protestors and arrested them, leading to tension. The TDP leaders alleged that the police resorted to excessive use of force to suppress the protest.

According to Vijaya Lakshmi's family members, she took the vaccine on January 19. She developed high fever on January 21. They alleged that a private hospital in Guntur refused to admit her, forcing them to take her to the government hospital.

They said the doctors told them that she suffered brain stroke but they alleged that the death was the result of adverse effect of Covid vaccine. **IANS**

I'm innocent, husband fixed me, says mother charged with sexually assault on minor son

Thiruvananthapuram: The 35-year-old woman, who has been accused of 'sexually abusing' her minor son, on Sunday said she was innocent and framed by her estranged husband and his second wife.

Appearing before the media with her face covered, the woman said, "the truth should come out. My son was threatened by his father to give the statements against me. The case is fabricated."

The woman, who was arrested under the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act was granted bail by the Kerala High court.

The court had observed that the gravity of offences alleged against the woman was serious in nature and quite unheard of, and had directed the state police chief to constitute a special team, preferably headed by a woman IPS offi-

cer, to proceed with the investigation. The woman from nearby Kadakkavoor was arrested on December 28 on charges of sexually abusing her son since the age of 10 till he shifted to Sharjah with his father in December 2019.

The case was registered based on a report filed by the Child Welfare Committee officials who had conducted counselling of the child.

The woman alleged that the POCSE case was filed by her husband in retaliation for the case she had moved before a family court seeking custody of her four children and alimony.

"I am innocent. The truth should come out. My son will never make such a complaint", she said. She said she was not aware about the details of the case and came to know about it only at the police station. **PTI**

Jawan succumbs to injuries caused by Pak firing in J&K

PNS ■ JAMMU

An Army jawan, undergoing treatment at Udhampur based command hospital, succumbed to his fatal injuries early Sunday morning.

The Army jawan, identified as Naik Nishant Sharma, had received serious injuries during 'unprovoked' ceasefire violation by the Pakistan Army along the line of control in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri.

According to Defence PRO in Jammu, Naik Nishant Sharma of 10 JAK Rifles was undergoing treatment at command hospital where he succumbed to his injuries on Sunday.

Meanwhile, tension prevailed along the line of control following repeated incidents of ceasefire violations in the region. The Pakistan Army is desper-



Naik Nishant Sharma

ately attempting to push small groups of heavily armed terrorists inside the Indian territory to execute a terror plot.

On the other hand, Indian soldiers are maintaining a tight vigil to prevent any infiltration bid from across the LoC.

High alert has been sounded in the run up to the Republic Day celebrations along the International border with Pakistan across the Jammu frontier after another cross border tunnel was detected by the BSF in Pansar area of Kathua district.

In Kashmir valley, the venues of Republic Day celebrations including Sher-e-Kashmir stadium in Srinagar have been fortified with a multi tier security ring to prevent any terror attack aimed at disrupting the celebrations. **PTI**

Tamil Nadu manages to bring down Covid-19 cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu has managed to bring the Covid-19 pandemic under control, if the government details are any indication. A State which was about to top the table with the maximum number of positive cases, has brought down the number of new persons diagnosed with the pandemic to 586 as on Saturday evening. The 24 hours ending Saturday night saw the fatalities coming down to just two.

"This is a marked change from the weeks when Tamil Nadu used to test 6000 to 7000

new Covid-19 cases daily and the death tally per day hovered around 200 to 300 for many weeks. Till Saturday the State lost 12,309 persons to the pandemic. But as on Saturday, there are only 5073 patients across Tamil Nadu. This is the State which used to have lakhs of Covid-19 patients," said a physician working with Tamil Nadu Government Health Services who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy and Health Minister Vijayabaskar attributed the success to the dedication shown by the doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and

workers in the departments of health, revenue, police and the general public. "But for their sacrifices and cooperation, we would not have reached this level," said Vijayabaskar.

But DMK president M K Stalin alleged that the Palaniswamy Government was a total failure in handling the Covid-19 at Ground Zero. "The fight against Covid-19 succeeded in the State because of the DMK's Ontrainaivom Vaa programme which reached crores of people. The DMK launched a campaign to feed one crore people and offer medical facilities. Covid-19 exposed Palaniswamy is a

hopeless Chief Minister who has no concern for the people," said Stalin while speaking to a pro-Left newspaper.

The fever clinics opened by the State Government across the State, the awareness programme carried out by various departments of the Government and the medical fraternity who worked round-the-clock with the twin objectives of preventing the spread of the pandemic and managing the patients contributed a lot in bringing down the cases and fatalities, said the Government physician. Veteran physician Dr C V Krishnaswamy, who was monitoring the situation in

Tamil Nadu from day one, agreed there has been a change in the course of the pandemic. "No doubt, it is a positive development. But I would like to be cautious because you have to take into account what is happening in Kerala," he said.

Kerala, which by May 2020 had claimed that it was free of Covid-19 is reeling under yet another onslaught of the pandemic, which experts describe as a third wave of attack. By Saturday evening, the State diagnosed 6,960 new cases. There are more than 72,000 patients under treatment in the State, according to the Department of Health release.

7 injured as bus collides with truck in Chitrakoot: Police

PTI ■ CHITRAKOOT (UP)

Seven persons were injured, two of them seriously, when a bus of the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) collided head on with a truck here on Sunday morning, police said.

Senior sub-inspector at the Raipura police station

Shivkumar Yadav said the accident occurred near the Maiki turn in the Raipura police station area at around 7.30 am, when the bus heading towards Karvi from Prayagraj collided head on with the truck.

Seven persons were injured in the incident, Yadav said, adding that the condition of the

truck driver and the bus conductor was critical.

A woman, who was making cow dung cakes on the roadside, was also among the injured, he said.

The police said prima facie it seems that the accident occurred due to dense fog, adding that investigations are going on. **PTI**

Will sack guilty officials in question paper leak: BSY

Bengaluru: Expressing outrage over the leak of the first division assistant examination question paper, for which 14 persons have been arrested, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Sunday warned any official of the Karnataka Public Service Commission found guilty would be sacked.

"I am not only ready to suspend the officials involved in the leak of question papers, but also dismiss them from service if found guilty," Yediyurappa told reporters here. The KPSC on Saturday cancelled the twin exams, which were to be held on Sunday across the state for 1,114 FDA posts.

"Stringent action will be taken against the guilty involved in the case, as leaking questions papers is an unpardonable act and a crime," the Chief Minister said.

According to KPSC Secretary G. Satyavathi, a whopping 3,74,000 candidates applied for the posts and 2,82,000 downloaded their hall ticket to appear for the exams in two sessions -- general knowledge in the morning and language proficiency in the afternoon.

On a tip-off, Central Crime Branch sleuths first arrested six accused, including kingpins Rachappa and Chandru in the city on Saturday and filed a case against them. They had allegedly sold the question papers for Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore to many of the job aspirants.

Chandru is reported to be an inspector in the state Commercial Tax Department.

The CCB arrested eight more persons, including some KPSC officials, on Sunday under various sections of the Indian Penal Code for the paper leakage.

Joint Commissioner of Police, Crime, Sandeep Patil said in a statement that eight more were arrested after their names were revealed by the kingpins during preliminary investigation earlier in the day.

The CCB sleuths also recovered copies of the question papers, Rs 24 lakh in cash and three vehicles from the two kingpins in a raid conducted on their premises on Saturday night. The KPSC informed the candidates through SMS that the exams on Sunday were cancelled and would be held at a later date. **IANS**

Two found dead in stranded vehicle on Jammu-Srinagar Highway

PNS ■ JAMMU

Two stranded passengers were found dead inside a load carrier parked on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway near Banihal in Ramban district on Sunday.

The duo, hailing from Kralpora area of North Kashmir's Kupwara district, were stranded in the area after traffic was suspended due to accumulation of snow on both sides of the Jawahar tunnel since Saturday morning.

The passengers were identified as Shabir Ahmad Mir (22) and Majid Gulzar Mir (30).

According to official sources, the passengers were rushed to the nearby hospital in Banihal where doctors declared them brought dead. Angry drivers of load carriers and others also staged a protest demonstration near Railway Chowk in Banihal to highlight their plight and pathetic state of

holding the government responsible for the death of the duo, the protesters alleged that the government should have allowed the stranded vehicles through the recently-completed Banihal-Qazigund tunnel

affairs of the highway.

Holding the government responsible for the death of the duo, the protesters alleged that the government should have allowed the stranded vehicles through the recently-completed Banihal-Qazigund tunnel.

The protesters also demanded adequate compensation from the government in support of the families of the deceased passengers.

Meanwhile, routine traffic remained suspended on the national highway on Sunday while some of the stranded vehicles were cleared after completing the snow clearing operations. **PTI**

Gujarat custodial death: 4 cops suspended, search on for 3 accused

Bhuj (Guj): A police inspector and three Constables have been suspended following the death of a theft suspect in the custody of Mundra police in Gujarat's Kutch district a few days back, a senior official said on Sunday. The three constables, who have been accused of murder, are absconding and efforts are on to nab them, he said.

The victim, Arjan Gadhvi (30), died on January 19 while undergoing treatment at a government hospital, after allegedly

remaining in the illegal custody of the three constables at Mundra police station for six days, according to a police complaint filed by a relative of the deceased.

Superintendent of Police, Kutch-West, Saurabh Singh on Sunday said inspector J A Padhiyar has been suspended for dereliction of duty, while the three constables were suspended after a case was registered against them on charges of murder.

The three accused constables

are - Shaktisinh Gohil, Ashok Kannad and Jaydevsinh Zala.

"I have suspended the three accused constables and a police inspector of Mundra. The three accused constables are still at large and efforts are on to nab them," Singh said. The constables are absconding ever since the case of murder and wrongful confinement was registered against them on January 21 following the death of Gadhvi in their custody allegedly due to torture. **PTI**

Badaun: Man arrested for raping 20-yr-old woman

Badaun (UP): A man was arrested here on Sunday for allegedly raping a 20-year-old woman, police said.

According to police, the man dragged the woman to the fields on late Friday night and allegedly raped her.

After reaching her home, the woman narrated the incident to her family members, who lodged a police complaint against him, they said.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Badaun, Sankalp Sharma on Sunday said that based on the complaint lodged by the family members of the woman, a case has been registered against the man, who is in his 20s.

The woman has been sent for a medical examination, while the accused has been arrested and sent to jail, the SSP said. **PTI**

167 fresh Covid cases reported in Rajasthan

Jaipur: Rajasthan's Covid-19 tally increased to 3,16,652 on Sunday with 167 fresh cases, according to a health department bulletin.

No death due to the coronavirus was reported on Sunday, it said. The highest number of fresh cases were reported from Jaipur and Kota with 26 persons testing positive for the infection in each of the districts, the bulletin said.

The rest of the cases were reported from Ajmer, Alwar, Banswara, Baran, Barmer, Bharatpur, Bhilwara, Bikaner, Bundi, Chittorgarh, Dausa, Dungarpur, Ganganagar, Hanumangarh, Jhalawar, Jodhpur, Nagaur, Pali, Pratapgarh, Rajasmand and Udaipur districts, it said. **PTI**

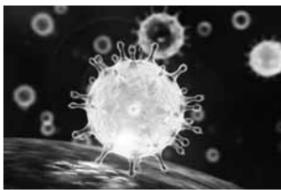
Kerala sees over 6,000 daily coronavirus cases; test positivity touches 12.48 %

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala posted 6,036 COVID-19 cases and 5,173 recoveries on Sunday with over 72,000 presently undergoing treatment for the infection, the government said. While the total COVID-19 caseload soared to 8,89,576, the recoveries have touched 8,13,550, state Health minister KK Shailaja, said in a press release here.

In the last 24 hours, 48,378 samples have been tested and the test positivity rate has touched 12.48 per cent.

So far, 92.58 lakh samples have been sent for testing. While Ernakulam accounted for 822 cases, Kozhikode 763, Kottayam 622 and Kollam 543, Kasaragod reported 124 new cases.

None of the UK returnees have tested positive in the last 24 hours. The virus toll has gone up to 3,607



with 20 more fatalities being added to the tally.

Of the positive cases, 42 are health workers, 74 had come from outside the state and 5,451 have been infected through contact. Presently, 2.14 lakh people are under observation in various districts, including 12,226 in hospitals.

The active case load in the state is 72,891. **PTI**

Gujarat: 4 dead in 2 accidents in Devbhumi Dwarka, Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad: Four persons were killed in two separate accidents on Sunday in Devbhumi Dwarka district and on Bhavnagar-Ahmedabad Highway in Gujarat, police said.

In the first incident, two unidentified men were killed on the spot when their SUV, heading towards Bhavnagar, was hit by a truck near Moti Baru village in Ahmedabad's Dholka taluka, said Koth police station sub inspector HR Patel.

Three people in the SUV were injured in the incident and the driver of the truck, which overturned on impact, has been detained, he added.

In the second accident, which took place later in the day in Devbhumi Dwarka, a couple from Bhavnagar traveling on a scooter was hit by a speeding pick-up truck near Manja village, an official said.

Ketan Parmar (39) and his wife Jyoti (37) died on the spot and the pick-up driver fled from the spot, the Khambhalia police station official said. **PTI**

Mission Shakti: UP woman seeks road repair before wedding

Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh): A 24-year-old woman, who is preparing for her marriage next month, has approached the district magistrate with an unusual request.

The woman, who lives in Iglas area, met the district magistrate with a request to repair the road leading to her house in the Naglachura village so that her 'baraat' does not face problems in reaching her home.

Karishma Kumari, the bride-to-be, said her marriage had been fixed for February 27 and the road, in question, was filled with potholes and mud.

"It will be difficult for the 'baraat' to move on the road at night," she told the district magistrate.

Aligarh District Magistrate Chandra Bhusan Singh said, "I have directed the official concerned to take immediate action and commence work for the construction of the road."

He said that this initiative is the best example of the Mission Shakti campaign, launched by the state government to empower women. **IANS**

Youth poses with gun at his mother's head, arrested in UP

IANS ■ SHAMLI (UP)

A youth posing for a selfie, with a pistol pointed at his mother's head, has been arrested by the Shamli police.

The weapon has also been seized from the youth, identified as Deepak Kumar, 20.

The cyber cell of the police traced the youth from the Sunheti village under Kairana police station in Uttar Pradesh. Kumar had uploaded the picture on social media. Superintendent of Police, Shamli, Sukirti Madhav, has ordered an inquiry into the matter.



Crowd of visitors at the Taj Mahal during foggy day in Agra on Sunday

PTI



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Missing cohesion

The latest attempts by the Congress to paper over differences raise more questions than these answer

One cannot help wondering what ails India's 'grand old party'? Why is it that over four months after the Congress set into motion the process of holding elections for the appointment of a new president, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Friday unanimously put off the exercise until June? Does the Congress not realise that it is rapidly losing political relevance in the country by losing State after State? So now, with the Assembly elections to five States slated for May or earlier, is it not the time for the party to elect a leader who will be able to effectively lead the party into the polls and work out a strategy to reverse its dwindling fortunes? It is very obvious that Rahul is not interested in being at the helm of affairs despite his mother Sonia Gandhi's fervent desire to see her son lead it. Though Rahul is rapidly shaping into a politician who frequently raises uncomfortable and relevant questions for the Government and even takes on the Prime Minister, he is a "reluctant politician" who would rather be away from it all instead of right in the middle of a fight at the hustings. So isn't it time that the Congress began looking at someone outside the "dynasty" to lead it into the poll battles? However, given that the schedule announced by the party's working committee will ensure that the new president escapes responsibility for the outcomes of the five Assembly elections, one cannot be blamed for



thinking that the mantle might again fall on the Gandhi scion.

Is it that the party does not have faith in the bevy of veteran leaders who are more than capable of steering it on the path of victory and, by extension, political relevance? Or is it that the loyalists would rather run the party into the ground than change guard? Is there so much rivalry in the 'grand old party' that the members can't rise above it and do what is best for the future of the Congress and, by extension, the country? Everyone knows that for democracy to be relevant, alive and kicking in a country, a strong Opposition is a must to keep the Government on its toes. But all attempts at forging Opposition unity have come to nought till now as senior leaders — like Chandrababu Naidu, Mamata Banerjee, Sharad Pawar and so on — refuse to kowtow to a young and inexperienced leader who has never even been a Chief Minister? Plus, each of them is more than capable and harbours prime ministerial ambitions. So why would the stalwarts step down for a dynast? The result is a country with a weak and scattered Opposition and no leader tall enough to give an alternative Government at the Centre and occupy the Prime Minister's chair. It is a shame that at a time when the Congress should be finalising its strategy for the looming Assembly elections, there is infighting over the internal elections and the CWC polls which were last held when Sonia took over as Congress president in 1998. The Congress obviously needs to put its house in order, both for its sake and for that of the country.

PICTALK



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and MoS (Finance & Corporate Affairs) Anurag Thakur participate in the halwa ceremony at North Block in New Delhi. PTI

Brrr, & yet hot!

The mercury may keep dipping but the political temperature is likely to soar ahead of the 72nd Republic Day

With the Weatherman's forecast that the mercury may dip to 4°C Celsius on the Republic Day this year, probably the politically soaring temperature in the Capital due to the planned tractor rally by the farmers' unions is the only thing that might get our blood thawed and running. The Indian Meteorological Department data shows the intense fluctuation in the minimum temperatures this month due to factors like a lesser number of western disturbances influencing the plains, rapid change in wind direction and its speed. Delhi's chilly weather may have troubled the residents a lot but what sends a chill down the Government's spine is the scheduled tractor rally by the peasants, wherever it finally takes place, and if at all. The Republic Day parade is the showcase of India's might and grandeur, its military prowess, rich cultural heritage, its research and development, its values, ethics and whatnot. However, a simultaneous protest rally by the cultivators, when marching contingents of our Armed Forces and paramilitary will showcase the nation's strength on the Rajpath, would definitely not be a feather in India's hat globally. In fact, it'll be considered a blot on Indian democracy.



Delhi has become a political hotbed since the past two months, when the farmers angry with the three Central farm laws have been camping at its borders. However, it's not only the farmer's rally that is expected to mar R-Day celebrations. In the absence of any chief guest at the parade this year, in over 50 years now, the R-Day celebrations would be a bit insipid. After British Prime Minister Boris Johnson expressed his inability to attend the celebration due to the emergence of the mutant COVID-19 strain at home, India would not be showcasing its military might and prowess to the world leaders, to their person. Also, the celebrations will be low-key due to the COVID-19 pandemic as the number of invitees has been drastically cut short to make sure that all the protocols are followed. The weather forecaster has predicted foggy weather in Delhi for the next three days, including that on the Republic Day. The mercury may dip further but the political temperature is soaring each passing day; is expected to leave a mark on the 72nd R-Day and then reaching a climax during the Budget Session.

Professions versus self-employment

Since only about half the employable people globally have jobs, it's time to start training youngsters for self-employment



PRAFULL GORADIA

For a living, there is nothing more pleasurable than owning and running one's own enterprise. True, lately, even in India, some companies offer a hefty pay and perks which exceed the profits of a small-to-medium industry or business. Nevertheless, the satisfaction of owning an enterprise is greater and well offsets the income of a top job. Mind you, a chief executive of a large corporation has several advantages other than merely pay and perks. To be able to operate on a large scale as well the potential of further expansion on commensurate scale is itself a substantial compensation.

The larger the enterprise, the greater the market and, perhaps, influence, and the more the number of people reporting to the CEO. Some chief executives experience, and rightly so, a sense of power which a medium self-owned enterprise can't provide. Until 1980, I headed a company, with no questions ever asked, which employed 25,000 people. That pleasure is yet to be replicated in my own business-cum-industry which has been successful for its size. For a musician, the pleasure of playing on a grand piano far outweighs the satisfaction that a harmonium provides, although the former belongs to someone else while the latter is one's own. The pain and humiliation of the piano being taken away would be greater than the pleasure it ever gave you.

Nevertheless, if I were born again, I would get into my own business earlier than I did in this innings. But I must not forget to mention that a certain discipline and method of work that a large organisation provides, a small one seldom gives. It is not widely known that management science or business management as a subject was started by what an officer observed of the German Army's functioning during World War I: How best to develop an effective organisation economically and then run it optimally. An example that readily comes to mind is the famous "tooth to tail ratio". Given, say, a division of soldiers, maximise the number of fighting/firing men and keep the deployment for servicing/sup-



porting the frontline men with rifles and machine guns at the bare minimum. It was subsequently discovered that the British Army had a 1:10 ratio, while the German ratio was 1:4. On this criterion, the Germans were two-and-a-half times more efficient than the British at the fundamental function of fighting and killing the enemy.

Do not get the impression that I favour the Army set-up as an ideal example for organising a large company. One, I have quoted an example of over a century ago. Two, in today's context, the Army's fighting soldiers and officers are divided into many layers. A better focused training would require fewer layers of supervision or leadership. In contrast, small businesses require versatile men and women, persons who know how to perform multiple functions for the simple reason that the smaller the company, the fewer number of persons it can afford to employ.

Looking at the world scenario, only about half the employable people have jobs. The other half is self-employed, which includes the wealthiest entrepreneur to the humblest hawk. The message is that of the two youngsters coming into the employment market, one must look for self-employment. If one's education

has been law, medicine, accountancy or suchlike, s/he knows what to do. Else, one may try one's hand at business. This is where youngsters who do not belong to families with a business tradition can feel lost. Business management studies enumerate theories on commerce-related subjects. But they seldom lay out advice on how to set up a business if one has no experience. Few successful entrepreneurs write their life stories for the beginners to learn from. Nor have the publishers of educational books apparently persuaded enough entrepreneurs to fill this knowledge gap.

A word of caution: Neither an inheritor of business nor an academician is quite the appropriate author of a truly useful book. Only someone who happens to have started his/her enterprise from scratch and succeeded, is such an author.

My plea is urgent because in the employment market right now, women in significant numbers are seeking jobs, which was earlier a men's monopoly. We had not heard of women fighter pilots in the Air Force; now they are a reality. On the other hand, the COVID-19 affliction has caused a loss in jobs. Will all the shops survive or will home deliveries replace some of them? What are like-

ly to be the effects of work-from-home on employment?

With no family tradition of business, I worked as an executive in big companies for 23 years. In pursuing acquaintances in multi-national corporations, I got started with contract manufacturing. That line helped me set up small factories manufacturing and selling similar goods. This is one example of how a novice can enter his/her own enterprise. But one factor is certain: The person concerned has to lose his/her fear of insecurity. The security of a steady job can sometimes be as bad as a disease.

India is proud of its business management schools which have turned out first-rate executives. But it will be interesting to see a survey of their alumni: What percentage has developed their own enterprises? I feel there is a need for similar schools for small enterprises. A laundry, a restaurant, even a grocer or *panwallah* is a business worth learning and pursuing. Everyone need not learn how to run a large company. In fact, there is greater scope for smaller enterprises but I doubt if there are schools teaching about them.

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

TRUE, SOME FIRMS OFFER A HEFTY PAY AND PERKS WHICH EXCEED THE PROFITS OF A SMALL-TO-MEDIUM INDUSTRY OR BUSINESS BUT THE SATISFACTION OF OWNING AN ENTERPRISE IS GREATER AND WELL OFFSETS THE INCOME OF A TOP JOB

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FARMERS SPOILING INDIA'S IMAGE

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'The farm divide' (January 23). Consequent upon the failure of the 11th round of talks between the farmers' unions and the Central Government, the wrong message is being transmitted. For the first time in the history of independent India, there is a possibility that farmers will take out a tractor rally parallel to the Republic Day parade, which is a big shame for us, as a nation. The image of the Government is going to get tarnished in front of the whole world. The Republic Day, being a red letter day, is of utmost importance for maintaining a clean image of India's sovereign prowess. Celebrating and enjoying the Republic Day parade is of great importance for every Indian.

We may have internal differences due to different opinions, non-consensus on any other issue but that doesn't mean that we have the right to eclipse India's global image. The farmers are doing exactly that. Therefore, the farmers' organisations must abort their plan in the larger interest of the entire nation. Patriotism runs through the veins of every true Indian. On the Republic Day, the countrymen are least interested in farmers' tractor rally and want to witness the peaceful R-Day parade at Rajpath.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

EDUCATION HOLDS THE KEY

Sir — Gender inequality has affected the socio-economic development of India for decades, but now the situation is changing and we are moving towards gender equality in all spheres. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has started observing January 24 as 'National Girl Child Day' to create awareness on the inequalities and problems faced by girls in the Indian society.

Our Constitution grants equality to both genders, ensures equality before the law and prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Indian women are multi-talented and have the unique

Better late than never



The adage 'better late than never' seems to have come in handy for the grand old party given that the much-longed-for yet belated decision to hold the party's organisational elections towards June-end came from the Congress working committee (CWC), the highest decision-making body of the party, that met on Friday amidst the clash between members belonging to the old and the new guard.

quality of patience. They are the ambassadors of our culture and heritage.

Gender inequality is mainly because of poverty, disability, early marriages and pregnancy, gender-based violence and orthodox local traditions and cultures. But now the situation is changing slowly and gradually.

Education is the only solution to many of our socio-economic problems. Access to quality education is the key to ensuring that women have access to work opportunities, decent healthcare and representation in political and economic fields. In India, initiatives by successive Governments since two decades have done a lot in uplifting women who are now on a par with their male counterparts. India cannot be empowered unless its women are.

BVS Kumar | Krishna

WE MUST TAKE PRIDE

Sir — We should be proud that global community is applauding India for its role

The June 30 deadline for holding the party elections met with strong opposition from a group of dissenters. It resulted in a heated exchange between two sections of party veterans.

But they unanimously entrusted the interim party chief Sonia Gandhi with the responsibility of having the final call on the recommendations it made *vis-a-vis* the election for the party's full-time president.

The decision has been taken on mature reflection so that the results of the upcoming Assembly polls due in May in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and West Bengal may not be attributed to the new chief's performance, if these are not up to the expectations. Interestingly, as many as 23 members from both the groups demanded in an open letter to Sonia Gandhi a couple of months back, the conduct of the organisational elections. Now, political circles are avidly waiting as to what way this Congress cookie crumbles!

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

SOUNDBITE

The honour is ours, President @jairbolsonaro to be a trusted partner of Brazil in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic together.

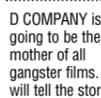


Prime Minister —Narendra Modi



Namaskar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Brazil is honoured to have a great partner to overcome a global obstacle.

Brazilian President —Jair Bolsonaro



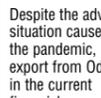
D COMPANY is going to be the mother of all gangster films. It will tell the story of the father of gangsterism whose name is Dawood Ibrahim.

Bollywood Filmmaker —Ram Gopal Varma



Virat Kohli bats better when he is the captain. I think if you change it, it would destroy the culture of the Indian team.

Former Australia cricketer —Brad Hogg



Despite the adverse situation caused by the pandemic, export from Odisha in the current financial year up to November has registered 55 per cent increase.

Odisha CM —Naveen Patnaik

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE NEXT STAGE IN WORLD HISTORY

The US and China will be embroiled in conflict and India will join the ranks of developed countries



MARKANDEY KATJU

In my opinion the next stage in world history will be marked by two main events: The conflict between the US and China and India joining the ranks of developed countries. Regarding the first, there are two superpowers in the world today, the US and China. The difference between the two is that China is aggressive and expanding, while the US is on the defensive. Hence, the Chinese can be compared to Nazi imperialists in the 1930s and early 1940s, while the US can be compared to the British and French, who were on the defensive. At that time the real danger to the world was Nazi Germany, not the British or French. Today the Chinese, with their huge \$3.2 trillion foreign exchange reserve hungrily looking for new markets, raw materials and avenues for investment worldwide, are the real danger to world peace, like Hitler's imperialism. The main check to the Chinese is the US. Therefore, they are bound to clash. However, for now, the conflict will not take the form of an open war between the two in view of the fact that both have nuclear weapons. But limited conflicts may take place, in various forms like tariff wars and in different places like the South China Sea incidents. As regards the second, in today's age there are really two worlds, one of the developed countries (like North America, Europe, Japan, Australia and China) and the world of the underdeveloped nations (like India and the other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America). India is on the verge of smashing its way into the ranks of the developed countries.

Before the Industrial Revolution, which began in England in the beginning of the 18th century and then spread everywhere, there were feudal agricultural societies everywhere. The feudal mode of production was so backward that very little wealth could be generated by it. Consequently only a handful of people (kings and aristocrats) could be rich while the rest (over 95 per cent) had to remain poor.



This situation changed drastically after the Industrial Revolution. Now modern industry is so powerful and so big that enough wealth can be generated by it to give a decent life to everyone. Yet, over 75 per cent of the people of the world are poor, particularly in underdeveloped countries. The objective of the underdeveloped countries must be to become developed nations and, therefore, the 21st century and the next stage of history will be characterised as a period of struggle by the people of underdeveloped countries to make this historical transformation. Otherwise they can never escape poverty, unemployment, hunger, lack of healthcare and other evils. There are powerful forces which, for their own vested interests, oppose this historical transformation, so it will not be easy but it must be done by patriots.

India will lead the underdeveloped countries in this process, because it is the most developed of all of them and is on the verge of smashing its way into the ranks of developed nations. India has a huge pool of technical talent with thousands of bright engineers, technicians and scientists (Indians are largely manning Silicon Valley in California and are professors in the science, engineering and mathematics departments in many American universities) and immense natural resources.

However, Indians lacked a genuinely patriotic and modern political leadership and were till now divided on the basis of feudal concepts like caste and religion. This was blocking their advance. The ongoing farmers' agitation has changed this to a large extent. Indians are shunning divisive politics and politicians and are united like never before. This stir has come as the spark that will transform India into a developed country.

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India. The views expressed are personal.)

Make AI evolution inclusive in India

The disproportionately dominant role played by men in the development of this technology, which leads to gender stereotypes and biases, is concerning



TRISHA PANDE & SHRUTI SHREYA

The last few years have witnessed the evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into a powerful tool that enables machines to think and act like humans. Considering the ability of this technology to transform economies, the AI revolution holds unparalleled significance for a developing country like India, which has the second-largest population in the world. While recognising the tremendous potential that this technology holds, it is also important to understand and question the processes involved in the making and functioning of AI. The disproportionately dominant role played by men in the development of this technology which leads to gender stereotypes and biases, is concerning.

The growth of AI technologies: India being the fastest-growing economy in the world has a significant stake in the development of AI. Recognising this potential, the Government had in 2018 instructed the NITI Aayog to establish a national AI programme. Thereafter, the establishment of a national AI stack, the proposal for a National Mission on AI and the launch of a global AI summit in 2020 by the Prime Minister, are all evidence of the Government's commitment to creating a robust AI infrastructure in the country.

With machine learning (ML) finding its application across sectors including healthcare, digital finance and education, the opportunities for job seekers are also abundant in this field. The robust Information Technology (IT) ecosystem coupled with talented human resource has the ability to convert India into an AI hub very soon. However, like any other man-made technology, AI artifacts too reflect the challenge of being cluttered with existing sociological biases. Such concerns need a strategic and tacitful response to obviate the said technology from reinforcing the existing stereotypes and discriminatory social norms.

Feminist challenges to the proliferation of AI in Indian Society: It has been 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, that envisioned a peaceful and equitable world for all women. A significant gender bias still exists in our society. For instance, as late as in February 2020 the Supreme Court had to remind the Government that its arguments for denying women a position of command in the Army were based on stereotypes. Moreover, as per a recent report of UNDP titled 'Tackling Social Norms', gender bias is not a male problem as the findings of the report reveal that almost 90 per cent of the people (both men and women) hold some kind of biases against women and people from other marginalised communities. The challenges of social bias and other forms of discrimination against women and members of the trans community pervade all spheres of life. While the existing digital divide and under-representation of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) continue to pose significant concerns, AI and automation are throwing newer challenges for attaining substantive equality in the age of the fourth industrial revolution.

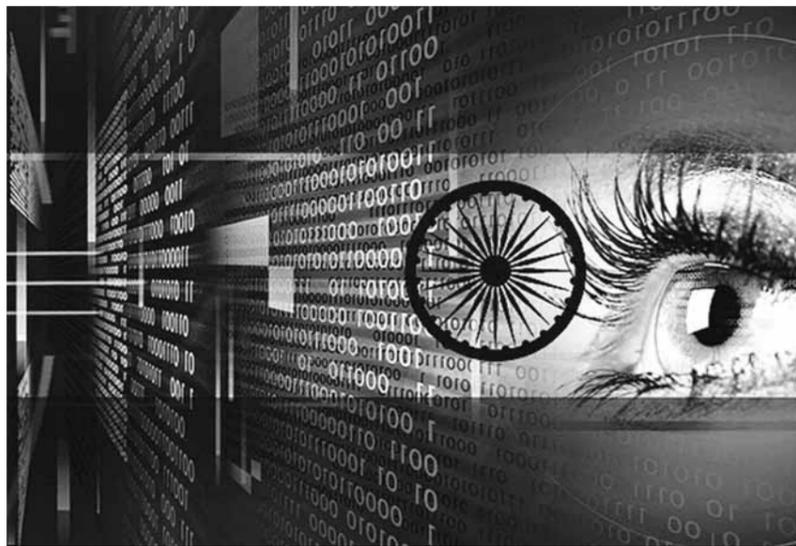
With 78 per cent of AI professionals being men, it is certain that male experiences inform and dominate all AI algorithms with negligible representation from the other communities. This power imbalance has severe adverse implications for the other sexes like affecting their access to jobs and loans by automatically vetting out their applications.

Even companies leading the drive of automation are unintentionally contributing to the existing social biases getting embedded in the AI systems. As highlighted in a 2019 report by UNESCO, it is not a coincidence that virtual personal assistants like Alexa and Siri have female names and they come with a default female voice. These features reinforce the existing social realities where a



AI/ML SOLUTIONS ARE VAST AND FAR-REACHING — WITH THE POTENTIAL TO REVOLUTIONISE SECTORS SUCH AS BUSINESS AND GOVERNANCE, BUT THEIR IMPACT CAN BE DIVISIVE, SEXIST AND EXCLUSIONARY IF NOT IMPLEMENTED CORRECTLY

Pande is Policy Manager and Shreya is Policy Research Assistant, The Dialogue. The views expressed are personal.



majority of personal assistants in the public and private sector are women.

The way forward: Some of the solutions that concern an overall better uptake of AI among women and minorities for India lie in designing these systems inclusively. This may seem fairly obvious on the face of it, but effectively it means using more inclusive training data wherever possible. For instance, women who have never formally learnt to read or write can use their smartphones to communicate. Such digital literacy — and India's increasing digital penetration — can open up a world of opportunities. Voice assistants inbuilt into mobile devices allow women to access a range of tools — however, manufacturers need to ensure that the training data used by the voice assistant is inclusive. Indian accents can vary incredibly based on region, according to the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, India has 22 regional languages. These can vary further — based on geography and community. If the voice assistant is unable to help a woman due to dialect — then there exists a missed opportunity to include those who are not literate, but willing and able to use their smartphones for a range of purposes.

The solution is straightforward but the challenge lies in its implementation — there has to be emphasis on ensuring that voice assistants can recognise a range of Indian dialects. This is not particular to women — and is a much broader issue of regional inclusivity — but it can benefit women more due to the gender divide in accessing formal education. Manufacturers can pre-empt the digital divide from worsening, in this manner — and such a solution benefits society at large. Conversational

AI can increase the number of customers on an e-commerce platform, help with information and knowledge access and enhance internet experience overall. There are many women who are older and often have not used devices as early on in life as their male counterparts. This leads to a stereotype that mothers are often not as adept at using their mobile phones, and some part of it can be rooted in reality — however, that can be changed with leveraging the power of conversational AI.

Another important element to consider with AI and disruptive technology is the nature of job loss — which will be borne unequally by women across the world. Gender justice in the workforce is a concern of immense importance which must be addressed when it comes to the future of work. Women have the highest participation rates in the informal sector. This is reflected across major sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture and services, where employment of the female labour force is mainly informal. Their jobs are more routine and less abstract than their male counterparts. Research in developing countries shows patterns of job-loss due to digital automation affect women-dominated jobs more than male-dominated ones. This indicates that there is an urgency to skill women so that they can take on jobs which require handling of the AI-based tools.

A majority of the female labour force should be skilled to handle such jobs across sectors. Empowering women technologically will enable them to benefit from emerging technology such as 5G, blockchain, robotics, digital communications and so forth — instead of being the reason for an economic landslide.

COVID-19 has affected women unequally — with women being on the receiving end of job loss, domestic violence and increased household responsibilities. When the post-COVID recovery for the economy begins, India must remember to focus on these gendered issues in order to leverage the potential of its working women — across formal and informal sectors.

In the truest sense of intersectional inclusivity, it is important to remember that inclusivity does not include only women in the strict social sense of the term — but also sexual minorities. The LGBTQIA+ community in India isn't well-represented on forms which collect data for larger AI/ML analyses. Many Government forms only offer the 'M/F' categories to indicate gender and occasionally, 'other'. This leaves out an entire category of people who might identify elsewhere on the gender spectrum — or non-binary people, who do not identify as M/F.

It is vital to work towards weeding out the bias which exists while hiring from the general pool of applicants — by anonymising the profiles of candidates in terms of removing gender identifiers, limiting the skill sets to only those that are required for the job (and not inadvertently including skills which might be typically masculine) and locating non-traditional applicants.

These are some of the social disparities which must be kept in mind while designing and deploying AI systems in India. AI/ML solutions are vast and far-reaching — with the potential to revolutionise sectors such as business and governance, but their impact can be divisive, sexist and exclusionary if not implemented correctly.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ENSURING THE VICTORY OF WHOEVER CONTESTS FROM NANDIGRAM ON A BJP TICKET.
—BJP LEADER
SUVENDU ADHIKARI



I WILL CONTEST FROM NANDIGRAM. IT IS MY LUCKY PLACE. NANDIGRAM IS MY OLDER SISTER, BHABANIPUR IS MY YOUNGER SISTER.
—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE



Navalny is a thorn in Putin's side but he's no Lenin

What he is doing to great effect is mobilising the tech-savvy youth whose attitude to the regime now verges on contempt

When the Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny returned to Moscow after convalescing in Germany following a failed poisoning attempt by the FSB domestic spy agency, the regime-friendly media loyally failed to mention his arrival. With one striking exception: *Vremya*, the flagship news show of Russian State television. Presumably somebody there was hoping to win favour with the Kremlin, because they briefly mentioned Navalny three-quarters of the way through the two-hour programme. In fact, they compared Navalny's trip home to Vladimir Lenin's famous return to Russia in 1917 and suggested that he



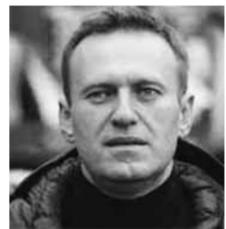
GWYNNE DYER

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

was as great a danger to Russia as Lenin had been. The Germans plucked Lenin from exile in Switzerland in the middle of World War-I. He was sent across Germany in a "sealed train" (so he wouldn't spread the infection of communism there) to St Petersburg, then in the throes of Russia's first democratic revolution — and he did just what the Germans had hoped he would.

Lenin overthrew the fumbling democratic provisional Government in a military coup, took Russia out of the war and launched a 73-year totalitarian communist regime that cost at least 20 million Russian lives in purges, famines and lesser acts of repression. Is Navalny really

that great a danger? The ambitious presenter at *Vremya* probably won't get the job he wanted, because President Vladimir Putin really won't have liked seeing his noisiest critic compared to Lenin, a genuine world historical figure. Putin himself never mentions Navalny's name at all. Russians cannot even put a name to the system they live under, as the poor presenter's confusion illustrates. It's certainly not a democracy, although there are regular elections. It's definitely not communist, although most of the regime's senior figures were communists before they discovered a better route to power and wealth. It's not a monarchy, although Putin



has been in power for 20 years and is surrounded by a court of extremely rich allies and cronies. And "kleptocracy" is just a pejorative term used mostly by foreigners, although Navalny does habitually refer to Putin and his cronies as "crooks and thieves." It's a purely personal

regime and it is very unlikely to survive his dethronement or demise. Putin has just changed the Constitution with a referendum that lets him stay in power until 2036. But that seems unlikely, partly because he is already 68 and partly because the younger generation of Russians is getting restless and bored. Navalny is a brave man who has gone home voluntarily to face a spell in Putin's jails. (He missed two parole appointments for a suspended sentence on trumped-up embezzlement charges because he was in Germany recovering from the FSB assassination attempt.) But his role in Russian politics so far had been more gadfly than revolutionary. However, his sup-

porters do their homework and make witty videos detailing the scandalous financial abuses of the regime. The latest is a virtual tour of Putin's new \$1 billion seaside palace on the Black Sea, but he is probably not the man who will take Putin down. What he is doing to great effect is mobilising the tech-savvy youth whose attitude to the regime now verges on contempt.

Russians have put up with it for a long time because they were exhausted and shamed by the wild political banditry of the 1990s, but Putin's credit for having put an end to that has been exhausted. He may still be in power for years, but this is a regime on the skids.

FOREIGN EYE



TRUMP MUST NOT RETURN

American President Joe Biden is certainly well cast as the steady presence come to clean up the mess. But the fear persists that the villain who created it will return. Donald Trump threatened as much in his last public statement as President, uttering the chilling words: "We will be back in some form." Democrats can vote to ban Trump (The Guardian editorial)

Biden talks up transatlantic ties, Covid and climate with Boris

PTI ■ WASHINGTON/LONDON

Joe Biden conveyed his intention to strengthen the "special relationship" with the UK in his first call as the US President with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, during which the two leaders re-committed to the NATO alliance and agreed to cooperate on combating climate change and containing the Covid-19 pandemic.

The conversation with Johnson over phone on Saturday was Biden's third involving a foreign leader since his inauguration on Wednesday, after he spoke with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on Friday.

"Great to speak to President Joe Biden this

evening. I look forward to deepening the longstanding alliance between our two countries as we drive a green and sustainable recovery from Covid-19," Johnson said in a tweet.

It seems that a new trade agreement was not on the list of priorities for both sides. While the Downing Street readout of the phone call referred to Johnson reiterating his intention to resolve existing trade issues as soon as possible, the White House communique of the call only referred to "strengthening the special relationship".

"The president conveyed his intention to strengthen the special relationship between our countries and revitalise transatlantic ties, underscoring the critical role of NATO to our collective defense and shared



values," the White House said. "Building on the UK and US' long history of cooperation in security and defence, the leaders re-committed to the NATO alliance and our shared values in promoting human rights and protecting democracy. They also discussed the benefits of a potential free

trade deal between our two countries, and the Prime Minister reiterated his intention to resolve existing trade issues as soon as possible," a Downing Street spokesperson said.

The UK is keen to conclude a post-Brexit free trade agreement with the US, but the new American administration



has been less vocal over this amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

The global health crisis and vaccination programme in both countries and around the world as well as climate change were areas of mutual agreement, with security and defence through

strengthening the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) also high on the agenda – in contrast with former President Donald Trump's hard ball with the alliance.

During the call, President Biden noted the importance of cooperation, including through multilateral organisations, on shared challenges such as combatting climate change, containing Covid-19, and ensuring global health security, the White House said.

The leaders also discussed the need for coordination on shared foreign policy priorities, including China, Iran, and Russia, it said.

"The Prime Minister warmly welcomed the President's decision to re-join the Paris Agreement on climate change, as well as the World Health Organisation and the

COVAX programme to ensure equitable access for vaccines," the Downing Street spokesperson said.

On climate change, Johnson is said to have also praised President Biden's early action on tackling climate change and commitment to reach Net Zero by 2050.

"The leaders looked forward to meeting in person as soon as the circumstances allow, and to working together through the G7, G20 and COP26 this year," the spokesperson added.

The UK will be hosting the G7 summit in Cornwall in June, which is expected to be Biden's first visit to the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also due to join the summit for its guest country sessions.

The new White House

incumbent is famously anti-Brexit but all early indications are that his views on the UK's exit from the European Union (EU) are unlikely to overshadow US-UK relations in future.

In his call with Mexico's President, Biden and Obrador agreed to work closely to stem the flow of irregular migration to Mexico and the US, as well as to promote development in the Northern Triangle of Central America.

"The president outlined his plan to reduce migration by addressing its root causes, increasing resettlement capacity and lawful alternative immigration pathways, improving processing at the border to adjudicate requests for asylum, and reversing the previous administration's draconian immigration policies," the White House said.

Vaccinated people may still transmit Covid, warns England's chief medic

PTI ■ LONDON

One of England's leading medical officers on Sunday urged the public to continue to follow the strict lockdown rules because any vaccine-related immunity from Covid-19 takes at least three weeks to kick in.

Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, England's Deputy Chief Medical Officer, also warned that there is no clear evidence yet to show that vaccinated people cannot transmit the deadly virus on to others.

"Regardless of whether someone has had their vaccination or not, it is vital that everyone follows the national restrictions and public health advice, as protection takes up to three weeks to kick in and we don't yet know the impact of vaccines on transmission," said Van-Tam.

His warning comes as the UK registered another high daily death toll from the virus of 1,348 this weekend, taking the country's total to 97,329.

However, he pointed to an additional 32 vaccination sites coming on stream to add to the thousands of venues where the

National Health Service (NHS) has been delivering 140 jabs a minute, taking the vaccinated total to over 5.8 million.

"The vaccine is rightly something to celebrate – let's stay patient, stay at home and support the NHS as it continues to roll out the vaccine," he said.

A Living Museum where the BBC filmed a hit drama series 'Peaky Blinders' based on the notorious Birmingham gang in the 1920s is among the new vaccine sites.

A former IKEA store at the Westfield shopping centre in Stratford, London, the Francis Crick Institute, which is also in the UK capital, the Nightingale Hospital in Sunderland and the Blackpool Winter Gardens will also be new vaccination centres.

The latest openings mean there will be a network of almost 50 across the country, adding to options alongside hospitals, pharmacies and general practice (GP) surgeries.

"Through the vaccines delivery plan, we have made outstanding progress in vaccinating our NHS and care staff

and the most vulnerable people in society," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

"We must not drop our guard. While the vaccine can prevent severe disease, we do not know if it stops you from passing on the virus to others, and it takes time to develop immunity after a jab, so for now everyone must continue to stay at home to help bring down infections and protect the NHS," he said.

The NHS said the new vaccine centres will each be capable of delivering thousands of jabs each week, scaling up and down according to vaccine supplies and demand.

People eligible in the priority criteria of over-80s, followed by over-70s, care home workers and staff as well as frontline workers, are being invited when it is their turn and people are being urged not to just turn up.

"These new centres provide another option for people invited for their jabs, alongside the fantastic work of local GPs," said Professor Stephen Powis, NHS national medical director.

US condemns Russia's use of harsh tactics against protesters, journalists

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States has strongly condemned Russia's use of harsh tactics against protesters and journalists demanding the release of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The US State Department called on Russian authorities to release all those detained for exercising their universal rights and for the immediate and unconditional release of Navalny.

"We urge Russia to fully cooperate with the international community's investigation into the poisoning of Alexei Navalny and credibly explain the use of a chemical weapon on its soil," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement amidst widespread protests across Russia.

"Prior to today's events, the Russian government sought to suppress the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression by harassing protest

organisers, threatening social media platforms, and preemptively arresting potential participants," he said.

This follows years of tightening restrictions and repressive actions against civil society, independent media, and the political opposition, he added.

Continued efforts to suppress Russians' rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, the arrest of Navalny, and the crackdown on protesters that followed are troubling indications of further restrictions on civil society and fundamental freedoms, Price said.

"Russians' rights to peaceful assembly and to participate in free and fair elections are enshrined not only in the country's constitution, but also in Russia's OSCE commitments, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in its international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," he said.

Chinese military pressure on Taiwan threatens regional peace, stability: US

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Expressing concern over Chinese military pressure on Taiwan, the United States has said that such intimidating tactics threaten regional peace and stability.

"The United States notes with concern the pattern of ongoing PRC (Peoples Republic of China) attempts to intimidate its neighbours, including Taiwan," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said on Saturday.

In a statement, he urged Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure on Taiwan and instead engage in meaningful dialogue with Taiwan's democratically elected representatives.

"We will stand with friends and allies to advance our shared prosperity, security, and values in the Indo-Pacific region -- and that includes deepening our ties with democratic Taiwan," Price said.

The US will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent

In a statement, he urged Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure on Taiwan and instead engage in meaningful dialogue with Taiwan's democratically elected representatives

with the wishes and best interests of the people on Taiwan, he said, adding that the US maintains its longstanding commitments as outlined in the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances.

"We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defence capability. Our commitment to Taiwan is rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region," Price said.

FBI: Texan charged in Capitol riot tweeted 'Assassinate AOC'

AP ■ DALLAS

A 34-year-old Texas man has been arrested for allegedly taking part in the storming of the US Capitol this month and posting violent threats, including a call to assassinate Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York.

Garret Miller, who is from the Dallas suburb of Richardson, was arrested on Friday after being named in a five-count federal complaint.

Authorities allege that Miller posted photos and videos on his social media accounts that show him inside the Capitol during the January 6 storming of the building by supporters of then-President Donald Trump.

They also say he called for violence in online posts, including a tweet that simply read "Assassinate AOC," a reference to the liberal Ocasio-Cortez.

In another tweet, Miller

posted: "They are right next time we bring the guns," an FBI agent wrote in an affidavit.

Miller also threatened a US Capitol police officer during an exchange on Instagram, writing that he planned to "hug his neck with a nice rope," the affidavit states. After posting a photo on Facebook showing him inside the Capitol, Miller responded to a comment on the picture with: "just want to incriminate myself a little lol," according to an FBI affidavit.

Ocasio-Cortez on Friday posted Miller's charging documents on Twitter and then tweeted: "On one hand you have to laugh, and on the other know that the reason they were this brazen is because they thought they were going to succeed."

Miller's attorney, Clint Broden, said that Miller regrets the actions he took "in a misguided effort to show his support for former President Trump."

Dutch police clash with protesters in Amsterdam, Eindhoven

AP ■ URK (NETHERLANDS)

Dutch police clashed with protesters demonstrating against the country's lockdown in the capital, Amsterdam and the southern city of Eindhoven on Sunday, a day after rioting youths protesting the country's curfew torched a coronavirus testing facility in a Dutch fishing village.

In Amsterdam, police used a water cannon to disperse protesters taking part in a banned demonstration on a major square ringed by museums. Video images showed the water cannon spraying people grouped against a wall of the Van Gogh Museum.

Police in Eindhoven used a water cannon and tear gas against a crowd of hundreds of demonstrators that also included supporters of the anti-immigrant group PEGIDA.

Eindhoven police said they made at least 30 arrests by late afternoon and warned people to stay away from the city center amid the clashes.

There were no immediate reports of injuries.

It was the second Sunday in a row that police clashed with protesters in Amsterdam angry at the country's lockdown amid.

The unrest followed a night of rioting in the fishing village of Urk on the first night of a curfew imposed by the Dutch government to rein in the spread of the more transmissible variant of the coronavirus.

Police said Sunday they fined more than 3,600 people nationwide for breaching the curfew that ran from 9 pm Saturday until 4:30 am Sunday and arrested 25 people for breaching the curfew or for violence.

11 trapped miners rescued from gold mine in China

PTI ■ BEIJING

Eleven miners, trapped underground for two weeks following a blast in a gold mine in east China's Shandong Province, have been rescued, the state media reported on Sunday.

Authorities have been racing to dig out 22 miners trapped underground in the partially built gold mine in the city of Qixia in Shandong Province, since the explosion blocked their exit on January 10.

The rescuers set free two workers on Sunday, bringing the number of rescued miners to 11, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The first miner was rescued from the mine in the morning. The worker, said to be in "extremely weak condition," was rushed to the hospital for treatment, the report said.

Currently, 633 people and



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, rescuers carry a miner who was trapped in a mine to an ambulance in Qixia City in east China's Shandong Province on Sunday.

407 equipment are at the site for rescue operations.

Before Sunday, rescuers had established contact with only 10 of the miners, who were in good physical and psychological condition. Another is believed to have been dead, the report said, adding the deceased worker had been in a

coma.

Efforts have been underway to reach the workers since the blast occurred about 240 meters from the mine's entrance, but Chinese officials said on Thursday it could take 15 days to drill through 70 tons of debris trapping many of the miners.

Palestinians ask Europe to send monitors for elections

AP ■ GAZA CITY (PALESTINE)

Palestinian election officials on Sunday invited the European Union to send observers to monitor upcoming elections planned for the Palestinian legislature and presidency.

The elections are seen as an important step toward ending a rift that has left the Palestinians divided between rival governments since the Islamic militant group Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip from the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority in 2007. The PA has governed only autonomous areas of the Israeli-occupied West Bank since then.

Past attempts at reconciliation have repeatedly failed. But Sunday's invitation to the European Union was a sign that the Palestinians are serious

about holding what will be their first elections in 15 years.

The Central Elections Commission said its chairman, Hanna Nasir, extended the invitation for both the European Union and the European Parliament to send monitors. It said the invitation was given to the local EU representative, Sven Kuhn von Burgsdorf, and Nasir "stressed the importance of international observation to the electoral process, particularly by the EU."

The Palestinians are looking to the EU to ensure that the vote is transparent, and also in hopes of rallying pressure on Israel to allow Palestinians in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem to vote.

The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem, captured by Israel in 1967, as the capital of a future state. Israel considers all of

Jerusalem to be its capital. It has not said whether it will allow Palestinian residents in east Jerusalem, home to the city's major religious sites, to vote in Palestinian elections.

The EU supports the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, with a capital in east Jerusalem.

The EU did not officially respond to the monitoring request. But Shadi Othman, spokesman for the EU office to the Palestinians, confirmed the EU's "readiness to provide everything possible for the success of the electoral process."

"The goal during the coming period is to make all efforts to reach free and fair elections that produce elected representatives from the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip," he said.

South African Hindu priests accused of 'overcharging' for funerals of Covid-19 victims

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Some Hindu priests in South Africa have come under fire for allegedly charging high rates to conduct funerals of Covid-19 victims.

Pradeep Ramlall, Manager of the Clare Estate Crematorium in Durban, slammed priests who are doing this.

Ramlall, who is also a member of the Hindu Dharma Association of South Africa, said the organisation had received a number of complaints about this from families of people who had succumbed to the virus.

In recent weeks, amid a second wave and a new variant of the Covid-19 virus, the crematorium has had to introduce double shifts amid daily deaths

in the city which is home to more than a third of South Africa's Indian-origin population of about 1.4 million.

"Priests are charging between R1,200 and R2,000 to conduct a funeral. This is not right. As per our scriptures, this is our seva (service) to the community. If a family wants to give a priest a donation, then that is acceptable but priests should not be charging people," Ramlall told the Weekly Post.

"I was in my vehicle. The priest had conducted a Covid-19 victim's funeral. While he was in the parking lot, he removed R100 notes from his pocket and counted it before sanitising each note and putting the money back into his pocket," he said recounting an incident that he had personally witnessed.

Scotland's leader vows to push for second independence vote

AP ■ LONDON

Scotland's leader said on Sunday that she intends to hold a "legal referendum" on independence from the UK if she wins Scottish elections scheduled for May.

Such a move would put First Minister Nicola Sturgeon on a constitutional collision course with Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who opposes another secession vote.

Scotland voted to remain in the UK by a margin of 55 per cent-45 per cent in a 2014 referendum that was billed as a once-in-a-generation event. A new binding referendum requires the UK Government's approval, and Johnson insists he'll say no.

Sturgeon argues that Brexit has transformed the situation by dragging Scotland out of the European Union against its

Opposition parties in Scotland say Sturgeon should be focusing on defeating the coronavirus and supporting the economy, rather than planning for independence

will. A narrow majority of UK voters opted to leave the EU in a 2016 referendum, but a large majority in Scotland voted to stay.

A string of recent opinion polls suggests a small majority now supports Scotland becoming an independent country. Sturgeon says her Scottish National Party will run in May's election "to seek the authority of the Scottish people" for a new referendum.

"If the SNP win the Scottish election in a few months' time on a proposition of giving the people that choice, then what democrat could

rightly stand in the way of that? Boris Johnson just clearly fears the verdict and the will of the Scottish people," Sturgeon told the BBC.

The SNP says that if it wins a majority in the Scottish Parliament in May it will pass legislation allowing for a new referendum once the coronavirus pandemic is over. If Johnson's government refused to agree, the issue would likely end up in the courts.

"I want to have a legal referendum, that's what I'm going to seek the authority of the Scottish people for in May and if they give me that authority that's what I intend to do," Sturgeon said.

Opposition parties in Scotland say Sturgeon should be focusing on defeating the coronavirus and supporting the economy, rather than planning for independence.

GLOBE TROTTER

19 BURNED BODIES FOUND NEAR MEXICO-US BORDER

Ciudad Victoria (Mexico): Mexican authorities say they have found 19 shot and burned bodies near a town across the Rio Grande from Texas in an area that has seen violent territorial disputes between organised crime groups in recent years. The Tamaulipas state prosecutor's office said late Saturday that the bodies were discovered along a dirt road outside Camargo after residents reported a burning vehicle. Authorities found two vehicles on fire, one containing four bodies and the other 15.

ESTONIA TO GET 1ST FEMALE PRIME MINISTER

Tallinn: Estonia's two biggest political parties say they have clinched a deal to form a new Government to be led by a female Prime Minister for the first time in the Baltic country's history, replacing the previous Cabinet that collapsed into a corruption scandal earlier this month. The party councils of the opposition, center-right Reform Party and the ruling Left-leaning Center Party were expected to vote in favor of joining a Cabinet headed by Reform's PM-designate and chairwoman Kaja Kallas.

PIRATES ATTACK TURKISH SHIP OFF WEST AFRICA

Ankara: Armed pirates attacked a Turkish cargo ship off the West African coast, kidnapping 15 sailors and killing one of them, officials said Sunday as Turkey sought to recover the captured crew. The Liberian-flagged M/V Mozart was sailing from Lagos, Nigeria, to Cape Town in South Africa when it was attacked Saturday morning 100 nautical miles northwest of the island nation of Sao Tome and Principe.

US NSA TALKS TO ISRAELI COUNTERPART

Washington: Reaffirming Biden Administration's unwavering commitment to Israel's security, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in a call with his Israeli counterpart Ben Shabbat extended an invitation to begin a strategic dialogue in the near term, the White House said on Sunday. During the call on Saturday, Sullivan reaffirmed President Joe Biden's unwavering commitment to Israel's security and expressed appreciation for Shabbat's contributions to the bilateral partnership, said National Security Council Spokesperson Emily Horne.

Markets may witness profit-taking after 50K peak

All eyes on Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian stock market which added another feather to its cap by scaling the 50,000-mount for the first time ever may witness some profit-taking ahead but for now, all eyes are on the upcoming Union Budget that will influence the onward journey of the bluechip index, according to analysts.

From witnessing gigantic losses to record-shattering gains, investors witnessed a wide array of emotions in 2020. Markets showed volatile trends last year, with the benchmark crashing to its one-year low of 25,638.9 on March 24, only to roar back to reach record highs in the later part of the year.

The record-breaking run has been continuing, with the benchmark reaching the momentous 50,000-mark on January 21. The 30-share BSE index jumped to its record high of 50,184.01 during the trade on Thursday.

"Expect markets to go into consolidation phase in the second half of this calendar year and again resume the upward trajectory from CY22 onwards," Rusmik Oza, Executive Vice President, Head of Fundamental Research at Kotak Securities, said.

The entire plot changed for the markets in just ten months from massive losses to record-breaking peaks and this came at a time when the world is facing a health crisis.

Market analysts have attributed the sharp rebound in the market following the March crash to a host of factors such as abundant liquidity injected into the global financial system by leading central banks of the world, unprecedented retail investor participation and in recent months, on hopes of successful vaccines.

Driven by the improved investor sentiment, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies is also making new records and is currently at over ₹194 lakh crore. The BSE-listed companies market cap had crossed the landmark ₹100 lakh crore on November 28,

2014. In 2020, investors grew richer by ₹32.49 lakh crore helped by massive returns in the equity market which had a roller coaster ride during the year hit by the coronavirus pandemic.



From March 23, 2020 when the benchmark indices posted their worst ever one-day crash till now, the investor wealth has risen by a whopping ₹92,48,551.09 crore.

During the entire 2020, the 30-share BSE Sensex made monthly gains in seven while closing with losses in five of them. The Sensex, the country's first equity index, was launched in 1986. On July 25, 1990, it had closed above 1,000 mark. In another milestone, the benchmark closed above 10,000 mark on February 7, 2006.

"Indian markets have been witnessing strong momentum over the past few months on hopes of a faster economic recovery after the pandemic lockdown. Also positive global cues, sustained FII inflows and strong corporate earnings kept the sentiments high. Buzz around the upcoming Budget has also added strength to the markets. The Budget could potentially lay the foundation for a long term economic growth path."

"Overall, we expect the market to continue its upward journey on the back of healthy corporate earnings, strong liquidity, positive developments on the vaccine front, broad-based economic recovery and low interest rates," Hemang Jani, Head Equity Strategist at

Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

Jani also noted that unlocking of the economy since June 2020 led to a significant recovery in various macro, micro data points, resulting in equity markets surpassing its previous lifetime highs once again.

"The three big factors that have driven markets are smart recovery in the economy, FPI flows and earnings revision," Oza said.

Apart from being driven by FII investments, the rally was also led by direct investments by domestic investors. The sharp fall in Indian markets in March opened up opportunities for stock picking which saw a clear shift in the way retail investors participated in stock markets, Jani added.

"The speed with which central banks across the globe infused liquidity was the single most reason for the equity markets to recover," S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities, said. On the road ahead, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said markets are likely to turn highly volatile reacting to events and news.

IN BRIEF

ANNUAL ATHLETICS MEET-2021 STARTED IN CLW



Chittaranjan: Annual Athletics Meet-2021 inaugurated by RS Shina, PCMM & president, CLW Sports Association on 23rd Jan 2021 at Oval ground accompanied by senior officers, staff, supervisors of different shops of CLW took part in this mega event. Athletes participated in track events like, flat race, long jump, high jump, relay, discuss throw, shot-put etc. Finals of main events and prize distribution ceremony will be held on 26th January at oval ground.

Govt likely to announce formulation of policy for toys sector in Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government may in the Budget next week announce formulation of a dedicated policy for the toys sector to boost domestic manufacturing, sources said.

They said the policy will help in creating a strong ecosystem for the industry in the country and also attract startups.

The commerce and industry ministry is already taking steps to promote domestic manufacturing of toys. It has come out with a quality control order for the sector and had also increased import duty last year on toys.

Quality control order is one of the ways to stop flow of cheap sub-standard toys into the domestic market.

A source said that the country has low share in the international toys industry and India's exports account for less than 0.5 per cent of global demand, so there are immense opportunities in this segment.

The other areas which could be considered for the sector include promotion of research and development and design centres for toys.

"Boosting manufacturing would also help increase exports of toys from India. Countries like China and

The commerce and industry ministry is already taking steps to promote domestic manufacturing of toys. It has come out with a quality control order for the sector and had also increased import duty last year on toys

Vietnam are major players in the sector," they added.

India's toy exports are limited to about USD 100 million. The toys industry in India is primarily in the unorganised sector, comprising about 4,000 small and medium enterprises.

About 85 per cent of toys are imported in the country, with maximum coming from China. It is followed by Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Germany, Hong Kong and the US.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that India has talent and ability to become a toy hub for the entire world and called upon startups to work towards realising this potential while being "vocal about local toys".

Covid underlined need for higher Budget allocation for healthcare sector

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 pandemic has emphasised the key role of healthcare in the lives of people, underlining the importance of higher budget allocation for improving the healthcare infrastructure in the country, sectoral players said.

The pharma sector which has played a leading role as the "pharmacy of the world" said it expects support and incentives especially for research & development and innovation in the coming Budget.

The pandemic has completely changed the dynamics of the Indian healthcare ecosystem, NATHEALTH President and Apollo Hospitals Executive Vice-Chairperson Preetha Reddy told PTI.

"It has reiterated the need for increased investment in healthcare infrastructure, national level programmes for skill development and training of healthcare staff, increase in number of medical colleges, effective PPP models and further boost for local manufacturing," she added.

These should be the key priorities for the Government this time, Reddy said.

"Private healthcare providers are hopeful that there will be additional incentives to aid the sector in business recovery and also enable expansion across tier 2-3 cities - through provision of land at subsidised rates to set up hospitals, tax relief for new infrastructure creation, import duty relief for life saving equipment and ease of GST regulations for healthcare services," she added.

Reddy said that public spending in healthcare should increase to deal with future pandemics and for sustained preventive care.

Digital Health services found their rightful space during the pandemic and there is a need to expand and support the essential backup services to enable digital healthcare to function efficiently in all primary and secondary healthcare centres, she added.

In a similar vein, Fortis Healthcare MD and CEO Ashutosh Raghuvanshi said the Covid pandemic has underlined the importance of higher budget allocation for healthcare.

"The current situation demands increased budgetary impetus for improving healthcare infrastructure at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and also to enable the healthcare sector's speedy recovery," he added.

It is important to note that the healthcare sector is not only a potential foreign exchange

earner but also a significant employment generator, Raghuvanshi said.

"Our overall strategy must integrate preventive and curative services and make healthcare more affordable and accessible for the people of India," he added.

Highlighting the need for increasing the budget allocation for healthcare, Aster DM Healthcare Founder Chairman and MD Azad Moopen said the Covid-19 pandemic hit home the fact that a strong healthcare infrastructure is absolutely essential to ensure a sustainable economy.

"It is important to at least double the healthcare budget from last year's meager allocation. This would help improve access to affordable care for the masses," he added.

Emphasising expectations from the budget for the pharma sector, Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) Secretary General Sudarshan Jain said: "The overall policy ecosystem should help increase thrust on healthcare and build healthcare infrastructure to cater to the societal needs as healthcare is fundamental".

The pharma industry is looking for support and incentives in research & development, and innovation, he added.

Real estate sector seeks sops in upcoming Budget

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The real estate sector wants Stimulus in the form of sops in the upcoming Union Budget to boost housing demand, a top Credai Bengal official said.

The demands include personal tax relief, tax rebate on housing, extension of interest subvention, GST waiver, infrastructure status for the realty and easing liquidity for the sector, the official said. The Budget for financial year 2021-22 will be presented on February 1.

In recent months, the government had offered ₹25,000 crore stress asset fund for the uncompleted housing projects, increasing the differential from 10 per cent to 20 per cent under Section 43(CA) of the IT Act till June 30, 2021 were announced apart from ongoing interest subvention scheme.

"The year 2020 has been an unprecedented period in human history that disrupted the normal course of life. Since the outbreak of the pandemic in India earlier this year, the real estate sector reeling under a liquidity crunch, witnessed a flurry of challenges, Credai, West Bengal, president Sushil Mohta told PTI.

"There is a need to bolster the real estate sector that contributes 8 per cent of the country's economy as it is gearing for a big leap in the next 10 years," he said.

Global real estate consultant Knight Frank India chairman and managing director Shishir Bajjal in a pre-budget wish demanded A separate annual deduction of ₹1,50,000 that will provide the much-needed fillip to opt for house purchase. On the aspect of housing demand, Section 80 C

tax deduction on home loan principal repayment does not provide for a focused benefit on housing, he said.

₹1 hike the ₹2 lakh tax rebate on housing loan interest rates to at least ₹5 lakh to generate healthier housing demand, most notably in affordable and mid-segment housing. The last increase in the deduction limit under Section 80C (to ₹1.5 lakh a year) was in 2014 and an upward revision is long overdue," Mohta who is also the Merlin group chairman said.

He also demanded GST waiver for under-construction homes and extension of the interest subvention by another three years. Bajjal said the government should use this budget session to refer to recommendations on restoration of GST input tax credit to the upcoming GST council meet.

tax deduction on home loan principal repayment does not provide for a focused benefit on housing, he said.

₹1 hike the ₹2 lakh tax rebate on housing loan interest rates to at least ₹5 lakh to generate healthier housing demand, most notably in affordable and mid-segment housing. The last increase in the deduction limit under Section 80C (to ₹1.5 lakh a year) was in 2014 and an upward revision is long overdue," Mohta who is also the Merlin group chairman said.

He also demanded GST waiver for under-construction homes and extension of the interest subvention by another three years. Bajjal said the government should use this budget session to refer to recommendations on restoration of GST input tax credit to the upcoming GST council meet.

Finance Ministry allocates ₹660 cr additional funds to Madhya Pradesh for capex

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry on Sunday said it has allocated an additional ₹660 crore to Madhya Pradesh for capital expenditure to undertake citizen-centric reforms.

"A list of capital projects with an estimated cost of ₹660 crore was approved by the Department of Expenditure. Fifty per cent of the approved amount (i.e. ₹330 crore) has also been released to the state (Madhya Pradesh) as first instalment for the approved projects," it said in a statement.

The Ministry has allocated this additional funds to the state for capital expenditure for undertaking the "One Nation, One Ration Card" reforms, Ease of Doing Business

reforms, and urban local bodies reforms.

The State has also completed part of the fourth reform - the power sector reforms.

The "Special Assistance to States for capital expenditure" scheme was announced by the Centre in October last year as part of Aatmanirbhar Bharat package. The scheme is aimed at boosting capital expenditure of the state governments that are facing difficult financial environment due to a shortfall in tax revenue arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

"So far, capital expenditure proposals of ₹10,657 crore of 27 states have been approved by the Ministry of Finance. An amount of ₹5,328 crore has already been released to the states as the first instalment under the scheme.

Country's economy is gradually recovering, says Montek

PTI ■ PUNE

The country's economy, which contracted in the first two quarters of the current fiscal, has started recovering at a gradual pace, former deputy chairman of erstwhile Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia said on Sunday.

The economy contracted by a massive 23.9 per cent in the first quarter and 7.5 per cent in the second quarter on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We had jumped off a cliff in the first quarter of this financial year because of the lockdown, which was necessitated by the pandemic. The economy is now climbing back. I think it's a gradual recovery but it is a clear recovery," Ahluwalia said at a virtual event.

According to the first advance estimates of national

income released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the country's GDP is estimated to contract by a record 7.7 per cent during the current financial year (2020-21).

An article published in the Reserve Bank of India's January Bulletin has stated that the country's GDP is within the striking distance of attaining positive growth.

Ahluwalia said the manufacturing sector is recovering and has got back to where it was in 2019-20. However, the contact industries which include hotels, restaurants, travel, tourism and retail shopping in malls are badly hit and will take some time to return to normalcy, he said.

He said the infrastructure in the country still lags behind and there is an urgent need to increase investment in the sector over the next few quarters.

FPIs net investors at ₹18,456 crore in January so far

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) remained net buyers to the tune of ₹18,456 crore so far in January as global liquidity led to continued investment in emerging markets.

According to depositories data, overseas investors pumped in ₹24,469 crore into equities but pulled out ₹6,013 crore from the bonds market between January 1-22.

The total net investment during the period under review stood at ₹18,456 crore.

"The inflow into the Indian markets continue as global liquidity leads to more investments in emerging markets like India," said Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO at Groww.

Besides, he said there are indications which suggest that the economic recovery post lockdowns have been better than expected.

Hold back imposition of BCD on solar equipment in Budget, demand developers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Solar power developers in the country have demanded that the government should hold back the imposition of basic customs duty (BCD) on solar equipment for the time being in the forthcoming Budget. They fear that this could derail the Government's ambitious target of having 175GW renewables by 2022, requiring an investment flow of ₹1.75 lakh crore.

India has an ambitious target of having 175GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022, including 100GW of solar and 60GW of wind energy

According to industry estimates, as much as ₹1.75 lakh crore investment is required to bid out 35GW of renewable energy capacity in the country. About 50 GW of clean energy is under implementation, while India has already installed over 90GW renewables, including 37GW of solar and 38GW of wind energy. India has an ambitious target of having 175GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022, including 100GW of solar and 60GW of wind energy.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman would propose the General Budget on February 1. Earlier in June last year, Power Minister RK Singh had clearly indicated about the Government's intent to impose basic customs duty on solar equipment and also reiterated that again.

India sees 19 IPOs worth \$1.84 bn in 2020 Q4: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reflecting strong momentum, India witnessed 19 initial public offerings worth \$1.84 billion in the fourth quarter of 2020 and market sentiment remains positive in what could be a stellar 2021, according to a report.

Leading consultancy EY's India IPO Trends Report: Q4 2020 showed that there were a total of 10 Initial Public Offers (IPOs) in the main market and 9 in the SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) segment during this period.

In the latest December quarter, there were 19 IPOs valued at \$1.836 billion and the largest was that of Gland Pharma with an issue size of \$869 million. There were just 11 IPOs in the year-ago period.

India ranks ninth globally in terms of the number of IPOs in 2020 with 43 IPOs raising \$4.09 billion, as per the report.

"There is a strong momentum in the IPO markets, and we are seeing an increased interest from companies across sectors looking to raise capital in the near term. Additionally, companies are keenly awaiting guidelines for direct listing in overseas markets. The market sentiment remains positive for what could be a stellar 2021," Sandip Khetan, Partner and National Leader, Financial

Accounting Advisory Services (FAAS) at EY India, said.

During the 2020 December quarter, main markets had 10 IPOs compared to 5 in the same period a year ago.

Real estate, hospitality and construction and diversified industrial products were the most active sectors (in terms of the number of IPOs) with three IPOs launched in each sector (including main and SME markets), the report said.

The report said that in 2020, global IPO volumes continued to accelerate, increasing by 19 per cent to 1,363 while proceeds increased 29 per cent year-on-year to a total of \$268 billion.

Last year, IPO activity proved resilient to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic supported by low interest rates and expansionary monetary policies, it said.

"Despite a challenging year, 2020 activity in the Asia-Pacific region surpassed 2019, increasing 20 per cent (822) by volume and 45 per cent (\$136.2 billion) by proceeds in 2020.

"In fact, the region saw the highest proceeds since 2010. Industrials led the sectors with 181 IPOs raising \$20.8 billion in proceeds, followed by technology with 180 IPOs and \$38.7 billion in proceeds, and materials, which saw 95 IPOs raising \$7.4 billion," the report said.

CAIT seeks action against Amazon, Zomato for 'daylight robbery'

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) in a communication sent to Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal demanded immediate action against e-commerce entities including Amazon, Flipkart, Zomato, Swiggy and others.

"It is a case of daylight robbery of e-commerce entities in India and therefore demand immediate action against the erring e-commerce portals and online mechanism providers," CAIT said.

CAIT has accused Amazon, Flipkart, Zomato, Swiggy and various other e-commerce entities for violation of mandatory display of Country of Origin and Manufacturer, seller details on products sold through their respective E-Commerce Portals as required under the

Consumers Protection (E Commerce) Rules, 2020, Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Act, 2011 and guidelines of Food Safety & Standards Authority of India.

CAIT has asked Goyal to take action against E-commerce entities including Amazon, Flipkart, Zomato, Swiggy and others.

"It is a case of daylight robbery of e-commerce entities in India and, therefore demands immediate action against the erring e-commerce portals and online mechanism providers," CAIT said.

CAIT National President B.C. Bhartiya and Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal in a communication to Goyal said that e-commerce entities conducting business in India including Amazon, Flipkart and others are highly violating the mandatory conditions spelled out in above Acts.

"It is a pity that particularly in e-commerce every guidelines, Rules & Regulations, Laws and policies are being flouted openly and no department has so far taken any cognizance of compliance issues resulting in a highly vitiated and mess like e-commerce trade of India," CAIT said.

Bhartiya and Khandelwal said that Rule 10 of Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 provide that e-commerce entities should have to display name and address of the manufacturer, name of the country of origin, common/generic name of the product, net quantity, best before/use by date (if applicable), maximum retail price, dimensions of the commodity, etc.

This rule was introduced in June 2017 and provided a transition period of six months thereby its implementation

from January 1, 2018 but even after a lapse of three years, the above rules are not being complied by e-commerce companies prominently by Amazon, Flipkart, etc.

Failure to make declarations as above will amount to selling non-standard packages and will invite penalty under the above said Act, including fine or imprisonment or both, CAIT said.

Both trade leaders further said that similar obligations were imposed on e-commerce food business operators vide guidelines issued by the Food Safety & Standards Authority (FSSAI) on February 2, 2017.

"But such FBOs like Zomato, Swiggy, etc. are not complying with the above rules," CAIT said.

Bhartiya and Khandelwal said that under Rule 4(2) of the Consumer Protection (E Commerce) Rules, 2020, it is provided that every e-commerce entity shall provide the following information in a clear and accessible manner on its platform, displayed prominently to its users, namely, legal name of the e-commerce entity, principal geographic address of its headquarters and all branches, name and details of its website, and contact details like email address, fax, landline and mobile numbers of customer care as well as of grievance office. Similar provisions are also spelled out in Press Note 2 of the FDI Policy, 2016.

CAIT said no e-commerce entity has appointed a Nodal Officer as also complying with above provisions. Important rights of the consumers are being violated as they are not aware of the seller or description of the product at the time of purchase of products from e-commerce portals.

Trend Slazer

'Actors can bring societal change'

Actor **RANI MUKERJI** believes that cinema has the power to impact societal change. Says she, "Actors have the power to talk to people and seed the thought of positive change through their choice of films. I have been fortunate as an artiste to get projects that had strong female protagonists, and to be honest, I have also consciously tried to seek out such projects." The actor reveals that she had a specific plan in mind while choosing such roles and films. "I wanted my work to portray my intent. I'm happy that I chose well," adds she.



'January 26 is not just a holiday. People just think of it as a dry day and probably get upset too because of this. I don't drink but a lot of my friends are like, '26th January is coming and we won't get liquor!' It's a day that is just considered a holiday now, which is sad. It is so upsetting to see that you are an Indian and you totally ignore such an important day.'

—Sharad Malhotra

Actor **KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN** has shared what would be the only situation when one could find her lowering her head.



Kareena posted a video from a shoot on Instagram. In the clip, she is seen sporting a black dress with a thigh high slit. "If I ever let my head down, it'll be to admire my heels #FeelItReelit," she wrote as the caption. She is all set to welcome her second child with actor-husband Saif Ali Khan.

Safety is priority: Halsey

Singer **HALSEY** has cancelled her tour, which was originally scheduled to take place in 2020. "Safety is the priority. I wish things were different. I love you," she tweeted.

"Despite our absolute best efforts, there is no guarantee I'll be able to tour the currently scheduled dates. I miss seeing all of you in the crowd every night more than anything, but I need to prioritise your health and safety. That being said, the Manic tour is now officially cancelled. As much as we wanted to hold our hope that this tour could eventually happen, our priority is now getting your ticket money back to you immediately," she added.



REGAIN THE LOST GLORY

Traditional handloom tapped into the potential of modern e-commerce sites during the pandemic. By SANJAY DESAI

India's handlooms and handicrafts, unique to various communities within the country, represent its rich cultural heritage. Handloom products, from Pashmina Shawls of Jammu and Kashmir, Ikkat of Odisha, Kanchipuram Saris of Tamilnadu, Lucknow's Chikan and Zardozi to Assam's Eri and Muga Silks, have been preserving the colourful and vibrant culture for over 2000 years.

M N Upadhyay in his book *Handicrafts of India* wrote the most fitting description of Indian handmade craft and textile: "To write about Indian handicrafts is almost like writing about the country itself. So vast, complex, colourful yet simple and charm, difficult to attain under comparable conditions."

The social and economic importance Indian handloom industry is enormous as well. It creates 95 per cent of the world's handmade textiles, making a hefty contribution to the economy. It also remains the second-largest employment provider for the rural population after agriculture. According to the Handloom Export Promotion Council, a statutory body constituted under the Ministry of Textiles, about 4.3 million people directly derive their livelihood from the handloom industry.

Despite its cultural, social, and economic significance, handlooms have been on a decline. In the last few decades, economic liberalisation, globalisation, rapidly increasing industrialisation have affected the handloom and handicrafts industry. There's a substantial difference between the time consumed in the production of cloth by the handloom industry and the powerloom industry. It takes months to design and weave a beautiful Chanderi silk sari while machine-made saris are woven within days. Thus, cheaper powerloom products dominate the market.

The traditional industry also suffers due to supply chain inefficiencies, lack of branding and marketing. The middlemen and retailer of handloom products receive three to 10 times the price paid to weavers and artisans. The craftsmen, renowned for their hand-spinning, weaving and printing elegance, struggle to make ends meet. The skills are passed on from one generation to another but lack of income and dignity of labour has been deter-



ring the younger generation from working in this industry. The unorganised and informal nature of the craft heritage has left it on the verge of dying.

The pandemic effect

During the COVID-19 pandemic, people, wary of contracting the virus, rarely stepped out of their homes and started shopping online. This dealt a heavy blow to local weavers, who earn their living by selling to tourists in fairs and exhibitions. Export earnings also fell drastically during the prolonged lockdown. India has been the second-largest exporter of handloom products in the world. It exported US\$ 353.9 million worth of handloom products, but between April to August 2020 slid to US\$ 66.26 million.

Online platforms to the rescue

Today, building an online presence is essential for both traditional and modern players. And, during the pandemic, it became more apparent than ever before. E-commerce has been helping artisans regain their footing for the

past few years. The Department of Handlooms and Textiles, Government of India, engaged nine e-commerce players and 70 retailers to increase the reach of handlooms products. These online platforms together generated handloom sales of ₹ 1.06 crore in 2015-16 and ₹ 7.07 crore in 2016-17, increasing to ₹ 9.54 crore in 2017-18.

E-commerce giant Amazon expanded its footprint in India's handloom industry, adding pure handloom and handicraft items of Weavesmart, an online handloom store supported by the Government of India on its app and website. It made more than 20,000 handloom products available to millions of customers. "We have been engaging with cooperatives (like Khadi Nation). Consumers from cities as far as Port Blair (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), Kullu (Himachal Pradesh), Guwahati (Assam) and Chhatarpur (Madhya Pradesh) are shopping for products such as Ikkat saris. There is still plenty of potentials that can be unlocked from artisans and craftsmen

across the country," said an Amazon spokesperson. Flipkart's art house or social marketplace GoCoop has been beneficial for local craftsmen and weavers.

Online selling platforms proved to be a lifeboat for traditional artisans during the lockdown months. Besides providing local weavers with a platform to showcase their handiwork, these platforms have extended their support to those suffering from lack of resources. They are collaborating with artisans, promoting their products and helping them improve their brand visibility and reach. With e-commerce, they have made their way in every nook and corner of the country, meeting buyers who appreciate and value their artwork.

The road ahead

The future of the Indian handloom and handicrafts industry looks promising. The global demand for handmade products is growing rapidly, owing to an increase in tourism and the propensity of gifting unique products and interest in using eco-friendly, sustainable clothing and accessories.

The current generation of artisans has grasped this opportunity to gain more traction in both domestic and international markets. Their focus is on curation and product development, meeting quality standards, branding and marketing to grow through online channels. They are also bringing a modern twist to traditional handloom garments and handicrafts, making them more appealing to Gen Y and Z.

With e-commerce uniting the fragmented population of artisans and weavers, eliminating middlemen and making a wide variety of well-made handloom products at fair prices directly from weavers, the Indian handloom and handicrafts industry is expected to see an upward growth trajectory. It's expected to reach USD 60 billion by 2024.

The pandemic brought the significance of e-commerce in India, shifting consumer taste and preferences. And the shift has been permanent. Online shopping platforms continue to see a growing number of shoppers every day. With e-commerce boosting sales in the forthcoming years, the craft-heritage is set to regain its former glory.

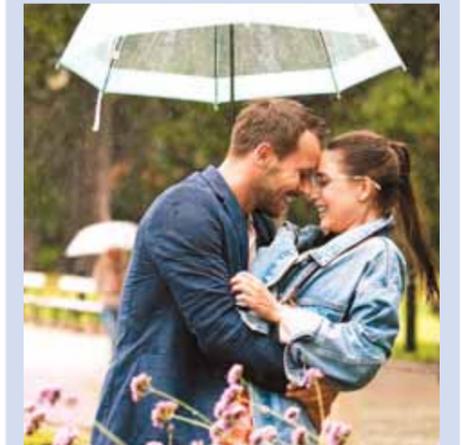
(The writer is the director of an e-commerce site.)

WEBBED



THE GREAT ESCAPISTS

In this season Richard Hammond and Tory Belleci use what's left of their shipwreck to survive and thrive. Will their inventions help them escape or keep them stuck forever in paradise? It releases on January 29 on Amazon Prime Video.



SQUARED LOVE

A celebrity journalist and renowned womanizer starts to rethink his life choices after he falls for a mysterious model who leads a double life. Starring, Adrianna Chlebicka, Mateusz Banasiuk and Agnieszka Zulewska, it releases on February 11 on Netflix.



THE BIG DAY

For six engaged couples, happily ever after begins on a spectacular note in this eye-popping look at India's multibillion-dollar wedding industry. It releases on February 14 on Netflix.

Sanchi is a 'blink and you'll miss it' sort of town, much like thousands of other small towns on India's highways. Located on the Bhopal to Vidisha state highway, you'd never quite believe one of India's most famous historical sites is located on a hill on the edge of the town if it weren't for the tens of boards that the state tourism board has stuck at various places, all but the last vital turn. On the way to the site from Bhopal, you do cross a little curiosity, a marking for the 'Tropic of Cancer', an imaginary line which if you remember your middle-school geography is the northernmost declination of the sun relative to the earth, a point reached at the summer solstice. Odd that there are remarkably few markings of this line in India and it was a pleasant surprise to find it out here.

If you take a look inside your wallet and find a ₹ 200 note, you'll see the image of the Great Stupa of Sanchi on the obverse, and its importance in Indian history is mainly because of the fact that it is one of the largest archaeological remains from Mauryan times. The Great Stupa, or 'Stupa Number 1' as it is called dates back to the reign of Ashoka and construction was begun by him. This stupa is a part of a major complex of Buddhist sites across the region. Ashoka considered the region dear to him as his first wife Devi hailed from the nearby town of Vidisha. She was the mother of Ashoka's son, Mahinda and daughter, Sanghamitra, who spread the tenets of Buddhism to Sri Lanka from where other monks spread it far and wide.

As you turn off the highway to drive to the Stupa, you first pass the Archaeological Museum. Though small, it is a place that you must stop and visit. The 'Lion Capital' from the Ashokan pillar found at the Stupa has pride of place at this museum. This capital which is extremely similar to the one found at Sarnath that most Indians today know as our national symbol is remarkably well-preserved as are many other relics mainly from the site and other nearby Buddhist and Hindu sites. It recalls the stellar work of Sir John Marshall in restoring the site and saving it from his fellow colonialists.

The story of saving the Stupa is one that does deserve to be told and the Sanchi Museum has a treasure trove of photographs dating back to 1881 when the British finally put an end to the ravaging of the site by military treasure



The Stupas at Sanchi

KUSHAN MITRA explores one of the few remaining sites in Central India with a direct connection to ancient India's greatest emperor



hunters and amateur archaeologists. Sir Marshall, more famous for his work in excavating the sites at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, played a vital role in saving Indian historical sites as the Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). His stellar role in shepherding the ASI for a quarter-century till 1928 is a major reason that so many sites across India survive to this day. Marshall's role at Sanchi is so venerated by the ASI that they've kept his worktable and some notes at the museum and, rather curiously, his silver cutlery as well. The stupas and the old Buddhist monasteries and schools at Sanchi had been ravaged by time and treasure hunters, the worst of which were the final colonialists who broke into

the great stupa in the hope of finding a buried treasure. India owes a great debt to Sir John Marshall.

A winding drive up the hillside takes you to the site where on the way is a small levelled out field where the local children have an ongoing tennis-ball cricket match while the town elders sit on the roadside wall drinking tea and bemoaning the pandemic and the loss of income the town has suffered. Sanchi is the most important site in the central Indian 'Buddhist Circuit' and is particularly popular with Sri Lankans, so much so that many signs inside the complex are written in Sinhala. Once you get to the rather empty parking lot, the Giant Stupa looms large in front of you. And you also get a sense of the vastness of the complex, Sanchi was a major site of Buddhist learning for centuries and several additions to the complex were made even after Mauryan times. Indeed, there is a belief by some scholars that the post-Mauryan Shunga dynasty destroyed the original stupa and rebuilt it later.

At its peak, there were probably thousands of monks, scholars and students at the site, the ruins of the monastery and smaller stupas under which prominent monks had been buried. You enter the site walking to the northern gateway and its

impressive "Torana", these gateways have rich sculptures where stories of the Buddha and great kings, including Ashoka have in relief. The remains of the polished sandstone Ashokan pillar are located near the southern gateway from where a staircase leads up to the deambulatory walkway. Scholars believe that the Great Stupa as we see it today was built by the Shunga dynasty that followed the Mauryan empire, the covering of stone, the balustrades and even the intricate sculptures on the gateways are from that period. What you see on the 200-rupee note is the Western gateway.

Much like the 100-rupee note that features Rani Ki Vav, the famous stepwell near Patan in Gujarat, the image on the note does not do justice to the site. The sculptures on the gateways are tremendous and the different gateways all have different stories. Some depict tales from the life of Gautam Buddha and others tell the story of Ashoka the Great. You also see the vastness of the site that you never really learn about in your history textbooks in school. This again comes back to the fact that India has the richest amount of history of any nation. A site like Sanchi could be as prominent as the Taj Mahal in other nations, in India, while undoubtedly a popular site, primarily due to its importance as a site of Buddhist pilgrimage, but it should also be remembered, much like Sarnath outside Benaras as one of the few remaining sites with a direct connection to ancient India's greatest emperor.



A LONG WALK



The slow pace of construction work has deprived remote villages in Uttarakhand of basic infrastructure, especially transport facilities. By MAHANAND SINGH BISHT

Uttarakhand, which has been separated from Uttar Pradesh with the expectations of better roads, health, education, employment and livelihood, is still craving for the basic needs. Even after 20 years of establishing the state, the residents of this mountainous state are struggling for the basic necessities of life. During the outbreak of COVID, thousands of migrated youths came back to their villages for employment. They had expectations that the government would help them make a living. Due to lack of proper counseling and complicated proce-

dures for obtaining government schemes, youngsters couldn't benefit and are now back to cities in search of employment. Other than employment, the hilly areas of the state have various issues, the major one being lack of basic infrastructure. Various villages such as Dumak Kalgoth, Kimana, Palla, Jakhola, Lanji Pokhni, Dwijing, etc., do not even have a proper transport facility. Due to this, the development works in this area are also being affected. Although the construction work of the roads had started over the years but due to the slow pace, the work still remains incomplete.

However, the state government is claiming to provide roads to the villages. After frequent agitation by villagers, under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, approval of the Dhingharan-Syun-Vemru-Dumak Kalgoth roads was announced by the government. Along with this, road construction in several other areas was also promised. But due to the arbitrariness of the construction agencies, in the last 17 years, the work has either stopped or is on due. The residents here have to walk for miles to manage their livelihood. The villages in this

region are home to around 500 families. The biggest problem they face is during the rains and snowfalls, when the road is not even walkable. The bridges and pedestrian roads connecting these villages were completely damaged during the 2013 disaster, and have not been made yet. Jeet Singh Sanwal and Pooran Singh of Dumak village say, "Despite being a border village, the basic problems remain as they were. Villagers have to walk for 18 km to reach the road." He further adds, "the problem becomes even

more severe when someone in the village is ill. In such a situation, people take the sick person with the help of a *doli*. Sometimes s/he dies on the way. During rain and snowfall, it is not even possible to take the patient to the hospital."

Rajma, ramdana, potato, mainly cash crops are grown in this region. But without proper transportation the products do not reach the market. The cost of transporting products to *mandis* (farmer's market) like Dehradun increases manifold.

Tanuj Kamboj, Assistant Engineer, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Chamouli, says, "At present, the construction work is in progress. A new tender process has been issued after the contractor left the construction work in the middle some time ago. The work is in progress and the construction of the road is likely to be completed soon."

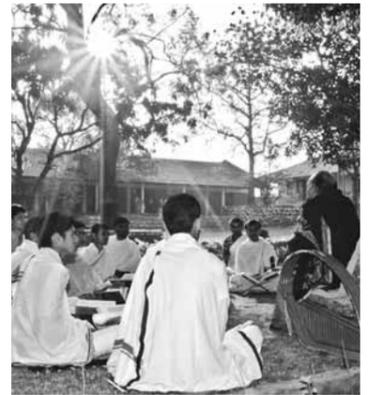
In this regard, the local MLA Mahendra Bhat says, "Along with the development of roads, necessary instructions have been given to the departmental officers for the development of

other facilities too. Funds for the road have also been approved by the government. If we don't see progress by the construction agency, strict action will be taken against them."

Prem Singh Sanwal, a social worker and a pioneer of the road movement of Dumak village, says, "Even today, the people of these villages are resorting to horses and mules to market their cash crops. Due to this, farmers have to bear the loss as large amount of money is spent in freight." A farmer from the village says, "To take five quintal *rajma* to reach Gopeshwar or Joshi Math city, the rent of horse and mule is so high that I am left with zero profits."

The government of a welfare state should take the problems of its citizens seriously and at least provide them with basic facilities. Quick action should be taken to complete development works on time. Only then it will be possible to integrate the development of villages and villagers.

—Charukha features



KNOW YOUR ART

In order to build a better world, spiritualists tend to imbibe good qualities from every profession, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

Almost over the world, we find that people of almost every profession have some special personality traits because of the nature and demand of their profession. This factor makes people different from each other in various respects.

For example, scientists and technologists have the tendency to believe things only if they can be demonstrated or proved correct by application of certain laws or through precise mathematical theorems. Artists, on the other hand, have a sense of aesthetics or beauty and can notice harmony or disharmony in colour, contours or tones and tunes. Similarly, people in medical profession are inclined to diagnose the cause of a problem and to know the cure or remedy needed.



Literateurs and linguists form the habit of using words in their precise sense and very much keep in mind the need of being clear in their expression. Religious teachers/preachers always look towards the moral side of things and see as to what a karma will lead us to. Psychologists have their attention on the complexes and syndromes of the person whom they meet and talk to, and they analyse their behaviour in those terms. Administrators have their focus on doing things in an organised manner. They fix their goals, time-limits and strategy well in advance. Businessmen tend to invest time and money in things which bring them more profits. They know their customers well and the art of selling things. Industrialists and technologists are practical people who want to put their plans into practical act. Judges develop their sense of judgement and the art of arriving at truth. Advocates plead their cases forcefully and with clarity, putting the needed emphasis on certain facts and incidents. Teachers know the art of teaching and making their point clear.

Lastly, there are spiritualists whose goal is perfection and who have to have all the specialities in their life. They inculcate the ability of investing their time and energy in result giving activities like a good businessman does. They have to do things in an organised and systematic manner as an able administrator does. They have to be precise in their thinking and in the use of language as a literateur or a linguist would be. They have to know the art of educating, convincing and persuading others so that they take the spiritual knowledge for their enlightenment and release themselves from sufferings. They also have to be more practical in their life like an industrialist and have the vigour of a youth, the tender feelings of a mother, the maturity of an aged person, the simple-heartedness of a small baby and so on. It is only after they inculcate these traits or values, can they reach the stage of perfection. In order to build a 'better world', spiritualists have to do the service of all and while doing so, they get an opportunity to imbibe good qualities of every profession. Hence, they have a double duty to perform i.e. towards self and others.



Parenting is a task no one prepares you for and is perhaps the best example of learning on the job as there is no prior training or benchmark to follow. In a nutshell, it is a rollercoaster ride. However, regardless of the absence of a set standard to be a good parent, every parent, especially new parents have the urge to be the best parents their child can have.

There are several things you can do to make this journey more effective and have a positive impact on your child. One such crucial thing is your child's early learning and development. Every parent wishes for their child to grow into a smart, successful and happy individual. If you are a new parent, here are eight simple yet effective parenting tips that will put your mind at ease and help you nurture your child's learning abilities.

Countless opportunities/experiences

Each child is born with infinite potential. Did you know that in the first few years of life, more than one million neural connections form every second in our brains? After this period of fast-tracked proliferation, the connections become reduced through a process called synaptic pruning where the brain then works on making the existing connections more efficient.

Since early childhood is a time of tremendous brain development, it is important to expose your baby to as many experiences and opportunities as possible. This will not only help them learn more at an early age but also enable them to discover their passion and interests.

Believe in your child's potential

Research confirms that the first three years of childhood play a pivotal

Embrace the journey

Here are a few simple yet effective parenting tips that will put your mind at ease and help to nurture your child's learning abilities



role in shaping the brain's architecture. It is necessary to expose your child to various experiences but most parents unconsciously underestimate their baby's ability to learn, which sets limitations on their phenomenal capabilities. Believing in your child's potential and encouraging them to learn will produce miraculous results and unearth their hidden abilities.

Teach something new every day

Every single day in our life presents

an opportunity for us to learn something new. For babies, this is maximised infinitely. Furthermore, children naturally tend to be curious and are always keen on discovering new things to learn about. With most parents now working from home, this may be the perfect time to spend quality time with your baby to teach them something new each day — be it a physical activity or a creative one like art, music or dance. It will go a long way in preserving their capabilities and

enable them to continue learning quickly even as adults.

Steer clear of screen time

At a time when technology has been a game-changer, especially during a global pandemic where we spent majority of our time indoors, our screen time has surged dramatically. In addition to this, parents are now increasingly turning to technology to keep their babies occupied or teach them new things. According to studies, kids' screen time has increased by 50 per cent since the onset of the pandemic. It can have an adverse impact on your baby by hampering their creativity and thinking abilities. So, steer clear of screen time at all costs to safeguard and nurture your baby's abilities.

Keep lessons crisp

While babies tend to be curious with a voracious appetite for learning, their attention span is no longer than two to three minutes. Even when they are playing, the maximum amount of time they tend to spend with any toy or activity is three minutes, after which they become bored and move on to the next activity. Unfortunately, various new parents believe that the child has lost interest in the activity, when in fact, they simply lack the attention span to continue an activity for a longer time. Hence, parents must keep lessons crisp and succinct to avoid

loss of focus while also enabling them to learn. This brings us to the next point — repetition.

Avoid repetition

How often we, as adults become bored of repetitive things? Repetition makes an activity boring, resulting in a loss of engagement and interest. Given that babies have less attention span, parents must avoid repeating lessons and activities. It may even make the child dislike a certain activity. So, ensure that you keep it to a bare minimum.

Provide them space to learn and grow

One of the most common mistakes that parents make is pushing their children to fulfill their unfulfilled dreams. For instance, if a parent wished to become a dancer but was unable to for any reason, they tend to push their baby into dancing even if the child doesn't display passion or interest in it. However, children aren't born to be moulded into anyone's ideologies. Therefore, it is important to allow your child the space to grow without piling your expectations onto them. They should have the freedom to choose who they want to be.

Nurture and guide them

There exists a surprisingly fine line between neglecting your child's needs, nurturing and guiding them, and burdening them with too many expectations. Offering the necessary handholding but also allowing them the freedom to choose who they want to be or what they want to do is vital to nurturing your baby into a smart individual who is capable of making their decisions.

(The writer Raghav Himatsingka is the founder of Raising Superstars.)

“Nurture your mind with great thoughts. To believe in the heroic makes heroes.” —Benjamin Disraeli

VEGAN KIDS MAY HAVE LOW VITAMIN D

If your child is fully vegan, then there are chances that they may have a lower level of vitamin D, a new study suggests.

The findings indicate that children on a fully vegan diet were found to have significantly lower vitamin D levels compared to children without a special diet despite having regular vitamin D supplementation.

Along with that, the study also suggested that their vitamin A status was lowered too.

"Our results indicate that the health effects of strict diets on children cannot be extrapolated from studies on adults. In addition to vitamin D intake, attention must be paid to adequate intake of vitamin A and protein from various sources," said researcher Topi Hovinen from the University of Helsinki.

Vegan diets gain popularity especially among young adults and through choices of the families vegan diet is becoming more common in young children, too.



HYPERACTIVATION SIGN OF ALZHEIMER'S

Abnormal hyperactivation in the brain could be an early biomarker of Alzheimer's disease, a new study suggests. The study indicates that hyperactivation in certain brain areas in people not yet diagnosed with Alzheimer's but who were worried about their memory loss and who exhibited risk factors for the disease.

"Alzheimer's disease is progressive and may emerge in the brain 20 to 30 years before diagnosis," said researcher Sylvie Belleville from the Universite de Montreal in Canada.

"It is therefore, very important to pinpoint biomarkers — that is, physical and detectable signs of the disease — and to understand better the initial effects on the brain. Hyperactivation could therefore represent one of the first signs of Alzheimer's disease," Belleville added.

For their study, the team used data from the Consortium for the Early Identification of Alzheimer's Disease to study brain activation in groups of individuals at a high risk of developing Alzheimer's disease who had performed a memory task while being scanned with MRI.



PLANTS MAY UP POSITIVE MENTAL WELL-BEING

If you love having plants at home, then there is a good news for you as a new study suggests that plants at home can keep you mentally healthy.

The findings, published in the journal Urban Forestry and Urban Greening, indicated that having plants at home had a positive influence on the psychological well-being of the dwelling's inhabitants during COVID-19 lockdown.

For the study, the researchers, including Katia Perini from the University of Genoa in Italy, evaluated the role played by the plants at home during the first COVID-19 lockdown and the study involved 4,200 respondents.

The situation between the months of March and June deprived the public of the chance to enjoy open spaces and nature, and forced them to spend extended periods of time indoors.

The team found 74 per cent of the respondents agreed that having plants at home had a positive influence on emotional well-being during lockdown, the researchers said.



INACTIVE CANCER PATIENTS AT HIGH COVID RISK

Patients with inactive cancer and not currently undergoing treatments also face a significantly higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, a new study suggests.

The findings underscore the importance of COVID-19 mitigation, like social distancing and mask wearing, and vaccinations for all patients, not just those recently diagnosed or with active disease.

"Patients who have cancer need to be careful not to become exposed during this time," said researcher Kara N. Maxwell, Assistant Professor at University of Pennsylvania in the US.

"That message has been out there, but these latest findings show us it's not only for patients hospitalised or on treatment for their cancer. All oncology patients need to take significant precautions during the pandemic to protect themselves," Maxwell added.



OBESITY IMPACTS COVID VACCINES' EFFICACY

COVID-19 vaccines may not be fully effective in people who are suffering from obesity, as experts on Tuesday suggested that the process of healing may be slower in obese people as compared to the healthy ones.

According to a report on Nature, obesity correlates with a dulled immune response to COVID-19. And vaccines for a

handful of other conditions often don't work as well in obese people, suggesting that a shot for COVID-19 might not provide as much protection as researchers would like. "The severity of the virus is potentially high in obese or diabetic people. The fact is that the immunity and the process of healing may be slower in an obese person than a healthy person," Navneet Sood, Pulmonary Consultant, Dharamshila Narayana Superspecialty Hospital, said.



Natarajan didn't expected to debut in Aus

PTI ■ CHENNAI

India's latest pace bowling find, T Natarajan, on Sunday said he was not sure of debuting in even one format, let alone all three and make history during the team's tour of Australia.

When he was picked for the fourth and final Test against Australia in Brisbane, Natarajan became the first Indian to debut in all three formats during the same tour.

"I was keen to do my job. But I didn't expect to get an opportunity in the ODIs, was not expecting to make my debut in Australia," Natarajan told reporters in Chinnappampatti in Salem district.

"When I was told that I will be playing there was pressure. I wanted to make use of the opportunity. Playing and taking a wicket was like a dream."

Natarajan took three wickets in the series-deciding Test, playing a part in India's incredible win.

"I cannot express my happiness in words about playing for India. It was like a dream. I got a lot of support from the coaches, players. They supported and motivated me a lot. I was able to perform well because of their backing," he said in Tamil.

Natarajan said he enjoyed playing under the captaincy of both Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane, adding they both supported and encouraged him a lot.

"Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane handled me very well. They had positive things to say and encouraged me a lot. I enjoyed playing under both of them," he said.

He made his ODI debut in the third and final match of the three-match series and picked up two wickets with Marnus Labuschagne being his maiden international scalp.

Natarajan said he got emotional when Kohli handed the trophy to him after the team won the T20 series.

"When Kohli handed over the tro-



phy to me after the T20 series win, I had tears in my eyes," he added.

Asked about sharing the dressing room with international players, Natarajan said it was tough initially but he was able to pick up many things from them.

"Having played in the IPL and played alongside many Indian and foreign players helped as that experience was useful. I could communicate with them and learn from them. First, it was tough but as things went on, I was able to pick up many things," he added.

He said Australian opener David Warner, his captain at Sunrisers Hyderabad, had good things to say about him.

"Warner said he was very proud of me. He was happy to see my progress. He told me during the match that you are very lucky and told me that I was doing well because my daughter had been born," the Tamil Nadu pacer said.

Natarajan, whose daughter was born while he was playing the IPL in UAE, said he did miss seeing her but playing for the country was a matter of pride for his family.

Natarajan, a late bloomer at 29, said he first aimed at playing for Tamil Nadu.

"My first aim was to play for Tamil Nadu, step by step everything happened, it was like a dream. Hard work is the key, it will take one place. I thank Almighty for everything."

Natarajan thanked his family, friends, Salem's district cricket association and current Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) secretary R S Ramasamy for supporting him.

He skirted a question on the racial abuse faced by his India pace colleague Mohammed Siraj in Australia, saying the seniors handled the issue.

Used to be petrified of bouncers: Gill



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The promising Shubman Gill on Sunday revealed he used to be "petrified of bouncers" before eventually overcoming all his fears to get his Test career off to a rollicking start against some of the world's fastest bowlers.

Gill, 21, announced his arrival on the big stage with a classic knock of 91, which set the tone for India's incredible victory on the final day of the series-deciding fourth Test against Australia recently.

In the six innings that he batted against the likes of Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc, Gill never looked in any sort of discomfort. But it wasn't so easy many years ago.

"When you get hit by a ball, your fear disappears. You are only scared until you get a blow but once you get hit, you feel like it was pretty normal! And then you lose the fear entirely," Gill was quoted as saying by his IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders on website www.Kkr.in.

"When I was young, I used to be petrified of bouncers. I used to be prepared for the chest-height balls way in advance. I used to practise drives a lot so I got mature in playing the pull shot with a straight bat."

"I also developed one more shot where I move aside a little to play the cut. I used to feel scared of short deliveries so I always wanted to get away from the line of the ball and play the cut shot."

"These two-three shots were my favourite as a kid and now they have become a part of me."

Going back to his early days in Mohali, Gill spoke about how he was scared of facing a particular fast bowler at the academy and how he overcame his fears.

"I was nine years old when I was asked to play in a higher age group match. There was a bowler in the academy, just like you find in every other academy, who was really fast. I was batting against him and was scared that I would get a bouncer to start with."

"So I had pre-decided that I would just duck it. He bowled a bouncer but pitched way ahead. I still squatted and saw the ball hitting the edge of my bat and racing to the boundary. I realised he was not that fast after all. Soon I hit 2-3 more boundaries. "I was quite young so everyone was surprised. This helped me raise my confidence level. This incident just eliminated all kinds of fear from my heart for leather balls and bouncers."

Sundar wishes to open in Tests



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coach Ravi Shastri's dressing room stories of grit and determination work as a tonic for young Washington Sundar, who is ready for any challenge even if it means opening the batting for India in Test matches.

The 21-year-old Washington was a specialist top-order batsman during his India U-19 days but then honed his off-spin to such an extent that he

is now an automatic choice in India's T20 team.

One of the heroes of India's epic triumph in Brisbane, which gave them the four-match Test series against Australia, Washington spoke about the head coach's influence on him.

"I think it will be a blessing for me if I ever get an opportunity to open the batting for India in Tests. I think I will accept the challenge just like our coach

Ravi sir did during his playing days," Washington told PTI during an interaction from his Chennai residence.

He scored 62 in the first innings at Gabba to keep India in the match and then a quick 22, including a hooked six off Pat Cummins, to play a part in the finishing act, apart from a match-haul of four wickets.

"Ravi sir tells us very inspiring stories from his playing days. Like how he made his debut as a specialist spinner, got four wickets and batted at number 10 against New Zealand on debut. "And how from there, he became a Test opener and played all those great fast bowlers. I would love to open batting in Tests like him," said Washington, who enjoys a decent first-class batting average of 32 plus, which can only improve from hereon as he gets to play more games for India. For a youngster coming into the Test side, he feels that there is no need to draw any inspiration from outside as there are so many role models in that India dressing room.

"As a youngster, when I look up for inspiration and motivation, I find so many role models in that dressing room. There is Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Ajinkya Rahane, R Ashwin who have been such great performers.

PAK INCLUDE 6 UNCAPPED PLAYERS FOR 1ST SA TEST

PTI ■ KARACHI

The Pakistan selectors on Sunday retained six uncapped players in the pruned 17-man squad, named for the first Test against South Africa.

The uncapped players include off-spinner Sajid Khan and left-arm spinner Nauman Ali, who are expected to partner the experienced leggie Yasir Shah in the match, starting Tuesday in Karachi.

The other uncapped players are opener, Imran Butt, who recently toured New Zealand and pacers, Haris Rauf and Tabish Khan.

Rauf played in the T20 matches in New Zealand but is yet to play a Test. He has just three first class games under his belt.

The selectors also retained former captain and wicketkeeper, Sarfaraz Ahmed in the squad as a standby to vice-captain, Muhammad Rizwan.

Sarfaraz has been part of the Pakistan squads which toured England and New Zealand but has played just one T20 game on both tours where Rizwan has been the first choice keeper.



The PCB said in a press release that the three players dropped from the 20-member squad — Kamran Gulam, Abdullah Shafique and Salman Agha — will continue to be part of the squad and will feature in warm-up and training sessions at the National Stadium.

The playing line-up with now be finalised by the captain in consultation with the head coach.

The 17-player squad: Openers - Abid Ali and Imran Butt.

Middle-order batsmen - Azhar Ali, Babar Azam, Fawad Alam and Saud Shakeel.

All-rounders - Faheem Ashraf and Mohammad Nawaz.

Wicketkeepers - Mohammad Rizwan and Sarfaraz Ahmed.

Spinners - Nauman Ali, Sajid Khan and Yasir Shah.

Fast bowlers - Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Tabish Khan.

पुलिस अधीक्षक, यातायात का कार्यालय, राँची

— आवश्यक सूचना —

दिनांक-26.01.2021 को गणतंत्र दिवस समारोह मोरहाबादी मैदान में मनाया जायेगा। यह समारोह दिनांक-26.01.2021 को प्रातः 09:00 बजे से महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय के आगमन के साथ प्रारम्भ होगा।

उक्त अवसर पर महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय के कार्यक्रम के अन्तर्गत राँची में राँची, एटीओआई मोड़, सिद्ध-कान्हु पार्क, राँची कॉलेज, राजकीय अतिथिभवन से बॉम्बे प्रुडकर भीओआईओ प्रवेश द्वार से मुख्य मंच तक आने के लिए सुगम यातायात के दृष्टिकोण से स्थिति होगी।

इस अवसर पर राँची शहरी क्षेत्र में सुगम यातायात व्यवस्था निम्नानुसार होगी :-

(क) बड़े वाहनों का नौ-इन्टी का समय प्रातः 06:00 बजे से 10:00 बजे तक रहेगा।

(ख) राँची शहर की ओर जाने वाली सड़कों द्वारा बड़े वाहन विभिन्न मार्गों के सामने अतिक्रमण तक ही जा सकेंगे :-

1. कांके से राँची भाया बोंडेया - बोंडेया।
2. चाईबासा-बुँटी से राँची - बिरसा चौक।
3. गुमला सिमडेगा से राँची (बाया अरगोड़ा) - कटवाल मोड़।
4. पलामू-लोहरदगा से राँची - पण्डल।
5. गुमला-सिमडेगा से राँची - आईटीआईओ बस पड़ाव।
6. जमशेदपुर से राँची - दुर्गा सोरेन चौक, नामगुम।
7. जमशेदपुर से राँची (बाया सदाबहार चौक) - कुसई / घाघरा।
8. कांके पासतु से राँची (बाया आईआईसीएम) - सोदनी चौक।
9. बुँटी मोड़ से राँची भाया बरिवातु - बुँटी मोड़।
10. कोकर मोड़ से लासपुर - कोकर।

1. बड़े वाहनों का बुँटी मोड़ से बरिवातु होते हुए तथा अन्य उपरोक्त मार्गों से नगर क्षेत्र में प्रवेश वर्जित रहेगा।

2. बुँटी मोड़ से बरिवातु मार्ग में छोटे वाहन करमटोली चौक से जेल चौक की ओर परिवहन कर सकेंगे।

3. कारमटोली चौक से उपयुक्त आवास की ओर समारोह में भाग लेने वाले भीओआईओ/सीडिया/वरीय पदाधिकारियों द्वारा प्रयोग में लाये जाने वाले वाहनों को छोड़कर अन्य सभी प्रकार के वाहनों का परिवहन बन्द रहेगा।

4. बोंडेया रोड से आने वाले छोटे वाहन करमटोली चौक से जेल चौक की ओर परिवहन कर सकेंगे एवं बरिवातु रोड होकर बुँटी मोड़ भी जा सकेंगे। इसी प्रकार जेल चौक की तरफ से आने वाले छोटे वाहन करमटोली चौक होते हुए बरिवातु से राँची बुँटी मोड़ जा सकेंगे।

5. मान्या पैलेस के तरफ से स्टेट गेस्ट हाउस के तरफ सामान्य परिवहन वर्जित रहेगा। सभी आम जनता ट्रायबल रिजर्व इस्टीमेट, करमटोली होकर अपने गंतव्य स्थान जाएँगे। यह भीडिया कबरेज करने वाले कर्मियों के लिए अनुमत्य नहीं होगा।

6. कांके रोड, रातु रोड एवं रेडियम चौक की तरफ से बोंडेया रोड, एचएलए इत्यादि जाने वाले आम नागरिक जेल चौक, करमटोली चौक, ट्राईबल रिजर्व इस्टीमेट रोड होकर अपने गंतव्य स्थान तक जाएँगे।

7. कांके की ओर से आने वाले बड़ी वाहन सोदनी चौक तक ही रहेंगे। छोटे वाहन राम मन्दिर मोड़ से सीधे होटलिसम चौक, न्यू मार्केट चौक होकर अपने गंतव्य स्थान की ओर जाएँगे।

8. पण्डल सिक्का रोड से नगर क्षेत्र की ओर सभी वाहनों का परिवहन बन्द रहेगा। छोटे वाहन उक्त मार्ग से आ सकेंगे तथा रातु रोड/न्यू मार्केट चौक से कांके की तरफ या किशोरी यादव चौक की ओर जा सकेंगे। ऑटो रिक्शा/छोटे मालवाहक का प्रवेश सीमित समय सीमा के लिए वर्जित रहेगी।

9. होटलिसम से एटीओआईओ मोड़ की ओर सामान्य वाहनों का परिवहन बन्द रहेगा। केवल समारोह में भाग लेने वाले वाहनों का प्रवेश होगा।

10. एटीओआईओ मोड़ से सिद्ध-कान्हु रोड की ओर सामान्य वाहनों का परिवहन बन्द रहेगा। केवल महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय एवं भीओआईओ के वाहनों का प्रवेश होगा।

11. महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय, माननीय सांसद/शिवायक एवं उच्च न्यायालय के न्यायाधीशगण एटीओआईओ मोड़, सिद्ध-कान्हु पार्क मोड़, राँची कॉलेज मोड़ होते हुए राजकीय गेस्ट हाउस से बॉम्बे प्रुडकर भीओआईओ प्रवेश द्वार मंच तक जाएँगे और उनके वाहनों की पार्किंग मुख्य मंच के पीछे (दक्षिण) बने पार्किंग स्थल पर की जाएगी।

12. केन्द्र/राज्य सरकार के पदाधिकारियों को कांके रोड, रातु रोड या इन्टर रोड से आते हों, जिन्हें मोरहाबादी जना हो वे होटलिसम चौक, एटीओआईओ मोड़, राँची रोड, एचएलए मोड़ आवास, उपयुक्त आवास मोड़ के तरफ से जाएँगे तथा नीलाम्बर-पिताम्बर पार्क (ऑक्सीजन पार्क) के सामने बने पार्किंग स्थल पर वाहन पार्क करेंगे।

13. उपयुक्त आवास मोड़ से होकी स्टेडियम तक बॉम्बे पार्किंग नहीं होगी एवं राँची कॉलेज मोड़ से भीओआईओ इन्टी गेट तक पार्किंग वर्जित रहेगा।

14. भीडियाकनी होकी स्टेडियम के उत्तर बायु वाटिका के सामने बने पार्किंग स्थल पर वाहन पार्क करेंगे।

15. शहर के अन्य मार्गों पर छोटे वाहनों का परिवहन पूर्ववत् रहेगा।

16. समारोह स्थल/मोरहाबादी मैदान की ओर आने वाले मार्ग पर यातायात सुगमता हेतु ड्रॉप गेट लगाये गये हैं। ड्रॉप गेट के पार्श्व में अतिक्रमण के अलावा अन्य वाहनों का उक्त ड्रॉप गेट से सीमित समय सीमा के लिए प्रवेश निषेध होगा, जो निम्नानुसार है :-

- ड्रॉप गेट नं-01 (उपयुक्त आवास की तरफ से मोरहाबादी जाने वाला मार्ग) इस मार्ग पर सिर्फ भीओआईओ/पदाधिकारियों एवं भीडियाकनीयों का प्रवेश होगा। बाकी वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-02 (दीनदयाल नगर की तरफ से उपयुक्त आवास होकर मोरहाबादी जाने का मार्ग) इस मार्ग पर सामान्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-03 (उपयुक्त आवास से आने मोड़) इस मार्ग पर सिर्फ भीओआईओ/पदाधिकारियों एवं भीडियाकनीयों के गाड़ियों का प्रवेश होगा।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-04 (माननीय शिबू सोरेन आवास के बगल वाले मार्ग) इस मार्ग पर सामान्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-05 (आर्मी मैदान के सामने) इस मार्ग पर समारोह में भाग लेने वाले पदाधिकारियों/भीडियाकनीयों के वाहनों को छोड़कर अन्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-06 (सम्बड़ी बाजार मोड़) इस मार्ग पर समारोह में भाग लेने वाले पदाधिकारियों एवं पारसवारी वाहनों का प्रवेश होगा।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-07 (मोरहाबादी मंदिर के बगल वाला मार्ग) इस मार्ग से समारोह में भाग लेने वाले पारसवारी वाहनों का प्रवेश होगा। सामान्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-08 (ट्राईबल रिजर्व इस्टीमेट मोड़) इस मार्ग से समारोह में भाग लेने वाले पारसवारी वाहनों का प्रवेश होगा। सामान्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-09 (बिजली ऑफिस के बगल ट्रांसफार्मर मोड़) इस मार्ग पर समारोह में भाग लेने वाले पारसवारी वाहनों को छोड़कर सामान्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-10 (मन्या पैलेस के सामने) इस मार्ग पर पारसवारी वाहनों को छोड़कर अन्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-11 (रेजिस्ट्री ऑफिस के सामने काट) इस मार्ग पर आम नागरिकों के वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-12 (रेजिस्ट्री ऑफिस से मोरहाबादी मैदान की तरफ जाने वाला रास्ता) इस मार्ग पर आम नागरिकों के वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-13 (स्टेट गेस्ट हाउस के बगल दीनदयाल नगर के तरफ से आने वाले मार्ग) इस मार्ग पर आम नागरिकों के वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।
- ड्रॉप गेट नं-14 (स्टेट गेस्ट हाउस मोड़)
 - स्टेट गेस्ट हाउस मोड़ से भीओआईओ प्रवेश द्वार की तरफ जाने वाली पूर्वी लेन पर सिर्फ महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय एवं भीओआईओ के कार्यक्रम/वाहनों का प्रवेश होगा।
 - स्टेट गेस्ट हाउस के सामने पश्चिम वाली लेन से सिर्फ पदाधिकारियों के वाहन नीलाम्बर-पिताम्बर पार्क (ऑक्सीजन पार्क) के सामने बने पार्किंग स्थल तक जा सकेंगे।

• ड्रॉप गेट नं-15 (राँची कॉलेज मोड़ के पास) इस मार्ग पर सिर्फ महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय एवं भीओआईओ कार्यक्रम/वाहनों का प्रवेश होगा। अन्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित रहेगा।

• ड्रॉप गेट नं-16 (सिद्ध-कान्हु पार्क मोड़) इस मार्ग पर सिर्फ महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय एवं भीओआईओ कार्यक्रम/वाहनों का प्रवेश होगा। अन्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित रहेगा।

• ड्रॉप गेट नं-17 (दीनदयाल नगर की न्यू कोला आवास के पास) इस मार्ग पर आम नागरिकों के वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित किया गया है।

• ड्रॉप गेट नं-18 (एटीओआईओ मोड़) इस मार्ग पर सिर्फ महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय एवं भीओआईओ कार्यक्रम/वाहनों का प्रवेश होगा। अन्य वाहनों का प्रवेश वर्जित रहेगा।

➢ उपरोक्त सभी प्रवेश पहुँच पथ निर्धारित समय सीमा के लिए ही संकुल किए जाएँगे व कार्यक्रम समाप्ति के उपरान्त यातायात व्यवस्था सामान्य रूप से परिवहन हेतु पदक: प्रशासन किये जा सकेंगे।

1. महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय के कार्यक्रम एवं भीओआईओ वाहनों का पार्किंग मुख्य मंच के पीछे बने पार्किंग स्थल पर पार्क किये जाएँगे।
2. पदाधिकारियों की गाड़ियों मुख्य मंच के पश्चिम नीलाम्बर-पिताम्बर पार्क (ऑक्सीजन पार्क) के पास बने पार्किंग स्थल में पार्क किए जा सकेंगे।
3. पीला पारसयुक्त वाहन मुख्य मंच के पश्चिम बने पार्किंग स्थल पर पार्क किये जा सकेंगे।
4. हरा पारसयुक्त वाहन बायु वाटिका के सामने बने पार्किंग स्थल पर पार्क किये जा सकेंगे।
5. भीडियाकनीयों की गाड़ियाँ होकी स्टेडियम के उत्तर बायु वाटिका के सामने स्थित आर्मी पार्कड से रातु स्थल पर पार्क किये जा सकेंगे।
6. ट्राईबल रिजर्व इस्टीमेट मोड़ पर स्थित फुटबल मैदान में कार्यक्रम में भाग लेने वाले आम नागरिकों के वाहन पार्क किये जा सकेंगे।

