

**OPINION 8**  
BRUTAL TACTICS TO KEEP  
THE UYGHURS IN CHECK

**WORLD 11**  
EX-PREZ KARZAI SAYS US  
FAILED IN AFGHANISTAN

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LUCKNOW, MONDAY JUNE 21 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3



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## Eyes on Gupkar Alliance ahead of all-party meet

June 24 talks Centre's bid for political outreach

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

All eyes are set on the formal response of the People's Alliance For Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) to the invitation from Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, to attend the all-party meet convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on June 24.

The Prime Minister's meeting on June 24 with the political leaders of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is expected to be about the delimitation exercise. The meeting is an attempt by the Centre to seek political validation of the administrative exercise which started in the first week of June. But Kashmiri leaders have their own agenda for initiating the talks.

"We have stressed for a collective fight and hence the PAGD will send two representatives to the meeting in New Delhi," a news channel quoted a senior leader, who attended the meeting, as saying. "Mehbooba has not decided to



boycott the meeting. We are in favour of a political process but it's a collective fight and hence we will all meet to decide who all should represent us in the meeting and convey the aspirations of the people," the senior leader stressed on the condition of anonymity.

Continued on Page 11

## Delimitation panel may meet DCs virtually

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid speculations of Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), the Delimitation Commission is expected to hold a virtual meet in the next few days with all Deputy Commissioners to discuss various inputs on geographical features of constituencies and the suggestions made by them. Delimitation involves redrawing the boundaries of Assembly and Lok

Sabha constituencies in a State or Union Territory.

Sources said that the Delimitation Commission is likely to visit J&K soon to begin the delimitation exercise which was on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The commission had recently sought data from all Deputy Commissioners on the area of existing constituencies, including geography and facilities available, and had asked them for their suggestions to make them more "geographically compact."

Having received the data and suggestions, the commission has decided to hold a virtual meeting with the DCs to take forward the matter. "As far as possible, the constituency should be fully geographically compact," sources said.

After the delimitation exercise, the number of Assembly seats in J&K will go up from 83 to 90. Twenty-four seats of the Assembly continue to remain vacant as they fall under Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir (PoK).

Continued on Page 11

## Modi brainstorms with team, fuels rejjig rumours

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of an expected Cabinet reshuffle and the June 24 Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) political outreach by the Central Government aimed at restarting the electoral process in the Union Territory (UT), a high-level ministerial meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

at his residence here on Sunday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh attended the meeting. Besides the two bigwigs, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Railway Minister Piyush Goyal are also learnt to have attended the discussions.

Continued on Page 11

## UP govt announces formula for marks in board examinations

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The UP government on Sunday announced the formula for determination of the marks of Intermediate and High School board exams. Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma said it was worked out through a transparent process and suggestions were taken from public representatives, teachers, parent associations, experts, principals and Madhyamik Shikshak Sangh.

For Class XII students, the UP Board will consider 50% marks obtained in class X, then 40% in Class XI and the remaining 10% obtained by students in the pre-board exams of Class XII.

In High School, 50% marks will be calculated on the basis of total marks obtained in Class IX and 50% of marks scored in Class X pre-board.

For non-practical subjects in which the maximum marks are 100, students will be awarded marks on the basis of 50% what they obtained in class 10. The total marks will be divided by six to get the value which will be considered for Class XII results.

The board will add 40% of the total marks scored by the students in a specific subject in Class XI. The remaining marks will be considered equal to 10% of total marks scored by the student in that specific subject in Class XII pre-board.

**For Class XII students, the UP Board will consider 50% marks obtained in class X, then 40% in Class XI and the remaining 10% obtained by students in the pre-board exams of Class XII.**

In High School, the theory exam is of 70% and practical exams account for 30%.

Deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma on Sunday said in case practical exams marks or internal assessment marks of a student were not available, the student would be awarded practical or internal assessment marks on the basis of his or her final marks in the subject. He said such students, whose class 11 marks or class 12 pre-board marks for intermediate, Class X pre-board marks and Class IX marks are not available, they would be promoted without awarding marks.

Sharma said if a student's marks are not available in three subjects, the average marks scored in the remaining subjects would be awarded in those subjects. The students who manage to clear internal assessments and practical exams but failed to clear theoretical examination, they will also be promoted without

marks. The practical and internal assessment marks of Classes 9, 10, 11 and 12 can also be considered in case these marks in Class 10 and 12 are not available. In case of change in board, the marks in the previous board will be scaled to UP Board marks before considering it in the final results.

"This decision will help regularise the next academic session and the online classes for students of 11 will start shortly. Those getting promoted from Class 12 will also be able to seek admissions in colleges on time," Sharma said.

A total of 56,04,628 candidates were registered for UP Board High School and Intermediate examinations conducted by UP Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad. For High School exams, 29,94,312 candidates were registered of which 29,74,487 (99.34%) were regular students and 19,825 were enrolled as private candidates. Similarly in Intermediate, 26,10,316 students were registered. Of these, 25,17,658 were regular and 92,658 were private.

The deputy CM said if any student is not satisfied with the marks awarded to him or her, they would be given an opportunity to appear in exams to be held next year. It will be marked as exams for the year 2021. No examination fees will be charged from such students.

## India hits back at UN for criticising new IT rules

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The United Nations Special Rapporteurs have criticised the new Information Technology (IT) rules, prompting a strong rebuttal from the Indian Government. In its letter dated June 11, UN special rapporteurs on right to freedom of opinion, peaceful assembly, and privacy said India's Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, in their current form, do not conform with international human rights norms.

The seven-page communication expressed concerns on various other aspects of the IT rules, and asked the Government for a response. The letter is authored by Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Clement Nyaletsossi Voule, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and Joseph Cannataci, Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy.

The UN special rapporteurs in its letter said India's new IT Rules are in violation of rules laid down in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a key international human rights treaty.

Continued on Page 11

## CAPSULE

### LAKSHADWEEP ADMIN SEEKS SHIFTING OF HC

**Kochi/New Delhi:** The Lakshadweep administration, which has been facing widespread protests from the islands' people over some of its policies, has mooted a proposal to shift its legal jurisdiction from the Kerala High Court to the Karnataka High Court.

### SHOW-CAUSE NOTICE IN KERALA SMUGGLING CASE

**Kochi:** The Customs probing the Kerala gold smuggling case has issued show-cause notices to 53 people including prime accused Swapna Suresh.

### CAN'T PAY ₹4L EX-GRATIA TO VICTIMS: CENTRE TO SC

**New Delhi:** The Centre has told the Supreme Court that ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh cannot be paid to the families of those who have died of Covid-19 as it is beyond fiscal affordability and the finances of Central and State Governments are under severe strain.

### IRAN'S SOLE N-PLANT SHUTS DOWN

**Tehran:** Iran's sole nuclear power plant has undergone an unexplained temporary emergency shutdown for four-five days, the state TV reported quoting an official from the state electric energy company.

## Sore Soren returns to Ranchi after 4-day wait

### Gandhis give time to Stalin as Hemant simmers

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

After Punjab and Rajasthan, a trouble is brewing in the JMM-Congress Party-led Government in Jharkhand. Chief Minister Hemant Soren, who camped for four days in Delhi, could not get an audience from either Congress chief Sonia Gandhi or senior leader Rahul Gandhi. The Gandhis, in between, however, found the time to meet the new Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, whose DMK is an ally of the Congress in the southern State.

"Hemant returned to Ranchi on Saturday. He had been repeatedly making attempts to call on Sonia and Rahul but failed. The snub has not gone down well with the JMM. Moreover, their meeting with Stalin has only rubbed salt to the wound," sources said.



Filling up the vacant Cabinet berth, a possible reshuffle in the Council of Ministers and appointments to corporations among others were high on Soren's agenda, sources said.

"Such developments do not augur well for the coalition when there has always been an air of mistrust among the two major coalition partners. Particularly, given the buzz of a possible BJP-JMM alliance, that keeps the Congress and the RJD on their toes. Or for that matter, the BJP getting a sizeable MLAs of the JMM and the Congress to resign just as it did in several States," they added.

An AICC leader, however,

asserted, "Sonia could not meet Hemant as she was too busy the entire week due to developments in Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra as well. There is no problem in the Jharkhand coalition." The Congress is saddled with the power tussles between Sachin Pilot and Ashok Gehlot in Rajasthan and Navjot Singh Sidhu and Amarinder Singh in Punjab.

Jharkhand Congress chief and Finance Minister in Hemant's Government, Rameshwar Oraon, too, had come to Delhi to discuss "party affairs" besides appointments in corporations and commissions etc under the State Government. Both Hemant and Oraon would have participated in the meeting with the Congress top brass to discuss all the pending issues.

Both the JMM and the Congress have staked claim to the vacant 12th berth in the Soren Cabinet. Besides the CM, the JMM has five Ministers while the Congress has four and other ally RJD one ministerial berth.

Continued on Page 11

## Millions to bend, stretch on Yoga Day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From political personalities to commoners, from Bollywood celebrities to jawans guarding India's borders, people from all walks of life will stretch and bend in their homes, parks and grounds to mark the International Yoga Day on June 21, which will be celebrated amid the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic for the second year in a row.

The Union Ayush Ministry, which is the nodal Ministry for International Day of Yoga (IDY), said in a statement that in view of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent restrictions on congregational activities, the lead event of the day will be a televised programme. The highlight of course will be Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation. This year's theme is 'Yoga for Wellness.' The Prime



Two girls perform yoga near Taj Mahal ahead of the International Yoga Day in Agra on Sunday

Minister tweeted, "Tomorrow, June 21, we will mark the seventh Yoga Day. The theme this year is 'Yoga For Wellness', which focusses on Yoga for physical and mental well-being." Scheduled to start at 6.30

am on all Doordarshan channels on Monday, the event will also include an address by Minister of State for Ayush Kiren Rijiju and a live Yoga demonstration by the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, the Ministry said in a statement.

With the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbating psychological suffering and mental health problems, many people across the world and in India have been embracing Yoga to stay healthy and to fight isolation and depression. Indian Embassies in various countries also held events for the D-Day. For instance, over 100 Chinese Yoga enthusiasts took part in an event organised by the Indian Embassy here on Sunday to celebrate the ancient Indian science ahead of the International Yoga Day on June 21.

Similarly, the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi, Thailand and South Korea were among those who observed the International Yoga Day on Sunday. Sprinter Usain Bolt from Jamaica too in his tweet on social media wished healthy and peaceful living to all for the D-Day.

Continued on Page 11

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# 10 cr people to be jabbed in UP by end of August

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government set a target of administering 7 lakh Covid vaccine doses per day which will be ramped up from July 1 and 10 crore people will be jabbed by the end of August.

"The administration has chalked out an action plan and made all arrangements to meet the target smoothly and swiftly," a government spokesman said. Earlier, the state was administering about 4.5 lakh vaccine doses a day under 'Mission June'.

While chairing a high-level Covid review meeting on Sunday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated, "The decision of the prime minister to give free vaccines to all citizens above 18 years will boost the vaccination campaign. Taking advantage of this

opportunity, we have to conduct our vaccination campaign to full capacity. Make preparations with a goal to administer 7 lakh doses per day and then ramp it up to around 12 lakh doses from July 1," he said.

In this regard, the CM has ordered to increase the vaccination centres from 6,000 to 10,000. The Health department has directed the district magistrates to make all the arrangements accordingly. The cold chain capacity has been doubled in the state. From 80,000 litres, the capacity has been increased to 2.25 lakh litres to stock up the vaccine doses provided by the Centre, the spokesperson said.

He said from July onwards, to meet the target of 10 crore doses, the government will aim to administer nearly 12 lakh doses a day.



Therefore, the next task for the state is to ensure that it has enough manpower and vaccine delivery centres. The services of more than 12,000 new nursing students will be taken for the purpose. The UP government has tweaked its strategy and adopted a 'cluster approach' to ensure maximum vaccination. The entire population will be divided into clusters. Focusing on rural areas, more than 97,000

revenue villages of all the development blocks in the state will be divided into clusters. The campaign promising 'ease of vaccination' aims to vaccinate one cluster a week in the village panchayat ghars. The date and place of vaccination will be given to the villagers in advance in the form of 'bulawa parchis'.

In each revenue village of the state, mobilisation teams will be constituted with gram pradhans, lekhpals, ASHA & Anganwadi workers, teachers of primary schools, panchayat secretaries and Yuva/Mahila Mangal Dal. The cluster mobilisation teams will start the awareness drive three days prior to the pilot project. They will work to remove people's doubts about the vaccine and encourage them to come forward to get the jabs.

# UP law panel chairman hints at population control policy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A move which can potentially spark a political row, Uttar Pradesh State Law Commission has started drafting a law for population control as its chairman believes that the growing population puts stress on facilities such as hospitals, food grains and houses.

The commission is working on the lines that people having more than two children will be deprived of some government benefits. The commission is currently studying the social conditions and other points along with the laws applicable to some other states, including Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh in terms of population control. The commission is expected to prepare a report and submit it to the state government soon.

Meanwhile, UP Law

THE COMMISSION IS WORKING ON THE LINES THAT PEOPLE HAVING MORE THAN TWO CHILDREN WILL BE DEPRIVED OF SOME GOVERNMENT BENEFITS

Commission chairman Aditya Nath Mittal told mediapersons here on Sunday that population is nearing an explosive stage, causing pressure on issues related to hospitals, food grains, houses and employment. "We believe that there should be a check on population," he said, adding that population control is different from family planning.

"We don't want to send across a message that we are against any particular religion or human rights. We just want

to see to it that the government resources and facilities are available to those who are helping in and contributing to population control," he said.

Though Mittal's statement hints at a population control policy in the state, there is no official confirmation regarding the same by the UP government. The announcement came a day after Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma echoed similar thoughts and said that the state government would gradually implement a two-child policy for availing of benefits under specific government schemes.

Notably, PM Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day speech in 2019, had advocated smaller families to combat population explosion and appreciated people voluntarily keeping the size of their families small, terming it a form of patriotism.

# CM to take part in Yoga Day programme

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On the International Yoga Day on Monday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will take part in a programme from his official residence. A government spokesman said that the programme would start at 6:30 am and the chief minister would practise yoga while others would join him virtually.

In his appeal, the CM asked people to do yoga by staying at home. "We are thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the International Yoga Day which has got an approval from the United Nations. We should perform yoga to keep ourselves healthy in these trying times," he said.

"Our sages understood the importance of yoga thousands of years ago and made it the basis of life. At this time of the pandemic, the world is realising the importance of yoga," Yogi said.

# Govt to take up plantation drive in July

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amid the ongoing Covid pandemic with people increasingly realising the importance of having a strong immune system, the Uttar Pradesh government is set to launch a plantation campaign in July.

The campaign will lay special emphasis on medicinal and nutritious plants to help the present as well as future generations build a protective cover against diseases. "The campaign will take care of both the environment as well as people's health," a government spokesman said.

As per the Forest department, one-and-a-half dozen species of medicinal and aromatic plants such as sahjan, amalata, arjun, neem, kadamba, ashok and hibiscus will be planted and their total number will be close to 418 lakh.

Besides, the government has set a target of planting about three dozen species of medicinal and nutritional plants, including bael, aonla (gooseberry), kaitha, jamun (java plum), bahera and harr among others. The total number of these plants, which are rich in medicinal properties, will be 2,82,05,994.

Nutritional plants will also include custard apple, jackfruit, lemon, lasoda, fig, sycamore, mahua, mango, mulberry, jungle jalebi, guava, pomegranate, tamarind, plum, kinnow and papaya. The government has set a target of planting 30 crore saplings this season. "The government has made all preparations to make the plantation campaign a success. The Forest department is its nodal agency while 26 other departments are also cooperating in this campaign. The departments have been given the target to plant a total of 19.20 crore saplings. The Forest department will plant the remaining 10.80 crore saplings," the official said.

As many as 42.17 crore saplings have been prepared in 1,813 nurseries of the Forest department according to the agro-climatic conditions of all the districts in order to ensure timely availability of plants as per people's demand.

A record plantation has been done every year since Yogi Adityanath took over as chief minister. A total of 60,24,46,551 saplings of different species have been planted so far during this government. Both forest cover and tree cover have increased in UP in the last four years due to record plantation.

According to the State Forest Report 2019 by the Forest Survey of India, there has been an increase of 127 kms in the forest cover in UP as compared to 2017. According to the report, the tree cover of UP is 3.05 per cent as compared to the national average of 2.89 per cent.




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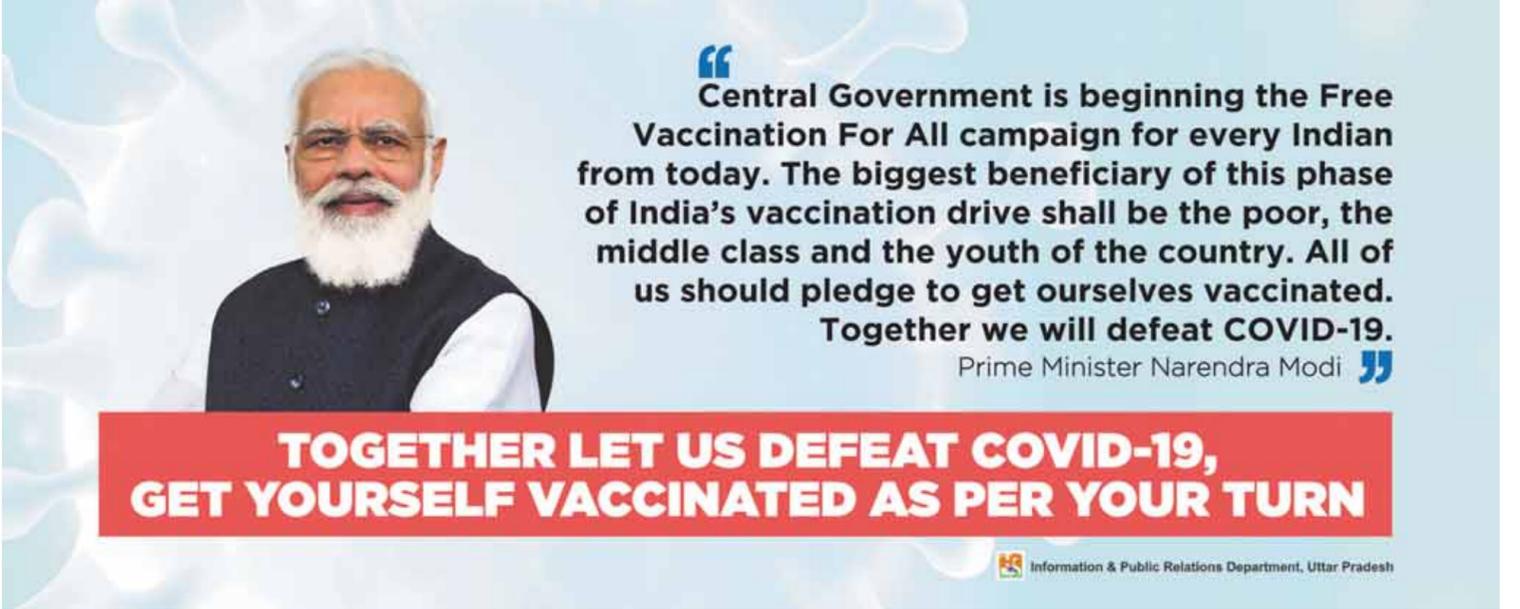
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### Road mishap

Lucknow: A 45-year-old dumper driver died when the vehicle overturned on him in Madaon on Sunday. Umar of Kanpur Dehat had brought maurang on an order placed by a trader, Vipin Gupta of Khadra in Daudnagar locality of Madaon.

The pressure pipe of the dumper exploded when maurang was being unloaded and the vehicle overturned. "Umar was standing close to the dumper and he was crushed under it. Umar was rushed to a hospital where he was declared dead.



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# Relief, apprehensions as curbs ease

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

There were mixed feelings of apprehensions and relief over the reopening of malls, restaurants and religious places in the state from Monday. Most of the traders and mall managers said it would be a different scenario, especially in view of the possibilities of a third wave. They said even though a large number of people have been given at least the first vaccine dose, Covid-appropriate is the need of the hour.

Restaurants and malls will open from Monday across the state as the government has announced further relaxation, extending the timings of markets from 7 am to 9 pm on weekdays and allowing full attendance in government offices. However, the guidelines issued late Saturday night by Chief Secretary RK Tiwari made it clear that all the relaxations would be withdrawn immediately in the districts where the number of active cases exceeded the 500-mark. The weekend curbs will stay for while educational institutions, cinema halls, clubs, swimming pools and gyms will remain closed till further orders.

Government offices will open with full attendance while restaurants and eating points will



A city mall is being sanitised on the eve of reopening after lockdown

Pioneer

have to follow the 50 per cent capacity rule. Private companies can also function under Covid protocol but they have been asked to promote work from home as far as possible.

Saraswati Singh, who looks into the management of a shopping mall, said they have made sure that the staff is vaccinated. "We have been trying hundred per cent retailer vaccination which is close to 70-80 per cent," she said. The entire mall

was sanitised while contactless arrangements were made for parking and all the stores have touchless payment options to make the people feel safe.

Regarding the footfall on the first day, she pointed out there is already a cap of 50 per cent occupancy. "People will start coming and once they see the arrangements made for their safety, the footfall will increase. The first day may see 20-25 per cent of the usual crowd," she

added. She admitted that the malls had been impacted because of the lockdown, but it was a matter of life and death. She said they were planning to approach the government for support. Anil Tewari, the administrator of Aliganj Hanuman Mandir, said they were still undecided as the issue was that only 50 devotees were allowed at a time. "We are still holding discussions with the administration because it is very difficult to pick

and choose the devotees on the occasion of Bada Mangal," he added. Diwakar Tripathi, who is associated with a Hanuman temple, said they have enough space in the rear portion and managing the flow of the devotees would not be a problem.

General secretary, UP Hotel and Restaurant Association, Girish Oberoi said there was a relief with the hotels and restaurants reopening because home deliveries form only 20 per cent of their business.

"Though we are happy that there is a cap of 50 per cent occupancy, it is a wait-and-watch situation as of now," he said.

"People who have already taken both vaccine doses will move out but those have yet to get it will still be apprehensive," he said. He pointed out that the moratorium period for various installments is over but the business still hangs fire. "We have already made our representations in this regard to the state government," he said.

Shabab Hussain, spokesperson of Taj Mahal Hotel, said they are opening with 50 per cent occupancy and were getting several queries from regular customers. According to the fresh guidelines to be enforced from Monday, all the markets can open from 7 am to 9 pm from Monday to Friday.

## Online workshop at SGPGI

Lucknow (PNS): The department of Pathology, Sanjay Gandhi Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS), is organising an online workshop on "Transmission electron microscopy in life sciences: Procedures and applications" from June 21 to 26. It has been sponsored by the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) and Department of

Science and Technology (DST). Transmission electron microscopy (TEM) uses electrons to analyse tissues and cells at higher magnification and is useful for diagnosis of different medical diseases. "Training in this area is limited due to the lack of access to such facilities. The department of Pathology, SGPGIMS, provides such facility," said Dr Vinita Agrawal, the organising secretary. National and international faculty will participate in the workshop.

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**अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना**

अधोस्तासरी द्वारा निम्न कार्य हेतु परियोजना में विद्युत/यांत्रिक कार्य हेतु पंजीकृत/अनुमती फर्मों से ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है-

क्र. सं.	कार्य का विवरण	कार्य की अनुमानित लागत (₹ लाख में)	घरोहर धनराशि (₹ लाख में)	निविदा प्रस्ताव मूल्य 18% GST सहित (₹ लाख में)	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि	ई-निविदा डाउनलोड करने की तिथि	बिड खुलने की तिथि व समय	सम्बन्धित खण्ड का नाम/खुल का नाम
1.	मदन मोहन मालवीय प्रौद्योगिकी विश्वविद्यालय गोरखपुर के मुख्य प्रशासनिक भवन में विद्युत/यांत्रिक कार्य।							वि०/या०- इकाई, ग्लोबल सेल/ अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, गोरखपुर वृत्त।
अ	यातानुकूलन का कार्य	115.00	7.75	5310.00	6 माह	22.06.2021	28.06.2021	
ब	भवन में फायर फाइटिंग एवं फायर अलार्म का कार्य।	30.00	3.00	1770.00	3 माह	22.06.2021	28.06.2021	
स	01 नम 10 पैसेन्जर लिफ्ट की आपूर्ति एवं संस्थापन का कार्य।	15.00	1.50	1180.00	3 माह	22.06.2021	28.06.2021	

**नियम एवं शर्तें**

- निविदा से सम्बन्धित प्रश्न का मूल्य व घरोहर धनराशि आरटीओजीएस के माध्यम से अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत/यांत्रिक-इकाई के इन्डियन बैंक, इन्दिरा नगर, लखनऊ के खाता सं०-50141297464 आई.एफ.एस.सी. कोड-IDIB000I522 में निविदा खुलने से एक दिन पूर्व विद्युत/यांत्रिक-इकाई के उपरोक्त खाते में जमा किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा, जिसके अभाव में निविदा पर विचार किया जाना सम्भव नहीं होगा।
- यह प्रश्न एनआईसीओ की वेबसाइट [www.upavp.com](http://www.upavp.com) के निविदा लिंक पर कोड 0090 इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स कारपोरेशन की वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर देखे जा सकते हैं। इच्छुक ठेकेदारों से अनुरोध है कि व नियमित रूप से उक्त वेब साइट पर देखते रहें क्योंकि निविदाओं के सम्बन्ध में कोई बदलाव अथवा सूचना वेबसाइट पर उपलब्ध करायी जायेगी। डिजिटल सिग्नेचर धारक ठेकेदारों द्वारा ही ऑनलाइन निविदा आनी जा सकती है।
- निविदादाता फर्म का आयकर विभाग में पंजीकरण होना अनिवार्य होगा। उसके सभी देयकों से नियमानुसार आयकर सेस टैक्स एवं अन्य कोई कर जो राज्य/केन्द्र सरकार द्वारा लागू की जाती है, की नियमानुसार कटौती की जायेगी। जीएसटीओ अतिरिक्त देय होगी।

अधिशासी अभियन्ता

## Massive fire in PNB audit office



Firefighters busy in rescue operation at the site

Pioneer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A massive fire broke out under mysterious circumstances on the ground floor of Punjab National Bank's audit office in Halwasiya market in Hazratganj on Sunday. In the 4-storey building, two floors are in the possession of the bank while some families live in the back portion.

Around 4:15 pm, some inmates spotted smoke emanating from the building. On being informed, a police team reached the scene. It later surfaced that the fire broke out in the bank's office.

The police said that the fire broke out on the ground floor of the bank's office and it later spread and engulfed the first floor. Fifteen fire tenders from different fire stations were pressed into service. The firefighters reached inside the office and contained the fire after hectic efforts. The area was cordoned off and traffic movement was stopped.

No casualty was reported in the incident while the losses were being estimated. The firefighters and police evacuated the inmates before launching the rescue operation.

## Ambika Chaudhary likely to join SP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Former minister and Bahujan Samaj Party leader Ambika Chaudhary is likely to join the Samajwadi Party soon as his resignation was accepted on Sunday. Chaudhary had announced his resignation from the BSP in Ballia on Saturday after his son Anand Chaudhary was declared a Samajwadi Party candidate for district panchayat chairman poll.

The BSP accepted the resignation of Ambika Chaudhary from the primary membership and termed it an act of betrayal. BSP's zone coordinator Madan Ram said: "Chaudhary's resignation from the primary membership of the party has been accepted. Directions have been issued not to invite him to party programmes. If he has any morality left in him, he would make his son resign from the post of the zila panchayat member and contest the bypolls," the BSP leader said, adding that the party would prepare a fresh strategy for the zila panchayat chairman elections.

When asked whether he would join the SP which he had quit in 2016, Chaudhary said, "Ghar wapsi (homecoming) is always pleasant."

However, the former cabinet minister added that he would make the decision at an appropriate time after consulting his supporters. Chaudhary was a cabinet minister in the Samajwadi Party governments led by Mulayam Singh Yadav (2003-2007) and Akhilesh Yadav. Due to his differences with Akhilesh Yadav, his portfolio was changed and he was shifted from the Revenue department to Backward Caste Welfare department. He resigned from the SP in 2016 and contested the 2017 assembly election as a BSP candidate but lost.

Anand Chaudhary is a zila panchayat member from Ward No. 45 of Ballia and was elected with the support of the BSP. The SP move had triggered a sharp reaction from BSP legislative party's deputy leader Uma Shankar Singh, who accused Ambika Chaudhary of betrayal. Uma Shankar Singh is the BSP MLA from Ballia. Accusing Chaudhary of backstabbing the BSP, Singh said he indulged in deceit, showing his true nature.

“योग से हमें वो आत्मविश्वास और मनोबल मिलता है, जिससे हम संकटों से जूझ सकें, जीत सकें। योग से हमें मानसिक शांति, संयम और सहनशक्ति मिलती है। 'समत्वम् योग उच्यते' अर्थात् अनुकूलता-प्रतिकूलता, सफलता-विफलता, सुख-संकट, हर परिस्थिति में समान रहने, अडिग रहने का नाम ही योग है।”

- नरेन्द्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री

**योग करें, घर पर रहकर 'YOGA FOR WELLNESS'**

7<sup>वें</sup> अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय **योग दिवस**  
21 जून, 2021

के अवसर पर  
समय: प्रातः 6:30 बजे से  
घर पर ही रहकर सामान्य योग प्रोटोकॉल के अनुसार परिवार के साथ योगाभ्यास करें

योग दिवस चैलेंज के अन्तर्गत वीडियो, कला तथा क्विज प्रतियोगिता में प्रतिभाग करें। अधिक जानकारी के लिए आयुष कवच एप या [www.ayushup.in](http://www.ayushup.in) पर लॉगिन करें।

“हमारे ऋषि-मुनियों ने हजारों वर्ष पहले योग के महत्व को समझा और इसे जीवन का आधार बनाया। माननीय प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी के प्रयासों से योग को वैश्विक स्तर पर मान्यता मिली। कोरोना से लड़ाई में योग के महत्व को आज पूरा विश्व मान रहा है। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय योग दिवस की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं।”

- योगी आदित्यनाथ  
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

कार्यक्रम का लाइव प्रसारण देखें  
<https://pmevents.ncog.gov.in>  
DD National/Uttar Pradesh  
[Youtube.com/duttarpradesh](https://www.youtube.com/duttarpradesh)  
UPGovtOfficial  
CMOUttarpradesh  
CMOOfficeUP

AYUSH KAVACH COVID APP @AYUSHMISSIONUP @AYUSHMISSIONUP UTTARPRADESHAYUSHSOCIETY सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

# Row over Cong leader seeking public donations

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The financial crisis has landed Congress, the grand old party, in an unseemly controversy with its leader Lallan Kumar seeking donations from people to help the people affected by the pandemic. The appeal was made by the Congress leader through an advertisement in a local Hindi daily.

However, the UP Congress Committee has distanced itself from the donation advertisement saying it has no official sanction. The advertisement has the photos of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and UPCC president Ajay Kumar Lallu.

The advertisement apparently endorses the campaign for cashless transactions launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, following demonetisation of the high value currency notes in

November 2016. Kumar has sought donations through PayTM and BHIM app along with NEFT or RTGS. His bank account number has also been given in the advertisement.

Meanwhile, Lallu categorically denied the role of the party in the advertisement. "It's an act of indiscretion by Lallan Kumar and against the party's ideology of publicly seeking donations. I will look into this matter and seek a report," Lallu said, adding it was clearly an anti-party activity by Kumar.

This is the second controversy to have hit the UP Congress within a week. Earlier, the party had to face embarrassment over the alleged meeting of Ajay Kumar Lallu and media department chairman Naseemuddin Siddiqui with Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav. However, both the leaders denied having met Akhilesh Yadav.

# Police help pavement dweller perform last rites of brother

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Madaon police helped a pavement dweller perform the last rites of his elder brother who died on Sunday. The deceased was identified as Adarsh Tiwari (17) of Atrauli in Hardoi.

As per reports, Adarsh lived with his family consisting of brother Golu near a bank in the locality. On Sunday, the police were informed about the death of a boy and a team reached the scene. In the meantime, Golu also reached the scene and identified the body as that of

Adarsh. He told the police that their father died when they were young and their mother is mentally unstable. She got separated from them several years back. Golu further said that they moved to Lucknow to eke out their livelihood and spent nights on the pavements.

Golu was worried about performing the last rite of his elder brother as he had no money. A police team led by incharge of Aziz Nagar police outpost Ashok Singh came forward to help Golu. The items needed for the last rites were arranged and Golu was

helped in carrying the body to the graveyard.

Meanwhile, a 32-year-old auto driver ended his life at his house in Para police station area on Sunday afternoon. As per reports, Gaurav of Old Kanshiram Colony was found hanging from the ceiling with a saree tied around his neck. Police said Gaurav's father Dayaram informed them about the incident. Initial investigation revealed that Gaurav got married in November last year and he had no issue from the marriage. The police said Gaurav took the step between 4 pm and 5 pm on Sunday.

# People disillusioned with BJP, says Sanjay Singh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow (PNS): Aam Aadmi Party UP incharge Sanjay Singh welcomed Lok Jan Shakti and OBC Mahasabha leaders into the party fold on Sunday. Addressing mediapersons on the occasion, he said New Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's model of governance has attracted the public of UP towards AAP. He said people of the country were appreciating the Kejriwal government which brought several public welfare schemes. He said more leaders and people are joining AAP as they find it a strong alternative to BJP which made hollow promises and left the people in the lurch, due to its faulty policies. AAP state president Sabhajeet Singh welcomed the new entrants and said they would strengthen AAP's poll prospects in 2022.

He said BJP promised to bring OBCs into the mainstream at the time of election but forgot the same after coming to power. Sabhajeet said the atrocities against OBCs have increased during the BJP government and it was time to uproot the government in the forthcoming elections.

# UP BJP announces media, IT teams

Lucknow (PNS): The UP BJP on Sunday announced its media and IT teams that will highlight the Yogi Adityanath government's achievements in a bid to pave the way for a second term.

UP BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh announced the state media and IT and social media teams on Sunday. Manish Dixit has been made the state media in-charge while Himanshu Dubey, Dharmendra Rai, Priyank Pandey and Abhay Singh have been made joint incharges of the state media.

Harishchandra Srivastava, Sameer Singh, Manish Shukla,

Hero Bajpai, Alok Awasthi, Ashok Pandey, Jugal Kishore, Anila Singh, Rakesh Tripathi, Prashant Vashisht, Sanjay Chaudhary, Anand Dubey, Sakshi Diwakar, Alok Verma and Mahamedha Nagar have been made the party's spokespersons.

Kameshwar Mishra has been made the state convener of the IT department while Mangal Chaudhary the co-convener. Ankit Chandel will be the state convener of social media while Harsh Chaturvedi, Shashi Shekhar Singh, Gaurav Vashney and Saurabh Marodia the co-conveners.

# Rape accused lands in police custody

Lucknow (PNS): A rape accused landed in police custody after the 10-year-old victim spotted him in Mohanlaljan on Sunday. The accused, identified as Rajendra Soni, is a native of Barabanki and lives near railway crossing in the area. The police had registered a case earlier but the accused remained elusive as his identity could not be ascer-

tained. On Sunday, he passed via the locality where the victim lives and she identified him. As the girl raised an alarm, the accused, who was riding a blue bike, tried to speed off the scene. However, he was nabbed by the villagers. He was pinned down and handed over to police. The villagers said the accused was probably not aware that the victim lives in this local-

ity. The girl was allegedly raped on June 13 after the accused lured her by offering pani-puri and introducing himself to be her father's friend. He made her sit on his bike and took her to a deserted place where he raped her.

The girl, along with her cousin (brother), had gone to a mango grove when she fell into the trap of the accused.

# Lakshadweep admin mulls shifting HC jurisdiction from Kerala to K'nataka

PTI ■ KOCHI/ NEW DELHI

The Lakshadweep administration, which has been facing widespread protests from the islands' people over some of its policies, has mooted a proposal to shift its legal jurisdiction from the Kerala High Court to the Karnataka High Court, officials said.

The proposal was initiated by the administration after several litigations were moved before the Kerala High Court against the decisions taken by

the islands' new administrator Praful Khoda Patel.

These decisions included revising standard operating procedures for Covid appropriate behaviour, introduction of the "goonda act" and demolishing hutments of fishermen for widening of roads.

Patel, who is the administrator of Daman and Diu, was given the additional charge of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep in the first week of December last year, when the former administrator

Dineshwar Sharma died after a brief illness.

This year, as many as 23 applications, including 11 writ petitions, have been filed against the administrator of Lakshadweep and also against the alleged high-handedness of either the police or the local government of the islands.

However, for reasons best known to the island's administration, which is under the spotlight over its handling of these issues, it has made a proposal for shifting its legal jurisdic-

tion from the high court of Kerala to Karnataka.

Efforts to seek comments from the advisor of the administrator, A Anbarasu, and Collector of Lakshadweep S Asker Ali did not fructify.

Mails to their official e-mails and WhatsApp messages did not elicit any response to a question asking the rationale behind mooted of the proposal for shifting of legal jurisdiction. The jurisdiction of a high court can be shifted only through an act of Parliament,

according to the law.

"Parliament may by law constitute a high court for a Union Territory or declare any court in any such territory to be a high court for all or any of the purposes of this Constitution," according to Article 241 of the Constitution.

Section 4 of the same article mentions that "nothing in this article derogates from the power of Parliament to extend or exclude the jurisdiction of a high court for a state to, or from, any Union Territory or

part thereof". Talking to PTI over phone, Lok Sabha member Mohammed Faizal P P said, "This was his (Patel) first attempt to shift the judicial jurisdiction from Kerala to Karnataka." "Why was he so particular to transfer it... it's totally a misappropriation of the post. The mother tongue of the people on these islands is Malayalam," he said.

"One should not forget the name of the high court is Kerala and Lakshadweep High Court. This proposal was con-

ceived during his first visit to the islands," Faizal said and asked was there a need for this and how could he justify the proposal. Faizal said there have been 36 administrators before Patel and no one had this kind of an idea. "However, if this proposal will see any light of the day, we will oppose it tooth and nail on the floor of Parliament as well as with the judiciary," the Lok Sabha member from Nationalist Congress Party said.

He said the Save Lakshadweep Front (SLF) has

been making appeals to the Centre for changing the administrator at the earliest.

"The SLF is a non-violent people's movement which has been requesting the central leadership to change Patel with someone who can be people's administrator," he added.

Legal experts from Lakshadweep said that Malayalam is the spoken as well as the written language both in Kerala and Lakshadweep and, therefore, the process could be streamlined.

# Kerala Covid situation still critical despite long-drawn lockdowns

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

There is no end in sight for the Covid-19 pandemic in Kerala despite the triple lockdowns and double lockdowns slapped on the State since April 2021. The State diagnosed 11,647 new cases on Sunday while 112 persons succumbed to Covid-19 on a single day that took the total fatalities till date to 12,060.

The Test Positivity Rate, according to the press release issued by the Department of Health was 10.84 per cent. But elsewhere in Kerala, there were many regions with higher TPR, according to Government Medical Doctors.

More than 300 local self government bodies in the State have TPR of 30 per cent and high. There were 1.05 lakh patients across the State undergoing treatment for the pandemic.

Though the Government claimed that the situation is inching to normalcy, there has been no dearth of ambulances blaring their sirens ferrying critically ill patients from homes to hospitals.

The Government release on Sunday said that 1.07 samples were tested in the last 24 hours. Thiruvananthapuram topped the table of districts with the highest number of patients-1,600 while Ernakulam came close behind with 1,461 cases.

Monday will be crucial for Kerala as the lock down is being lifted in stages. All liquor outlets have been opened while bars, popularly known as watering holes too have started selling drinks, though in parcel mode. Leaders of Islamic organisations are expected to call on Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to seek his permission to get the mosques opened.

# TN limping back to normalcy

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu has succeeded in taming the Covid-19 pandemic to a great extent, according to the data for Sunday released by the Directorate of Preventive Medicine and Health.

The State logged 7, 817 new cases of Covid-19 on Sunday while the fatalities for the day stood at 182. Across the State, 1.66 lakh persons were subjected to RT-PCR tests. Coimbatore, the industrial capital of Tamil Nadu, which had

showed more than thousand cases on an average per day, registered just 904 new cases on Sunday while neighbouring Erode (870) and Tirupur (477) districts too showed that the Covid virus was getting flattened.

Chennai logged 455 cases while the death toll date rose to 31,197. At the time of going to Press, Tamil Nadu as a whole was in different stages of lifting of lockdowns indicating that normal life is returning to the State though with restrictions.

# Maha infections rise to 9,361, deaths drop to 605

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 deaths in Maharashtra dropped to 605 and the infections went up marginally to 9,361 on Sunday, even as 9,101 patients were discharged after full recovery from various hospitals across the State.

A day after the State logged 8912 infections and 682 pandemic deaths, the infections rose to 9,361, while the daily deaths came down by 77. Of the 9361 deaths reported on Sunday, 190 were current ones, while 415 were "old unaccounted" fatalities.



People visit a crowded market near the historic Charminar after the Telangana Government lifted Covid-induced restrictions, in Hyderabad on Sunday

ple discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year increased from 57,10356 to 57,19,457. The recovery rate in the state stood static at 95.76 per cent

The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 1,32,595 to 1,32,241. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.97 per cent.

Mumbai recorded 19 deaths and 747 infections. As a result, the Covid-19 toll in the metropolis increased from 15,279 to 15,298, while the infected cases in Mumbai went up from 7,19,266 to 7,20,013.

# Amid Cong solo chant, Sena leader Sarnaik asks Uddhav to patch up with BJP

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid the ruling Maharashtra Congress latest posturing that it wanted to go it alone in the 2024 State Assembly polls, Shiv Sena leader Pratap Sarnaik has shot off a letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, saying that the Sena must patch up with its erstwhile alliance partner BJP.

In a letter written to Uddhav who is also the Shiv Sena president, three-time MLA from Thane Sarnaik said: "The municipal corporation elections in Mumbai, Thane and Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation are round the corner. Our alliance with the BJP may have ended, but we as the erstwhile saffron alliance leaders are maintaining good relations between us. Instead of letting the relations between us deteriorate further, it is better we come closer to other".

We come together, it will benefit the party workers like me and the Shiv Sena in the long run. This is what I feel.. It is for you to take a proper decision in the matter," Sarnaik said in a letter written to the Chief Minister on June 9. The June 9 letter made its way to the media on Sunday.

Alluding to the bickering within the ruling Maha Vikas

Aghadi (MVA), Sarnaik said: "On one hand, setting aside politics, you (Uddhav Thackeray) are doing justice as the Chief Minister, while on the other, our alliance partners Congress and NCP have gone to town saying that it is because of them that you have become the chief minister. And the Congress is talking about going it alone in the 2024 State Assembly polls".

"Instead of weaning away leaders and workers from other political parties, the Congress and NCP are trying to break the Shiv Sena. Simultaneously, some MVA Ministers and IAS officers are cosying up to the BJP leaders at the Centre to ensure against the central investigating harassing them," Sarnaik said.

"In certain quarters of our party level, the talk that goes around is, the works of the Congress-NCP workers get done faster at the State Government level. But, despite having our party's Chief Minister in the state, the Shiv Sena MLAs are not able to get work done in various Government departments. The question that is being asked in the party circles is: whether the Shiv Sena broke its alliance with the BJP and formed the MVA to make the Congress-NCP stronger," Sarnaik said.

# Customs issues show-cause notice to 53 in Kerala gold smuggling case

Kochi: The Customs Department probing the Kerala gold smuggling case has issued show-cause notices to 53 people including prime accused Swapna Suresh, suspended IAS officer M Sivasankar and two former diplomats in the UAE consulate, Thiruvananthapuram, official sources said here on Sunday.

The notices asking why action under Customs Act should not be taken against them in the smuggling cases were issued by Customs (Preventive) Commissioner Sumit Kumar on June 16. The case against them involves smuggling of a total of 167 kg of gold 23 times including the illegal trade of 30 kilograms gold worth nearly ₹15 crore that was seized by the Customs at Thiruvananthapuram Airport from a diplomatic bag on July 5, 2020, the sources told P T I. Former UAE Consulate

General Jamal al-Zabi and Attach Rashid Khamis Ali were issued notice through the Union Finance Ministry, sources said.

The Finance Ministry will forward the matter to the External Affairs Ministry as it is a matter involving foreign diplomats who have already left the country, they said.

Besides Suresh, six others who were served notices are currently detained under COFE-POSA (the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act). The key accused who were served notices included Sarith P S, Sandeep Nair and K T Ramees, they said.

The show-cause notices were prepared based on the statements of the accused, the documents that were seized and other evidence collected during the probe. They have been requested to

inform if they desire to be heard in person before the case is adjudicated. "All these people are given a chance of 30 days for reply," the source said.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), the ED and the Customs conducted separate investigations into the racket that was busted with the seizure of gold worth Rs 15 crore from the diplomatic baggage of the UAE Consulate at Thiruvananthapuram airport on July 5. Several people including Sivasankar, the former Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, former employees of the UAE consulate, Suresh and Sarith, were arrested in connection with the case snowballing a political controversy with the opposition using it against the Pinarayi Vijayan-led government in the Assembly polls held in April this year.

# Assam among top 5 in Life on Land category of SDG Index

Guwahati: Assam's Environment and Forest Department has emerged as a front-runner in the Life on Land category of the 2020 edition of the Niti Aayog's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Index.

The index for SDGs, launched in 2018, evaluates the progress of states and union territories on social, economic, and environmental parameters. Among the 17 broad-based global SDG goals with 232 indicators,

Assam ranks fifth in the category 'Life on Land' with a composite score of 78 per cent, according to the Niti Aayog's report. Arunachal Pradesh tops the list with a composite score

of 93 per cent, followed by Madhya Pradesh 84 per cent, Odisha 83 per cent, and Telangana 81 per cent.

To be enlisted in the category of front-runners, a state or Union Territory needs to score in the range of 65-99, including both.

On the forest plus tree cover as a percentage of the state's total geographical area, Assam has registered 37.91 per cent against the all-India average of 24.56 per cent, and under this indicator, it has exceeded the set target of 33 per cent.

The northeastern state has 0.457 per cent of its geographical area covered under afforestation schemes, which is

marginally lower than the national average of 0.51 per cent.

The total number of cases booked under the Wildlife Protection Act in Assam is 63, against the national average of 15. The Environment and Forest department will focus on biodiversity conservation and forest area development, including restoration of degraded forests, habitat improvement of wildlife and extension, human-wildlife conflict management, identification, mapping, securing of corridors, extension of forest cover, enhancing forest and ecosystem resilience to frequent floods and droughts and disaster risk reduction.

# Minor girl raped in Bihar's Aurangabad

Patna: A 12-year-old girl, residing in a school hostel in Bihar's Aurangabad district, was allegedly sexually assaulted by the school owner, police said on Sunday.

As per the FIR registered with the women police station, the victim alleged that the accused Raju Kumar, the owner of the school, located in Daudnagar locality in Aurangabad, raped her for the last two days.

On Sunday, she managed to escape from the hostel and reached the nearest police station. When she revealed her ordeal, she was immediately sent to the women police station under police custody.

"The victim was the only girl student living in the hostel. Her father and mother are employed with a private firm in Gujarat. The owner knew the status of the girl and took advantage of it. He sexually assaulted the victim on Friday and Saturday night. The accused also threatened her to dire consequences if she revealed the incident to anyone," Suman Kumar, investigating officer of the women police station, said. "We have conducted medical examination of the victim which confirms rape. An FIR under POCSO Act has been registered against Raju Kumar. He is at large now," she added. IANS

# Sikkim reports 87 new cases, 2 more deaths

PTI ■ GANGTOK

Sikkim reported 87 new Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, pushing the coronavirus tally to 19,296, a health department bulletin said on Sunday.

The Covid-19 death toll rose to 293 as two more persons succumbed to the infection, it said. The new cases were reported from East Sikkim district (57), West Sikkim (22), South Sikkim (6) and North Sikkim district (2).

The Himalayan State now has 2,697 active Covid-19 cases, while 16,056 patients have recovered from the disease, the bulletin said.

# Devotees defy order, bathe in Ganga

PNS ■ VARANASI

Hundreds of devotees took a holy dip in the sacred water of river Ganga on the auspicious occasion of Ganga Dussehra here on Sunday.

Despite the weekend Covid curfew being in force, the devotees defied the movement restrictions and the order for not taking bath in the river. They started thronging various ghats, especially the Dashashwamedh and its adjoining areas, right from the early hours but later police personnel were deployed there to ask people not to take bath in the river.

However, as the police did not block the areas, many devotees reached the 84-odd ghats on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra to offer prayer to Goddess Ganga as it is believed by Hindus that Ganga descended from heaven to earth on this auspicious day, which is also known as Gangavatara diwas.

Meanwhile, the volunteers of Namami Gange led by its convener Rajesh Shukla reached Dashashwamedh Ghat and offered dughd abhishek and aarti, praying to the



A police officer appealing to devotees not to bath in river on occasion of Ganga Dussehra in Varanasi on Sunday

Pioneer

Goddess Ganga for welfare of the people.

They appealed to the people to keep the river clean and pollution-free as Ganga is the source of livelihood of about 50

crore people.

They also offered shramdaan and removed wastes from the river and prayed to the Goddess Ganga to help the world overcome the novel

coronavirus pandemic and for the victory of Team India in the first ICC World Test Championship being played in England.

Shivdutt Dwivedi, Shivam

Agrahari, Ramprakash Jaiswal, Soni Chaurasia, Preeti Jaiswal, Rashmi Sahu, Sarika Gupta, Pushpalata Verma, Anjali Upadhyay and many others were present on the occasion.

# Yoga Day a historical event: Ramesh Pokhriyal

PNS ■ VARANASI

The inaugural session of the five-day international webinar on 'Vedic Yoga Science' being organised on the occasion of International Yoga Day was held at Vedic Vignyan Kendra in Banaras Hindu University here on Sunday.

Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said in his message that Yoga Day was a historical event in world history and it was a matter of joy and pride that 192 countries participated in this international campaign of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The message was read out by the minister's personal co-ordinator Dr Rajesh Nethani who is Vice Chancellor of Himalayan Ayurvedic University, Uttarakhand.

University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Dharendra Pal Singh, who was the chief guest, revealing the facts related to Vedic yoga science described in the Vedas, said that in human life, exercise, asanas and pranayam were important to discipline the daily routine and develop

human qualities.

"Today, work is being done for the promotion of Yoga in all the universities and colleges of India," he said.

Special guest and senior pracharak of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Prof Shankar Vinayak Tattvawadi, said that the popularity of yoga in many countries had enhanced the knowledge and tradition of India.

Presiding over the programme, BHU Chancellor Justice Giridhar Malviya said that through this webinar, public awareness about yoga would increase and help the society overcome the global pandemic. Summary guest Dr Tony Nadar, president (Leadership, Transcendental Meditation) of Maharishi International Universities Worldwide (USA) said that Yoga was a subject of Vedic philosophy.

Prof Hriday Ranjan Sharma, senior member of the steering committee of Vedic Vignyan Kendra, BHU, said that Vedas were practical and spiritual knowledge.

Welcoming the guests, centre's coordinator Prof Upendra

Kumar Tripathi introduced the subject of the webinar. The programme began with the recital of Vedic manglacharan by Shivarchit Mishra.

Meanwhile, under the aegis of St John's Madauli Alumni Association, a yoga retreat camp was organised at Shubham Lawn (Mahmoorganj) here on Sunday, on the eve of International Yoga Day.

The camp was inaugurated jointly by Yogacharya Sanad Mishra and former presidents of the alumni association Rohit Kapoor and Vaibhav Kapoor, by lighting the lamp.

After the welcome address by the alumni association's president Ayush Khatri, health and lifestyle coach Garvita Rai threw light on balanced diet. This was followed by an hour-long yoga practice under the guidance of Yogacharya Sanad Mishra. He said the asanas and yoga exercises kept the body healthy and the mind calm and happy. The programme was conducted by Neha Arora while the vote of thanks was proposed by secretary Prakash Santha.

# Admn intensifies preparations to tackle third wave

PNS ■ VARANASI

The district administration has intensified preparations to tackle the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic under which 40 separate beds will be made available at the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) hospital near Pandeypur crossing. Out of these beds, some beds will be in the pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) for the treatment of children.

It may be mentioned that a 100-bed child ward has been prepared at the super speciality complex in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in view of the anticipated third wave of the COVID-19 outbreak. Experts have warned that the third wave could affect children in a big way and keeping this in mind, the district adminis-

## 11 more test +ve in Varanasi

Varanasi (PNS): Eleven more people tested positive for novel coronavirus infection during the past 24 hours in Varanasi, taking the tally of confirmed cases to 82,160, as per the figures released by the health department on Sunday evening.

With no COVID-19 death reported during the last 24 hours, the death toll remained at 773. As many as 37 COVID-19 patients recovered during the past 24 hours -- 33 in home isolation and four in hospitals. With this, 81,237 COVID-19 patients have been cured in the district so far -- 74,964 in home isolation and 6,273 in Covid hospitals.

tration has intensified the preparations to tackle the possible situation.

A 40-bed ward had been opened at this hospital in the second wave of the pandemic and the district administration has now decided to develop it as a children's ward. Out of the 40 beds, some could be developed as PICU.

The district administra-

tion has already directed the health officials to upgrade the community and primary health centres of the districts besides government hospitals as per requirement to face the situation during the third wave of the pandemic. The health department has decided to conduct Covid test of the children to be taken to hospitals for the treatment.

# Niranjan Jyoti, devotees take holy dip on Ganga Dussehra

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

Union Minister of State for Rural Development Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti took a holy dip in Sangam on Ganga Dussehra on Sunday.

Thereafter, she went to attend the religious ceremony at Someshwar Mahadev temple in Arai after having darshan at the Bade Hanuman temple. After this, she reached the Mauji Ashram of Juna Akhara located on the banks of Yamuna and met the saints.

Many sages and saints took bath in the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati on Ganga Dussehra.

On this occasion, a large number of devotees took a dip in the Ganga on Sunday to get rid of the sins they committed unknowingly. Due to rain, apart from the Sangam, the devotees had to face problems due to slippery ground at Ramghat and Dashashwamedh Ghat.



Arrangements were tightened at the ghats for security. This time on Ganga Dussehra,

with Sarvartha Siddhi Yoga, there was a dip in Chitra Nakshatra. It is believed that by

bathing in the Sangam and lighting lamps on this day, there are chances of fulfillment of all kinds of wishes. According to the Puranas, on this day, Ganga descended from Brahma's kamandalu and incarnated on the earth.

On the occasion of Ganga Dussehra, consecration was done at Salori Ghat with the wish of world welfare. Ganga Aarti was performed at 9 O'clock in the morning on behalf of Manav Kalyan Sangh amid performing rituals. Ganga Aarti was also performed at Sangam along with Triveni Puja.

There was also Ravi Yoga on Ganga Dussehra on Sunday and so the importance of bathing, meditation increased even more due to the Amrit Kaal and Sarvartha Siddhi Yoga.

In view of the coronavirus infection, the message of reaching the ghats with masks and following social distancing

were given from the checkpoints to the pilgrims. Preparations had already been made for this festival. Crowds were not allowed at the checkpoints. Tika, sandalwood were applied to the devotees in turn.

According to Tirth Purohit Rajamani Tiwari, religious rituals were conducted on Ganga Dussehra following the Covid protocol.

He said no cultural programmes were organised this time and the Ganga Aarti was performed at Ram Ghat for welfare of the world and prayers were offered for freedom from coronavirus.

In the evening, apart from the Ganga ghats, the consecration of Goddess Ganga with milk and the Maha Ganga Aarti were organised on the banks of the Sangam by priests. This is the first major bathing festival after the end of the Covid curfew in the second wave, when mud had spread on the ghats due to rain.

## ZILA PANCHAYAT CHAIRMAN'S POLL

### VK Singh is BJP candidate

Allahabad (PNS): Bharatiya Janata Party has declared Dr VK Singh as its candidate for the post of district panchayat chairman. BJP state vice president Laxman Acharya announced the name of VK Singh as party candidate for zila panchayat chief's post in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and Cabinet Minister Sidharth Nath Singh at a programme organised in a guest house in Civil Lines here on Sunday.

Acharya said that this time VK Singh was elected as a member of zila panchayat from ward number 13 of Handia and seeing his good image and dedication to the party, he was selected as the party candidate for the post of district panchayat chairman. He said that on Ganga Dussehra, the party had made VK Singh its candidate after consultation with the local people's representatives of Prayagraj to realise and give impetus to the dream of village Swaraj.

Keshav Prasad Maurya said that Dr VK Singh would achieve a historic victory in the election of district panchayat chairman. He also lambasted the statement made by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav in which he said that the BJP lagged behind in the district panchayat elections.

"Akhilesh Yadav should wait for July 3. He will know how strong the BJP is in the state on July 3," he said.

The deputy chief minister also said that during the SP regime, zila panchayat members were bought and even kidnapped, but this was not the case in the BJP rule. He said that the BJP would get the biggest victory in the state in the election of district panchayat chairman.

## Special cancellation stamp to mark World Yoga Day today

PNS ■ VARANASI

To commemorate the Seventh International Day of Yoga (IDY-2021), the Department of Posts will put a special cancellation on mails on June 21 in all head post offices.

The department has made this effort to capture the essence of Yoga Day among people. On Monday, this special cancellation will be released in all 810 head post offices across India, including Varanasi head post office and Cantonment head post office.

This would be one among the largest such simultaneous philatelic commemorations ever, said Postmaster General (PMG) of Varanasi Region Krishna Kumar Yadav.

Apart from this, people are also being made aware about Yoga Day through banners and LEDs in various post offices. As an aspirational district, a special campaign is being run by the postal department for yoga in rural areas in Sakaldaha of Chandauli district.

Yadav said that 'Yoga' and 'International Yoga Day' had been popular subjects for philatelic commemoration over the years. He said in 2015, the Department of Posts had brought out a set of two stamps and a miniature sheet on the International Day of Yoga and in 2016, a commemorative postage stamp on Surya Namaskar was released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to mark the commemoration of the Second International Day of Yoga, while in 2017, the UN Postal Administration had issued a set of stamps showing 10 yoga asanas to commemorate the International Day of Yoga in New York. He added that at present, all these stamps and philatelic items had become an integral part of the collection of philatelists.

Yadav said that any person could easily open a philatelic deposit account by depositing Rs 200 in any post office in the country and get commemorative stamps and other philatelic material sitting at home.

## Mechanic's body found in farmhouse

PNS ■ VARANASI

Sensation prevailed on Sunday after the body of a middle aged mechanic was seen lying in a farmhouse near Kanshiram Awasiya Colony in Shivpur police station area.

Police started an investigation after sending the body for autopsy. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Trans-Varuna) Vikrant Veer said there was no mark of injury on the body and the post-mortem would reveal the cause of death.

According to reports, some local residents spotted the body in a farmhouse situated in a field near Kanshiram Awasiya Colony in Shivpur on Sunday morning. They identified the deceased as Rambabu Singh (50), a mechanic living in the colony, and informed the police about it.

The cops who arrived at the spot recovered empty bottles of liquor near the body. A forensic team was called and it collected samples from the spot.

The deceased was said to be a habitual drinker and was not living with his family for years. It is learnt that his family members have severed all relations with him. It is said that one Chhotu lives in the farmhouse on rent and the deceased used to visit him. He had stayed at the farmhouse the previous night and was found dead in the morning.

In a separate incident, the body of a youth was found in a truck in the transport area in Maheshpur under Manduadih police station on Sunday morning. The deceased was identified as truck driver Ram Bahadur Yadav (32). He had breakfast in the morning and after some time he was found dead. On being informed, the local police reached the spot and made a preliminary investigation.

The DCP said there was no mark of injury on the body and the body was sent for autopsy which would ascertain the cause of death.

# Sons kill father on Father's Day

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

On Father's Day, sons along with their wives killed their father over a property-related dispute in Kaushambi on Sunday.

In Gandhinagar locality of Manjhanpur town of Kaushambi district, in a dispute over the distribution of property and money, the sons along with their wives beat up their father with iron rods. After this, the daughters-in-law and sons went to Kotwali.

The police recovered the rods used in the murder and took all the

accused into custody.

Bajinath (61), a resident of Gandhinagar in Kaushambi, had retired from the Railways in March. According to his wife Pati Devi, sons Surendra, Virendra and their wives used to quarrel over the distribution of property and the amount received after retirement. For this reason Bajinath lived in another house with his youngest son Narendra and daughter Pooja.

On Sunday morning, Bajinath was returning home with fodder for cattle from the field when Virendra and Surendra and their wives stopped him

on the way. They took Bajinath to their house and closed the door and beat him up mercilessly with rods and punches. Surendra's son Sachin was also involved in the assault.

On coming to know about this incident, Narendra reached there with his mother and took Bajinath to the hospital where the doctors pronounced him dead.

CO Manjhanpur KG Singh said that the body was sent for post-mortem. He said a written complaint had been received from Narendra and further action would be taken after the post-mortem report was received.

## BSP leaders join Cong

Allahabad (PNS): Just before zila panchayat chariman elections, about a dozen Bahujan Samaj Party local leaders and activists joined the Congress at the Civil Lines residence of senior Congress leader Pramod Tiwari on Sunday. They include former member of the zila panchayat Sunil Patel and his supporters. Welcoming the new entrants, Pramod Tiwari instead of making any adverse comment on the BSP, said the Bharatiya Janata Party misrule had led to this political conversion because people had faith in the Congress and they knew that only the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi could defeat the BJP. Tiwari said that the BJP governments at the Centre and in Uttar Pradesh did nothing to fulfill their poll promises. Some more defections were expected before the zila panchayat elections, he said, adding that leaders of other parties were likely to join the Congress.

## BJP to organise yoga events at mandal level

Varanasi (PNS): The Bharatiya Janata Party will organise yoga programmes at mandal level on the occasion of International Yoga Day on Monday. Giving this information, BJP regional president (Kashi unit) Mahesh Chand Srivastava said that the importance of yoga was accepted by the whole world due to the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and on June 21, 2015, Yoga Day was celebrated all over the world. "It is a proud moment for all Indians," he said, adding that the party would celebrate the day at every mandal unit this year, following the Covid guidelines. In these programmes, the party office-bearers, workers and citizens would practice yoga. He also said that on June 23, Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee made the first sacrifice for the unity and integrity of the country, and the party would launch a massive tree plantation campaign at the booth level from June 23 to July 6. Along with the campaigns, he said, the party workers would spread awareness among the people for vaccination and provide help to COVID-19 patients under its 'Seva hi sangathan' campaign. Kashi unit regional general secretary Ashok Chaurasia and secretary Dr Sudama Patel said the conveners of the fortnight-long tree plantation campaign at the booth level would be regional vice-president Awadhesh Gupta and secretary Ashish Baghel.

## Cop sending porn pics to woman suspended

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

The police constable who had been harassing a woman by posting porn photographs and videos, has been arrested under various sections of the IT Act, and he has been placed under suspension, informed SP (Trans Ganga) Dhawal Jaiswal.

A woman had lodged a complaint against police constable Sitaram Pandey with Chief Minister Yogi Aditya Nath besides senior police officers, seeking action against him. After a preliminary inquiry, the complaint of the woman was found to be true on Saturday evening and the Handia CO, who investigated the case, took the phones of the constable and the woman as proof of the misdeeds of Sitaram Pandey.

The complainant is the mother of a minor rape victim. According to her, she had to visit the court in connection with the rape case, and the police constable of Uttararaon police station of Handia area also happened to be there. He sympathised with her and started briefing her about the case when she could not visit the court.

After some time the constable started sending porn photographs to her, which she ignored, but when he started porn videos, the woman objected to it. The constable then started threatening her, and kept on sending videos. As the same smartphone is used by her daughter to attend on-line classes, she decided not to ignore it any further, and lodged a complaint with the police officers and also posted it on the Chief Minister's portal. After this the police registered a case of cyber crime and the Handia CO was handed over the inquiry and he found the constable to be guilty.

# Aspirants preparing for bank jobs disappointed

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

The aspirants preparing for bank recruitment examinations are disappointed. Due to the merger of banks and outsourcing, the number of posts is continuously decreasing. Meanwhile, the coronavirus infection has aggravated the difficulties of the aspirants. In the last one year, the recruitment process was started only in SBI and Cooperative Bank. No major recruitment was done by the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS) during this period.

The despair of the youth sitting in the hope of getting jobs in banks can be gauged

from the fact that in the last six years, the number of posts has halved.

According to the data received, recruitment was made for about 37,000 posts in 2015 through IBPS, SBI and other means. Of them, more than 12,000 were recruited for the posts of probationary officers. At the same time, the recruitment process was started for about 18,000 posts in 2020. Most of these recruitment processes have been completed.

The process of reduction of posts in banks is still going on. In the midst of this despair, the coronavirus pandemic has added to the woes of the aspi-

rants. During this, the recruitment process was started in SBI and Cooperative Bank and recruitment was made for 12,000 posts. Out of these, more than 9,000 posts were in Cooperative Bank. In contrast, no recruitment took place in other public sector banks.

Rajeev Pandey, who is well aware of banking methodology and recruitment process, said that the number of posts in banks was continuously decreasing and due to this, the enthusiasm of the meritorious youth towards banking was also waning.

He said large-scale recruitment could be expected in future as people were con-

stantly retiring in banks and at the same time, banks were also continuously expanding. He said as with the use of technology in banks, opportunities were visible for the technically proficient youth.

The annual report of IBPS also talks about the job crisis during the coronavirus period. In the session 2019-20, 609 projects of recruitment, promotion were completed by IBPS while the total number of applicants stood at 1.47 crore. Out of these, 97 lakh candidates appeared in various recruitment examinations. At the same time, only 377 projects were completed in 2020-2021. Only 50 lakh youth applied for

various recruitments. Of these, only 33 lakh appeared in the recruitment examinations. In 2021-22, the process has been started for recruitment only in regional banks.

Applications have been invited for the recruitment of officers and office assistants in Regional Rural Banks. Online applications have been invited by IBPS by June 28. Online preliminary exam is expected in August and main exam in September-October. The recruitment process is expected to be completed by November. With this, there is hope of starting the recruitment process for other banks as well.

# Over half-a-dozen injured as van rams into stationary truck

PNS ■ KANPUR

Over half-a-dozen persons of a marriage party were injured when their van rams into a stationary truck near Ahirwar petrol pump on Mughal Road in Ghatampur police station area late Saturday night.

The local police, which reached the spot after around 45 minutes, sent all the injured to Ghatampur community health centre from where they were referred for the LLR hospital in Kanpur Nagar in view of their serious condition. The condition of two of them was stated to be critical.

The marriage of Jagatpal alias Chhauwan, son of Sitaram Nishad of Ghat Bamrauli village of Kanpur Dehat, was fixed with a girl of Gokulpur village near Jahanabad town of Fatehpur district.

The groom's uncle, Raju Nishad, said the marriage party proceeded to Gokulpur village on four-wheelers, including a van, on Saturday evening. Raju said Sonu alias Jubair of Moosanagar was driving the van while he along with others was following the



Damaged Van after colliding with a truck-traila in Ghatampur

Pioneer

van in another car.

Near Ahirwar petrol pump in Ghatampur, Raju found the van badly damaged as it had rammed into the truck parked at the roadside and all the passengers seriously injured. He with the help of other relatives rescued the

injured trapped in the van and informed the police. Apart from van driver Sonu, six other persons of the village including Vikram, Sagar, Dharmendra, Ramji, Surendra and Ram Milan, were in the van sustained serious injuries.

# Boy killed, 2 hurt in house collapse

PNS ■ KANPUR

A minor boy was killed and his grandmother and sister were seriously injured when their kachcha house suddenly collapsed after incessant rain in Hanspur village under Rasoolabad police station of Kanpur Dehat late Saturday night. Both the injured were rescued by the villagers and admitted to the community health centre. After first aid, the doctors referred them to the district hospital in Kanpur Nagar due to their serious condition.

According to reports, when the family members of farmer Ranvijay Singh Yadav were fast asleep in their kachcha house on Saturday night, it suddenly collapsed on them. The farmer's only son Ansh (10), mother Laungshri and daughter Sakshi were buried under the rubble. On hearing screams, the villagers rushed to spot and rescued the three. While Ansh had died by that time, Laungshri and Sakshi were seriously injured and they were rushed to the CHC. Villagers alleged that none of the officials responded to their call. Nayab tehsildar visited the spot on Sunday morning. SDM Anju Verma assured to recommend grant of financial aid to the victim's family under the Natural Calamity Relief Fund.

# NCL CMD's emphasis on green mining

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Miniratna company of the Government of India, on Saturday, under the 'Bharat Ka Amrit Mahotsav' organised a webinar on 'Kisan Ganga', a multifaceted campaign of NCL-IIT BHU Incubation Centre being run for environmental protection and promotion, ecosystem restoration, green mining techniques, clean energy, integrated wildlife management and for the uplift of farmers and local tribes. Addressing the webinar NCL CMD Prabhakar Kumar Sinha expressed his gratitude for the guidance received from the Ministry of Coal from time to time on topics like environmental mining, long-term development, clean energy and ecosystem restoration. Sinha expressed NCL's commitment to promoting research and development for use of green mining techniques, development of local community, promotion of clean energy and to develop advanced mining techniques and expressed confidence that by organising such webinar along with NCL the mining industry will get multi-dimensional benefits. Joint Secretary, Ministry of Coal, Government of India, BP Pati, who joined the webinar, congratulated Team NCL for organising it and in a modern perspective expressed his views on topics like clean energy, land reforms, climate change, afforestation, rehabilitation of local community, holistic development and long-term livelihood generation. In the webinar NCL

Director (Finance) RN Dubey thanked all the guests, speakers and people present through virtual medium for joining the webinar and threw light on its theme. Employees of other subsidiaries of Coal India also joined the webinar. In the webinar, Director (Technical/Operations) of NCL Dr Anindya Sinha mentioned the work done by NCL in the field of environmental protection and promotion, green mining, innovation, development of new technology and practices and social and economic uplift of the local community. During it senior scientist, CSIR-NEERI Dr Shalini Dhyani, delivered her lecture on importance of sustainable land restoration for healthy ecosystem and income diversification. Professor, IIFM Bhopal, Dr Yogesh Kumar Dubey, presented his research paper on the plan of integrated wildlife management for Singrauli region. On the other hand, Dr HB Vashisht, retired scientist, Forest Ecology and Climate Change Division, Forest Research Institute, presented a case study on ecosystem restoration in NCL's Krishnashila and Nigahi projects. On behalf of NCL-IIT BHU Incubation Centre Hemant informed about the important projects of NCL 'Kisanganga', Birkuniya satellite centre and Agri Clinic, Semuar handloom training centre etc. The technical session was presided over by NCL Director (Technical/Project & Planning) SS Sinha. The senior scientist, CSIR-NEERI, Dr Shalini Dhyani, was the coordinator of the session.



# Vegetable vendor beaten up by history-sheeter succumbs to injuries

PNS ■ KANPUR

Tension prevailed in the Shivrajpur police station area after a vegetable vendor succumbed to his injuries during treatment on Saturday night.

The irate villagers, alleging slackness of local police, gheraoed the Shivrajpur police station and staged a demonstration. In a bid to avoid any untoward incident, a heavy police force was deployed there on Sunday. Officials have ordered a probe into the incident.

A history-sheeter and his accomplices had held the vendor hostage and brutally assaulted 10 days ago. He was admitted to hospital in an unconscious state and during treatment, he succumbed to his injuries on Saturday night.

Circle Officer Rajesh Kumar said a case for attempt to murder had been registered against the assailants. He said after the death of the vegetable vendor, relevant sections of murder would be added to the case and stern penal action would be initiated against the history-sheeter.

According to reports, on June 10, vegetable vendor



Ehsan alias Munna of Ward No.10, Shivrajpur, had an argument with history-sheeter Bony Thakur, son of Sikanderpur village pradhan, and his accomplices over maintaining supremacy in the area. He was bundled in a car and beaten black and blue by them.

The assailants had later dumped Ehsan near Bairi level crossing on GT road in an unconscious state. The next day, Ehsan's mother had lodged an FIR against seven persons, including Bony Thakur, Shivam and Sumit for kidnaping, scuffle and attempt to murder.

Both the groups had clashed several times in the past over a dispute of maintaining supremacy in the area but the police never intervened in the matter, villagers alleged.

# Committee for development along Ring Road set up

PNS ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar said that a special committee had been set up for the development along the Ring Road.

He said an additional sub-committee had also been set up for the development in four sectors of the Ring Road namely Mandhana- Lucknow, Mandhana- Sachendi, Sachendi- Ramaipur and Ramaipur- Rooma highways.

Dr Shekhar said the UP government was committed to providing better facilities to the city industrial units through improved connectivity and its integrated development in all the four sections of the Ring Road.

He said many ambitious projects were being sanctioned to speed up development to make industrial areas well-connected for better prospects. He said in addition to this connecting the inner city roads with the highways and the Ring Road would also be given top priority under these projects.

The divisional commissioner said Neeraj Srivastava, who had played a pivotal role in the development of the city,

had suggested the construction of a connecting road up to Ring Road direct from Ganga Barrage via Unnao and for carrying out integrated modernised development in alignment of the Ring Road from Mandhana to Lucknow National Highway 27.

He said experts were asked to review the suggestions and there had been positive discussion with the Lucknow divisional commissioner as well.

He added that Srivastava had also submitted a proposal to Joint Secretary Ministry of Road Transport, Amit Ghosh, for connecting Ganga Barrage with Ring Road and from National Highway 34, Mandhana to Dahiney Bandhey of barrage. He added that the joint secretary had ordered a departmental survey and review of the proposal. He added that the officials of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) would soon hold a meeting.

Dr Shekhar said connecting Ganga Barrage with the Ring Road would directly connect Lucknow Highway 27 and it would also reduce the load of traffic moving to Jhansi up to Sachendi as this would be diverted towards the outskirts

of the city via Mandhana. He said this would also benefit the Trans-Ganga Project of UPSIDA and the other proposed projects of Kanpur Development Authority.

He said the committee, apart from commissioner, would comprise of commissioner of police, Kanpur, IG Police, Kanpur Nagar district magistrate, KDA vice chairman, district magistrate of Unnao, Kanpur municipal commissioner, chief conservator of forest Kanpur division, additional district magistrate (finance), joint director industries, chief engineers of KESCO, Irrigation, PWD, KDA chief town planner, NHAI project director, RTO, UPSRTC regional manager and Neeraj Srivastava.

He similarly the sub-committee would comprise KDA secretary, Kanpur Nagar ADM (F&R), Unnao ADM (F&R), additional municipal commissioner, KDA/KMC chief engineer, KDA town planner, secretary, Unnao-Shuklaganj Development Authority, SE Irrigation/PWD, project director NHAI and Neeraj Srivastava, coordinator High Level Joint Development Committee/ Independent director Kanpur Smart City.

# Rake composition of trains to be changed

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

For the convenience of the passengers the rake composition of the following special trains will be changed by the railway administration from different dates. All coaches in them will be of reserved class and passengers traveling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention norms, CPRO PK Singh said.

**GKP-KANPUR ANWARGANJ SPL:** In 05004 Gorakhpur-Kanpur Anwarganj special from June 25 a total of 22 coaches, including one each of generator-cum-luggage van and SLRD, seven of general second class, eight of sleeper class, one of AC second class, three of AC third and one coach of AC first-cum-second class will be attached.

**KANPUR ANWARGANJ-GKP SPL:** In 05003 Kanpur Anwarganj-Gorakhpur special train from June 26, a total of 21 coaches, including one each of generator-cum-luggage van and SLRD, seven of general second class, eight of sleeper, one of AC second, three of AC third and one of AC first-cum-second will be attached.

**GKP-HISAR SPECIAL:** In 02555 Gorakhpur-Hisar special train from June 27 a total of 22 coaches, including one each of generator-cum-luggage van and SLRD, seven of general second class, eight of sleeper, one of AC second, three of AC third and one of AC first-cum-second will be attached.

**HISAR-GORAKHPUR SPL :** In 02556 Hisar-Gorakhpur special train from June 28, a total of 22 coaches, including one each of generator-cum-luggage van and SLRD, seven of general second class, eight of sleeper, one of AC second, three of AC third and one of AC first-cum-second.

## CHANGES IN TIMINGS, STOPPAGES

The railway administration has changed the present running time and stoppages of the following trains at some stations change from June 26. However, their timings and stoppages at the remaining stations will remain the same. All the

coaches in them will be of reserved class and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 norms, CPRO PK Singh said.

**LTT-JAYNAGAR SPL:** The 01061 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Jaynagar special train will leave Bhulanpur at 12.09 hrs, Varanasi City at 12.47 hrs, Sarnath at 13.00 hrs and Aunrihar at 13.22 hrs.

**NEW DELHI - JAYNAGAR SPL:** The 02562 New Delhi - Jaynagar special will leave Ghazipur City at 09.35 hrs and Ballia at 11.00 hrs.

**SITAMARHI - ANVT SPECIAL:** The 04005 Sitamarhi - Anant Vihar Terminus Special train will leave Siwan at 09.35 hrs, Mairwa at 10.12 hrs and Bhatpar Rani at 10.18 hrs.

**SAMASTIPUR-AHMEDABAD SPL:** The 09454 Samastipur-Ahmedabad special train will leave Deoria Sadar at 12.25 hrs.

**NEW DELHI - SAHARSA SPL:** The 02564 New Delhi - Saharsa special train will leave Chhapra at 10.15 hrs.

**CHHAPRA - DELHI SPECIAL:** The 05115 Chhapra - Delhi special train will leave Chhapra at 11.25 hrs, Ballia at 12.30 hrs, Yusufpur at 13.15 hrs, Ghazipur City at 13.40 hrs, Aundihari at 14.25 hrs, Dohhi at 14.53 hrs and Kerakat at 15.07 hrs.

## HOWRAH-LALKUAN SPL FROM JUNE 25

For the convenience of passengers the following special trains will be operated by the railway administration from different dates till further advice. All coaches in them will be of reserved class and passengers will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention norms, CPRO said.

**HOWRAH-LALKUAN WEEKLY:** The 02353 Howrah-Lalkuan weekly special train will be operated from June 25 and 02354 Lalkuan-Howrah weekly special train from June 26 till further advice.

**HOWRAH-KATHGODAM DAILY:** The 03019 Howrah-Kathgodam daily special train will be run from June 30 while the 03020 Kathgodam-Howrah daily special train from July 2 till further advice.

# Child welfare schemes reviewed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Member, UP State Commission for Protection of Child Rights Dr Neeta Sahu held a divisional meeting for reviewing Mukhyamantri Bal Seva Yojana along with other schemes related to child welfare at Bansagar Inspection House on Saturday. She was apprised by PO Shakti Tripathi that under the Mukhyamantri Bal Seva Yojana 40 children who had lost their parents had been identified in which 15 were found illegible, seven had been selected after completion of procedure and cases of 18 others were under process. About child protection home he said it was under construction at Parsiya but its construction had stopped due

to death of fund, he said. Regarding advance preparation in view of the possible third wave of Covid, CMO Dr PD Gupta said arrangements for tackling it had already been done at all four tress head-quarters. BSA informed that Kasturba schools were closed along with other schools and for primary education 2.77 lakh students were enrolled. He said books were to be distributed through groups of maximum five students and amount of school uniform was to be sent to accounts of parents to buy it. The member reviewed schemes related to other departments concerning child welfare and gave necessary directions. The meeting was attended by CMOs, DIOS, BSAs, ALCs of the division along with other officials.

# Mishap death

CORRESPONDENT ■ LAKHIMPUR KHERI

A bike rider was hit by an uncontrolled DCM near Tetapur village under Phoolbehad police station on Saturday. He died before being taken to a hospital. Later people from the nearby areas gathered at the spot and informed the police which sent the body for the post-mortem examination. Thereafter the driver managed to flee from there leaving the DCM behind. The police personnel tried to ascertain the identity of the victim with the help of people belonging to the nearby areas but to no avail. Later they tried it on the basis of the bike number and the deceased was identified as Subhash (26), a resident of Maheva under Kotwali Sadar.

# Anti-malaria campaign to be launched on July 1

**Kanpur(PNS):** Kanpur Nagar District Magistrate Alok Tiwari said that on the directive of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the district and medical authorities had decided to launch an anti-malaria campaign from July 1.

He said this would be part of the communicable disease control programme.

He said the two major threats in the coming season were malaria and dengue and thus proper arrangements had to be made well in advance.

He said the most important factor to control communicable and vector-borne diseases was awareness. He said the irony was that while people kept their houses clean, they were unconcerned about their surroundings.

He said stagnant water, both clean and dirty, was one of the major factors for the rise in vector-borne diseases and thus the district administration along with the medical authorities had decided to combat it effectively.

He said special teams would be set up to ensure that apart from post-infection, the people were made to realise the importance of cleanliness in their surrounding areas.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Nepal Singh said diseases like malaria and dengue exerted a huge burden of morbidity and mortality, particularly affecting the poorest of the poor. He said these could be controlled through vector control. He said insecticide-resistant vectors had become a major cause of concern.

He said the famous adage 'prevention is better than cure' was the most effective method and advised people to ensure there was no stagnant water in their surroundings. He advised them to spray pesticides, use repellents, wear full sleeved clothes and use mosquito nets.

# People asked to take part in Yoga Day event virtually

PNS ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar's Additional District Magistrate Atul Kumar said this year Yoga Day would be observed strictly as per the Covid protocol on Monday, which happens to be the World Yoga Day. He said it was advised that people should remain at home and take part in online yoga.

He said the objective was to ensure that one should boost one's immunity by keeping the body healthy and Yoga was one of the most potent factors to keep mind and body healthy.

He advised all the people to go to #bewithyogabeathome# on social media and video tag to take part in the event

# IIT-K offers free course on cognitive robotics'

**Kanpur (PNS):** The Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur has launched a free online 'Foundations of Cognitive Robotics' course which would be beneficial for both students and industry experts. The objective of conducting the course is to introduce students, researchers to this new field of robotics with the help of illustrative models, facts and relevant theories. The course can be completed in a period of four weeks. The course will be conducted by Prof Bishakh Bhattacharya, professor at the mechanical engineering department who is currently heading the cognitive science programme at IIT Kanpur. He is also coordinator of Space Technology Cell of IIT-Kanpur and head of the smart materials, structures and systems (SMSS) laboratory. The participants can also obtain a certificate for the course by paying Rs 1,000 an d taking an examination on September 26. According to IIT-Kanpur officials, the course has been designed by carefully maintaining a balance between biology, engineering and control system design so that it attracts a broad group of people interested in the interdisciplinary field. Topics to be covered in the course include introduction to cognitive robotics and human-robot interaction, smart materials; brain physiology and neural signal transmission; architecture of the brain, and nerve cells; neural modeling; introduction to synchronisation models, and electroencephalography; theories of intelligence, Kuramoto Model, and child-robot interaction.

# UPMRC erects 500th U-girder in priority corridor

PNS ■ KANPUR

Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation (UPMRC) completed the erection of 500 U-girders on the priority corridor between IIT-Kanpur and Motijheel with the erection of the 500th U-girder at the depot line near Geeta Nagar metro station.

With this, the base for the Metro track (viaduct) is ready up to almost 7 km out of 9 km stretch. The erection of U-Girders began in August 2020 and it took nearly 312 days to complete the work. However, a total of 622 U-girders are to be placed in this corridor.

UPMRC Managing Director Kumar Keshav congratulated the entire team of Metro engineers for completing the erection of 500 U-girders in such a short time span. He said the team was reliable and thus there was full faith in its competency and dedication. He said on account of this the project would be accomplished on time. He said this would end the priority corridor stretch and provide a world-class Metro service to the city on time.

Keshav said the U-girders were pre-cast and were being moulded at the Lakhnagar casting yard. He said only 38 U-girders remained. The casting of U-girders began on January 20, 2020.

He said the track beams of all the eight Metro stations from IIT-Kanpur to Lala Lajpat Rai Hospital were ready. He said the complete load of the train and partial load of the platform fell upon this track beam. He said in the priority corridor, now track beam casting was under progress at the Motijheel Metro station only and it was expected to be completed soon.

# Pediatrician for allowing parents to stay with admitted kids

**Kanpur (PNS):** In view of the apprehended third wave of COVID-19, the LLR Hospital authorities are of the opinion that if the infected children are admitted to the hospital, their parents -- mother and father -- should be allowed to look after the children. The entry of parents to the wards where the sick children will be admitted will be on conditions.

Head of LLRH pediatric department, Dr Yeshwant Rao, strongly supported the decision to allow parents to personally be present beside the child's bed.

He said minor children and kids, if in

critical condition, would not be comfortable if they were alone with doctors and nurses in PPE kits moving around. He said it would become a major problem if the

ers teams will be assigned the task to reach every home and ensure that every person in the house is vaccinated.

The team will also be responsible for spreading awareness and ensuring that the Covid protocol is strictly followed.

As a pilot project in three districts, a vaccination drive will be launched from Monday and every day vaccines will be administered to people aged 18 years and above. The chief medical officer said the drive was being started in Kalyanpur, Bidhnoo and Sarsaul and later it would be extended to the rest of the district.

## THIRD WAVE

# 'Take pride in wearing CRPF combat uniform'



RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF headquarters has issued a directive to all the formations across the country to take pride in wearing the paramilitary's khaki/ combat pattern uniform. The move comes after CRPF chief Kuldip Singh took exception to a number of officers and men wearing the CoBRA pattern fatigue while deployed in Jammu and Kashmir.

Despite repeated reminders for following the uniform rules, even senior officials have been flouting the norms in the Valley.

"During the visit to operational units in Jammu and Kashmir, the DG, CRPF observed that in spite of the instructions, some officers/men are still wearing CoBRA pattern of combat uniform. It is once again reiterated that we

need to take pride in wearing CRPF pattern uniform," an official said, quoting the circular sent recently across the formations.

The official further said, "The competent authority has desired that all officers/men including QATs/CTTs to wear only prescribed pattern khaki/ combat uniforms as applicable in the area."

While QAT refers to Quick Action Teams, the CTT implies Counter-Terrorism Team.

Earlier, similar instructions were issued on April 16 and April 19 this year underscoring the need to adhere to the uniform rules.

In the circular issued on April 16, the DG's office had said, "Competent authority has observed that officers are exhibiting complacency towards their uniform. Uniform is a matter of pride and officers must have an

exemplary turn-out at all times. Commandants and senior officers should not hesitate to point out deficiencies. Henceforth, please ensure that officers and the men they command are smartly turned out." It called for a strict compliance of the order.

Likewise, in a separate letter on April 19, the Force reiterated the importance of wearing proper uniform.

Combat Battalion for Resolve Action (CoBRA) is a specialized anti-Naxal force within the overall command of the CRPF.

The CRPF was raised in 1939 but despite being in existence for over 80 years, the paramilitary does not have a patented pattern for uniform. Besides the CoBRA, the Rapid Action Force (RAF) also has a distinctive pattern of fatigue. The RAF uniform pattern has been copied by the West Bengal

police and the disruptive pattern of the CoBRA uniform has been adopted by several state police forces in absence of any patents for these uniforms.

Despite being the biggest paramilitary with lead roles in various operational theatres, the provisioning directorate has not been able to properly address the continuity and cohesion factor that is instilled through a consistent pattern of uniform.

A senior official said that during the entire winter season every year, the CRPF has to rely on the Jammu and Kashmir Police pattern of jacket in the absence of any authorised pattern of winter jackets (angola dark shade) of its own.

During various official meetings, even the senior officers have been found asking the delegates to wear the JKP pattern of winter jacket to maintain uniformity.

"It is unfortunate that even the Police forces are having better and established dress codes and the lead paramilitary force like CRPF lacks any coherent uniform which is so important for inculcating discipline in the ranks and imparting an unique identity," the official added.

During the last 17 years, the CRPF uniform has been changed thrice and the fatigue in vogue currently was introduced during the then paramilitary chief K Vijay Kumar in 2012.

This combat pattern uniform has bright white patches which could give a distinctive advantage to the ultras during operations in various theatres as they may not be so effective in camouflaging, officials said.

"Frequent changes in the uniform pattern disrupts continuity in outlook and leads to lack of cohesive continuum with regard to the image of the force," this official added.

# ₹4L compensation to Covid-19 victims not feasible: Centre to SC

New Delhi: The Centre has told the Supreme Court that ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh cannot be paid to the families of those who have died of Covid-19 as it is beyond fiscal affordability and the finances of central and state governments are under severe strain.

In an affidavit filed before the top court, the Ministry of Home Affairs said the Centre submitted that it has by ways of "Minimum Standard Relief", under section 12 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, taken several steps providing for substantial and speedy measures by way of increase in health, infrastructure, ensuring food safety to every citizen.

"The prayer of the petitioner for payment of ex-gratia to all deceased persons due to Covid-19 is beyond the fiscal affordability of the state governments. Already the finances of state governments and the central government are under severe strain due to the reduction in tax revenues and increase in health expenses on account of the pandemic.



"Thus, utilisation of scarce resources for giving ex-gratia may have unfortunate consequences of affecting the pandemic response and health expenditure in other aspects and hence cause more damage than good. It is an unfortunate but important fact that the resources of the governments have limits and any additional burden through ex-gratia will reduce the funds available for other health and welfare schemes," the affidavit filed by the Centre said.

It further submitted that under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, Section 12, the "National Authority" is empowered to recommend guidelines for the minimum standards of relief, including ex-gratia assistance and the function entrusted to the authority by the law passed by the Parliament.

"It is well settled through numerous judgements of the Supreme Court that this is a matter which should be performed by the authority, to whom it has been entrusted and not one where the Court will substitute its own judgement for the decision to be

taken by the Executive.

"Any attempt to second guess may create unintended and unfortunate constitutional and administrative ramifications. It may also be noted that the term 'ex-gratia' itself connotes that the amount is not based on legal entitlement," the affidavit stated.

The Centre told the apex court that it is wrong to state that the help can be provided only through ex-gratia assistance as "it would be a rather pedantic and narrow approach".

"A broader approach, which involves health interventions, social protection, and economic recovery for the

affected communities, would be a more prudent, responsible, and sustainable approach. Globally, the governments in other countries too have followed this approach, and have announced interventions that provide fiscal stimulus. Government of India has followed a similar approach," it said.

Earlier, on June 11, the Centre told the top court that issues raised in the pleas, seeking directions for ex-gratia compensation of ₹4,00,000 to the families of those who have died of Covid-19, are "genuine" and are under consideration of the government. PTI

## Centre lost sense of responsibility towards people: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday alleged the Centre has lost all sense of balance and responsibility towards people. The Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said, "Power-drunk Modi government has lost all sense of balance and responsibility towards people. In an affidavit to the Supreme Court, the BJP government claims it doesn't have money to pay even ₹4 lakh as ex-gratia compensation to families of Covid victims." "Does Modi Govt even feel the pain and suffering? No money for compensation to COVID-19 victim families but Rs 20,000 crore are being spent on Central Vista and a palace for prime minister. And where are the ₹3,89,662 crore collected in the year 2020-21 from the loot in prices of petrol and diesel?" he asked in another tweet.

# Nadda asks party workers to focus on Covid-related works

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping an eye on the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and expected third wave in the country, BJP national president JP Nadda on Sunday reviewed the progress of party's work on the ground towards helping out those affected by the virulent second wave of the Coronavirus infection.

In the backdrop of lives lost due to the pandemic across the country and large-scale unemployment following the lockdown, the BJP has reassessed its approach and asked all its central and state ministers, MPs and MLAs to personally focus on Covid-19-related work in their respective areas and mitigate impact of the pandemic.

Six States are going to poll next year including Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Gujarat.

Nadda will now be meeting ministers every Sunday for the next 6 weeks to bring party work in sync with the government's development and welfare policies, an exercise that party has been doing in the first inning of the Modi-



government.

The government has recently been criticised by the opposition for being caught off-guard during the second wave of the Covid-19 in April-May, leading to major casualties.

Nadda's meet will also focus on preparations for the third wave of COVID and be prepared with all that necessary to deal with the pandemic.

Nadda assessed the work done under the programmes 'Sewa hi Sangathan' and 'Vaccination Drive' saying, "Today, a review meeting was held with all the national vice presidents of the BJP on 'Sewa Hi Sangathan', 'vaccination drive' and other programmes and all partymen are doing

their best under the able guidance of the Prime Minister."

As part of its 'Sewa hi Sangathan', BJP has plans to train a woman and a youth worker each in two lakh urban neighbourhoods and villages in the country.

The Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry election campaigns had invited public criticism of Governments and political leaders who were seen to be busy with 'power games', ignoring the surge in the Covid-19 second wave.

The review meeting by Nadda is an attempt to be alert, this time round, to the public sentiments, and ward off opposition attack in view of the approaching assembly polls.

# Chirag to launch 'aashirvaad yatra' from July 5

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Embroiled in a power tussle with his uncle, Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) leader Chirag Paswan on Sunday announced an "aashirvaad yatra" from July 5, the birth anniversary of his father and party founder Ram Vilas Paswan, from Hajipur in Bihar. The move is to popular legitimacy in his battle for the party's ownership with the rival faction, headed by his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras.

Accusing his family rivals of "stabbing" him in the back, Paswan made the announcement following a meeting of the LJP national executive which endorsed his leadership and hit out at the faction headed by his paternal uncle for working against the party's constitution.

Paras, in turn, dismissed the meeting as an assembly of "rented crowd" and claimed that it held no legitimacy.

The Election Commission will now decide whether his group is the real LJP or whether the Chirag-led faction is right, he told reporters.

The meeting chaired by Chirag also urged the Modi government to confer Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour, on Ram Vilas Paswan, a popular Dalit leader from Bihar who died last year.

He claimed that over 90 per cent of the national executive members were in the meeting. The decision to launch the yatra from Hajipur is significant as Paswan's father was elected to the Lok Sabha from there for eight times, and Paras represents the seat now in the House.

Chirag said Hajipur had been "karmabhoomi" of his father and the yatra will roll out across the state and culminate with a meeting of the party's national council.

As he fights an all out battle to reclaim his father's legacy with all other party MPs, including his cousin Prince Raj, siding with Paras, Paswan launched an emotional attack on the rival members of his family for not waiting for even the first death anniversary of Ram Vilas Paswan and stabbing him in the back.



Mawya Sudan, a resident of Jammu and Kashmir, has become the first woman fighter pilot in the Indian Air Force (IAF) from Rajouri district. Hailing from the village of Lamber, of Border Tehsil of Nowshera in Rajouri, she was commissioned into the IAF as Flying Officer. Mawya has become the 12th woman officer and first from Rajouri to be inducted as a fighter pilot in the IAF. Pioneer photo

# Congress alleges scam in land purchase by Ram Temple Trust



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday alleged a scam in the purchase of land by the Ram Temple Trust in Ayodhya and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Supreme Court to "fulfil their responsibility" by ordering a court-monitored probe to find the truth.

AICC chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that the "loot" of funds collected in the name of Lord Ram is "continuing" at the hands of BJP leaders in Ayodhya and questioned the "silence" of the prime minister and the Supreme Court.

He alleged that a BJP leader brought 890 metres of land in Ayodhya for Rs 20 lakh in February and sold it to the Temple Trust for a whopping Rs 2.5 crore, making a profit of 1250 per cent in only 79 days.

"Lord Ram's temple is being constructed as per the orders of the Supreme Court. Is it not the responsibility of the

Supreme Court and its judges and the prime minister who formed the Trust, to find out the truth and investigate this.

"Shouldn't the Supreme Court take cognisance of the matter? The Supreme Court should discharge its duty... hold an audit of the entire transactions under its monitoring and punish the culprits," Surjewala said when asked if the party would move the court.

"Now the question is whether the Supreme Court and the prime minister will discharge their duty, we leave it to their discretion," he said.

Surjewala said if it is anyone's responsibility, it is Prime Minister Modi's as he formed this trust.

"It is not only a question of morality, but it is also a question of constitutionality," he said, adding that the ball is now in the prime minister's court on what action he takes.

He said the people will never forgive anyone who loots donations in the name of Lord

Ram.

The Congress had earlier alleged that land purchased for Rs 2 crore was sold for Rs 18.5 crore to the Trust "within minutes", as per the land deed registered on March 18 this year, and demanded an SC-monitored probe into the "scam".

BJP leaders had hit out at the Congress, claiming those who were opposed to the Ram temple constructions were now trying to derail it by making false and misleading allegations.

Surjewala said with the "facts" now in the public domain, an investigation is required under the supervision of the Supreme Court to ascertain the truth.

Posing five questions to Prime Minister Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, he asked, "What is the reason that Modi-Adityanath ji are completely silent on taking action against the sinners who openly looted funds for the construction of the Ram temple.

# Covid-19 cases falling in country, lowest in 81 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 cases in India continued to witness a declining trend in the country with 58,419 new cases recorded on Sunday, lowest in the last 81 days. In the same time span, 1,576 fatalities were reported which was lowest in 63 days, according to data released by the Government.

India recorded less than 60,000 new coronavirus infections after 81 days taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to 2,98,81,965, while the active cases further reduced to 7,29,243. The death toll climbed to 3,86,713 fatalities.

The active cases further declined to 7,29,243 comprising 2.44 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate improved to 96.27 per cent. A net decline of 30,776 cases has been recorded in the Covid-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 18,11,446 tests were conducted on Saturday

taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of Covid-19 in the country to 39,10,19,083.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 3.22 per cent. It has been less than 5 per cent for 13 consecutive days, the ministry said, adding the weekly positivity rate has declined to 3.43 per cent.

Recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for the 38th consecutive day. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,87,66,009, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.29 per cent, the data stated.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16.

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4.

# Covid-induced hyperglycemia patients can look towards ayurveda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Those who survived Covid-19 but are now battling with too much sugar in their blood, a condition called hyperglycemia that is a signature feature of diabetes, can look towards ayurvedic formulations like BGR-34 which are based on natural bioactive compounds with DPP-4 inhibitory effects to manage the health issues.

According to a global analysis published in the journal, Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolism, at least 14.4 per cent of Covid survivors have reported hyperglycemia causing dysfunctioning of their immune response.

Though a plethora of medicines are available in the market to check hyperglycemia, DPP-4 inhibitors have been found to be most safe to arrest the condition, as per a recent study in Elsevier journal. Symptoms of hyperglycemia are frequent urination, excessive thirst, blurry vision, or unexplained weight

loss.

Developed by one of the labs of the Council Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), BGR-34 has natural bioactive compounds of Daruharidra with DPP-4 inhibitory effects. In fact, as per a research published in the Journal of Drug Research, the primary source of DPP-4 inhibitors is the herbal plant Daruharidra.

Dr AKS Rawat, scientist from CSIR's lab National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow, which has developed the ayurvedic drug, said, "Because of this property, the Daruharidra was added in the herbal formulation BGR-34.

The scientists had researched extensively to study its efficacy."

Besides Daruharidra, BGR-34 has two other herbal elements that control hyperglycemia.

One of these is Gymnemic acids, which again, according to a ChemRxiv journal, controls hyperglycemia in the dia-

betes patients. These are sourced from Gudmaar herbal plants.

Similarly, the chemical element Trigonoside found in fenugreek, yet another herbal plant, too checks high blood sugar levels, as has been detailed in the journal, Environmental Challenge. BGR-34 too, among various other herbal ingredients, contains bioactive compounds of both these medicinal plants.

Giloy, Vijaysaar and Majeeth, all known for their anti-diabetic properties, are already found in BGR-34. Dr Rawat said that these studies are proof that the herbal formulation is also effective in treatment of hyperglycemia in covid survivors.

While nearly one in six people with diabetes in the world being from India which is reeling under Covid-19, cases of hyperglycemia caused by damage of the pancreatic beta cells, leading to insufficient insulin production, is on increase.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Afghan landmine

All stakeholders are busy formulating plans so as to have the most power once the US exits

Afghanistan is a worsening quagmire of confusion with the immediately involved parties working towards their own individualist goals. The United States is singularly focused on vacating the military bases and moving tones of equipment as a prelude to the withdrawal of its troops before September 11. The Taliban, working to a post-withdrawal plan, are intent only on bringing maximum territory under their control because that alone would give them leverage in the future to either negotiate or grab power. The Afghan Government is caught between a withdrawing ally and an aggressive rival, looking for every scrap of support to be able to wield power after September. There is no dearth of friends for the Afghan Government in the region, but none with the clout to nail a permanent peace agreement with the Taliban. The primary, and only, concern of the world is the prospect of the return of terrorism to Afghan soil once the Americans leave. Even with them around, the US never once felt satisfied that the threat to its national security from terror groups in the country has abated. On the one hand, the Taliban are only waiting to turn the country into an Islamic State and, at worst, what they call a "Caliphate". They are already flashing their religious identity as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, intent on taking the country back into the dark ages with their irrational social codes. On the other, they have convivial relations with terrorist groups active in Afghanistan, including Al-Qaeda, and that makes their peace overtures suspect.



Despite signing the Doha Agreement with the US in 2020, the Taliban never attempted to formally distance itself from the terrorist group. India is at the forefront of nations wanting to ensure that terrorism does not raise its head in Afghanistan once again. It has no formal communication links with the Taliban and the word is that it may be reaching out to sections of the Taliban leadership that consider themselves nationalist and not under the influence of Pakistan. Much of the terrorist leadership is currently holed up in Pakistan; so is the orthodox and aggressive Taliban leadership for that matter. Having invested a lot in Afghanistan — it gave nearly \$2 billion in reconstruction aid already — India wants to have a greater say in the country's return to democracy. However, it will have to contend with Pakistan which to date played a subdued role because of the formidable American presence, and now plans a more direct role because of its links with the Taliban and the protection it extends to some terrorist groups. It is to be seen if the signs of a bilateral thaw in the India-Pakistan ties do not face rough weather because of their clashing positions over Afghanistan. An indication will be available at the meeting of the National Security Advisers of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan — virtual or in person — at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting next week.

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### PICTALK



Girls perform yoga ahead of the International Yoga Day, in Surat

# Brutal tactics to keep the Uyghurs in check



PRAFULL GORADIA

### Why can't the Hans of China learn from the example of Indian Hindus towards Muslims and be considerate enough to let the Uyghurs be?

Reports about the treatment of Uyghurs in general and their pregnant women in particular in Xi Jinping's China sound barbaric. If the purpose is family planning, fair enough, but it should be implemented by law and not by force. Cases were reported in this journal from Istanbul which mentioned several women who were up to six-and-a-half months pregnant being forcibly aborted, evidently posing a threat to their lives. True, Muslims are reputed to procreate much more prolifically than other people but that does not mean that the Government should resort to violent means to achieve smaller families.

According to the Hadith (Traditions), Prophet Muhammad once asked a man whether he was married. On being replied in the negative, Muhammad reacted by saying: "Then you are a brother of the Devil." In Islam, even ascetic orders are expected to marry rather than remain single. One of the Prophet's companions, Usman ibn Maz'un, wished to lead a life of celibacy; Muhammad forbade him. Normally such consent is given on condition of the celibate becoming an eunuch. In the same context, the Prophet exhorted his followers to marry women who will love their husbands and be very prolific: "For I wish you to be more numerous than any other people." (Mishkatul Masabih book XIII)

We in India have a long and enormous experience of being ruled by Muslim sultans and, of course, coexisting with them for centuries. This led to serious and prolonged oppression in the 50-year reign of Aurangzeb, which ended in 1707. There was a serious emotional parting of ways. In 1887, the then most prominent Islamic leader Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan of Aligarh fame declared in a public speech that the Hindus and Muslims were separate nations. He repeated his contention the following year.

The next eminence to pronounce the same sentiments in the early 20th century was Justice Syed Ameer Ali. Then in 1930, poet Mohammad Iqbal voiced



that Muslims should have a separate homeland even if inside an Indian confederation. Most Hindu leaders, Gandhiji downwards, ignored these statements and continued to believe that the Congress Party represented all communities. Rightly or incorrectly, because the Congress had members of all communities, the leaders presumed that all of their communities followed the Party. Eventually, Mohammad Ali Jinnah had the Pakistan Resolution passed by the Muslim League at its Lahore session on March 23, 1940. Yet, the Hindus took only limited notice. Nor did the British realise how serious was the Muslim desire for a separate homeland, a New Medina.

On August 16, 1946, Bengal Chief Minister HS Suhrawardy directed a massive pogrom, later called the Great Calcutta Killing; which over three days saw the bloody end of thousands of people. This was Jinnah's way of proving particularly to the British that Hindus and Muslims cannot coexist in the same country. India had to be divided. This is also based on the Islamic theology that Muslims need a Dar-ul-Islam, wherein the law laid down by Sharia is



INDIA STILL HAS MORE MUSLIMS THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY EXCEPT INDONESIA. THIS IS AN UNUSUAL PARADOX. IF SO MANY MUSLIMS CAN HAPPILY LIVE IN INDIA, WHERE WAS THE NEED FOR PARTITION? YET, THE HINDUS HAVE ACCEPTED THIS CONTRADICTION WITHOUT A PROTEST

the only land wherein Muslims can flourish and fulfil themselves. Today, India still hosts more Muslims than any country except Indonesia. This is an unusual paradox. If so many Muslims can happily live in India, where was the need for Partition? Yet, the Hindus have accepted this contradiction without a protest. My question is if the Hindus can be so tolerant, why cannot the Hans of China be considerate enough to let the Uyghurs be?

After all, China has to coexist with many other peoples and countries. There are 57 Islamic countries and they have not yet protested because of what? Possibly sheer fear or business interests. But for how long? Sooner or later, the Islamic fury must explode. In any case, I appeal to the Hans for tolerance in the cause of peace.

In a spirit of freedom and brotherhood, we allowed the Ayodhya litigation to go on for nearly a century, waiting for a court judgment. Then only we have begun to build a temple for lord Ram whom poet Iqbal had described as "Imam-e-Hind". The Muslims of Ayodhya were in favour of building the temple because it would multiply pilgrimage

and consequently bring prosperity. The fight was about an edifice which had no minarets, no *woozu* for washing hands and feet before proceeding to prayers. In fact, it must have been meant as a *mazar* in Babar's memory after he died.

India has had three Muslim Rashtrapatis, Zakir Hussain, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and Abdul Kalam, plus several judges including Supreme Court Chief Justices and election commissioners appointed by, of course, Hindu Governments.

When it comes to elections, all adult citizens have the right to vote. There is no discrimination. In the bargain, Muslims in earlier elections voted *en masse* for one party and it won. The others were slack in casting their votes. But this was tolerant and no solution was applied to stop this practice. The easy solution was compulsory voting; that would have neutralised the *en masse* voting. But the Hindu ethos was too liberal for a drastic measure although nearly a dozen countries, led by Belgium and Australia, practise it.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Sir — In the first political engagement since the August 5, 2019, move by the Centre to end J&K's special status, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on June 24 give an audience to the region's mainstream leadership, including those who were incarcerated for opposing the Centre's move. Modi will chair the meeting. All the leaders have been asked to go for a RT-PCR test before attending the meeting.

It will be the second major peace move in J&K after the successful renewed ceasefire agreement in February this year with Pakistan, which has been demanding a roadmap on J&K to expand the engagement with New Delhi. The sudden move by the Centre also comes in the wake of pressure from the international community, especially the United States, to restore democratic and electoral processes in J&K, which remains under the Centre's rule since 2018. It is a step in the right direction but how far this move will succeed remains to be seen.

CK Subramanian | Navi Mumbai

### SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

Sir — Yoga means "to add"; to add to the good habits in life, to add to peace and prosperity. In the current scenario, the COVID pandemic has devastated almost everything but one thing remains that has helped life move on smoothly, and that's HOPE.

During the troubled days, yoga can be a step towards positivity, relaxation of mind and physical strength. The United Nations gave its nod to the idea on December 10, 2014, and from June 21, 2015, the entire world started celebrating the International Yoga Day. The theme for 2021 is "Yoga for the wellbeing". India has contributed a lot but the patent of that invention was in the hands of the white-skinned developed nations.

We have contributed zero, decimal and a lot more to the world. Several inventions by Indians were being taken away and credited to foreigners. However, we never criticised such moves because we wanted peace and prosperity, unity in diversity. Yoga is not

### Let Telangana schools remain shut



The Centre has advised the States to ease the COVID-19 curbs carefully since we are still living with the virus; it is not fully eradicated. All the States are accordingly easing curbs. In Tamil Nadu, the places of worship have been shut for a long time. Those who believe in God, seek peace and solace by visiting temples. I request the Government to open the temples for the public observing all the norms and COVID protocols.

Meanwhile, the Telangana Government has lifted the lockdown completely. It is shocking that the State has asked the education department to open all categories of educational institutions beginning July 1. Playing with the lives of students

in these times of the pandemic is a matter of serious concern.

The first wave was severe. The second was ferocious and claimed many lives. The third wave is said to be round the corner. It is likely going to affect children the most. Our vaccination strategy is slow. Only 30 crore people have so far been inoculated. Another one crore are in the queue. Our wards, who are below 18 years of age, are yet to be included in the inoculation drive. It may take another few months to inoculate them since the vaccine supply is not commensurate to the population of India. Without masks or maintaining social distancing, people are seen moving around.

At this point, the move to reopen educational institutions seems to be worrisome, problematic and unproductive. It amounts to inviting trouble. It is hard to enforce discipline among students to adhere to the standing protocols against COVID. The heavens will not fall if schools are not opened right now, when the third wave is likely to hit the nation with more severity in a few weeks. The Telangana Government should roll back its decision of reopening of educational institutions.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

of any particular religion but it's for the goodness of the entire humanity. Therefore, we all need to add yoga as an irreplaceable part of our daily routine and life. This will not only make us physically, but also mentally and spiritually, stronger.

Aman Jaiswal | New Delhi

### WEAR FACE MASKS TO SAVE LIVES

Sir — As India prepares to battle the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccinating as many citizens as possible with both doses is unquestionably the most rational way of countering the virus. However, it is equally important for each one of us to prove our pertinacity by wearing face masks.

A face mask is a crucial protective gear to safeguard ourselves. Scientific evidence goes deep into the containment of the Novel Coronavirus by wearing face masks. When

a person expels droplets into the air, they quickly evaporate and shrink to become tiny airborne particles, called "droplet nuclei".

But in a moist atmosphere, between a person's mouth and the mask, it takes nearly a hundred times as long for a droplet to evaporate and shrink into droplet nuclei. This means that nearly any kind of simple cloth mask is great for source control. The mask creates humidity, and prevents the virus-containing droplets from turning into droplet nuclei, allowing the fabric of the mask to block the droplets. Studies suggest that if 80 per cent of people wear masks in public, the COVID-19 transmission can certainly be halted.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

## The third coming

There is an urgent need for our citizens to heed experts and desist from reckless behaviour in public

The third wave of the COVID-19 virus is rapidly stealing upon us, if one were to go by either expert opinion or by the insouciant behaviour of our fellow countrymen in crowded public places. Barely has the nation's nose emerged from the sinking feeling that was the second wave of the Novel Coronavirus and its myriad variants, what with the accompanying horrors of the shortage of medical oxygen, hospital beds and ancillary medical supplies, the scary prediction now comes that the third wave could be far closer to us than we had imagined. Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences director Randeep Guleria has said in no uncertain terms that the third wave is inevitable in the "next six-eight weeks" if people don't adhere to COVID-appropriate behaviour. The virus can make a comeback within two months, much earlier than the trend noticed in India so far, if the unlocking process is not measured. Even though the vaccination drive is going on in full swing, with both the Centre and the State Governments doing their best



to make amends for the earlier oversight and the time lost because of it, there is still a disconcertingly huge window during which the virus can stage a dreadful comeback before the effects of the inoculation drive kick in.

So far, India has been able to fully vaccinate only about five per cent of its 950 million eligible population, leaving the other teeming millions vulnerable to infections and deaths. Needless to say, there is an urgent need for aggressive surveillance strategy in the COVID hotspots and even to again order lockdowns in case of significant surge in any particular area. Meanwhile, while the number of cases is still declining in the country, this is the right time to reflect upon past mistakes and take lessons for the future: Remember how the second wave took the complacent nation by surprise and swept the healthcare system off its moorings in many States? The drop in the infection rate in India surely is a positive sign, but that should be no reason for us to slacken our vigil. If there is a sudden jump in the numbers, god forbid, no healthcare system in the world can deal with such a large number of people simultaneously needing intensive care. We need to utilise this time to strengthen our healthcare facilities; each life is worth fighting for.

## SOUND BITE

The Congress believes that grant of full statehood to J&K as also holding elections... instead of a rule by Delhi, is the only way forward. so that people are able to elect their representatives



Congress general secretary — Randeep Singh Surjewala



The Government is in no rush to reopen the country's international borders.

Australia's Trade Minister — Dan Tehan



I look at it this way — I want my beard also to tell a story, to define me.

Actor — Arjun Kapoor



Psychologically, I think it (the draw) is a big boost and it definitely will put England on the back foot.

India women's cricket team skipper — Mithali Raj



Over the last two years, Shri @ombirakota Ji has ushered in a series of steps that have enriched our parliamentary democracy and enhanced productivity.

Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

## PEOPLE NEED TO TAKE INITIATIVE

World leaders keep meeting on climate change issue but there is no genuine commitment to the cause



VK BAHUGUNA

The Covid-19 lockdown last year had one positive fallout - the sky regained its brilliant blue as the perennial haze of pollution lifted and one could see the Himalayan range from far-off places like Delhi and Chandigarh. Metros like Delhi and Mumbai became pollution-free, wild animals started foraging for food in cities and towns, and rivers became cleaner. This is, however, a grim reminder that humanity must change its materialist, extravagant lifestyle and establish equilibrium with nature. That is the special message of the pandemic.

When the air pollution levels came down, there was a perceptible decline in respiratory diseases. One study said the improved air quality index on account of reduced human activities in Chennai was similar to that of European countries. The forests got a reprieve with reduced instances of forest fires, illegal felling of trees, and poaching. This writer noticed how migratory birds which normally returned home during February-March stayed back till May end. In zoos sans tourists the animals regained their natural composites and behaviours. In the Satpura Tiger Reserve of Madhya Pradesh, tigers, which had got used to regular movement of tourists, started liking their isolation and fretted upon seeing forest guards on patrols. According to Central



Pollution Control Board, the Ganga, Yamuna, and Gomati rivers' water became cleaner. Dolphins were sighted in the Ganga near Meerut.

These examples tell people to adopt climate-friendly behaviours in their day-to-day lives. Look at Jadhav Payeng from Jorhat, Assam who got the 'Forest Man of India Award' in 2010 for turning 550 hectares of barren land into a lush green forest.

National Governments the world over started climate change negotiations after the Kyoto Protocol came into being in 2005. However, there is no genuine commitment to climate change even though world leaders meet every now and then because of never-ending politics. In India too, despite good initiatives like the solar alliance, the bureaucracy is unable to stem the rot in the field of environmental conservation.

Let us consider some citizen's initiatives which can make a big difference to the environment. Let us go for water harvesting and recharging in every home. Climate change was responsible for about 74 per cent of flash floods and droughts in the last 20 years. In cities 90 per cent of rainwater goes waste because of excessive construction activities. In contrast, 90 per cent of the rainwater gets absorbed in forests, recharging the aquifers, streams, and rivers. Every household having a 200 sq. mt. area can recharge around two lakh litres of rainwater every year.

Second, each tree gives oxygen for 10 people to survive. Everybody should plant a tree every year. A big tree absorbs 21 kg of carbon dioxide (CO2) and in 100 years reduces one tonne of CO2.

Third, food wastage is the biggest environmental problem as it wastes water and food grains. In 2019, nine billion tonnes of food was wasted in the world, releasing 70.41 lakh tonne methane gas. If we stop this wastage, eight percent reduction in greenhouse emissions can be ensured. Four, we must stop the use of paper cups to save at least 65 lakh trees and billions of gallons of water. Five, we need to use electricity carefully because 40 percent of carbon emissions are due to electricity production. If we can switch off the wi-fi and laptops we can reduce the emissions by 16 percent. Six, cars contribute to huge carbon emissions and if we limit the car speed to 70 kmph, it will reduce emission by 8 percent. The principle is at the speed 100 kmph the emissions increase by 28 percent.

(The writer is Chairman, Centre for Resource Management and Environment. The views expressed are personal.)

## Dealing with Delhi CM Kejriwal's 'ration mafia'



UTTAM GUPTA

The scheme mooted by the Delhi Government will only create more avenues for the middlemen to make money at the cost of the taxpayer

Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister, National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi has justified his much-trumpeted scheme for door-step delivery of ration on the ground that this will help rein in what he describes as 'ration mafia' while ensuring that every grain of the subsidized food reaches the person (read: the poor) for whom it is intended.

Who is this 'ration mafia'? How does it plunder the subsidized food? Can the scheme prevent it?

Under the National Food Security Act, 2013, the Union Government directs the Food Corporation of India and other state agencies to procure food from the farmers at MSP (minimum support price) and organize its distribution to a mammoth population of 800 million people through an elaborate network of fair price shops (in common parlance, these are called 'ration shops') at the subsidized price of ₹2, ₹3 and ₹1 per kg for wheat, rice, and coarse cereals, respectively. Each person is eligible to receive 5 kg of cereals per month.

Considering that the cost of procurement, handling, and distribution is higher (in fact, many times more) than these ridiculously low selling prices, the Centre reimburses the excess amount as 'food subsidy' to the FCI and other agencies and is paid from the Union Budget.

During 2020-21, a total of ₹463,000 crore was paid to FCI. Apart from regular payment of ₹215,000 crore, this included about ₹150,000 crore towards free food given to all the 800 million beneficiaries as also to the migrant labour during April-November, 2020 under the Aatmanirbhar package. The balance amount was used for paying off a good slice of the loan taken by FCI from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) to finance the shortfall in subsidy reimbursements by the Centre in the past. Additionally, Rs 40,000 crore was paid to other state agencies under decentralized procurement (DCP).

During 2021-22, payment to FCI is expected to be about ₹302,000 crore including ₹202,000 crore being the budget allocation and an additional about ₹100,000 crore to provide for free food under Aatmanirbhar till November 2021 (announced subsequently to mitigate the impact of the second pandemic wave). A further ₹40,000 crore is available for DCP.

The scheme is pan-India, covering all the 28 states and eight union territories including the NCT of Delhi. The stuff unveiled by Kejriwal is merely an improvisation of this scheme. Unlike the latter wherein the beneficiary has to go to the ration shop for collecting 5 kg of cereals per month, under the former, the State Government will arrange for delivery of 4 kg of wheat flour and one kg rice at his/her doorsteps. Hopefully, he/she need not pay extra for getting 'wheat as flour' or receiving ration at home.

However, the delivery will be at a huge cost to the state exchequer by way of the Government having to pay vendors for picking up wheat from the ration shop, process it into flour and deliver back to the shop in round one, and then lifting the wheat flour plus rice and delivering the packet to each of the millions of beneficiaries at their homes in round two. This cost will have to be funded by the state as an 'additional subsidy' over and above what is given by the Centre.



THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM CANNOT BE SEEN IN ISOLATION FROM ITS SOURCE. IT HAS TO DO WITH PLENTY OF FOOD AVAILABLE 'VIRTUALLY FOR FREE' WHICH IGNITES THE GREED OF STAKEHOLDERS LEADING TO PILFERAGE AND OTHER ILLS. THIS FREE CULT HAS TO STOP

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



Fundamentally, the Delhi scheme being the same as the Centre's, if the charge (read: 'ration mafia') leveled by Kejriwal holds for the latter then this will also hold for the former. Let us examine.

When the owner of a ration shop has in his stock wheat/rice meant for distribution to ration card holders (RCH) at ₹2/₹3 per kg, he may get a strong temptation to divert it to the open market where they can fetch a minimum of ₹25/₹35 per kg. He will take deliveries from the FCI godown in the name of a 'fictitious' RCH and sell all those quantities in the market raking in a clear bonanza of ₹23 and ₹32 per kg on wheat and rice, respectively. This indeed is happening on a massive scale all over India and has been recognized by the Prime Minister too.

To stem the rot, the Modi Government has taken several measures including the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme which has at its core, the e-POS machine at all ration shops. Under this modus operandi, supply of the subsidized food to the beneficiary is made conditional upon him/her authenticating - using Aadhaar - taking delivery with the sale getting registered on the e-POS machine. This is uploaded onto the web portal on a 'real time' basis which should help in detecting

dubious sales if any.

Since 2014, reportedly, the Government has weeded out close to 44 million bogus ration cards which are equivalent to 176 million beneficiaries (assuming four persons on a card) or nearly 20 per cent of 800 million covered under NFSA. This is a creditable achievement. However, considering the large-scale diversion which in some states could be as high as 50 per cent, there is still a long way to go.

The menace of bogus ration cards is only a part of a larger problem in the public distribution system (PDS) as pilferage could be happening even at other levels in the supply chain; for instance, at the rake unloading points and godowns of the FCI. Reports of the disappearance of food stocks worth about ₹20,000 crore in Punjab in 2016 is a glaring example. The misuse of budgetary resources also manifests in other forms such as inefficiencies in handling operations of FCI/other state agencies and inflated claims (including bogus claims) towards various expenses.

All this happens because, under the existing system, the agencies get reimbursement for the costs on an 'actual' basis. This indeed is the most serious flaw in the scheme. Camouflaged under the noble banner of 'food subsidy',

albeit, for the millions of poor, this often goes unchallenged even when irregularities are pointed out by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

The scheme mooted by the Delhi Government does nothing to address this flaw. It will only create more avenues for middlemen to make money at the cost of the taxpayer. What is the way forward?

The solution to the problem cannot be seen in isolation from its source. It has to do with plenty of food available 'virtually for free' which ignites the greed of stakeholders leading to pilferage and other ills. This free cult has to stop.

The Government should unshackle the food supply and distribution chains. It should put the subsidy currently built into the sale price of food, say, ₹32 per kg on rice (cost: ₹35 per kg minus subsidized price: ₹3 per kg) or ₹160 per person per month (under the NFSA, he/she is eligible to get 5 kg in a month) in the account of a beneficiary who can use it to buy from wherever he/she chooses. This is the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of subsidy. While fully protecting the poor, it can help in curbing the colossal loot and wastage of public money that is germane to the existing dispensation.

Will Prime Minister Modi bite the bullet?

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

I HAVE REQUESTED THE LOK SABHA SPEAKER TO REVIEW HIS DECISION (OF ACCEPTING PK PARAS AS THE LJP LEADER IN THE HOUSE).

— LJP LEADER CHIRAG PASWAN



WE HAVE FORMED A NEW NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OF THE PARTY. ALL OTHER PARTY WINGS HAVE BEEN DISBANDED.

— LJP FACTION LEADER PASHUPATI KUMAR PARAS

## Re-inventing privacy in the digital market

Digital markets that emerged as State's attempts to ensure safety for lives of citizens now shape up benefitting organised and powerful corporates

The Covid-19 pandemic has facilitated the rapid expansion of e-commerce and digital trade, commerce, and financial transactions. At the same time, it put paid to socially interactive marketplaces and face-to-face contacts. Safety is the key concern that confines citizens to digital platforms and shrinks the space of personal liberty, social interaction, and human collectives and communities. One is reminded of Benjamin Franklin's warning, "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety."

If in the name of safety, the 'social contract' is relinquished and it is replaced by the authority of the State to gov-



PRAZENJIT BISWAS

(The author is a philosopher and political analyst based in Shillong. The views expressed are personal.)

ern the lives of private citizens in exchange for safety and security, it ends up benefiting the minions of the digital markets that set up a new normal for citizens.

What philosopher Michael Sandel characterized as a transition from market relations in socially necessary fields like health, education, and human security to an overall 'market society' is seemingly taking a digital turn during the pandemic. This picture of digital markets restrains choice-based consent and limits it to partially informed advantages. Digital economy tweaks choices, restrains access to essential resources, and dilutes ethical practices to market sentiments, even if it creates moral hazards. An AI-controlled collusive



behaviour on the part of human traders and customers is the outcome of uncontrolled digital deals that might tamper with the sovereign individuals.

A moral hazard of such a digital marketplace is the way the bot called Tay on Twitter, which learned abuses from the trolls, heaped it back upon a

feminist activist. Both State and non-state actors use botnets to surreptitiously control infected devices to hack, spy, and disable targets. As botnets cannot be attributed with intent, it helps to distance the actus reus of the perpetrator and allow them to escape with impunity. As a result, botmasters enjoy economic incentives to spread these bot networks that can be used for mining cryptocurrency, credit card fraud and distributed denial of services, etc. The bots can further position themselves as autonomous agents (AA) by camouflaging their point of origin, while they can feed their masters confidential information so that the targeted victim suffers definitive harm in multiple socio-economic parameters.

Given this default and design difficulty in fixing liability on cyber-attackers, there is a greater risk for liberty and freedom of speech of internet users. In a sense, cyberspace itself can be used to curtail and abridge various freedoms like privacy rights and the right to dissent by deploying surveillance and secret watch. Digital marketplaces facilitated a direct connection between cyberattack and surveillance, as personal data breaches are the route through which these actions are carried out. Though cyberattacks are illegal, surveillance assumes both legality and legitimacy by subjecting users to irrevocable meta consent as the new social contract in digital, virtual, and

cyberspaces. The ecosystem of the digital market, therefore, constructs the human agency and utilizes underlying technological structures to give meanings to both security and surveillance mechanisms. Digital markets create contested information spaces where the defense of users' rights versus the powers of governmental institutions remain locked up in a battle of legitimacy. The digital marketplace makes it possible to reduce the human being to a node, or better, into datasets on its networks. The digital life of such a reduced person is endowed with nominal rights of privacy and liberty, as such rights are subjected to the arbitrary ordeal of policing, profiling, moralizing. This is how digi-

tal marketplaces make it impossible for the marginalized segments of society by making them 'illegible' in political and economic affairs, if not completely 'ineligible'.

In the name of safety and security concerns, privacy breaches have been normalized by thinning down the line between legal surveillance and illicit attacks. The growth of digital trading and the increase in economic transactions in cyberspace now provides both the final reason and justification for increased control by both state and non-state actors. Once the right to privacy is breached in this manner, the resultant insecurity defeats all ethical-legal injunctions that could have given healthy immunity to digital markets.

# Govt open to more measures to boost economy: CEA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is open to coming out with more measures to boost the economy which has been hit by the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, says Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) K V Subramanian.

He, however, added that the demand for a fresh stimulus package has to be considered against the backdrop of a host of initiatives taken by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget for 2021-22 presented in February.

The Chief Economic Advisor was responding to a suggestion made by some industry bodies that the government needed to come out with a Rs 3 lakh crore stimulus package to boost the economy which was badly hit by the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic in April-May. According to an assessment by the Reserve Bank, the second wave has cost the nation about Rs 2 lakh crore in terms of output loss.

"Like last year, we do remain very open to coming up with more measures as well...But I think it is really important to take into account the big differences

between last year and this year when we talk about stimulus," he told PTI in an interview.

Elaborating his point, the CEA said that unlike the previous budget which was framed before the pandemic, the 2021 budget was presented amid the pandemic and had already incorporated significant fiscal expansion.

The focus is particularly on infrastructure spending which leads to construction activity and subsequently creation of jobs in the informal sector and demand generation, he said. It was witnessed during the January-March quarter of the last financial year, he added.

The significant capital spending by the government led to a 15 per cent increase in the construction sector in the fourth quarter and the gross fixed capital formation to GDP surged to 34 per cent, the highest in the last six years.

Emphasising that the final objective is to ensure that the economic recovery gathers pace, he said, the government will do whatever is necessary to ensure that.

With regard to food security for the poor, he said, the government has already

extended the free food programme for 80 crore population till November.

The extension of PM Garib Kalayan Yojana would cost about Rs 70,000 crore, he said, adding free vaccination for all is another important economic measure.

"Vaccine as you would appreciate is by far the most important from the perspective to get back into the path of economic recovery," he said.

On the effect of the second wave on growth, Subramanian said, there will be some impact but it is not likely to be very large.

The Economic Survey 2020-21 released in January this year had projected GDP growth of 11 per cent during the current financial year ending March 2022.

India's economy contracted by less-than-expected 7.3 per cent in the fiscal year ended in March 2021 after growth rate picked up in the fourth quarter, just before the world's worst outbreak of coronavirus infections hit the country.

The GDP print was better than expected contraction of 8 per cent for 2020-21 as projected by the Economic Survey.

# Sebi reconstitutes Takeover Panel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has reconstituted its Takeover Panel, which looks into the applications seeking exemption from the mandatory open offer that an acquirer needs to make to minority shareholders.

The regulator has appointed N Venkatram MD and CEO, Deloitte India as the new member of the Takeover Panel, latest update with Sebi showed.

The panel, chaired by N K Sodhi, the former Chief Justice of the High Courts of Karnataka and Kerala, makes its recommendations to Sebi on such applications after which the regulator gives an opportunity to concerned parties before passing an order.

Sodhi was also the former presiding officer of the Securities Appellate Tribunal.

The other members of the panel are Darius Khambata (former advocate general, Maharashtra) and Thomas Mathew T (former chairman of Life Insurance Corporation of India).

Sebi had first constituted a four-member Takeover Panel in November 2007, under chairmanship of former Bank of Baroda chairman K Kannan.

# Draft Cabinet note floated for 100% FDI in oil PSUs approved for disinvestment: Sources



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Commerce and Industry Ministry has floated a draft Cabinet note seeking inter-ministerial views on a proposal to allow up to 100 per cent foreign investment under automatic route in oil and gas PSUs, which have an 'in-principle' approval for disinvestment, sources said.

The move, if approved by the Union Cabinet, would facilitate privatisation of India's second biggest oil refiner Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL).

The government is privatising BPCL and is selling its entire 52.98 per cent stake in the company.

Sources said that as per the draft note, a new clause would be added in the FDI policy under the petroleum and natural gas sector.

According to the proposal, foreign investment up to 100

per cent under the automatic route would be allowed in cases where an 'in-principle' approval for disinvestment of a PSU has been granted by the government.

For BPCL privatisation, mining-to-oil conglomerate Vedanta had put in an expression of interest (EOI) for buying the government's 52.98 per cent stake in the PSU. The other two bidders are said to be global funds, one of them being Apollo Global Management.

After collating the views, the commerce and industry ministry would seek approval of the union cabinet on the proposal.

At present, only 49 per cent FDI is permitted through automatic route in petroleum refining by the public sector undertakings (PSU), without any disinvestment or dilution of domestic equity in the existing PSUs.

# Air India has time till mid-July to challenge Cairn lawsuit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Air India has time till mid-July to challenge the lawsuit filed by Britain's Cairn Energy PLC demanding that a US federal court force the airline to pay a \$1.26 billion arbitration award it had won against the Indian Government in December last year, sources said.

Air India is controlled by the Indian Government so much that they are 'alter egos', Cairn had said in the lawsuit filed with the US District Court for the Southern District of New York. The court should hold the airline company liable for the arbitration award, the company had said.

A three-member international arbitration tribunal that consisted of one judge appointed by India had unanimously in December overturned levy of taxes on Cairn retrospectively and ordered refund of shares sold, dividend confiscated and tax refunds withheld to recover such demand.

The government of India, despite participating in the arbitration proceeding over four years, has not accepted the award and has filed a setting aside petition in a court in The Netherlands - the seat of the

arbitration.

With Cairn seeking to recover the award from state-owned entities such as Air India, the government has said it will contest any enforcement. Air India has time till mid-July to file a plea contesting Cairn lawsuit, three sources aware of the matter said.

The airline, which is in the process of being privatised, is likely to argue that it is a separate entity and not the alter ego of the Indian government and cannot be forced to pay for any liability of the government, they said.

Air India spokesperson declined to comment on the story.

Cairn has identified USD 70 billion of Indian assets overseas for potential seizure to collect award, which now totals to USD 1.72 billion after including interest and penalty.

The assets identified range from Air India's planes to vessels belonging to the Shipping Corporation of India, and properties owned by state banks to oil and gas cargoes of PSUs, the sources said.

These assets are across several jurisdictions, they said without giving further details.

# Petrol crosses ₹97 in Delhi, diesel nears ₹88 after another price hike

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol price in the national capital crossed ₹97 a litre and diesel neared ₹88 after fuel prices were raised yet again.

Petrol price was hiked by 29 paise per litre and diesel by 28 paise, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

The hike -- 27th in seven weeks -- pushed fuel prices across the country to new historic highs.

In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of ₹97.22 a litre, while diesel is now priced at Rs 87.97 per litre.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges.

And because of this, petrol retails at over Rs 100 per litre mark in eight states and union territories -- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Among the metros, petrol is already above Rs 100 in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

In Mumbai, petrol now costs Rs 103.36 a litre and diesel comes for Rs 95.44.

# Sebi bars PNB Housing shareholders from voting on ₹4,000 cr-Carlyle deal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a rare regulatory move, Sebi has restrained PNB Housing Finance from going ahead with shareholders' voting on the proposed ₹4,000 crore-deal with Carlyle group and directed the company to carry out the valuation process as per the relevant legal provisions.

The watchdog said the resolution regarding the deal, which was to be put for shareholders' vote on June 22, was "ultra-vires" of the company's Articles of Association (AoA).

The transaction, which has come under the lens of Sebi and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) following concerns raised in certain quarters, including by a proxy advisory firm, would eventually see private equity major Carlyle group taking control of PNB Housing Finance, which is a subsidiary of Punjab National Bank.

The company's meeting is scheduled for Tuesday (June 22) to take up the matter for approval of the shareholders.

"The current resolution bearing item no. 1 (issue of securities of the company and matters related therewith) of EGM notice dated May, 31,

2021 is ultra-vires of AOA and shall not be acted upon until the company undertakes the valuation of shares as prescribed under 19(2) of AOA, for purpose of preferential allotment, from an independent registered valuer as per the provisions of applicable laws," PNB Housing Finance said in a late night filing referring to Sebi letter to ensure compliance.

The company, promoted by PNB, said it had received the letter from Sebi on June 18, 2021, calling upon the company to comply with the legal provisions in the matter. The said report shall be considered by the company's board while deciding on the preferential issue of shares and warrants, Sebi has asked.

"The company and its board of directors have considered the Sebi letter, and continue to believe that the company has acted in compliance with all relevant applicable laws, including the applicable pricing regulations prescribed by Sebi, and the AOA of the company, and that such preferential allotment is in the best interests of the company, its shareholders and all relevant stakeholders," PNB Housing Finance said in the filing.

# FPIs infused ₹13 k cr in Indian markets in June so far

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pumped in a net ₹13,667 crore so far in June as Indian markets continued to remain attractive to overseas investors.

However, market experts noted that FPIs withdrew money from Indian equities this week.

According to depositories data, FPIs invested ₹15,312 crore in equities between June 1 and June 18.

"The US Federal Reserve has signalled that it will start raising interest rates in 2023. This caused a sell-off on a global level that caused some money to be withdrawn from Indian equities," said Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO of Groww.

However, India is not a destination where investors put in money based on short-term trends.

India has always been an attractive spot for FPIs and these short-term trends will have short-term effects only, he added.

In the longer horizon, India will continue to get invest-

ments as its economy continues to expand, Jain further said.

"Of late, INR depreciation is attracting incremental buying interest in IT stocks," noted VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

During the same period, overseas investors withdrew Rs 1,645 crore from the debt segment.

The total net inflow stood at Rs 13,667 crore.

Prior to this, they had pulled out Rs 2,666 crore in May and Rs 9,435 crore in April.

"The US Fed's hawkish statement that it might raise interest rates much earlier than assumed could further adversely impact flows into Indian debt markets," said Himanshu Srivastava, associate director-manager research, Morningstar India.

Regarding other emerging markets, Shrikant Chouhan, executive vice president, equity technical research at Kotak Securities, said that most of them have seen FPI inflows this month to date except for Taiwan and South Korea.

# Aloe vera chemical may be of use in memory chips: IIT-Indore study

PTI ■ INDORE

A study by the Indian Institute of Technology Indore in Madhya Pradesh has found that aloe vera has an "electronic memory effect chemical" that may be useful in making memory chips and other data storage devices, an official from the premier facility said on Sunday.

The study was carried out by the Materials and Device (MAD) laboratory of the institution's physics department, he said.

"As part of our study, we used electric current in aloe vera fruit juice, which brought forth that it has an electronic memory effect chemical, and as per need, its conductivity can be increased and decreased," Dr Rajesh Kumar, Associate Professor of the Physics Department of IIT Indore told PTI on Sunday.

"Synthetic chemicals are used for making data storage devices like memory chips. If experts on the subject go for in-depth research, the natural chemical found in aloe vera fruit juice might open up a new vista in place of synthetic chemicals with which these devices are made," he informed.

Kumar said the study was conducted by the physics department's Materials & Device (MAD) laboratory with the participation of PhD student Tanushree Ghosh along with Suchita Kandpal, Chanchal Rani, Manushree Tanwar, Devsh Kumar Pathak and Anjali Choudhary.

# Labour Ministry mulls extending ABRY deadline till March 2022 to boost fresh hiring

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Labour and Employment is considering extending the timeline of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) till March next year from the existing June 30, in a bid to boost fresh hiring in the country amid the pandemic, said sources.

Under the ABRY approved by the Union Cabinet in December last year, the Government pays mandatory employees provident fund contributions of workers as well as employers for new recruits for a period of two years.

Under the scheme with an outlay of Rs 22,810 crore, workers recruited from October 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, were covered.

"The Ministry of Labour and Employment is in the process of circulating a Cabinet proposal for extending the timeline for ABRY till March 2022," sources told PTI.

The source explained that about 21 lakh new recruits are benefitted so far which is far less than government's expectation of 58.5 lakh.

Therefore, the labour ministry would push for extending the deadline of the scheme till March next year as the allocation of funds for the scheme was done keeping in mind the 58.5 lakh beneficiaries, the source added.

During the pandemic, the government took a series of steps to boost employment generation and to give relief to workers grappling with job loss and pay cuts.

The ABRY was one of those measures. Government had allocated Rs 22,810 crore for the entire period of implementation of the scheme from 2020 to 2023.

# Demand for talent will be key dependency for growth amid rapid digital shift: Rishad Premji

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The demand for talent will outpace supply and become a "key dependency" for growth as enterprises globally accelerate digital adoption with virtual, Wipro Chairman Rishad Premji said.

The Bengaluru-based company has effected "bold changes" in the last six months to help serve customers better and is well-positioned to leverage as well as enable digital transformations for its clients.

Premji said in the company's annual report for FY21.

The former Nasscom chairman noted that technology is often at the forefront of economic recovery, but especially now, as the pandemic precipitated structural changes across industries and challenged established ways of working.

Whether it is digital commerce, online education, or telemedicine, technology-enabled business models have emerged across the board, with cloud technology as the cornerstone of this transformation, he added.

"With the rapid shift to digital, the demand for talent will outpace supply, and become a key dependency for growth. Already we see new delivery models, such as 'work from anywhere' and

'Crowdsourcing', become the mainstay. We expect virtual, remote, community-based, and distributed work models to be the future of work," Premji said.

He added that as vaccination efforts ramp up globally and economies start seeing a rebound, clients keen to invest in and accelerate their digital transformation and the key to success for IT players would be "to respond to this opportunity with speed and agility".

Premji said the company had triggered its business continuity plans to quickly enable remote working as the pandemic broke out, and less than 3 per cent of its global workforce currently is working from office.

"We have settled well into this new way of working and have continued to make our customers successful. We enjoy their confidence, and I have no doubt that a hybrid model may well be how we work in the future," he added.

Premji said global cooperation is critical, especially in view of the pandemic and that vaccines for COVID-19 are one of the greatest examples of collaboration and pioneering science.

"We must now work to scale the supply chain, build mechanisms for equitable distribution and drive an effi-

cient administration for these life-saving vaccines," he added.

Rishad, who took over as chairman in 2019 succeeding his father Azim Premji, said Wipro Ltd, Wipro Enterprises and Azim Premji

Foundation, together committed about Rs 1,125 crore (about USD 150 million) in April 2020, towards tackling the unprecedented health and humanitarian crisis arising from the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

"Over the past 12 months, we have supported more than 1,500 projects covering humanitarian aid, integrated healthcare support, and livelihood regeneration. Cumulatively, we have reached out directly to more than 18 million people through our coordinated and comprehensive COVID-19 response, to provide humanitarian aid and help with livelihood regeneration," he said.

For employees, the company has undertaken a number of initiatives, including providing COVID-19 Isolation Care centres for staff and their families, partnering with major hospitals to provide medical support to critically ill employees, additional medical reimbursement and leaves related to COVID-19, as well as vaccination at campuses.

# Life insurers may see short-term pressure on profitability due to pandemic: ICICI Pru Life

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic life insurance industry may see pressure on its profitability in the short-term as the coronavirus pandemic has cast doubt on the certainty related to morbidity and mortality in the country, ICICI Prudential Life said in its annual report.

India became an epicentre with a spike in cases in the second wave of the pandemic, amidst shortage in medical supplies. There are concerns about the possibility of a third wave hitting the country, ICICI Prudential Life said in its annual report for 2020-21.

In FY21, the life insurance industry reported a modest 3 per cent growth in new business premium, said the report, adding the industry continues to get a higher share of household savings because of the increased attractiveness of life insurance savings products, the unique proposition of protection and annuity products among others.

"In the short-term, the profitability of the insurance industry is expected to be an area of concern given the increase in mortality and morbidity rates induced by the pandemic. Even more

than a year after the pandemic first struck, there continues to be significant uncertainty regarding its absolute impact on mortality and morbidity experience," the insurer said.

The pandemic has posed multiple challenges for the Indian life insurers. The onset of the pandemic saw a sharp fall in equity prices, while interest rates also declined.

Insurers have exposure to equities in unit-linked and participating businesses. Thus interest rate movements impact their liabilities and guarantees based based schemes. While, a credit risk can impact their investments made incorporates.

The sharp movements in markets, coupled with any asset liability mismatches that insurers may have, can impact the solvency position. The report said there are emerging risks related to environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues on the insurance industry of which climate change is a bigger challenge.

Apart from climate change, there are emerging risks associated with public health trends such as increase in obesity related disorders and demographic changes such as population urbanisation and ageing, said the

report.

Industry's growth even during the pandemic shows a promising future for the domestic life insurance sector, however, the pandemic has also exposed the gap in the protection gap in the country, said the report.

The number of Covid-19 related death claims is fraction of the number of overall lives lost, highlighting the vulnerability of the families, ICICI Pru Life said.

The insurer said it has become imperative for every working individual to add life insurance as a key ingredient of financial planning.

During the year, the pandemic amplified the need for life insurance among people, leading to the category slowly moving from being a "push product" to a "nudge product", ICICI Prudential Life Insurance said.

The company's total premium income during FY21 was Rs 35,733 crore of which Rs 13,032 crore was new business premium.

"On the back of the risk-averse behaviour of our customers, there was considerable interest for traditional long-term savings products which grew by 61.2 per cent for the year," said the insurer.

# DTPA says many teething problems in new IT portal

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Direct Taxes Professionals Associations (DTPA) claimed that many tax professionals are facing numerous problems or teething issues in the revamped Income Tax portal which was launched recently.

The DTPA in a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman claimed about 40 problems in the new income tax portal for filing of returns.

The DTPA has also urged the Finance Minister to extend by two months date for payment of tax under Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme as also date for furnishing TDS/ TCS statements and for other compliance which are due by June 30 as offices are non-functional in most states due to COVID-19 pandemic.

DTPA Representation Committee chairman Narayan Jain said, "No option for Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme (VSV) altogether despite the scheme is still on for payments, unable to file TDS/TCS statements, form 10A for making application for fresh registration of societies and trusts etc, under Sec 12AB and 80G not also available in

this portal while its last date is June 30."

He told PTI that "IT acknowledgements and Intimation under Sec 143(1) cannot be downloaded, DIN Number is not getting auto-populated, IT payment challan numbers not getting validated, digital signature certificate not getting registered or updated, new incorporated companies or firms are not able to get registered, e-proceedings tab not working".

DTPA president NK Goyal said that many taxpayers have got notices from National Faceless Assessment Officers and Faceless CIT (Appeal) but taxpayers are unable to comply in the absence of e-proceeding tab in the portal.

Taxpayers are also unable to file Income Tax Returns for AY 2020-21 and of earlier years as there is no facility or options even for furnishing income tax return under Sec 148 or making application against issuance of notices u/s 148, Goyal claimed.

Professional urged the government to resolve these issues immediately as the date for compliance is approaching.

# Ex-Prez Karzai says US failed in Af

AP ■ KABUL

Afghanistan's former President said on Sunday the United States came to his country to fight extremism and bring stability to his war-torn nation and is leaving nearly 20 years later having failed at both.

In an interview with *The Associated Press* just weeks before the last US and NATO troops leave Afghanistan, ending their forever war, Hamid Karzai said extremism is at its "highest point" and the departing troops are leaving behind a disaster.

"The international community came here 20 years ago with this clear objective of fighting extremism and bringing stability...But extremism is at the highest point today. So they have failed," he said.

Their legacy is a war-ravaged nation in "total disgrace and disaster."

"We recognise as Afghans all our failures, but what about the bigger forces and powers who came here for exactly that purpose? Where are they leaving us now?" he asked and answered: "In total disgrace and disaster."

Still, Karzai, who had a conflicted relationship with the US during his 13-year rule, wanted the troops to leave, saying Afghans were united behind an overwhelming desire for peace and needed now to take responsibility for their future.

"We will be better off without their military presence," he said. "I think we should defend our own country and look after our own lives...Their presence (has given us) what we have now...We don't want to continue with this misery and

indignity that we are facing. It is better for Afghanistan that they leave."

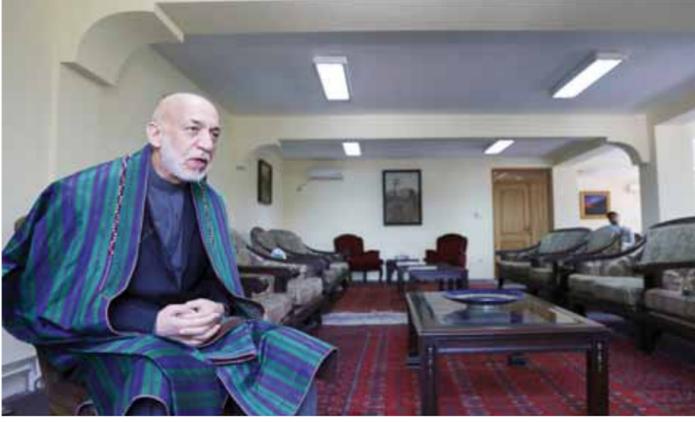
Karzai's rule followed the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 by a US-led coalition that launched its invasion to hunt down and destroy the al-Qaida network and its leader, Osama bin Laden, blamed for the 9/11 attacks on America.

During Karzai's rule, women re-emerged, girls again attended school, a vibrant, young civil society emerged, new high-rises went up in the capital Kabul and roads and infrastructure were built. But his rule was also characterized by allegations of widespread

corruption, a flourishing drug trade and in the final years relentless quarrels with Washington that continue even until today.

"The (US/NATO military) campaign was not against extremism or terrorism, the campaign was more against Afghan villages and hopes; putting Afghan people in prisons, creating prisons in our own country...And bombing all villages. That was very wrong."

In April, when President Joe Biden announced the final withdrawal of the remaining 2,500-3,500 troops, he said America was leaving having achieved its goals. Al-Qaida



Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai speaks during an interview with *The Associated Press* at his house, in Kabul, Afghanistan on Sunday

AP

had been greatly diminished and bin Laden was dead. America no longer needed boots on the ground to fight the terrorist threats that might emanate from Afghanistan, he said.

Still, the US' attempts to bring about a political end to the decades of war have been elusive. It signed a deal with the Taliban in February 2020 to withdraw its troops in exchange for a Taliban promise to denounce terrorist groups and keep Afghanistan from again being a staging arena for attacks on America.

There is little evidence the Taliban are fulfilling their part of the bargain. The United Nations claims the Taliban and al-Qaida are still linked. The architect of the US deal and current US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad says some progress has been made but without offering any details.

Karzai has had harsh words and uncompromising criticism of US war tactics over the past two decades in Afghanistan.

Yet he has become a linchpin of sorts in a joint effort being launched by the US and Britain to get a quarrelsome Afghan leadership in Kabul united enough to talk peace with the Taliban. The insurgent group has shown little interest in negotiating and instead has stepped up its assaults on government positions.

The Taliban have made considerable strides since the May 1 start of the US and

NATO withdrawal. They have overrun dozens of districts, often negotiating their surrender from Afghan national security forces.

But in many instances the fighting has been intense. Just last week a brutal assault by the Taliban in northern Faryab province killed 22 of Afghanistan's elite commandos, led by a local hero Col. Sohrab Azimi, who was also killed and widely mourned.

"The desire of the Afghan people, overwhelmingly, all over the country is for peace," said Karzai, who despite being out of power since 2014 has lost little of his political influence and is most often at the centre of the country's political machinations.

Diplomats, Western officials, generals, tribal elders and politicians on all ends of Afghanistan's political spectrum regularly beat a path to Karzai's door in the heart of the Afghan capital.

As the final military withdrawal is already more than 50% complete, the need for a political settlement or even a visible path to an eventual settlement would seem to be taking on greater urgency even as Afghans by the thousands are seeking an exit.

They say they are frustrated by relentless corruption, marauding criminal gangs — some linked to the powerful warlords in Kabul — and worsening insecurity. Few see a future that is not violent.

# Oz accused of 'excessive and unnecessary' secrecy

AP ■ CANBERRA

Australia's suppression of information seen as pivotal to a free and open media is at the centre of accusations that the country has become one of the world's most secretive democracies.

Last week, a former Australian spy was convicted over his unconfirmed role as a whistleblower who revealed an espionage operation against the Government of East Timor.

It's the latest high-profile case in a national system in which secrecy laws, some dating back to the colonial era, are routinely used to suppress information. Police have also threatened to charge journalists who exposed war crime allegations against Australian special forces in Afghanistan, or bureaucrats' plan to allow an intelligence agency to spy on Australian citizens.

Australians don't even know the name of the former spy convicted Friday. The Canberra court registry listed him as "Witness K". His lawyer referred to him more respectfully as "Mr K" in court.

K spent the two-day hearing in a box constructed from black screens to hide his identity. The public and media were sent out of the courtroom when classified evidence was discussed, which was about half the time.

The only sign that anyone

was actually inside the box was when a voice said "guilty" after K was asked how he pleaded.

The Australian government has refused to comment on allegations that K led an Australian Secret Intelligence Service operation that bugged government offices in the East Timorese capital in 2004, during negotiations on the sharing of oil and gas revenue from the seabed that separates the two countries.

The government cancelled K's passport before he was to testify at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 2014 in support of the East Timorese, who argued the treaty was invalid because Australia failed to negotiate in good faith by engaging in espionage.

There was no evidence heard in open court of a bugging operation, which media reported was conducted under the guise of a foreign aid programme.

K was given a three-month suspended sentence. If he'd been sent to prison, there were court orders designed to conceal his former espionage career by restricting what he could tell friends and associates to explain his predicament.

He had faced up to two years in prison. Since his offence, Australia has continued to tighten controls on secrecy, increasing the maximum sentence to 10 years.

## Pak to complete fencing of border with Afghanistan by June end: Min

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

In the wake of looming uncertainty in Afghanistan due to the withdrawal of the US troops, Pakistan has announced that it would complete the fencing of its border with the war-torn country by the end of June.

Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid Ahmed stated this on Saturday on the floor of the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament, the Dawn newspaper informed.

The minister reported the house that 88 per cent work on the fencing of the border with Afghanistan has been completed and the "rest would be completed by June 30", it said. The fencing of the 2,640 km land border with Afghanistan began in March 2017 after a spate of attacks from across the porous border.

Pakistan shares a long and porous border with Afghanistan, which runs through mountainous terrain and is largely unpatrolled. The Durand Line was drawn by the British rulers in 1896 and is disputed by Afghanistan, which also resists Pakistani attempts to erect any border fence.

## Rocket falls near Iraqi military base housing US troops

**Baghdad:** At least one Katyusha rocket fell close to the perimeter of a military base that hosts US troops in northern Iraq on Sunday, Iraq's military said. The rocket fell near the sprawling Ain al-Asad air base in western Anbar province but did not explode, the military said in a statement.

There was no significant damage, the statement said. An Iraqi security official said a fence at the perimeter of the base was minimally damaged. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

An investigation by security forces found the projectile had been launched from the nearby al-Baghdati area.

The attack is the latest targeting the American presence in Iraq. Rockets and, more recently, drones have targeted military bases housing US troops and the US Embassy in the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad.

# Diplomats: Progress made in Vienna at Iran nuclear talks

AP ■ VIENNA

Top diplomats said Sunday further progress had been made at talks between Iran and global powers to try to negotiate and restore a landmark 2015 agreement to contain Iranian nuclear development that was later abandoned by the Trump administration.

They said that it was now up to the governments involved in the negotiations to make political decisions.

It was the first official meeting since Iran's hard-line judiciary chief won a landslide victory in the country's presidential election last week.

Some diplomats expressed concern that Iran's election of Ebrahim Raisi as president could complicate a possible return to the agreement.

Enrique Mora, the European Union official who chaired the final meeting of the sixth round of talks between



Iran's Governor to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Kazem Gharib Abadi, and political deputy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Abbas Araghchi, from left, leave the Grand Hotel Vienna where closed-door nuclear talks took place in Vienna, Austria on Sunday

AP

Russia, China, Germany, France, Britain and Iran, told reporters that "we are closer to a deal, but we are not still there."

"We have made progress on a number of technical issues," Mora added. "We have now more clarity on technical documents - all of them quite complex - and that clarity

allows us to have also a great idea of what the political problems are."

He did not further elaborate on the nature of the technical issues.

Top Russian representative Mikhail Ulyanov said the members of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,

or JCPOA, "took stock of the significant progress made at the Vienna talks, including at the sixth round, and decided to make a break to allow participants to consult with their capitals in preparation for what is supposed to be the final round of negotiations."

"There are a few controversial points which require political decisions. Apparently diplomatic efforts to find common language have been almost fully exhausted. So the time has come for political decisions," Ulyanov added.

The nations involved in the negotiations have been trying to resolve the major outstanding issues on how to return the US into the landmark agreement, which then-US President Donald Trump pulled Washington out of unilaterally in 2018. Trump also restored and augmented sanctions to try to force Iran into renegotiating the pact with more concessions.

## Israeli PM: World powers must wake up on Iran nuke deal

**Jerusalem:** Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Sunday opened his first Cabinet meeting since swearing in his new coalition Government last week with a condemnation of the new Iranian president. He said Iran's presidential election was a sign for world powers to "wake up" before returning to a nuclear agreement with Tehran. Iran's hard-line judiciary chief, Ebrahim Raisi, was elected Saturday with 62% of the vote amid a historically low voter turnout. He is sanctioned by the U.S. In part over his involvement in the mass execution of thousands of political prisoners in 1988, at the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Raisi has not commented specifically on the event.

Bennett said at the Cabinet meeting in Jerusalem that "of all the people that (Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali) Khamenei could have chosen, he chose the hangman of Tehran, the man infamous among Iranians and across the world for leading the death committees that executed thousands of innocent Iranian citizens throughout the years."

Iran and world powers resumed indirect talks in Vienna on Sunday to resurrect Tehran's tattered 2015 nuclear deal.

## Libyan guards accused of assaulting minors

**Cairo:** When Libyan security forces rescued her earlier this year, the young Somali woman thought it would be the end of her suffering. For more than two years, she had been imprisoned and sexually abused by human traffickers notorious for extorting, torturing and assaulting migrants like her trying to reach Europe. Instead, the 17-year-old said, the sexual assaults against her have continued, only now by guards at the government-run center in the Libyan capital Tripoli where they are being kept.

### FROM PAGE 1

## MODI...

The high-powered meeting fuelled the possibility of a long-delayed first rejoin in the Council of Ministers since Modi started his second term as Prime Minister in 2019.

At least half a dozen interactions of the Prime Minister with his ministerial colleagues at his residence on 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, this month, apparently aimed at taking an estimate of their work in their respective Ministries, fuelled speculation about an impending revamp of the Union Cabinet. According to sources, the discussions may also have poured over to the June 24 meeting on J&K that has been called by Modi to discuss a plan to revive the electoral process by evolving a consensus among rival parties and groups.

Though, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti could skip the meet, the other parties in J&K which are also part of the 'Gupkar Alliance' and are demanding restoration of Article 370, will be attending the discussion, sources said.

Fourteen leaders of eight political parties, including the PDP and the National Conference (NC), have been invited to the meeting that will be chaired by the Prime Minister and will discuss ways of reviving the electoral process in the UT and build consensus on the delimitation process.

Opposition parties — the PDP, NC and the People's Conference — are boycotting the Delimitation Commission, arguing that any exercise post the August 5, 2019 (abrogation of Article 370), was illegal and unconstitutional and will not be supported in any form.

## MILLIONS TO BEND, STRETCH ON...

In India, the Union Culture Ministry will celebrate 'International

Yoga Day' on 21, June this year under the 'Yoga is an Indian Heritage' campaign. It said the day will be celebrated at its 75 cultural places in the country, and there will be 45 minutes of Yoga followed by 30 minutes of cultural programme. Similarly, various RWAs and sports organisations have various plans to celebrate the day but keeping in mind the Covid appropriate behaviour.

## INDIA HITS BACK AT UN ...

"Pursuant to Article 19 (3) of the ICCPR, restrictions on the right to freedom of expression must be 'expressly prescribed by law' and necessary 'for respect of the rights or reputations of others' or for 'the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals,'" the letter stated.

Responding to a letter sent by the UN Rapporteurs to the Government of India on June 11, the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations Office and other international organisations in Geneva, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) said, "India's democratic credentials are well recognised" and "right to freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed under the Indian Constitution"; note on new IT rules on how they are "designed to empower ordinary users of social media" and "victims of abuse at social media platforms shall have a forum for redressal of their grievances."

The MeitY said the Ministries undertook broad consultations in 2018 with various stakeholders, including individuals, civil society, industry association and organizations and invited public comments to prepare the draft rules. Thereafter an inter-ministerial meeting had discussed in detail the comments received in detail and, accordingly, the rules were finalised, it said. The Ministry

pointed out that India as a global leader in technology innovation can develop legislation that can place it at the forefront of efforts to protect digital rights.

The MeitY also highlighted salient features of the new IT rules. These included, Grievance Redressal Mechanism, Ensuring Online Safety and dignity of users, especially for women users, Removal of Unlawful Information.

"The concerns alleging potential implications for freedom of expression that the new IT rules will entail, are highly misplaced. India's democratic credentials are well recognised. The right to freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. The independent judiciary and a robust media are part of India's democratic structure."

It further said the traceability of the first originator of problematic content, which industry has argued would break end-to-end encryption, seeks only limited information.

"Only when a message already in public circulation is giving rise to violence, impinging on the unity and integrity of India, depicting a woman in a bad light, or sexual abuse of a child and when no other intrusive options are working, only then the significant social media intermediary will be required to disclose as to who started the message," the MeitY said in its statement.

## SORE SOREN RETURNS TO...

The thought process within the coalition is for dropping a controversial Minister from the Congress quota and inducting one of the party's woman MLAs, who is a Brahmin but married to an OBC person. Then again, Hemant is also saddled with the pulls and pressures from within his own family for the vacant berth.

Congress leaders sought to

downplay Oraon's visit and said it should also not be linked to Hemant's arrival here. Oraon's agenda was purely to discuss certain political development related to the party, they said.

"The Jharkhand Congress chief was here to discuss the desires expressed by former PCC chiefs Pradeep Balmuchu and Sukhdeo Bhagat to rejoin the grand old party. Oraon could meet AICC general secretary K C Venugopal along with Rajya Sabha member Dhiraj Shahu and is believed to have discussed these issues besides the coalition status," said an AICC leader aware of the Jharkhand developments.

Balmuchu and Bhagat had quit the Congress ahead of the 2019 assembly elections and contested the polls on AJSU and BJP tickets, respectively. However, both have now applied to return to the party. Balmuchu was also a Rajya Sabha member from Congress when he quit. While Balmuchu's return to the Congress fold is said to have been nodded, Bhagat's return is being opposed by certain sections of the State unit.

## DELIMITATION PANEL MAY MEET...

The exercise is being carried out as per the 2011 Census according to which Kashmir's population was 68,88,475 and Jammu's population was 53,78,538. At present the J&K Assembly has 83 seats, 47 in Kashmir and 36 in Jammu region.

The commission had asked the Deputy Commissioners whether a constituency is in one district or spread across two. They were also asked about details of tshils. As far as possible, not necessarily, one administrative unit should be in one constituency, else developmental work may suffer. Moreover, administrative control will be in two hands and not one, sources said. The Delimitation

Commission, headed by retired Supreme Court Judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai was constituted on March 6, 2020 for a period of one year to delimit the constituencies. However, it has not visited J&K since it was established. On March 4, the Union Ministry of Law and Justice issued a notification extending the tenure of the commission by one year, which was coming to an end on March 5, 2021. In the absence of the Legislative Assembly, the NC and BJP Lok Sabha members were nominated as associate members of the Delimitation Commission without having any voting rights.

## EYES ON GUPKAR ALLIANCE AS...

After receiving the invitation, mainstream leaders in Kashmir Valley went into a huddle with their party leaders to take a call on whether to attend the high-level meeting or boycott it. In the absence of any formal invite to the amalgamation of five different political parties none of the constituents can claim to represent the group at the crucial meeting.

Inside reports revealed that Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti is expected to authorise Dr Farooq Abdullah, chairman of the PAGD, to represent them at the all-party meet.

The PAGD was constituted by the leaders of the mainstream political parties to fight for restoration of Article 370 which granted special status to J&K. On its part, National Conference (NC) president Dr Farooq Abdullah spent the major part of the day holding informal consultations with senior party leaders.

## Conference chief Sajad Gani Lone is scheduled to chair a meeting of the party leaders on Monday to chalk out their future course of action

According to the provincial president of the NC, Nasir Aslam Wani (Kashmir province), the process of deliberations over the Centre's invite has been started by Abdullah.

"The party president has started the process of consultations with the senior party leaders and these meetings will continue till tomorrow. The consultations with a few senior leaders took place today, he (Abdullah) will meet a few more in the evening and some tomorrow morning. I think we will be able to give a clear picture to you by tomorrow," he said.

Wani, however, said the NC has not so far called any structured or organised meeting to take a decision over the issue. PDP spokesperson Syed Suhail Bukhari told reporters after the PAC meet members have decided that the final decision regarding this will be taken by Mehbooba Mufti.

Meanwhile, amid fast paced developments centering around All-Party's meet convened by the Prime Minister the clamour for restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir is gaining momentum in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir. Leaders belonging to different political parties have been constantly voicing their concerns over the delay in restoring the statehood as promised by the BJP led central government.

In Jammu, Chairman of Ikkjut Jammu, advocate Akur Sharma is spearheading a campaign in support of statehood to Jammu. According to him the entire Jammu region has been discriminated against by the Valley-based leadership of J&K.

He also demanded Kashmir should be further bifurcated into two UTs with one specially carved out for the Kashmiri Pandits, who migrated en-masse from the Valley after eruption of militancy in 1990.

## New 'national' vax drive to kick-off today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Come Monday and the next phase of India's vaccination drive will kick-off across the country with the Central Government providing free Covid-19 vaccines to everyone above the age of 18 years.

Since the launch of the nationwide vaccination programme from January 16, the June 21 drive will mark a departure from its earlier "liberalised and accelerated" vaccination policy.

Also, pre-registration on Cowin.gov.in portal will not be mandatory as all Government and private vaccination centres would provide onsite registration facility.

As announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 7, the States won't have to procure vaccines from the manufacturers. Instead, the Centre will buy 75 per cent of the vaccines and will distribute them among the states and the Union territories free of cost.

The Centre's new policy where States will no longer be obliged to purchase the jabs, came days after the Supreme Court slammed the ongoing vaccination drive for the 18-44 age group and called it "arbitrary and irrational." Faced with shortage of vaccines, the States were being forced to arrange the jabs on their own with several of them unsuccessfully floating global tenders to purchase the vaccines.



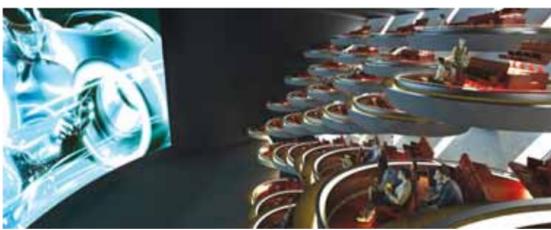
**Bollywood**  
 'I am mindful of the fact that I feel centered within my own self.'  
 —Malaika Arora Khan

# WALK INTO THE FUTURE

RACHNA AGGARWAL ideates on changes the post-pandemic world's entertainment sector can adopt to ensure the health of its patrons while retaining the joy of an outing

Over the past year, we have invariably seen the decline of the entertainment real estate industry due to the pandemic. As people are turning to the internet to help fill the void, OTT platforms are booming, and theatres and cinema halls have been left abandoned, grim and desolate. All other service sectors like salons and restaurants are opening up, but entertainment zones remain at the bottom of the list, given the crowds that throng these places, leaving them jam-packed and gasping for air.

Industry experts have been trying to put together new rules for theatres that help offset the adverse effect of the pandemic by distancing people through strategic and well-planned seating. One or two seats left between each occupied seat compel people to stay at a distance. However, when families go out to entertain, their sole purpose is to spend time together instead of being alienated, thereby failing the distancing approach. Entertainment spaces are social areas and a system that tries to separate people becomes the antithesis of its typology. Moreover, ailments similar to COVID-19 in the years to come will remain highly infectious and airborne. So, if one needs to rethink



entertainment design, one needs to go way beyond this basic concept.

Bearing in mind the collapse and turmoil caused by the malady in entertainment industries, one can't expect a sweeping upgrade in these spaces at the moment. Therefore, allotting more area per person is not an option, as it has substantial cost repercussions. How, then, can one stay in the domain of cost-effectiveness and yet keep the spaces safe during these unprecedented times?

When we think of virus transmission, the first thing that comes to our mind is the spread caused by coming in close contact with someone or touching surfaces which have been in contact with someone else who was infected. A practical solution to keep surfaces touch-free and uncontaminated is automation. Sensors and automation technology must be integrated within every micro-system, allowing people to move through doors and

carry out mundane tasks without having to lay a finger on any object. One such example is washrooms. When we open the door to a restroom, we need to press the push-plate that has also been touched by many others, making it a virus hotspot. A door that senses you and opens on its own and sanitary fixtures that can function with the wave of a hand can dramatically reduce virus transmission and enable hygienic safety to a large extent.

Nonetheless, some surfaces like seating upholstery or carpets can't be left untouched. To optimise their hygiene value, we need to become mindful of the specifications of the materials we use. Stainless steel was considered a hero material for clean, hygienic spaces, employed everywhere from small door handles to bulkier furniture pieces. The most sought-after metal has now ironically become one of the least preferable ones, quickly being replaced by alternatives to avoid creating habitable sur-

faces for the virus. Swinging away from steel surfaces and carpet materials that are a breeding ground for biological entities, we need to shift our focus towards materials like Flotex, which have a high surface tension, making it difficult to absorb any particles. An alternative is utilising surfaces that can be sanitised in a jiffy at regular intervals. Laminate companies are already leading in the race with newer technologies that enable such safe resources.

The air in urban cities was previously chock-full with pollutants, and the influx of the virus added to the problems, making it much worse. Air purification systems which regulate the PM level of air are now passé; we must upgrade to technologies that can eliminate biological aerosol contents from the air. Air conditioning will become a crucial element since controlling the viral load suspended in these enclosed spaces is tricky when people spend several hours inside the room. Owing to several hazardous accidents that have occurred in the past, the fire safety certification has become a compulsion for all buildings to ensure public safety. The recent turn of events will bring in a 'new norm' wherein air quality certification will be required to gain people's confidence and trust.

Perhaps, a technology that can accommodate social interaction as well as social distancing within the same realm, is a 'bubble' or 'pod system' that can be installed for families to spend

some leisure time while remaining confined within their micro-environments. Similar to this concept is the idea of a drive-in cinema from yesteryear that has begun trending again. But it does not come without cons, as these cinemas take up ample area and only function in a limited capacity for a limited number of hours during the day.

Another way to relook entertainment design is to change how we perceive these spaces. In the prosaic model, we are accustomed to enclosed rooms that are glammed-up with artificial mood lighting. Breaking this conventional style, lobbies can be redesigned into porous structures that open up to the outside world, allowing breeze and sunlight to wash the interiors. It ultimately boils down to people's choice — whether they prefer open, airy spaces or enclosed ones.

While the world is struggling to release itself from the clasp of the pandemic, people are trying to find newer ways to go out, interact and redeem the lifestyles they had in the pre-pandemic times. While eradicating the deadly disease stays a far-fetched dream, there will be innovations and ideas galore to restore our entertainment spaces to their lived-up state, bustling with people and energy that once offered us some recreational pleasures...

(The spokesperson is founder and design ideator of an award-winning architectural and interior design firm.)

## WEBBED



**SAMANTAR S2**

S1 of this original Marathi series revolved around the life of Kumar Mahajan, who realises that he is living a life that some other man named Sudarshan Chakrapani has already lived. After S1 ended in a cliff hanger, watch the forthcoming season to know what happens next. It releases on June 24 on MX Player.



**SEPTEMBER MORNINGS**

The life of a transwoman who has just gained her independence takes an unexpected turn when an unknown son she had with a woman 10 years ago shows up out of the blue. This series releases on June 25 on Amazon Prime.



**BOSCH S7**

Based on Michael Connelly's best-selling novel *The Burning Room*, the final season of Bosch puts Detective Harry Bosch's famous motto center stage — "Everybody counts or nobody counts." Releases on June 25 on Amazon Prime.

## With fame comes great sacrifices

While many of us fancy the idea of being a Bollywood actor, it's definitely not as easy as it looks on the outside. By TEAM VIVA

Our B-town stars devote an incredible amount of hardwork and dedication to do justice to their on-screen characters. Celebrating the zeal of such film stars, today we list down 4 Bollywood actors who underwent major physical transformation for their roles. Take a look...

### ADITYA ROY KAPUR

Just when the nation tried to label Aditya as the chocolate boy next door, the versatile actor left cinelovers with his massive physical transformation for his blockbuster release *Malang*. A dark thriller which won the audiences with its unpredictable and edgy storyline, *Malang* turned out to be a game changer for Aditya. It was impressive how the actor underwent a massive physical transformation to perform deadly, high octane action sequences in the film wherein Aditya was seen in two extremely distinct looks in the film, one being lean and the other being a bulky avatar. Even for his next *Om*, Aditya has worked hard to achieve the desired look.



### RANVEER SINGH

Known to be a director's actor, Ranveer has time and again undergone physical transformations for his role in various films. The actor had worked really hard on his body for Rohit Shetty's cop drama *Simmba* and underwent weight training to attain a beefed-up body. And yet again, not too long ago, Ranveer worked hard on his physical appearance and looks for his upcoming film *83*, for which he developed a lean physique. We hear that besides the intense workout sessions, the actor also had a meticulous diet regime in place for the same.



Alia Bhatt, underwent a solid physical transformation for his critically acclaimed film, *Sanju*. In order to get the required bulked up look for the Sanjay Dutt biopic, Ranbir used to have eight meals a day and woke up at 3 AM to drink a protein shake, along with intense workouts.

### VICKY KAUSHAL

Last seen in *Bhoot Part One: The Haunted Ship*, Vicky is known not just for his exemplary acting skills but also for his incredible physical transformations. For the superhit film, *Uri: The Surgical Strike*, Vicky went through a complete change and gained 15 kilos to portray the role of a military man. In order to get the right look for his character in the film, Vicky followed a strict diet regime and did immense training, building muscles for the desired sculpted structure. Next to be seen in *Sardar Udham Singh*, we hear he will be again seen in a never seen before avatar.



### RANBIR KAPOOR

Ranbir has earned himself a spot in every top filmmaker's wishlist with his performances. The actor who will be next seen in *Brahmastra*, opposite girlfriend and actor



Singer, music director, record producer and occasional actor, Shekhar Ravjiani happens to be a busy man. Currently in Singapore, he talks about his School of Music, which will celebrate its one year anniversary tomorrow.

**How has your experience been providing personalised musical training to handpicked students across 21 campuses of the Global International Indian School?**

It has been an exciting and satisfying journey. We are celebrating one year of GIIS-Shekhar Ravjiani School of Music, and I want to say despite the pandemic-related challenges, this has been a successful journey.

The School of Music was a meeting of minds for me and GIIS, as both parties wanted to encourage talent in youngsters. Children are our future, and I realised that many of them are blessed with oodles of talent.

The first year had 14 graduates from Singapore, Japan, UAE and Malaysia. Each one of them was mentored by me. We had one-on-one sessions wherein I listened to them, shared my inputs, gave them assignments on the parts they needed to work on et al. Six of them have now been selected for the second level of the mentorship programme for 2021.

This year, we have seen a five-fold increase in the number of aspirants and we are excited at the prospect of working with more children.

**While online classes are a handy tool in the backdrop of**

## Melodies of life

On the occasion of World Music Day, SHEKHAR RAVJIANI takes a break from work for a quick chat with CHRISTY VARGHESE



**the pandemic, did you experience any difficulties while virtually imparting musical training?**

I agree virtual classes cannot replace physical classes, no doubt. However, given the situation, virtual classes worked out fine. GIIS is a smart school. Its infrastructure is state-of-the-art. The founders have really invested in making it a school of the future. GIIS gave us a great licensed platform to hold virtual classes, gave us audio-visual equipment that was of excellent quality, and the students were given ample time and resources to practise and perfect their art. Of course, there were some technical glitches like

internet lag, but that was nothing compared to what the students walked away with. Overall, there were more positives than there were hiccups, and I am glad we did not let the pandemic dampen our spirits.

**Do you have any plans for your music school in the near future?**

This music school is my dream, so of course, I have a lot of ideas for the school and its talented students. As of now, I am working on pushing them to the next level through proper exposure and guidance. We have planned some collaborative activities with established members of

the industry for the students to get hands-on experience. It is going to be an amazing experience for them and this is just the beginning of our school's journey.

In the future, we will ideate on many such avenues to give the best to our students. Depending on the type of talent pool we acquire, we will determine the type of platforms they will have exposure to. We would not like to disclose much at this time but we are brainstorming and we are positive that many more avenues will open up in the foreseeable future.

**We would love to know what are the forthcoming projects you are working on.**

We are currently working on the music for *Pathan* and *Jayeshbhai Jorda*. Both of these films are set to release later this year.

I also have an extremely interesting surprise in store, something you will be hearing about, soon.

**What is your message to people on the occasion of World Music Day?**

In a world filled with uncertainty and anxiety, I believe that music has the power to help us all feel centred and loved. Our country has an undiscovered treasure trove of musical talent that is waiting to be heard. I urge music lovers to open their minds and hearts to these musicians and help them find their audience. It is also my dream that more and more kids pursue their love for music and I hope to do my bit in making this happen.

## TRENDBLAZER

### PLANT SOME SAPPLINGS: DEVGN

Actor **AJAY DEVGN** and son Yug were spotted planting trees in Juhu, as part of the 'Mega Vriksha Campaign' by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

"I can only try and set an example. I want everyone including all the kids to get involved in this initiative. Things will not change just because I am doing it, they will change when everyone gets involved. The least I can do is create awareness about it."



### fairtalk

SHAMA SIKANDER



'This pandemic gave me the time to do a lot of meditation and yoga. I request parents to enroll their children for yoga classes as this would lead them to experience the magic of meditation and change their world for the better. We need to lay enough emphasis on mental health.'

### dailytalk

TAHIR RAJ BHASIN



'It's great to see Mumbai regaining normalcy, and for the industry to restart. Mumbai has a very different energy and I have loved every bit of my time here. It is a city that has given me wind beneath my wings to aspire and soar creatively, so it really feels great to be back at work here.'

### DETERMINED TO MAKE IT TO 100: DICK

American actor, comedian, writer, singer and dancer **RICHARD WAYNE 'DICK' VAN DYKE**, 95, is determined to make it to his milestone birthday in 2025.

"The song says, 'I hope I die before I get old'. And I thought, what a sad thing. Old age can be a great time! The point is to enjoy life. I'm looking forward to 100. George Burns made it and I'm gonna do it too," Richard told *Closer US* magazine.



On the occasion of International Yoga Day, H H SWAMI MUKUNDANANDA says these uncertain times are a reminder that our well-being is connected to those around us and vice versa

Mother nature is a constant reminder of living in harmony. A forest, for instance, "has an amazing ability to communicate and behave like a single organism," says Dr Suzanne Simard, professor of Forest and Conservation Sciences at the University of British Columbia. Her research studies reveal how underground fungi networks of forests facilitate plants and trees to exchange water, nutrients, defence signals, and much more.

Along somewhat similar lines, the science of Yog has ventured deep and revealed to us that this whole creation is one system and that we are an integral part of one sublime energy. The spirit of yoga is the spirit of unity and union. We have a very subtle, yet deep and symbiotic relationship with one another at different levels. Hence, International Yoga Day not only emphasises the sense of oneness and wholeness within an individual but also our intertwined wellness and existence in this universe.

**We all are one**

Now more than ever we need to help one another achieve all-around wellness while navigating through these formidable times. If we work in unison with one another, cooperate, and share vitality, we will eventually conquer the virus. We have succeeded in doing so before — our coordinated efforts eradicated smallpox, which once killed 35 per cent of its victims.

Developing a vaccine against COVID-19, although the most pressing challenges of our time, is a remarkable achievement of medical science. It is heartwarming to watch the global community donate vaccines to COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access), a global initiative unlike any other. However, success depends upon the percentage of the global population that



**UNITED, WE ARE STRONGER & HEALTHIER**



accepts vaccination. As they say, no one is safe, unless everyone is safe.

**Enhancing the psychological immune system is equally important**

The psychological immune system encompasses all our cognitive mechanisms, which fortify us from experiencing despondent or low-spirited emotions. Over the past 16 months, I have been witnessing several members of our spiritual congregation remaining strong and soldiering through the pandemic. It is the wealth of scriptural knowledge and practise of yoga that has been their paramount aid in riding out the pandemic. The science of yoga provides a holistic approach to develop not only physical resilience, but also mental, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual vigour.

Perils and arduous circumstances are an integral part of our journey in this world. While some hardships are

predictable and preventable, others are inescapable. A degree of emotional maturity is necessary to develop an adequate reserve of mental energy to come up with creative solutions to the problems that arise in life. Empowering the mind through meditation brings stability to emotions. Most ailments have their roots in the mind. When one harbours anxiety, tension, fear et al, it disturbs the mental sheath (one of the five sheaths in the body). This disturbance is then passed on to the pranic sheath, which then manifests in the physical sheath of the body as disease. Meditation on God heals the various ailments of the mind, resulting in the enhancement of vital energy and the improvement of physical health.

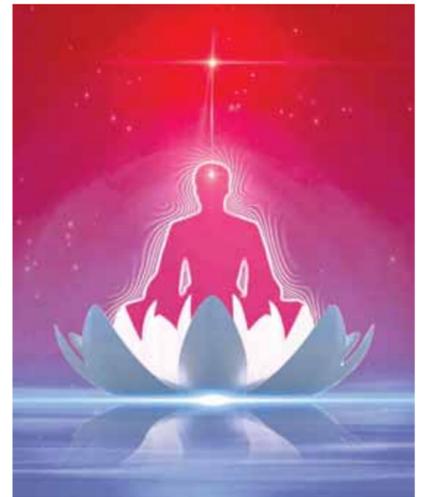
**Nurture positive inner ecology with yogic practices**

Sage Patanjali has given us five *nyama* (observances) that help us live in peace: *saucha* (purity of thought), *santosha* (contentment), *tapas* (self-discipline), *svadhyaya* (contemplating on the self/self-reflection), *isvarapranidhana* (devotion and surrender to God). Engaging in these practises sincerely, especially devotion and surrender to the Supreme Lord will ignite the lamp of wisdom.

There is a tremendous organisation manifesting around us in every aspect of God's creation — from a tiny atom to our DNA. If we transcend our internal imperfections, we can then discern the perfect world. This world is perfectly designed in a manner to bring about the gradual flowering of the consciousness of the soul over the continuum of lifetimes. The entire universe prods us towards the evolution of consciousness. The challenges that we come across are a part of the process that enriches us internally.

A caterpillar takes on strong wings, transforming into a beautiful butterfly only after going through the struggle. Similarly, this creation hurls processes at us to bring about transformation. If we can perceive this aspect of God's design, and align ourselves with it, we begin to understand his grand plan for us. When this dawns upon us, we not only take everything in our stride but also learn the art of dedicating our deeds to the Lord.

(The writer is an author, a yogi, world-renowned spiritual teacher, an authority on mind management, IIT & IIM alumnus and the founder of JKYog.)



**Supreme union**

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI feels that yoga can do what people waged wars for — help achieve world peace

Yoga. The word has now become omnipresent and is literally on everyone's mind. It's unbelievable how this euphoria has touched the hearts of people across 192 countries. This whole thing started with our PM, Narendra Modi's address at the United Nations in 2014 where he expressed his wish to dedicate one day as the International Day for Yoga. To everyone's surprise, the UN agreed to sanction the event and nine months later, the entire world was preparing for a yoga spectacle and a couple of Guinness world records too.

Yoga as a method and practise has evolved over centuries since the time it was developed in ancient India. As of today, for a seeker, there are so many forms and branches of yoga to choose from, hence at times, one gets confused as to which would be best for them. However, from a practical point of view, real yoga is not the one that just gives temporary health and happiness but one which transforms the world into one with no behavioural ailments, mental tensions or worries. It won't be wrong to say that it is an ideal method of curing physical and psychological disorders for several births.

Today it is being stated by political pundits that yoga is the best soft power that India possesses to bring the world together and end the increasing trend of violence. Of all the yoga techniques taught by various yogis over centuries, Raj yoga has been termed as the king among them all. Before practising this unique method, an aspirant needs to have a clear image of the supreme. The holy Gita says 'An ideal yogi is the one who has purity and chastity in thought, word and deed, who has knowledge and wisdom. One whose mind is subdued and remains constantly in soul-consciousness and yogic meditation. One who has conquered temptation of senses, who has cast aside ego, lust, anger, attachment and neither grieves at loss nor is jubilant with success. Someone in whose eyes all are equal, who is selfless and peaceful, whose diet is pure and in whose life there is austerity, who is upright, who knows the Almighty in his true essence and performs all deeds while in yoga with the Supreme'. So, to become an ideal yogi, one needs to, first of all, understand the nuances of the definition that is mentioned above and then start his/her journey.

Yoga in an actual sense means union or link. It is a union of the self (soul) with the Supreme (Almighty) for which there is a prerequisite that an aspirant needs to follow. One must understand that we are the soul and not the body. All our physical and mental sufferings are a result of our failure to remain in soul consciousness, and this has made our lives miserable. However, through Raj yoga, we can change this situation because every soul is pure and peaceful, in its original nature, and with proper guidance and practise it is possible to live a life without stress, worries and tension. Dedicating few minutes daily to Raj yoga is a meaningful expression of caring for yourself that can help you move through the mire of feeling unworthy. It involves the turning of one's mind and love towards the direction of the Almighty, to communicate with him.

Thus, it is a technique of self-exploration, leading to the experience of heightened and expanded awareness, reaching God and letting your soul focus on him. In short, the principal objective of Raj yoga is to bring the self in conscious touch with the Almighty, thus making it increasingly aware of its divine origin, divine destiny and its divine nature. So, be a Raj yogi and rediscover yourself.



In October, after the body of a COVID-19 patient in Sundergarh town, the district headquarters of Sundergarh in Odisha, reached 'Ranibagicha Swargadwar' cremation grounds, the administration realised there was no one present to help with the cremation. The son of the deceased waited from morning till 4 in the afternoon when the sub-collector and executive officer of Sundergarh Municipality contacted Siddhant Panda, Shishir Kumar Behera, Manoj Kumar Tripathy and Kamlesh Kumar Nathani. The four friends, wearing the PPE suits, cremated the body. The next day, the media covered the story and named these Samaritans *Shamshan Bandhu* (friends at cremation ground).

Their journey of cremating dead bodies began two decades ago. "In those days, when a person died in our colony or *sahi*, all the male members would join to help shoulder the body to the cremation grounds and console family members of the deceased. We had joined one such instance, back then," said 48-year-old Siddhant, who was 28 at that time. Whenever there was a call from their locality or neighbouring colonies these four friends would extend support. Initially, it was this interest that later transformed into dedication. "My mother would often say that *Shamasane je sa bandhabah* — a real friend is the one who stands with you during the funeral. We never stepped back from our mission," said Siddhant. They also helped

**Unsung heroes**

RAKHI GHOSH brings to the fore a story of four Samaritan friends who have been cremating COVID-19 infected bodies in a small town in Odisha



with the cremation of abandoned bodies. "In a small tin box, we would collect money from shops and people to cremate those who had no one to help them. During that time we relied on crowdfunding till we set up our respective businesses in 2003. Since then, we stopped collecting money from others and spent it from our pocket. This comes between ₹4,000-5,000 for the cremation of one abandoned body," informed Shishir. To date, they have cremated nearly 700 bodies from Sundergarh town, which has a population of 45,036 (2011 Census).

Sharing the heart-wrenching incidents they experienced during the second wave of the

pandemic, Siddhant said, "We have seen people become inhumane. The fear of infection was such that the relatives didn't come to even light the funeral pyre and claim the ashes. Out of the 240 Covid-positive deaths, we lit the *mukhagni* (funeral pyre) of 56 people." To date, the relatives of the deceased have not turned up to collect the *asthi* (ashes), kept in different earthen pots with names and mobile numbers of the departed persons. "We keep calling their family members to collect the ashes, no one turned up to receive these as they fear the infection," said Siddhant. They shared that they will wait for a few days more, if no one turns up they have decided to proceed with the *asthi visarjan* (immersion of the ashes) themselves. "We don't want to disrespect the dead and once the lockdown eases, we would perform *samuhik visarjan* (collective immersion) of the ashes," said Manoj.

**CHALLENGES DURING THE PANDEMIC**

Talking about the challenges while performing this work during the Covid-19 pandemic,

Siddhant shared, "It was terrible during the peak period. In May, every day nearly 12-15 bodies were coming to the cremation ground. In the morning, we would light the funeral pyres for four bodies then after finishing the ceremony (*Agni Shanti*), we would get another call from the municipality informing us that some more bodies were on the way to the crematorium. There was no rest till midnight." As per Manoj, the most difficult part during the peak period of the second wave was to perform the work wearing a PPE suit in the scorching heat of 44 to 45°. "We had to stand for three-four hours in front of the pyre. We couldn't drink enough water as urinating after wearing PPE was a challenge. Sometimes, we felt suffocated while working for long hours," he added.

These four friends have been conducting this work following all the necessary COVID-specific protocols. The local administration has provided them with a vehicle to carry the dead bodies and PPE kits to perform the work.

"After the work is done, we come to the room provided by the municipality where we disinfect ourselves, take off the PPE kit and after a small break, get ready for the next round of cremation work," said Manoj. Besides appreciating their work, Abhimanyu Behera, sub-collector of the district, declared them as COVID-19 Warriors and vaccinated them on a priority basis.

When the family has abandoned their dead relatives, other community members have come

forward to support their funerals. They have donated 70-80 tonnes of wood, ghee, sanitiser, water bottles and other things which are necessary for the cremation. These four friends, however, need more hands to support them.

**FAMILY SUPPORT GETS THEM GOING**

When asked how their family and neighbours react to their work, Siddhant said with a smile, "Last year, when media highlighted our work, my father-in-law and brother-in-law asked us to not undertake the task as they believed cremations should be performed by people belonging to the lower caste." His wife, however, stood by his side. Manoj — a Brahmin — also faced such issues. "This work gives us satisfaction, so we never pay heed to what others think of it," he said. Kamlesh explained, "We receive calls from all over the district as people understand the importance of the work we do. Sometimes, we travel to different corners of the district to bring infected bodies for cremation."

Seeing their dedication, the local administration and other organisations have felicitated them and their work. When they were asked about the name of their organisation, both Siddhant and Manoj laughed saying that they have been doing this work voluntarily and never thought of giving any name to it. It was the media that named them *Shamshan Bandhu*, a name people now associate them with. A name they are happy with. (Charikha Features)

**“ The unexamined life is not worth living. —Socrates ”**

**HOW TO BUILD A GOOD TEAM AT WORK**

Find it hard to manage your team? Encouraging employees to learn on the job and voice their ideas and suggestions for change can build teams that are more effective and resilient in the face of unexpected situations, according to new research.

The study, led by researchers from Rice University in the US and University of Windsor in Canada, examined what makes employees more resilient and fosters learning in the workplace. The researchers specifically examined the interactions of 48 teams from five Canadian technology startups. They found that teams were more effective and resilient if their bosses encouraged employees to take risks, make suggestions and learn from the process.

Creating a work environment centred around learning and open communication is helpful as teams grow and take on new tasks, said Danielle King, Assistant Professor of Psychological Sciences at Rice University.



**SINGLE DOSE SUFFICIENT FOR INFECTED**

A single dose of vaccine is sufficient for those who were already infected by Covid-19, revealed a study by Hyderabad's AIG Hospitals.

The hospital announced that it conducted a study on 260 healthcare workers who got vaccinated between January 16 and February 5 to assess the immunological memory response in all those patients. All patients were given the Covishield vaccine. The observations have been published in the *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, a peer-reviewed journal.

The previously infected group showed a greater antibody response to a single dose of vaccine compared with those who had no prior infection.

It also revealed that the memory T-cell responses elicited by a single dose of vaccine were significantly higher in the previously infected group compared with those who had no prior infection.



**RISKS OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION**

Elder adults who struggle to fall asleep and experience frequent night awakenings are at high risk for developing dementia or dying early from any cause, a new study suggests.

The findings, published in the *Journal of Sleep Research*, indicated that people who reported routinely experiencing difficulty falling asleep had a 49 per cent increased risk of dementia.

And those who often woke in the night and had difficulty falling back asleep had a 39 per cent increased risk of dementia, reports CNN.

"We found a strong association between frequent difficulty falling asleep and nighttime awakenings and dementia and early death from any cause, even after we controlled for things like depression, sex, income, education and chronic conditions," said researcher Rebecca Robbins from Harvard Medical School.



**CLIMATE CHANGE ALERT: NASA**

Raising an alarm over human-caused climate change, NASA-led research has revealed that the amount of heat trapped by Earth's land, ocean and atmosphere has doubled over the course of only 14 years.

Scientists at NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the US found that Earth's energy imbalance approximately doubled during the 14-year period from 2005 to 2019.

To reach this conclusion, scientists compared data from two independent measurements — NASA's Clouds and the Earth's Radiant Energy System (CERES) and data from a global array of ocean floats called Argo that enable an accurate estimate of the rate at which the world's oceans are heating up.



**POST-COVID GREY MATTER LOSS**

An analysis of brain scans from people once infected with Covid-19 suggest a consistent pattern in loss of grey matter over time, say researchers.

The researchers affiliated with the University of Oxford posted findings ahead of peer review to medRxiv, drawing on data from the UK Biobank.

"Our findings thus consistently relate to loss of grey matter in limbic cortical areas directly linked to the primary olfactory and gustatory system," or areas in the brain related to the perception of smell and taste, the authors wrote.

The team compared brain scans taken pre-pandemic to scans taken about three years later among 394 COVID-positive patients.



# Spain face threat of early exit

AFP ■ SEVILLE

Luis Enrique admitted he expected more from Spain at Euro 2020 after a 1-1 draw with Poland on Saturday left his team facing a fight to reach the last 16.

Gerard Moreno missed a penalty and Alvaro Morata squandered the rebound as Spain's scoring woes struck again, with Robert Lewandowski's header earning Poland a valuable point in Seville.

After starting with a stalemate against Sweden, Spain sit third in Group E and may well now have to beat Slovakia in their final game on Wednesday to avoid an embarrassing early exit.

"I was expecting more," said Luis Enrique. "I was expecting six points and zero goals conceded. But this is the situation."

"We're coming into the crunch match now and if we want to progress we need to win. If we win, we'll go through. If not, we'll be out. That's the reality."

Morata poked in from close range to put Spain in front but Lewandowski's 60th goal of the season pulled Poland level before Moreno's penalty hit the post.

The rebound came quickly to Morata but with Wojciech Szczesny committed down to his right, the goal was open for the striker to score his second.

Instead, the whistles that accompanied Morata against Sweden last week were saved for the whole Spanish team at the final whistle.

Poland, meanwhile, formed a huddle on the pitch before going to over to salute their supporters, after the deadly Lewandowski came up trumps again to keep his own team's hopes of progress alive.

Luis Enrique had launched



Poland's Robert Lewandowski, right, celebrates after scoring his side's first goal against Spain at La Cartuja in Seville

a passionate and prepared defence of Morata on Friday as he said the team would be "Morata and 10 others".

But he also replaced Ferran Torres in the starting line-up with Moreno, the Villarreal striker whose 23 goals was second only to Lionel Messi last season in La Liga.

Morata's best moment came in the 25th minute and it could hardly have been easier, even if a little shuffle put him in the right position to poke in Moreno's shot from the right.

The offside flag went up and Spain's players appeared to expect the cancellation but instead the goal stood.

Poland came again though and twice went close before half-time, Karol Swiderski hitting the post with a curling shot that came back for Lewandowski, but he smashed

## 'Barca move will give Depay something extra'

Amsterdam: Netherlands coach Frank de Boer is hopeful Memphis Depay's Euro 2020 form will be positively impacted after the confirmation the striker will play for Barcelona next season.

Depay has long been linked with a move to the Camp Nou and on Saturday Barcelona announced the 27-year-old had signed a two-year deal to join on a free transfer from Lyon.

"Maybe the transfer to Barcelona will give him something extra to help him perform at his best," De Boer told reporters ahead of the Dutch team's final Group C game against North Macedonia.

"We need Memphis at his

best to go as far as we want in this tournament but we have confidence in him and he is a confident player."

Depay, who scored 20 goals in Ligue 1 for Lyon in the season just finished, converted a penalty in the Netherlands' 2-0 win over Austria.

However he has come in for some criticism from some fans and media for failing to take other chances.

"I think Memphis is his first critic and I'm sure the criticism doesn't affect him," De

Boer said of the former Manchester United player, who is a huge star in the Netherlands.

"He knows if he played well or not so let's hope for the Netherlands that he can reach the level that we have in mind."

The Oranje have already secured qualification for the last 16 as winners of Group C after beating both Ukraine and Austria in their first major tournament since the 2014

World Cup.

"When we are doing well we can beat anybody. Hopefully we can grow into the tournament and we still have some better performances to come," said De Boer, whose team will play in Budapest in the first knockout round against one of the best third-placed sides on June 27.

Victory there would set up a quarter-final in Baku against the runners-up in either Group A or B.

"We know our path to the final and to get to the final you have to win every game, so I don't really care who we play next," De Boer said. "We have no influence on it."

## 'Bubbling' Germany back on track: Müller

AFP ■ MUNICH

Thomas Müller said confidence is now sky high in the Germany camp after getting their Euro 2020 campaign back on track with a 4-2 thumping of holders Portugal on Saturday.

"We are allowed to feel a little euphoria," said Müller after Germany moved second in Group F, level on three points with Portugal and a point behind leaders France.

"It's just fun playing in this atmosphere. The cauldron is boiling."

Germany now need to beat Hungary in Munich on Wednesday to be sure of reaching the knock-out stage.

"Now we have the three points, we are well in the tournament and have it in our own hands," added Müller.

"We mustn't get carried away and become arrogant — but we must believe in our quality."



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen reacts after winning the French F1 Grand Prix at the Paul Ricard racetrack in Le Castellet on Sunday

## Max wins French GP to extend c'ship lead

AP ■ LE CASTELLET

F1 championship leader Max Verstappen overtook Lewis Hamilton on the penultimate lap to win the French Grand Prix on Sunday and extend his lead over his title rival to 12 points.

Verstappen used the DRS system to catch Hamilton on Lap 52 and pass him on the inside before zooming off to clinch his third win of the season and 13th of his career. A bonus point for the fastest lap made it a great day for Red Bull, which had never beaten Mercedes on the Paul Ricard circuit in southern France.

It was a close call, though, with Red Bull's gamble on a two-stop strategy for Verstappen countered by a one-stopper for Hamilton as Mercedes kept him out on the same tires.

With five of 53 laps left, Hamilton was only 3.5 seconds ahead.

Verstappen quickly ate into that lead, kept calm and then positioned himself perfectly to attack on a long straight in the way Hamilton has done countless times in his record 98 wins.

"When we made the call to do a two-stop, luckily it paid off," Verstappen said. "We had to work hard for it."

Verstappen, who won by 2.9 seconds, has 131 points to Hamilton's 119 after seven races.

Red Bull's Sergio Perez sneaked past a dejected Valtteri Bottas to take third place and strengthen Red Bull's lead in the constructors' championship: 215 points to 178.

"We pulled the trigger and we went with the two-stopper (for Verstappen) and it worked. And great job from Sergio making the one-stop work," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said. "It's a team effort, the strategy guys are working the numbers and they go for it."

Verstappen has already matched his career best for a season with three wins and is emerging as a massive rival for the defending champion Hamilton, who is trying to win a record eighth F1 title to move one ahead of Michael Schumacher.

## Jamieson 5/31 holds India to 217

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Kyle Jamieson continued his love affair with the Indian team, tormenting the star-studded line-up with disconcerting bounce and swing as New Zealand bowled out the opposition for 217 on day three of the World Test Championship final here.

Jamieson decimated India with marvellous figures of 22-12-31-5 as New Zealand took control of the Test match by reaching 36 for no loss at tea. Openers Devon Conway (18 batting) and Tom Latham (17 batting) negotiated the Indian pace attack pretty well.

However, it was 6 feet 8 inch tall Jamieson, who after last year's series in New Zealand, has once again turned into a nightmare for the Indian batsmen.

Having removed Rohit Sharma on Saturday morning, Jamieson was relentless with his length and the bounce did the rest with clever traps laid for skipper Virat Kohli and the dangerous Rishabh Pant.

Kohli and his deputy Ajinkya Rahane walked into a nicely laid trap as India failed to reach 250, a good total in the prevailing conditions as per batting coach Vikram Rathour.

The overcast conditions made batting difficult and the likes of Jamieson, Trent Boult



New Zealand's Kyle Jamieson, right, appeals successfully for the wicket of India's captain Virat Kohli, left, during the third day of the WTC final in Southampton

(21.1-4-47-2) and Neil Wagner (15-5-40-2) indulged in a 'who blinks first' game with the Indian batters and came out trumps with some incisive seam, swing and short pitched bowling.

Kohli (44, 132 balls) couldn't add a single run to his overnight score as his RCB teammate Jamieson made life

difficult for him.

Boult and Jamieson kept bowling outside the off-stump channel and Kohli kept on leaving before the lanky seamer went slightly wide off the crease and got one to aim at rival skipper's boot laces.

Rishabh Pant (4) didn't score a run for 19 balls and

then got a boundary with a flick through mid-wicket. Two balls later, he took the bait when Jamieson angled one on to the imaginary fifth off-stump. He went for an expansive drive only to be snapped in the third slip by Tom Latham.

Once the 61-run stand with Kohli had ended, Rahane (49, 119 balls) sensed that the scoreboard needed a move on and started playing a few shots.

But perhaps, the milestone was working on his mind and despite playing a mistimed pull-shot one ball earlier, Wagner with his signature short ball prevented him from reaching a well-deserved fifty.

Rahane's disappointment was evident as he fell into the trap to play the pull-shot despite knowing that Wagner had kept a deep fine leg and long leg for the shot.

Ravichandran Ashwin (22, 27 balls) threw his bat around and got some useful runs but was never going to last long as Tim Southee (22-6-64-1) took care of him just before lunch break.

Post lunch break, Jamieson removed Ishant Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah off successive deliveries but Mohammed Shami prevented him from completing a hat-trick.

## Shafali important for us in all formats: Mithali

PTI ■ BRISTOL

Shafali Verma's spectacular debut has caught the imagination of the Indian women's team Test skipper Mithali Raj, who feels the teenager would be a key member of the side in all the formats of the game in future.

The 17-year-old, who had smashed a stroke-filled 96 in the first innings, made 63 in the second, to become the youngest woman and fourth overall to score twin half-centuries in her debut Test and was rightfully adjudged player-of-the-match.

"She will be very, very important to the Indian batting unit in all formats. She beautifully adapted to this format," Mithali said in a virtual media interaction after



Shafali Verma receives her Test cap from Indian skipper Mithali Raj before the start of first day play of Women's Test match against England in Bristol

India, following on, salvaged a draw in the one-off Test against England.

"She didn't go like how she would go bonkers in the T20 format. She played sensibly against the new ball and it's

great to have her."

Asked what prompted the Indian team management to hand Verma a Test debut in England, Mithali said: "She has great range of shots, and she can be very, very, effective in

a format like this if she gets going. In no time, we could see that the score would be somewhere else if she gets going."

"Once we knew that it's a used wicket and there won't be much of a movement, we thought it would be a good time to give her a Test debut and she lived up to it."

Mithali rated the young opener's knock in the second innings ahead of her first innings score of 96 as the teenager showed utmost composure and maturity.

"The (second innings) fifty came with a little more sorted head and a little bit more experience. Those sweetly-timed drives, it was beautiful to watch her. I'm sure she will grow from strength to strength from here on."

कोविड-19 से सम्पूर्ण सतर्कता के साथ

# खुशहाल परिवार दिवस

प्रत्येक माह की 21 तारीख को

परिवार नियोजन में पुरुषों की साझेदारी  
जीवन में लाए स्वास्थ्य और खुशहाली

## परिवार कल्याण हेतु विशेष ध्यान

1 वर्ष के अंदर की जटिल गर्भावस्था की प्रसूताएं

तीन या तीन से अधिक बच्चों वाले योग्य दम्पति

नव-विवाहित दम्पति

खुशहाल परिवार हेतु सभी सरकारी स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों तथा होसला साझेदारी में अधिकृत प्राइवेट अस्पतालों में प्रदान की जाने वाली नि:शुल्क सेवाओं का लाभ उठाएं

पुरुष नसबंदी

महिला नसबंदी

निरोध

कॉपर टी/पी पी आई वू सी डी

अन्तरा

छाया माला-एन

इजी पिल

समय से परिवार नियोजन के साधन अपनाइए, अनचाहे गर्भ की चिंता से मुक्ति पाइए

समझदारी दिखाएँ! अपने बच्चे का सम्पूर्ण टीकाकरण कराएँ

## टीका असरदार, लगावाएँ समझदार

आइए, ऐसी लहर चलाएँ: उचित व्यवहार से कोविड को हराएँ

समस्त जानकारियों हेतु सम्पर्क करें 104

साफाई मी - दवाई मी - कड़ाई मी