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China blacked out Mumbai in Oct

Amid LAC face-off, cyberattacks caused massive power outage: NYT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the middle of the stand-off in eastern Ladakh last year, China unleashed coordinated cyberattacks on India's power facilities that may have triggered the massive power outage in Mumbai in October 2020.

The outage led to a countywide uproar as India's financial capital came to a grinding halt on October 12. Mumbai lifeline local trains were shut, hospitals could not carry life-saving operations and stock exchange remained out of gear for hours.

The cyberattack on power facilities may have been initiated by a group of Chinese hackers, according to a study that first appeared in the *New York Times*.

China-linked threat activity group RedEcho may have planted malware in key power plants in India, said the study. "The Mumbai power cut provides additional evidence suggesting the coordinated targeting of Indian Load Dispatch Centres," said the study.

The study also suggested that some of the country's most sensitive infrastructures are vulnerable to cyberattacks from Chinese hackers.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Power on Monday said there is no impact on operations of Power System Operation Corporation (POSOCO) due to any malware attack and that



A Mumbai local train stranded due to a sudden and unplanned power outage

File photo

prompt actions are taken on advisories issued against such threats.

However, the Ministry did not mention about the Mumbai outage in its statement.

Responding to the findings of the study, the Ministry said, "There is no impact on any of the functionalities carried out by POSOCO due to the referred threat. No data breach/data loss has been detected due to these incidents."

The Ministry further said, "Prompt actions are being taken by the CISOs (chief

information security officers) at all these control centres under operation by POSOCO for any incident/advisory received from various agencies like CERT-in, NCIIPC, CERT-Trans etc."

The CERT-in (Indian Computer Emergency Response Team) is the nodal agency to deal with cyber security threats like hacking and phishing.

The National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) is national nodal agency for critical information infrastructure

protection.

Confirming the possibility of the cyberattack, Maharashtra Energy Minister Nitin Raut on Monday said the *New York Times* report claiming that the massive power outage in Mumbai last year might have been due to a cyber attack from China was true.

"There is truth in the claims made by the NYT. We had formed three committees to enquire into the matter. We will receive a detailed report this evening from the cyber department," Raut said.

The Maharashtra cyber

department had initially suspected that a malware attack could be responsible for Mumbai's power outage in October last year, which stopped trains and shut down hospitals and the stock exchange for hours. Some areas in suburban central Mumbai suffered outages for almost 10 to 12 hours.

Recorded Future, a US-based company that analyses online digital threats, first detected the flow of malware. Recorded Future's Insight Group observed that from early 2020 there was a large increase in suspected cyberattacks against Indian organisations from Chinese state-sponsored groups, said the report.

From mid-2020, Recorded Future's midpoint collection revealed a steep rise in the use of infrastructure tracked as AXIOMATICAS-YMPTOTE, which encompasses ShadowPad command

and control servers, to target a large swathe of India's power sector. 10 distinct Indian power sector organisations, including four of the five regional load dispatch centres responsible for the operation of the power grid through balancing electricity supply and demand, have been identified as targets in a concerted campaign against India's critical infrastructure. Other targets identified include two Indian seaports," the report said.

Modi takes Covid jab; 1 mn register for shots

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Minister for External Affairs (MEA) S Jaishankar received the Covid-19 jab even as more than one million citizens registered themselves on the CoWIN portal till 1 pm on Monday with India opening up vaccination drive for those over 60 years and within the age bracket of 45 to 59 years with specified comorbidities.

AIIMS chief Dr Randeep Guleria said the Prime Minister's move to take the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine on the very first day of the inoculation drive should eliminate any hesitancy from the minds of people about the vaccine.

Vaccines provided to beneficiaries at the Government



Prime Minister Narendra Modi is being administered a Covid-19 vaccine in New Delhi on Monday.

health facilities will be entirely free of cost, while private facilities cannot charge the beneficiary a sum above ₹250 per person per dose (₹150 for vaccines and ₹100 as operational charges).

As the vaccination programme got underway in other places across the country, Venkaiah, Shah, Jaishankar too was vaccinated on Monday.

PTI

PM jokes: Politicians thick-skinned, do you plan to use thick needle

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the nurses administering the Covid-19 vaccine to him on Monday whether they were planning to use some special thick needle as politicians are known to be "very thick-skinned", drawing laughter from the medical staff who immediately felt at ease.

Not afraid of Covid, won't take jabs: Farmer leaders

New Delhi: Protesting farmer leaders in the vulnerable age group on Monday said they are not afraid of coronavirus and won't take vaccine jabs, even as the second phase of vaccination drive got underway to inoculate senior citizens and those above 45 with underlying medical conditions.

Delhi Govt fought pandemic well, says Jain

New Delhi: Delhi fought the coronavirus well and brought down both the positive as well as death rates, said Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain on Monday. There are challenges but the Delhi Government is ready to deal with it, be it vaccination or health infrastructure.

CAPSULE

FRANCE'S SARKOZY SENTENCED TO JAIL

Paris: A Paris court on Monday found French former President Nicolas Sarkozy guilty of corruption and influence peddling and sentenced him to one year in prison and a two-year suspended sentence.

GST COLLECTIONS CROSS ₹1 L CR IN FEB

New Delhi: GST collections crossed the ₹1 lakh crore mark for the fifth month in a row in February, rising 7 per cent annually to over ₹1.13 lakh crore, indicating economic recovery.

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NH construction touches record 33 km a day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Road, Transport, and Highways Ministry has achieved the enviable target of constructing record 30 km highway a day. The feat could be achieved after the construction of 11,035 kilometres of national highways this fiscal so far.

Union Road Transport, Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said highway building has achieved a new feat, with the construction touching record 30 km a day. "We have built 11,035 km of highways till date this year. This comes to 32.85 km a day of highway building, which is a record," Gadkari said on the sidelines of an event talking to the media. Gadkari said that by end of this financial year the construction could go up to 40 km a day.

Tejashwi, Tipu back Mamata ahead of West Bengal polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In the battle royal for Bengal, two Yadav chiefs from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have thrown their weight behind Bengal Chief Minister Mamata

Banerjee. Both Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav have declared their parties' support for the Trinamool Congress in the coming Assembly elections.

The RJD leader, who called on Mamata in her office at State Secretariat Nabanna on Monday, appealed to the people of Bihar who live in Bengal to support the TMC in the coming elections.

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Govt committed to make U'khand a developed State

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

The budget session of the Uttarakhand assembly started in Gairsain, the summer capital of Uttarakhand on Monday with the address of the governor Baby Rani Maurya. As soon as the governor started the address, the opposition Congress boycotted the house in protest. Highlighting the achievements of the Trivendra Singh Rawat government during its four years in office so far, the governor said that the objective of the government is to bring Uttarakhand in the category of a developed state by adopting the principle of decentralised development. She said that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the state is Rs 2,53,666 crore and the per capita income is Rs 2,02,895. Under the pandemic of Covid-19, the governor said that five dedicated Covid hospitals, 12 Covid health centres and 420 Covid care centres were set up in the state. To combat the pandemic 528 ICU beds and two ventilators were installed and 214 new ambulances were purchased. The government appointed 378 doctors, 113 nurses, 32 pharmacists and 27 technicians to treat the Covid-19 pandemic. She said that three new medical colleges in Haridwar, Rudrapur and

Pithoragarh have been approved. The Uttarakhand government has digitised all ration cards and 94 per cent of ration cards have been linked with Aadhaar. The government has implemented the 'one nation, one ration card' scheme in the state. She said that a total of 5.88 lakh families were given employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme (MNRGS) and 1.06 lakh migrants who had returned during the pandemic were given employment by creating 166,370 man days. She informed that 105 child development schemes are operational in the state and 1.7 lakh children are given fortified milk in the Anganwadi centres. In the Mid Day Meal (MDM) scheme, two billion and two eggs are being given to the students twice a week as additional supplement. The governor said that the process of setting up two Atal Utkrishit Vidyalayas in every block of the state has been initiated. She said that 1,431 Licensed Teachers (LT) and 400 primary teachers is underway. She said that the Uttarakhand government has increased the ex-gratia payment to the families of the martyrs of armed and paramilitary forces from Rs 10 lakh to



Rs 15 lakh. Under the Sports Policy-2020, the state government has decided to provide government jobs to the medal winners. Area specific sports hubs would be set up in the state and Khel Vigyan Kendras would be set in the state. For preservation of the culture and folk arts, a cultural centre would be set up in Satpuli town of Pauri district. To prevent migration from the mountainous areas, 2,551 home stays have so far been registered. The governor said that the state government has entered into a bipartite agreement with Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL) for exploration of minerals in the state. She said that the state government has declared a moratorium on the start-up policy for setting up ecosystems in the state. In ease of doing busi-

ness the state is among the top states of the country. The governor added that proposals for setting up 104 growth centres have been approved in the state. In Haridwar one more pharma-city would be developed in 75 acre area. The state has also constituted an aerospace and defence policy to attract investment in the defence sector. The governor said that the state government has constructed 2,522 kilometres of new roads, reconstructed 2,700 kilometres roads and constructed 241 bridges. She also informed about the progress achieved under the Char Dham road project. Under the Deendayal Upadhyaya cooperative farmer welfare scheme, loans to 4.86 lakh individuals and 1,330 Self Help Groups have been provided.

Protest turns violent, locals lathicharged near Bharadisaian

CM orders magisterial probe, says guilty won't be spared

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

The protesters demanding the broadening of Nandprayag-Ghat road were lathicharged by the police on Monday when they tried to force their way past the barricades to the assembly building. High drama occurred on the day when more than 3,000 locals marched towards the assembly building. The police first tried to stop them at Jungelchatti, a place located about seven kilometres from the assembly building but the agitated protesters broke the barricades and broke the barricades. In order to stop the vehicles of the protesters the police blocked the road with a fire tender. The 200 odd vehicles of the protesters blocked the road and the police used water cannon to disperse the protesters. Gairsain route remained affected for hours.

The protesters including the women and children marched on foot to Diwalikhal where a large deployment of police force was posted. Here the police used water cannon to disperse the agitators but when things went out of control, the police restored to lathi charge. Though the administration is denying any injuries on either side, eyewitness accounts suggest that more than 25 protesters and few police personnel were injured in the altercation. Taking serious cognisance of the incident, chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said that it was unfortunate and has ordered a magisterial probe, stressing that the guilty will not be spared.

It is worth mentioning here that for the demand of broadening the 19 kilometre long Nandprayag-Ghat section, the locals have been undertaking protest from the last 87 days. The CM Trivendra Singh Rawat has assured them that the road would be broadened. However it failed to pacify the



protestors who wanted immediate start of work on the project. Recently they had formed a 19-kilometre long human chain but the protest failed to draw the response from the authorities concerned. Avtar Singh, a protester said that the demand of the people is very simple but despite many assurances from the leaders in the past nothing concrete has happened so far. The former chief minister Harish Rawat has condemned the use of force on the protesters.

Another resident of the area Hari Krishan Bhatt said, "We want that the existing six metre road should be broadened to nine metres. Our request was accepted by the CM but even after his assurance nothing has happened. We are protesting peacefully for the last three months but our pleas have fallen on deaf ears," said Bhatt. When contacted the district magistrate of Chamoli, Swati Bhaduria said that 300 protesters were arrested by police and shifted to a sub-jail. She denied any injury to anyone during the protest.

Cong to corner Govt on many issues in Budget Session

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

The Uttarakhand Congress has decided to corner the state government on many issues during the budget session of Uttarakhand assembly. Senior Congress leader Govind Singh Kunjwal told media persons outside the assembly on Monday that the state government has failed on every front. He said that though the state government has declared Gairsain the summer capital, the government has no intention to develop it. He said that the government should operate for at least six months from Gairsain. The deputy leader of Congress legislature party, Karan Mahra said that the Congress would raise the issue of district development authorities, atrocities on women, failure to tackle pandemic and other issues during the session. He said that though the chief minister is holding about 55 portfolios, the house rarely functions on Mondays when the CM is slated to answer the questions.

International Yoga Festival begins in Rishikesh

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The seven-day International Yoga Festival was inaugurated by Agriculture Minister Subodh Uniyal, head of Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad (ABAP) Narendra Giri and Patanjali Yogpeeth chairman Acharya Balakrishna in Rishikesh on Monday. The festival is being jointly organised by Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) and Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN). Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Uniyal said, "We are here at the world-famous location Rishikesh also known as Yoganagari to celebrate our age-old practice of Yoga. The aim of Yoga is not only to keep us fit but also to deal with the negativity within the human beings. Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always spread the message of well-being done by Yoga which has increased the popularity of Yoga nationally and internationally."



Patanjali Yogpeeth chairman Acharya Balakrishna said, "Yoga has played a very vital role in boosting immunity especially during the time of Covid. The regular practice of Yoga has helped in keeping the diseases away from the body. Yoga is also the cure for many diseases that are hard to treat using medical science."

The ABAP president Narendra Giri, said, "The real definition of Yoga is to unite the individual soul with the divine. Yoga also leads to peace and ultimately Samadhi which is very important in one's life."

No valid grounds for strike by UPNL outsourced workers, stresses Govt

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State government has stated that there are no valid grounds for the protest being undertaken by employees outsourced through Uttarakhand Purv Sainik Kalyan Nigam Limited (UPNL). It pointed out that the demand for UPNL personnel is raised from time to time by the state government. It was last raised recently during August 2020.

According to officials, the state government believes that the strike by UPNL outsourced workers is improper especially considering the impact of Covid-19 pandemic coupled with the Vidhan Sabha session which began on Monday and the approaching end of the financial year.



In a letter written to the UPNL managing director, the additional chief secretary Radha Raturi has also clarified that the demands being raised by the UPNL outsourced workers are pending in the Supreme Court - a fact which is known to all concerned. In her letter to the UPNL MD, the addi-

tional chief secretary has also expected that considering all the relevant facts, the protesting outsourced UPNL workers should be directed to immediately withdraw their strike. Only after they withdraw their strike would it be proper to talk sympathetically with the UPNL outsourced workers, she stressed. It is pertinent to mention here that the UPNL outsourced workers have been protesting for about a week now demanding equal work equal pay and against the termination of contract of some UPNL workers from the government college hospital.

SCPCR to conduct anti-drug awareness campaigns

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Considering the increasing substance abuse among children, especially in the slum settlements, the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) has decided to conduct two campaigns this month. The first campaign is against substance abuse in Dehradun. According to the chairperson of the commission, Usha Negi, the commission will organise an awareness campaign in which young girls and women would tell Raksha Sutra boys and men who operate turn promise to abstain from

drug abuse. Apart from this, Negi said that the commission will also make the locals living in slums sign affidavits which will make them a part of the anti-drug awareness campaign. "These initiatives aim to involve local residents, especially those living in slums, and make them contribute to the campaign," stated Negi. She further informed that the commission will start these campaigns this month under the leadership of the three brand ambassadors of the anti-drug campaign which SCPCR recently announced. "The three selected students

will lead the campaigns in association with some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). One of the selected ambassadors of the campaign is a reformed addict which will also inspire others to give up the drug addiction and lead a normal life," said Negi. She further informed that SCPCR will soon send recommendations to the Central Government and State Government after conducting a two-day seminar this month with all the child commissions including the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).

CDO directs swift completion of PMAGY works

Dehradun: Reviewing works under the Pradhan Mantri Adash Gram Yojana (PMAGY), the Dehradun chief development officer Nitika Khandelwal directed the officials concerned to complete all the development projects in the selected Gram Panchayats within the specified time. Presently, the development projects in 17 Gram Panchayats are under process and the CDO instructed the departments to work on basic facilities like roads, proper garbage disposal, health centres, water and electricity connection, and

employment opportunities in the selected Gram Panchayats. Besides this, Khandelwal also directed departments to construct multipurpose halls in the villages with more population wherever possible. She also instructed Uttarakhand Energy Development Agency (UREDA) to finish the solar light works in selected areas. Further, the CDO also ordered the departments to adopt the Geographic Information System (GIS) for the development projects under PMAGY.

MCD receives over one lakh feedbacks within 20 days

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) has received over one lakh citizens' feedback through Swachhata-MoHUA application in the last 20 days. The corporation informed that the citizen feedback constitutes 1,800 marks out of 6,000 which also includes engagement of locals with the app and their experience with the sanitation facilities provided in their city. About 78,000 feedbacks were registered in the Swachhata app by February 10 but within only 20 days more than two lakh citizens have registered their feedback through the app. "The feedback registration started from December 2020 but it was only around 80,000 feedbacks in the first week of the last month. The corporation has been running awareness campaigns about Swachh Survekshan 2021 in the city through various means like sanitation drive and by playing audio messages through the door to door garbage picking vehicles. Due to this, the citizen feedbacks are now approximately twice of what they were a few weeks ago," said chief municipal health officer, Dr. Kailash Joshi. Further, municipal sanitation



inspector Pushpa Rauthan informed that the citizens are asked questions regarding cleanliness in their nearby area, commercial places and public toilets to register their feedback. It also asks citizens about how much they are aware of the ongoing as well as the last Swachh Survekshan, added Rauthan. Meanwhile, Dr. Joshi added that citi-

zens' feedback constitutes 30 per cent of the total marks and he is certain that Dehradun city will get around four lakh citizens' feedback by the end of March. It is pertinent to mention here that the MCD got 124th position in last year's survey and this year it aims to achieve a position among the 100 cleanest cities of the country.

MCD starts penalising locals for violating plastic ban

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

To restrict the use of single-use plastics in the city, the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) started imposing penalties on locals violating the ban on plastics on Monday. According to sanitation inspector Pushpa Rauthan, the corporation mainly focussed on raising awareness against use of single-use plastic on Monday and fined only about nine locals collecting about Rs 900. "We penalised those who were using single-use plastics to carry products like vegetables and fruits among other things," said Rauthan. Moreover, the officials informed that the municipal commissioner, Vinay Shankar Pandey has formed five teams to raise awareness in the zones of the city. These teams will conduct raids on commercial establishments and plastic manufacturers besides imposing penalties on the locals using single-use plastics from this week.

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1.	Mr. Panna Lal Yadav (Borrower), Mrs. Poonam Yadav (Co-Borrower) Loan No. LBAKAP00003872259	Khatu No 290, Kharsa No 640/1 Min Situated at Mouza Meheshpura, Udhamsingh Nagar, Kashipur-244713. Area of Property- 496.87 Sq Feet. Built up area- 600 Sq Feet. Property Type- Residential House	Rs. 21,23,768/- (as on Feb 22, 2021)	Rs. 12,50,000/-	March 12, 2021, From 11:00 AM to 11:30 AM	March 24, 2021, From 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link-https://disposahub.com) of our auction agency M/s NexGen Solutions Private Limited. The mortgagee's notice is given as last chance to pay the total dues of the secured credit on or before March 23, 2021 before 05:00 PM else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) ICICI Bank Ltd, Pagar Electricale, Kataratal Road, Kashipur, Udhamsingh Nagar Dist., Uttarakhand- 244713 and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before March 23, 2021 before 05:00 PM along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. The Bidder(s) who are unable to submit their offer through the website then they need to submit their signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at: ICICI Bank Ltd, Pagar Electricale, Kataratal Road, Kashipur, Udhamsingh Nagar Dist., Uttarakhand- 244713 on or before March 23, 2021 before 05:00 PM. The Bidder(s) who are unable to submit their offer through the website then they need to submit their signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at: ICICI Bank Ltd, Pagar Electricale, Kataratal Road, Kashipur, Udhamsingh Nagar Dist., Uttarakhand- 244713 on or before March 23, 2021 before 05:00 PM. The Bidder(s) who are unable to submit their offer through the website then they need to submit their signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at: ICICI Bank Ltd, Pagar Electricale, Kataratal Road, Kashipur, Udhamsingh Nagar Dist., Uttarakhand- 244713 on or before March 23, 2021 before 05:00 PM.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 8953652366 or M/s NexGen Solutions Private Limited on 9710029933/9610029926/01244233933

Please note that Marketing agencies, M/s NexGen Solutions Private Limited 2. Augoo Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Prope AMC. have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/m4p4s

Date: March 02, 2021
Place: Kashipur

AUTHORIZED OFFICER
ICICI Bank Limited

Opp sees plot in PM taking Covid shot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Politics erupted over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vaccination on Monday as the Opposition accused him of using the occasion for electoral gains while the BJP sought the nation to "speak in one voice" in the battle against coronavirus and sought the Opposition to not to come up with "wild theories" and politicise the vaccination drive.

Politicising Modi getting his first vaccine dose in the second-phase scheduled for senior citizens, Trinamool Congress MP Shantanu Sen claimed that the Prime Minister's jab was "publicity" adding, "Photograph is more important than protocol".

Commenting on Modi's "changed appearance", he claimed that the PM's "newly grown Rabinidrik beard" would have become invisible if he had worn a mask. Adding 'God save India', the Trinamool MP added that Mamata Banerjee was 'saving Bengal'.

Several other politicians like Congress's Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and SP's Akhilesh

Yadav have politicised vaccination as a BJP "stunt".

Chowdhury said, "In PM's inoculation visuals, there was gamcha of Assam, and nurses who vaccinated him were from Kerala and Puducherry".

Kicking off part-2 of India's Covid vaccination programme, Prime Minister Modi received his first jab of the vaccine on Monday at All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, sporting an Assamese Gamcha.

He got a jab by nurses—Sister Niveda & sister Rosamma—hailing from Puducherry and Tamil Nadu respectively.

The event soon turned into political name calling in the backdrop of high pitch poll campaigns in five States, including Bengal, Assam and Tamil Nadu and Kerala, going for Assembly elections and will keep doing so in the next month.

BJP hit back with Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad saying the need to speak in one voice to battle-out coronavirus pandemic as BJP president JP Nadra demand-

ed that the Opposition should stop resorting to "wild theories" to criticise Indian achievement.

Prasad said Modi had worn Assamese gamcha and Mundu last year when he had appealed to light a lamp to fight corona. "Than there were no elections", Prasad said and taking a swipe at suggested to Chowdhury to "wear all Bengali symbols when he gets himself vaccinated".

BJP chief said that the Opposition party comes up with "wild theories" to ridicule India's achievements.

"Congress and the Opposition is not proud of anything Indian. They should introspect about how their lies on the COVID-19 vaccine will be used by vested interest groups for their own agenda. People of India have been rejecting such politics and will keep doing so in the future", Nadra tweeted.

Union aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri also took a swipe at the opposition leaders, saying they are on a quest for permanent political marginalisation.

Maha, Kerala, 3 others lead Covid surge in country



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Five States—Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat—continue to cause serious concern for the Centre by showing a consistent surge in new Covid-19 cases. Put together, they contributed 84 per cent of the 15,510 fresh infections reported in a day on Monday.

The Union Health Ministry said on Monday, India's total number of active Covid-19 cases was recorded at 1,68,627, comprising 1.52 per cent of the total infections.

Maharashtra alone accounts for 46.39 per cent of India's total active cases, followed by Kerala with 29.49 per cent. "A total of 15 states and union territories have registered more than 1,000 active

cases. Kerala and Maharashtra are the two states with over 10,000 active cases, while the rest of the 13 States and UTs have between 1,000-10,000 active cases", the Ministry said.

The total number of cases with the UK, South Africa and Brazil variants of SARS-CoV-2 in the country as on date has reached 213, the Ministry said. A total 15,510 new cases were registered in a span of 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 8,293, followed by Kerala with 3,254 cases while Punjab has reported 579 new cases.

The Centre is continuously engaging with the states and union territories manifesting higher number of active cases and those reporting a rise in the daily new Covid-19 cases.



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

States and UTs have been advised to maintain a continued rigorous vigil for containing the spread of COVID-19. Need for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close con-

tacts are strongly emphasised, the Ministry said. "Eight states are displaying an upward trajectory in the daily new cases", it underlined. So far, a total of 1,43,01,266 vaccine doses have been administered to beneficiaries

The total number of cases with the UK, South Africa and Brazil variants of SARS-CoV-2 in the country as on date has reached 213

through 2,92,312 sessions. These include the first dose to 66,69,985 healthcare workers, second dose to 24,56,191 healthcare workers and 15,75,090 frontline workers who have taken their first dose.

"The next phase of COVID-19 vaccination has commenced from today for those who are over 60 years of age and for people aged 45 and above with specified comorbid conditions."

"A simplified process of registration has been set up, whereby potential beneficiaries can have the option of advance self-registration, on-site registration or facilitated cohort registration", the ministry said.

The top states account for 86.79 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties of 62 deaths. Kerala followed with 15 daily deaths and Punjab has reported seven fatalities in a span of 24 hours.

A total of 20 States and UTs have not reported any Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours.

FPOs will prevent rural migration to cities: Tomar



Union Ministers of State for Agriculture & Farmer Welfare Parshottam Rupala and Kalish Choudhary giving the FPO Registration Certificate to a woman FPO on the occasion of anniversary of the Central Government Scheme FPO of the Union Ministry of Agriculture. Union Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agrawal and Additional Secretary Agriculture Dr Akhilesh Likhri were also present on the occasion on Monday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Farmer Processing Organisation (FPO) "Krishak Utpadak Sangathan Evam Audyayik Viparan Sahkari Samiti" from Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi, Prime Minister's Parliamentary Constituency has become the country's first agricultural entity to be registered under the ambit of the Cooperative Societies Act.

Generally, the FPOs are registered under the Companies Act. But, this is the first time that such an entity has been established under the Cooperative Societies Act as the part of the Government's Central Sector Scheme titled "Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)" to form and promote 10,000 new FPOs. More FPOs are on the way under the scheme.

One of the implementing agencies of the scheme, the National Cooperative Development Cooperation (NCDC), an apex finance entity under the Union Agriculture Ministry, will handhold the Varanasi-based FPO for next five years in helping it setting up the multi-service center

facilities for mushroom production, cultivation while the green chilli drying system will be equipped with dryers with vacuum nitrogen drying capacities. It was registered on February 26, 2021, as part of the "Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)" scheme, which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 29, last year.

It aims at bringing small and marginal farmers on a bigger platform and help them to help them become "atmanirbhar" (self-reliant) in the long run.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the scheme on Monday, Union Agriculture Minister, Narendra Singh Tomar tweeted that FPOs will help to improve the rural economy and create employment opportunities for rural sector in the villages itself and this will prevent migration to cities. Later at an event online, Parshottam Rupala, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmer Welfare termed the FPOs' scheme as a game changer in the country's agriculture ecosystem and said that FPOs will make farming more viable

by aggregating land."

Formation of FPOs is not just a scheme but it is a plan to give a new dimension to Indian Agriculture in a new India. We will ensure that each FPO is a role model in itself," he said at the event which was also attended by Kalish Choudhary, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmer Welfare besides senior officials from the concerned department and implementing agencies like NABARD.

Sanjay Agrawal, Union Agriculture Secretary said that in each block there should be an FPO which acts as catalyst for institutional infrastructure while Sandeep Nayak, Managing Director of the NCDC, said that the farmers in the country are keen to set up FPOs as it will help them boost their income and make them self-sustaining.

"This is just the beginning", he said adding that more than 2200 FPOs produce clusters have been allocated for the formation of FPOs in the current year. "The Government aims at transforming agriculture into a sustainable enterprise through FPOs," Nayak said.

6th Swachchh Survekshan launched to foster healthy contest among cities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

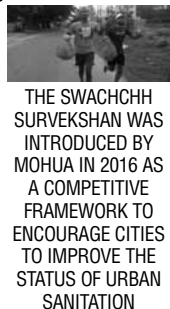
With 2,000 assessors who will go on the field to assess the performance of cities this time, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MHUA) on Monday launched the 6th Swachchh Survekshan (SS) 2021, which is dubbed as the world largest cleanliness drive.

Launching the sixth edition of the SS 2021, Durga Shankar Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MHUA) said that this Swachchh Survekshan will get over 3 crore citizen feedback through various platforms and focus would be on parameters pertaining to wastewater treatment and reuse along with local sludge management, the crucial issues of legacy waste management and remediation of landfills have also been brought to the fore in this edition of Survekshan.

Every year, the on-field assessment for SS takes place between January 4-31. However, the same had been delayed by two months due to the COVID pandemic and will now be conducted between 1-28 March 2021. The second phase of SBM-U for a period of 5 years (2021-26) has recently been announced in the Union Budget of 2021.

Speaking at the webinar, Mishra said, "SS has led to a spirit of healthy competition among cities and towns of India. The journey that started in 2016 with only 73 cities with million plus population has grown manifold, with 434 cities in 2017, 4,203 cities in 2018, 4,237 cities in 2019 and 4,242 cities in SS 2020, including 62 Garment Producer Cities have been regularly finding their data, updating their progress in the MIS along with running several citizen centric campaigns in preparation of SS 2021. Today, we are happy to formally kick-off the survey as more than 2,000 assessors get ready to go on the field to assess the performance of cities".

The Swach Survekshan was introduced by MoHUA in 2016 as a competitive framework to encourage cities to improve status of urban sanitation while



encouraging large scale citizen participation. Since its launch in 2014, Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) has made significant progress in the area of both waste management and management. 4,360 Urban ULBs have been declared ODF, 2158 cities certified ODF+ and 551 cities certified ODF++.

Moreover, 66 lakhs individual household toilets and over 6 lakhs community/public toilets have been constructed/are under construction. Additionally, nearly 60,000 toilets across 2,900+ cities have been made live on Google Maps. In the area of solid waste management, 97% of wards have 100% door-to-door collection while 68% of the total waste generated is being processed. A total of six cities have been certified 5 Star, 86 as 3 star and 65 as 1 star under the Star Rating Protocol for Garbage Free Cities.

The next phase of the Mission will focus extensively on aspects of sustainable sanitation including faecal sludge and wastewater management, along with holistic solid waste management with a focus on curbing and ultimately eliminating the use of single-use plastic (SUP), reducing air pollution through effective management of construction & demolition waste, and reducing soil pollution through remediation of legacy dumpsites.

SC denies relief to married Govt servant accused of rape

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

"Are you willing to marry her," was the question posed to a public servant, who is accused of repeatedly raping a minor girl but when the Supreme Court on Monday was told that he is already married he was asked to seek regular bail from the court concerned.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde was hearing a plea filed by the accused who is serving as a technician in Maharashtra State Electricity Production Company Ltd and has moved the apex court against the Bombay High Court February 5 order which had cancelled the bail but she had refused and now he was married to someone else. As the counsel said that the accused is a public servant, the bench said, "You should have thought this before seducing and raping the girl. You knew that you are a government servant". The counsel said that charges in the case are yet to be framed.



you to marry". After taking instructions on the query posed by the bench, the counsel appearing for the petitioner, said the accused was initially willing to marry the girl but she had refused and now he was married to someone else. As the counsel said that the accused is a public servant, the bench said, "You should have thought this before seducing and raping the girl. You knew that you are a government servant". The counsel said that charges in the case are yet to be framed.

"You apply for regular bail. We will stay arrest", the bench said.

The apex court granted the accused protection from arrest for four weeks.

The court was hearing a plea filed by the accused against the Bombay High Court's February 5 order cancelling the anticipatory bail granted to him by the trial court in January last year.

He has also been accused of offences punishable under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Plea in SC against EC call to hold poll in Bengal in 8 phases



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea challenging the Election Commission's decision to conduct Assembly elections over eight phases in West Bengal was filed in the Supreme Court on Monday.

The plea, filed by lawyer M L Sharma, seeks the apex court's direction to the poll panel to stop it from conducting eight-phase elections in the State as it violates Article 14 (right to life) and Article 21 (right to life) of the Constitution.

On February 26, the Election Commission announced the schedule for assembly elections to be held in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and in Puducherry. While the Trinamool Congress Party-led West Bengal will have elections over eight rounds from March 27-April 29, polling in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry will be held in one phase on April 6 and in Assam over three phases.

The plea, which may come up for hearing in few days, also seeks a direction to the CBI to register an FIR into the alleged chanting of religious slogans during electioneering in West Bengal.

Coal mining: SC to deal with legal issue if intra-court appeal can be filed in HC in criminal cases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, hearing an appeal against a Calcutta High Court order allowing CBI probe into an alleged coal mining and transportation case, Monday said it would first examine a legal issue whether an intra-court appeal can be entertained by the high court in a criminal matter against an order of a single judge bench.

A bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud, meanwhile, granted time to CBI to file its response to the appeal of Anup Majee, the director of a company engaged in purchase and sale of the dry fuel, which is an accused in a case of alleged illegal coal trading in the Asansol-Raniganj belt of West Bengal.

Majee, in his plea, has challenged the Calcutta High Court order which allowed the CBI to investigate a case of alleged illegal mining and transportation of coal in West Bengal without the State's consent.

In the proceedings conducted through video conferencing, the bench, also comprising Justice M R Shah, was concerned with the issue of maintainability of LPA before the division bench. We are not concerned with subsequent development," the bench

said. It adjourned the hearing on Majee's plea to March 10 after accepting the request of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta who was representing the CBI. Earlier, the bench had issued notices to Centre and CBI and had sought their response by March 10 on the plea which claimed that the central probe agency lacked jurisdiction to lodge an FIR in the case after the withdrawal of general consent by the West Bengal Government in 2018.

It, however, had refused to grant protection to Majee. Senior advocate A M Singhvi, appearing for West Bengal government, had said that he supported the contention of Majee on the question of law as there was no consent given to the CBI to investigate the case after West Bengal withdrew its general consent.

On February 12, a division bench of the Calcutta High Court had stayed a single bench order that had restricted a CBI investigation into alleged illegal mining and transportation of coal to just "railway areas" of the state and rejected the plea of Majee for grant of protection from any coercive action against him.

It has been observed that if the process of investigation is stalled at this stage, material evidence which may have to be collected can get lost and the accused may be able to achieve the objective for which "frivolous litigation" has been filed.

NIA arrests four drug traffickers from Srinagar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA on Monday arrested four alleged drug traffickers from Srinagar in connection with the Handwara Narco-Terrorism Case.

The arrested accused are Altaf Ahmed Shah (Dangherpora), Kheer Bhawani, Ganderbal, Jammu and Kashmir) Showkat Ahmad Parray (Parray Mohalla, Wangipora Sumbal, Bandipora, J&K), Mudisar Ahmad Dar (Wanduna, Shopian, J & K) and Amin

Allaie alias Hilar Mir (Near Petrol Pump, Shan-e-Kashmir National Highway Sangam, Bijbehara, Anantnag, J&K).

The case relates to seizure of 21 kg of heroin and cash amount of Rs 1,35,89,850 from the members of a drugs syndicate operating in the Valley.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 183/2020 dated June 11, 2020 at Handwara in Kupwara district wherein during checking of vehicles at Kairo Bridge, Handwara, accused Abdul



Momin Peer's Hyundai Creta vehicle was intercepted by police at a naka and during

search Rs 20 lakhs along with two kg heroin was recovered and seized.

Yogi: Jewar airport Govt's top priority

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Monday that his Government has accorded top priority to the development of the Jewar International Airport in Noida.

He said that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the speed, transparency and execution as per the schedule of this project has demonstrated the new work culture of the state. It has been decided to increase the number of airstrips from two to six at this airport, he informed.

The Chief Minister also appreciated the work of the Zurich Airport International AG, a developer of Jewar airport, and assured their representatives of all possible help to be provided by the government.

Adityanath was reviewing the progress of the project on Monday on the occasion of the signing of the 'state support agreement' between Yamuna

International Airport Private Limited and Noida International Airport Limited, constituted by Zurich Airport International AG, the chosen developer for Jewar airport.

The Chief Minister recalled that the Jewar airport project was lying pending with the previous governments for almost 30 years.

"We decided in March 2017 itself that this project would be completed on priority in the interest of the country and the state," he said.

In 2017, Lucknow and Varanasi had the only operational airports in the state. In just three years, five airports, including in Gorakhpur, Hindon, Agra, Prayagraj and now Bareilly, have become operational.

There were only two international airports in the country's largest state (Lucknow and Varanasi), but now there will be five international air-

ports with the addition of Jewar, Kushinagar and Ayodhya to the list.

The Chief Minister said that he was of the view that good connectivity expedites the development process. "The process of operationalisation of 21 airports and seven runways is underway. The effort is to make Uttar Pradesh soar in the field of civil aviation," he stated.

Reviewing the displacement and subsequent rehabilitation of the families affected by the construction of Jewar airport, the Chief Minister said that dialogue should be established with these families so that they should have a better displacement mechanism.

He directed the concerned officials to address this issue within one week, saying that the process of allotment of plots to the displaced population should be conducted with complete transparency. **IAN S**

Around 64% voting in local body polls in Gujarat; counting today

Gandhinagar: There was an average of around 64 per cent voting in the local body elections for municipalities, district and taluka panchayats in Gujarat on Sunday. Voting for 8,473 seats in municipalities, 980 in district panchayats and 4,773 in taluka panchayats took place across 36,008 booths. The counting of votes will take place on March 2.

According to the State Election Commission (SEC), around 64 per cent voter turnout was recorded in the elections to Gujarat's 81 municipalities, 31 district panchayats and 231 taluka panchayats which were held in a largely peaceful manner.

As per the figures provided by the State Election Commission (SEC), there was 58.82 per cent voter turnout in 81 district panchayats, 65.80 per cent in 31 district panchayats, and 66.60 per cent in 231 taluka panchayats.

The average voting percentage across all these local bodies together was around 63.74 per cent.

The SEC officials said voting for 8,473 seats, including 720 in 81 district panchayats and 3,753 in 31 district panchayats and 4,773 in 231 taluka panchayats took place across 36,008 booths.

Out of them, 237 seats remained unopposed, and no forms were filled for two seats in taluka panchayats.

The elections were held on a total 8,235 seats for which the BJP had fielded 8,161 candidates, Congress 7,778, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) 2,090, among others, said the SEC.

Besides these, by-elections for two seats in taluka panchayats and 24 seats in municipalities, was also held on Sunday, where there was 47.63 per cent voter turnout in municipality by-elections and 68.65 per cent in taluka panchayats by-elections.

Gujarat BJP president CR Paati led a road show in Navsari, while Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, Pooja Patel, took part in a motorcycle rally in Amreli. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief minister Arvind Kejriwal sought votes during a road show in Surat on the last day of campaigning on Friday.

For the first time, the All India Majlis-e-Itehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) has fielded candidates in minority-dominated seats in Godhra, Modasa and Bharuch municipalities.

According to the Director General of Police Ashish Bhatia, over 40,000 policemen along with 54,000 Home Guards were deployed to ensure incident-free voting on Sunday. **IAN S**

Interfaith couple's 'marriage' put on hold endlessly

IAN S ■ BAREILLY

Four months ago, a 27-year-old Muslim man had allegedly 'eloped' with a girl from another faith to get married, which had created a lot of sensation. The man was later caught and jailed for over a month.

The couple has since been waiting for permission from the sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) to get 'legally' married but has been asked to wait for another month.

The couple has an Allahabad high court order, giving them freedom to get married and an exemption from notice period under special circumstances by the marriage officer.

SDM Sadar area, Vishu Rajan said, "The issue is not a legal one, but they would have to wait for a police report to ensure there is no law-and-order issue. The couple had

come with their friends who agreed to sign as witnesses on Saturday but the girl's family is still against the marriage."

The SDM said that the couple represented themselves personally, as well as through their legal counsels, for the application of marriage under the special act. They produced an Allahabad high court order, which stated that days of notice period can be exempted under special circumstances by the marriage officer.

"The judgement favours them. However, we are seeking a verification report on 12 points to ensure that neither of the persons is already married, their actual place of residence, possibility of law-and-order issue, etc. Police report is crucial here as well. This process may take more than 30 days to complete and the permission would be granted to the couple for marriage after that," said the SDM.

Youth held for raping 3-yr-old girl in Bihar

Patna: A 20-year-old youth has been arrested by the Bihar police for allegedly raping a three-year-old girl in the state's Jamui district on Monday.

The accused has been identified as Hareram Manjhi, who is a native of Dhamana village near the Aliganj police station in Jamui district.

He had come to Khatuana village to attend the marriage of his cousin brother. Manjhi spotted the victim who was playing outside her house at nearly 9 a.m. He lifted her and took her to a nearby deserted house and raped her. The victim's screams were not heard by anybody due to the loud music being played at the marriage venue nearby.

After committing the crime, Manjhi tried to flee from the village but the vil-

SP of Jamui district said, "We have registered an FIR under the POCSO Act and arrested the accused. He has been sent to judicial custody"

lagers became suspicious and caught him.

They found the girl lying in the deserted house, bleeding profusely. Following this, the 25 days yatra being organised by the Gramodaya Chamber of Commerce and Technology will cover 5000 km before concluding in Haridwar.

"We will soon file a chargesheet in the matter and are committed to bring up the matter in a fast track court for speedy justice," Mandal said. **IAN S**

Kumbh Sandesh Yatra from Kanyakumari to Haridwar starts

Kanyakumari: Kumbh Sandesh Yatra, aimed at spreading the message on the significance of Kumbh Mela, started from Vivekananda Centre in Kanyakumari on Saturday. The yatra was flagged off by Swami Chaitanyananand Maharaj, Vivekananda Ashramam, Kanyakumari and Pongulati Sudhakar Reddy, BJP national co-ordinator, Tamil Nadu.

The 25 days yatra being organised by the Gramodaya Chamber of Commerce and Technology will cover 5000 km before concluding in Haridwar. "Started from Kanyakumari, the Rath Yatra will travel via all four directions where the Kumbh Mela is held, including Nasik, Ujjain, and Prayagraj and reach Delhi and later to Haridwar," said Haridwar-based Divya Prema Service Mission president Ashish Gautam. **PNS**

UP girls to train in self-defence

Lucknow: Under the ongoing Mission Shakti programme, girl students in more than 40,000 upper primary schools will learn self-defence techniques between March 1 and 31.

According to Vijay Kiran Anand, Director-General of School Education, "These classes will help rural students boost their self-confidence and self-esteem. It is time for the responsibility to train girl students."

He further said that the education department has 10,748 physical education instructors who have been given the responsibility to train girl students.

The department has made a provision of Rs 3,000 per school for the purpose. "The trainers will train girls in their own school and a nearby school, said the official. He said that the main purpose of self-defence training is that it is to make the girls physically and mentally self-dependent so that they can face any situation. **IAN S**

J&K Police arrest JeM terror associate

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Police have arrested a person, who was helping the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists, at Awantipora in South Kashmir's Pulwama district and recovered incriminating material from his possession, police said on Monday.

Police said following specific information about presence of terrorists in Larow Jager Tral was arrested. "Incriminating material of proscribed terrorist outfit JeM has been recovered from his possession. On his disclosure, one hand grenade was also recovered which he had concealed in the compound of his home," police said.

Police said preliminary investigation has revealed that the arrested person was in contact with JeM commander in Tral. **IAN S**



Students wearing masks attend a class after schools resumed for the students of classes 1st to 5th, with certain Covid-19 safety guidelines, in Mirzapur on Monday

PTI

Stalin turns 68, DMK releases campaign song

Chennai: DMK President MK Stalin turned 68 on Monday and the party marked the occasion by releasing a campaign song for the April 6 Assembly elections.

The song titled "Stalin dance varu, vidyal than poraru" (Stalin, come to school, we have a dance) was released by senior DMK leader Duraimurugan.

On Monday, Stalin paid floral tributes at the memorials of his father and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Muthuvel Karunanidhi, the founder of Dravidian politics, C.N. Annadurai, besides visiting the memorial of E.V. Periyar, the rationalist leader of Tamil Nadu. While addressing a DMK leadership meet, Stalin said that he wished to make Tamil Nadu the best state in all spheres of life.

Several programmes, including sporting events, were organised by the DMK youth wing across the state to mark the occasion.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, BJP leader Kishu Sundar and MNM leader and Tamil superstar Kamal Haasan extended their wishes to the DMK leader on his birthday.

With DMK out of power in Tamil Nadu since the past 10 years, the onus is on Stalin to script a grand comeback for the party in the coming Assembly elections. And the party is celebrating his birthday celebrations as an opportunity to connect with the masses with programmes held across all the 284 constituencies in the state. **IAN S**

Arunachal reports zero Covid cases for 10 days

Itanagar/Agartala: Arunachal Pradesh has reported zero Covid cases during the last ten days, even as the state's recovery rate stands at 99.67 per cent, the second highest in the country after the Union Territory of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Diu.

According to the data released by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Monday, the total Covid-19 positive cases in Arunachal Pradesh were 16,836, while the number of recoveries stood at 16,780.

In all, 56 patients have succumbed to the coronavirus in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, with a fatality rate of 0.33 per cent. As per the information released by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the recovery rate of seven of the eight northeastern states excluding Sikkim is above 98 per cent.

Sikkim's recovery rate is 97.05 per cent and mortality rate is 2.20 per cent, the third highest in India after Punjab (3.20 per cent) and Maharashtra (2.42 per cent).

Mizoram among the 28 states in India has the distinction of having the lowest death rate of 0.23 per cent and the state's recovery rate is 99.21 per cent. Mizoram was the lone state in India where there was no Covid-19 related death until October 28 last year even as the first death was reported in India on January 30, 2020.

According to the health officials in Aizawl on Monday, Mizoram has so far reported 4,423 Covid-19 cases with ten people having died.

While 4,393 people have recovered from the infectious virus, there were 20 active cases as on Monday. The official death toll at the ten deaths were in two - Aizawl (9) and Serchhip (1) - of the state's 11 districts.

Meanwhile, in a bid to contain the spread of coronavirus, officials in Meghalaya said that the night curfew (11 p.m. in the night to 5 a.m. in the morning) would remain in force in Shillong and other adjoining areas under the East Khasi Hills district for the next seven days from Monday.

Beside Shillong, the night curfew is being extended from time to time in Mizoram capital Aizawl.

According to the officials of the Health and Family Welfare Department of Assam, the state had reported its first death due to coronavirus on April 10 last year.

The first death in Assam, as well as in the northeastern region, was reported from Hailakandi district in southern Assam where a middle-aged man, who had gone abroad, succumbed to Covid-19 at the Silchar Medical College and Hospital.

In Assam, 2,17,537 people have so far been infected by the dreaded virus and 2,14,830 people recovered from the disease with the recovery and mortality rates are 98.76 per cent and 0.50 per cent respectively. The state's active cases on Monday were 1,615. **IAN S**

Girl knocks at court door after tolerating torture of child marriage for 12 yrs

IAN S ■ JAIPUR

After suffering for 12 long years subsequent to marriage at the tender age of seven, 18-year-old Mansi Gurjar has finally summoned courage to initiate steps to annul her child marriage.

A resident of Palodi village of Rajasthan's Bhiwara district, Mansi knocked the doors of Bhiwara's Family Court and filed the case for annulment of her child marriage on which Family Court Judge Mukesh Bhargava has issued summons to her so-called husband.

Mansi elicited the support of Dr. Kriti Bhatti, Managing Trustee and Rehabilitation Psychologist of Sarathi Trust, Jaipur, in her quest to break free from child marriage. Dr. Bhatti, known for launching a campaign that facilitates annulment of child marriages, said that Mansi, 18, was married at the age of seven in 2009 to a young man from Banera tehsil.

The child bride is busy pursuing her first year of graduation. Her marriage took place in 2009 under social pressure. All of seven years, old, Mansi realised what had happened only a few years ago.

After Mansi became an adult, she refused to accept the marriage. Since then, her in-laws have been putting pressure on her family and Mansi. They've even threatened the family with dire consequences. Certain caste panchs have also been threatening the family of penalty and social boycott if the child marriage was annulled.

Mansi and her family became depressed for a long time owing to pressure and personal fear of caste panchayats. Now, with help from Dr. Kriti Bhatti of Sarathi Trust, Mansi has shown courage to annul her child marriage. Dr. Bhatti helped Mansi file a child marriage annulment case in the family court of Bhiwara District. In the petition, Dr. Bhatti pleaded on behalf of Mansi and presented the facts related to her age and other facts in the court.

Centre owes ₹29,290 cr to Maha as GST compensation: Maha Gov

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari said here on Monday that the Centre owes a sizeable sum of Rs 29,290 to the Shiv Sena-led MVA Government as GST compensation.

Addressing a joint sitting of the Maharashtra Legislature on the first day of the State Legislature, Koshiyari said: "By the end of February 2021, out of the Rs 46,950 crore due to my Government as Goods and Services Tax Compensation, the Central Government has paid just Rs 6140 crore and Rs 11,520 crore as loan for Goods and Services Tax Compensation. Goods and Services Tax Compensation to the tune of Rs 29,290 crore is overdue from the Centre."

Lamenting that the State economy had slowed down because of the Covid lockdown, medical emergency and natural calamities, the Governor said: "Of the revenue collection target of Rs 3,47,456 crore, the State has collected just Rs 1,88,542 crore at the end of January 2021. This is 35 per cent less than the budgetary estimate and 21 per cent lower than the collection in the same period in the previous year."

The Governor said that the state government was pursuing with the Government of India for increasing the grant in aid receivable to my State in accordance with the recommendations of the Central

Finance Commission. "Last year was not only a year of medical emergency but also presented several economic challenges. As jobs and livelihoods were affected, my Government undertook massive humanitarian aid programme to help the Government. He said that in view of the pandemic situation and the economic condition, the State government is pursuing with the Centre to increase the latter's contribution to central schemes.

"To stimulate the economy, my government has provided for 75 per cent of the budgetary provision for capital expenditure and released 100 per cent money to the Local Development Fund, DPC schemes and Dongri Vikas Naryakarn, the Governor noted.

"My Responsibility" scheme of the chief minister, Koshiyari said that through an 'innovative health checkup mission in the country', the state government had carried out two rounds of surveys, the state government had reached out to all the families in the state. During the survey, it had examined high-risk persons and senior citizens and detected many Covid-19 cases which helped chart out the state health map. "By participation of citizens in the management of Covid-19 pandemic, our state ensured successful control of this epidemic. But the battle against Covid-19 is still on and now the 'Me Jabardar' (My Accountability) mission has been

launched," the Governor said. Koshiyari said that the state government had effectively combated the pandemic by reducing the number of active cases, dealing successfully with problem areas like Dharavi (Mumbai slum), first to set up private hospitals at affordable rates, for public benefit, he said.

Stressing on the need for 'constant Vigil' on safety measures as the Covid-19 dangers have not passed with the imminent possibility of a second wave, the Governor stressed on physical distancing norms, face-masks, washing hands, etc.

The Governor said that the State was also implementing the Covid-19 vaccination programme and investing in public health infrastructure by approving new medical colleges, hospitals, and health centres, and Osmanabad, with plans for more in future. Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, his deputy Ajit Pawar, Leaders of Opposition in the Assembly and Council respectively.

Devidra Fadnis and Pravin Dandekar, ministers and legislators from both the houses were present at the joint sitting of members from both the Houses of the State Legislature.

Bovines smuggled in water tanker rescued by Kathua cops

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NJAMMU

Alert jaws of Kathua police in Jammu region late Sunday night foiled a cow smuggling bid after intercepting a water tanker near Satkesh Chak and rescued nine bovines packed inside the modified cavity.

However, the driver of the water tanker managed to give a slip to the police party deployed at one of the security checkpoints along the national highway. In the last one month Kathua police has successfully foiled 16 bovine smuggling bids and rescued over 200 bovines.

At present Kathua police is catering for over 500 bovines, kept in a cowshed in Kathua. These bovines were rescued by the police teams while they were being illegally transported towards the Kashmir valley.



Kathua Shailendra Mishra said, "Late Sunday night a rare type of bovine smuggling bid was noticed in which a

water tanker was being used for illegal transportation of animals."

He said a water tanker bearing Reg No JK02AD-5569 was intercepted by the police teams. When the driver was directed to stop for checking, the driver of the water tanker parked the vehicle way behind the naka point and fled away from the spot taking advantage of the darkness.

During checking of the said tanker 09 bovines were found loaded inside the tanker.

According to a written statement issued by the Kathua police, "A case vide FIR No. 100/2021 Under Sections 188 IPC, 11 P.A Act has been registered in P/S Kathua and further investigation has been set into motion."

Congress appoints 7 new dist chiefs in UP

Lucknow: The Congress has appointed seven new presidents for district unit in Deoria, Maharajganj, Jalaun, Kanpur, Bulandshahr, and Lucknow City (South).

An official statement from the All India Congress Committee said that the Congress President has approved the proposal of the appointment of presidents of seven district unit Congress committees in Uttar Pradesh with immediate effect.

Ramji Hari has been appointed president of Deoria district, Sharan Singh Babloo for Maharajganj district, Rajiv Narayan Mishra for Jalaun district, Amit Kumar Pandey for Kanpur Nagar.

The DCC of Unnao district will have Arti Baijai as its president and Bulandshahr District and Lucknow City (South) will have Sheopal Singh and Dilpreet Singh, respectively. **IAN S**



Members of Karanataka sheep and goat breeders during a protest to demand the implementation of Sadashiva Commission recommendations, in Bengaluru on Monday

PTI


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PAPER WITH PASSION

Taming the virus

The second phase of the vaccination drive began with the PM and his ministerial colleagues taking the jab

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading the way, a battery of eminent political leaders on Monday took the anti-COVID shot as the country saw the launch of the second phase of vaccination drive and reports of a successful start to the campaign coming in from across India. Prominent among those who took the first dose on the first day of the second phase were Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, Union Ministers Amit Shah, Jitendra Singh, S Jaishankar, Som Prakash, Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and NCP president Sharad Pawar. Kickstarting the second phase of the immunisation programme, the Prime Minister received his first dose of Covaxin at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi. In a light vein and seeking to



put them at ease, the Prime Minister asked the nurses administering him the vaccine whether they planned to use "some special thick needle" as politicians are known to be "very thick-skinned". People above 60 years of age and those above 45 with comorbidities are eligible to get the jabs in this phase. The second phase of the vaccination drive will cover 10 crore people across the country. So far, 1.45 crore people in two priority groups, healthcare and frontline workers, have received the shots of Covishield and Covaxin in the first phase.

The second phase of vaccination comes at a time when India's active COVID cases are largely under control, but eight States — Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Jammu & Kashmir and Madhya Pradesh — have been a cause of concern, reporting an upswing in daily cases in the last two weeks. India's COVID-19 tally rose above the 11 million-mark on Monday as the country logged in 15,510 new cases in a span of 24 hours. A total of 106 fatalities were reported on Sunday, taking the death toll to over 1.57 lakh. The number of active cases currently stands at 1,68,627, a level last seen at the end of January and pointing to the re-emergence of the virus after a period of containment of the COVID outbreak. After months of staying indoors and strictly practising social distancing and hygiene norms, the number of cases had finally come under control but suddenly the pandemic outbreak has spiralled out of hand. Perhaps, the eagerness to get back into action or the reports of a declining caseload are offering a false sense of security and pushing an increasing number of Indians into vulnerability, which shouldn't be the case. If we let down our guard now, India with its population may find it nigh impossible to break free from the clutches of this virus.

PICTALK



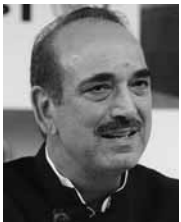
A mural depicting Pope Francis in Baghdad, Iraq

AP

Overt bonhomie

By praising Modi, Azad is consolidating his position within the dissenter group

There is nothing unusual in leaders of rival parties having a cordial relationship despite serious political differences. But what makes such "friendships" different from the others is their public display. The bonhomie between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad is a case in point. Recently, the manner in which Azad heaped praises on Modi indicates that it is something more than just geniality.



Everybody appreciated when the PM first displayed it while bidding an emotional farewell to the Congress stalwart on his retirement from the Rajya Sabha. Azad echoed the sentiments as the occasion called for it. However, Azad heaping praises on the PM in Jammu, that too, a day after a few senior Congress leaders reiterated their call for leadership change, has a political message. Being one of the most senior members of the group of 23 Congressmen — unofficially termed "G23" — Azad wants to carve a space for himself within this faction and also tell the party that it must go by the advice of its "elders". It seems that this group is sending a message that sidelining the old guard will only prove counterproductive to the

party's interests. Azad is sending a clear message to the party high command that if tall leaders like former Union Ministers Kapil Sibal, Anand Sharma, Manish Tewari, former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda and others can stand by his side even if he heaps praises on Modi, they can also go the extra mile and stand in complete defiance of the leadership. He is increasing his bargaining power within the Congress.

By praising Modi, Azad is basically consolidating his position within the dissenter group. Modi, being an astute politician, must be aware of what Azad is up to. With the Congress old guard speaking out against the leadership, it is clear that all is not well within the "Grand Old Party". Moreover, the G23 leaders are trying to stay relevant by upping the ante against the party leadership. They don't want to loosen their hold on the party. The BJP has already parted ways with many of its tall leaders by creating a "Margdarshak Mandal" and these seniors are now just in an advisory role. The Congress old guard must be apprehensive of meeting the same fate. At least the restlessness shown by these Congress leaders points to this line of thought. On the other hand, it would not suffice to blame the Gandhis alone for the electoral losses that the Congress has suffered in the past few years. It was a failure on the part of these veteran leaders also. However, whether these veterans would be successful in bringing about reforms in the party, saving their positions, influencing party decisions, increasing their bargaining power or will Rahul Gandhi give an opportunity to the youngsters to lead the party and gradually do away with the "rusty bolts", only time will tell. Well, as we eagerly wait for what Modi or Azad say next on their bonhomie, we shall continue watching the high-voltage Congress drama.

Beware of Pak's softening stand

It is a temporary move to tide over the crises Pakistan is facing. The moment its rulers find some relief, the agreement will turn into a mere piece of paper



PRAFULL GORADIA

One mistake Indians must not make is to read Pakistan through Indian eyes.

Normally, anything that leads to peace should be welcome. Similarly, we should welcome the fact that Pakistan has agreed to cessation of the ongoing hostilities with us and honour the ceasefire pact of 2003.

Yet, one must interject a note of caution here. This is because quite a few Indians, including expert observers, have interpreted the venom from Islamabad on Kashmir for years as revenge for India dismembering their country in 1971. In actual fact, as soon as the anger of the defeat was forgotten, the Pakistanis were relieved that the "dark short people" — as the Bengalis are contemptuously referred to by Pakistanis — who were a majority of their population, were finally gotten rid of.

Poet Mohammad Iqbal, who was also a leading light of the Muslim League, as its president had in 1930 at Prayagraj (then Allahabad) proposed a separate Muslim homeland which comprised only the north western provinces. He made no mention of Bengal or any part thereof. The larger Pakistan was for MA Jinnah's glorification; he began by dreaming of six provinces, four in the west and two in the east, including Assam. Through his League colleague who was the Premier of Assam for several years after 1939, Mohd Saad Ali, he had nearly succeeded in recording that the *advisis* were not Hindu but animists. This was to bring down the Hindu percentage of population and draw Assam into Pakistan when the moment of decision came. When Jinnah could not get Assam, except the district of Sylhet, Bengal and Punjab were divided by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the lawyer dispatched by London. Jinnah was sorely disappointed at getting what he called "a moth-eaten Pakistan".

Here, it has to be iterated that Jinnah did not represent the ultimate choice of any Pakistani except the Gujarati-speaking businessmen like the Khojas and Memons who wanted to get



rich quickly by avoiding competition against Indian business communities and crossing over to the new State, where they would have to compete only against the Punjabi and Sindhi farmers.

For the rest, Jinnah pleaded brilliantly for those Muslims who wanted or half-wished a separate homeland. This was Jinnah's role in actuality; his fee was his place in history's hall of fame. Fortunately for him, he died within 13 months of Independence. The word *mohajir*, a term for Muslims from Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar migrating to Pakistan, came into circulation soon thereafter. But *mohajirs* soon found themselves not only unwelcome but also the target of ethnic hostility in the newly carved out Muslim homeland. Jinnah's deputy Liaquat Ali Khan, from UP, was assassinated a mere four years after Pakistan had been carved out.

What prevails in Pakistan now is the will of the West Punjabis who are two-thirds of the country's population. Their need for Kashmir has been to keep the country together and paper over their dominance of everything, which is now a bone of contention. Plus, they portray India as a great threat to the

WHAT PREVAILS IN PAKISTAN NOW IS THE WILL OF THE WEST PUNJABIS WHO ARE TWO-THIRDS OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION. THEIR NEED FOR KASHMIR HAS BEEN TO KEEP THE COUNTRY TOGETHER AND PAPER OVER THEIR DOMINANCE OF EVERYTHING

survival of Pakistan and thus justify the indispensability of the Army as the country's guardian.

If one looks at the latest ceasefire agreement, one would conclude that for Islamabad, it is a temporary move to hopefully tide over the crises the country is facing. The moment Pakistan's rulers are able to find some way of relief for these crises, the current agreement will turn into a mere piece of paper. One reason for Pakistan's softening could be that its rulers realise that China has overplayed its hand, whether with India, Taiwan or the South China Sea, and that the US has reacted strongly, though so far only in words. Otherwise, there is no explanation for Beijing to kick off a confrontation in Ladakh during the winter. It could have waited until after the spring to exercise its options which were three: To try and grab some strategically useful land points, to ease off by extracting some other concessions or by continuing to harass the Indian forces by creating local points that would pose a threat. Similarly, Islamabad wants to cool off vis-à-vis New Delhi until China warms up again after, say, arriving at

some settlement with the US. If not, the rulers would wait for circumstances to change; for a true *momin*, his faith in Allah the Merciful is infinite. We must not compare it with the mind of a thinking or reticent Hindu.

Another possibility might be that Pakistan's real ruler, General Bajwa, wants to ease India's pressure on his eastern Indian front and use it to settle his scores with Baluchistan, like General Tikka had tried to do in East Pakistan in 1971. Bajwa may have been advised that the Baluch province is so rich in resources that it could greatly help in solving Pakistan's economic problems. But to exploit these resources would take time, peace and complete control. I concede that this possibility may sound too farfetched, but unless Islamabad takes some drastic steps, how can it keep the economic wheels of Pakistan rolling? If it depends on Chinese loans, Pakistan could become a Beijing protectorate inch by inch, as we have already begun to see with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor coming into play.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HAIL INDIA'S VACCINATION DRIVE

Sir — The second phase of India's vaccination drive has been rolled out and Prime Minister Narendra Modi got the first shot of COVAXIN, the India-researched and produced COVID-19 vaccine (produced by Bharat Biotech) at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi. The drive aims to cover 10 crore people across the country. So far, more than 1.5 crore people have received the jabs.

Mostly the elderly would benefit in the second phase. This phase is a nationwide drive to inoculate people above 60 years of age and those above 45 years with co-morbidities. Several old people were seen at the centres to get themselves inoculated. The self-registration process in Co-WIN module has allowed people to get as many as four people registered, pick slots at their nearby vaccination centre and reschedule the appointment. Thus, the vaccination pace is expected to increase in the coming days.

A lot of hard work has gone into reaching this phase wherein the Government has started to vaccinate general population. We must rely on our vaccinators as they are absolutely safe and are being used all over the world. In the coming days, we hope that the process will pick up pace and get completed in record time. On the other hand, there is also the need to worry as the country reported a single-day rise of 16,752 cases in the last 24 hours, the highest in the last 30 days, taking the overall tally to 1,10,96,731 on Sunday.

CK Ramani | Mumbai

PINK-BALL TEST MATCH MAGIC

Sir — When cricket matches like T-20s and ODIs are making life hell for the bowlers with batting-friendly surfaces, Test matches of late, especially pink-ball day-night Test matches, have come like a whiff of fresh air for the bowlers. The pink-ball Test cricket is still evolving and teams are still getting to grips with the ball that was tough to handle for a spinner due to the extra

Win-win situation for India, Pak



The ceasefire between India and Pakistan is a win-win situation for both the nations and for the border population in the two countries. A renewed pledge last week by both the neighbours to adhere to a ceasefire pact along the Line of Control (LoC) and international border in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is working on the ground.

We must hope that both the nations will stick to the agreed terms to address each other's core

issues and concerns which have the potential to disturb peace in the region and lead to violence. However, the peace agreement would face its biggest test over the next few months when the snow will melt. It is because terrorists' ranks might infiltrate through the routes which are inaccessible in winter as they are clogged due to heavy snowfall.

The adherence to the ceasefire agreement is a welcome proposition, as it will prevent the unnecessary loss of lives of soldiers and civilians residing in border areas. It will also bring some normalcy to the India-Pakistan bilateral ties. The easing of military tensions could also have a positive impact on the situation in J&K and all political parties there have welcomed the ceasefire agreement. If Indian and Pakistan are able to resolve their issues, it will send a message that bilateral issues could be resolved through talks and democratic means rather than through violence and terrorism.

P Senthil | Mumbai

old woman's alleged death by suicide in Pune. This will pave the way for an impartial enquiry in the case.

The audio clip which surfaced on social media two days after her death, in which two men are talking about the woman's death, should be sent to forensic science laboratory for examination. The BJP has claimed that one of the men in the audio clip is Rathod while the Shiv Sena leader has denied the charge. On the other hand, responding to the Opposition's demand for a case against the Minister, Chief Minister Thackeray said a First Information Report (FIR) can't be registered before investigation. The Maha Vikas Aghadi Government must take the case investigated by the Central agencies for a free and impartial investigation. The CM must act and think out-of-the-box to save his image.

MR Jayanthi | Coimbatore

CONDUCT AN IMPARTIAL INQUIRY

Sir — It is good on the part of Maharashtra Forest Minister Sanjay Rathod to resign from his post after the Opposition BJP linked him to a 23-year-

SOUND BITE

Overall, 192 hospitals have been prepared in Delhi, of which 136 are private and 56 are Government-run hospitals.

Delhi Health Minister

—Satyendra Jain

Workers across America are voting on whether to organise a union in their workplace. It's an important choice that should be made without intimidation by employers.

American President

—Joe Biden

I am very specific about the roles that I come on board with. It takes a lot of courage to say no but I am glad I have the privilege to do that.

Actor

—Vijayendra Kumeria

Landing in Bombay or Mumbai, as it is called now, was a total culture shock, there were just people everywhere, there were cars and bikes and animals and rats and cats running along the footpath.

Former Australia captain

—Steve Waugh

The Uttar Pradesh Government has accorded top priority to the development of the Jewar International Airport in Noida.

UP Chief Minister

—Yogi Adityanath

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Of course, the ethics of data sharing and privacy implications for patients and their insurers is debatable. As we enter a brave new world with AI, it entails certain benefits and limitations.

Sensex surges 750 pts as investors cheer Q3 GDP

PTI | MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex surged nearly 750 points and Nifty rallied over 232 points on Monday as investors cheered the domestic economy returning to positive territory after two quarters of contraction.

The 30-share BSE index briefly traded above the 50,000-mark in day trade before closing at 49,849.84, showing a rise of 749.85 points or 1.53 per cent. Of the Sensex constituents, 29 closed with gains. Likewise, the NSE barometer Nifty settled with a gain of 232.40 points or 1.60 per cent at 14,761.55.

Top performers were PowerGrid, ONGC, Ultratech Cement, Asian Paint, Kotak Bank and Titan - rising as much as 5.94 per cent.

"Positive global cues and US yields retreats from their previous peak on Monday helped to spark an opening today with Indices sustaining gains throughout the day. The broader markets saw energetic buying momentum across PSU bank and sectors like Paints & Chemicals," said Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities said.

After two consecutive quarters of contraction, the Indian economy has finally entered an expansionary phase. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 0.4 per

Rupee drops 8 paise to 73.55 against dollar as oil spikes

PTI | MUMBAI

The rupee dropped by 8 paise to close at 73.55 against the US dollar on Monday, extending its falling streak to a third day due to spike in global crude oil prices and strong American currency.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened lower at 73.76 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 73.19.

The local currency finally ended at 73.55 against the American currency, registering a fall of 8 paise over its previous closing.

On Friday, the rupee had settled at 73.47 against the American currency.

Gold price rises ₹241; silver jumps ₹781

PTI | NEW DELHI

Gold prices on Monday rose by ₹241 to ₹45,500 per 10 grams in the national capital in line with the strong global bullion market trend, according to HDFS Securities.

The precious metal had closed at ₹45,279 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. Silver also jumped by ₹781 to ₹68,777 per kg, compared with the previous close of 68,096 per kg. HDFS Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said, "Spot prices for 24 karat gold in Delhi rose by ₹241, in line with the recovery in global gold prices while rupee appreciation capped upside."

The spot rupee was trading around 16 paise stronger against the dollar, halting three days of loss, during the intra-day session, HDFS Securities added.

₹77,146 cr bids for spectrum on Day 1

Govt says response better than expected

PTI | NEW DELHI

India's first auction of spectrum in five years attracted Rs 77,146 crore of bids on the opening day on Monday with Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea participating in the bidding process. A response that the government said was better than expected.

There were, however, no takers for spectrum in 700 MHz and 2500 MHz bands on the first day, and participants will continue and conclude on Tuesday.

About 2,308.80 MHz of spectrum, that carry telecom signals, in seven bands worth nearly Rs 4 lakh crore at the bidding price, was offered for bidding in the auc-

tion that began on Monday. Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Rs 77,146 crore worth of spectrum was bid on the opening day. There were no takers for the airwaves in the premium 700 MHz and 2500 MHz bands.

The response from players and the bids received surpassed government's internal estimates, that had anticipated bids worth Rs 45,000 crore.

"The winning bids that have come till 6 PM today is Rs 77,146 crore. We thought since there are only three players, and spectrum replacement is happening, our estimation was that the bids will touch about Rs 45,000 crore, but it is a matter of assurance that it has gone as high as Rs 77,146 crore," Prasad said.

The bidder-wise details were not available immediately. A total of 2,308.80 MHz

Automakers report double digit sales growth in Feb

PTI | NEW DELHI

Luxury car makers Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Tata Motors reported robust sales growth in the domestic market in February as the demand for personal mobility amid COVID-19 pandemic continues to drive the market.

Others, including Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM), Mahindra & Mahindra, and Honda Cars India, also reported strong wholesale dispatches to dealers last month.

The country's largest car-maker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said its domestic sales increased 11.8 per cent to 1,52,983 units last month, against 1,36,849 units in February 2020.

PM says farmers should get more avenues to sell crops

PTI | NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday emphasised on farmers getting more avenues to sell crops and said a food processing revolution was needed in the country for value addition to farm produce and to realise better prices.

Addressing a webinar on effective implementation of Budget provisions regarding the Agriculture Ministry, he

underlined the need for increased participation of private players in the farm sector, including in research and development (R&D) work.

Without making any direct reference to the three new farm reform laws or to the three-month-old agitation by farmers, Modi said there is a need for expanding options for the country's farming community to sell agri produce.

GST collections rise 7% to ₹1.13L cr in Feb

The collection is, however, lower than the record ₹1.19,875 crore collected in the previous month

PTI | NEW DELHI

GST collections crossed the ₹1 lakh crore-mark for the fifth month in a row in February, with the central government collecting ₹1.13 lakh crore, indicating economic recovery, the Finance Ministry said on Monday.

The collection is, however, lower than the record ₹1.19,875 crore collected in the previous month. The gross GST revenue collected in February 2021 is ₹1,13,143 crore, of which CGST is ₹21,092 crore, SGST is ₹27,273 crore, IGST is ₹5,253 crore (including ₹24,342 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess is ₹9,525 crore (including ₹660 crore collected on import of goods). "In line with the trend of recovery in the GST revenues over past five months, the gross GST revenue for the month of February 2021 is 7 per cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year."

"During the month, revenues from import of goods were 15 per cent higher and revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) are 5 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year," the ministry said in a statement.

PUBLIC NOTICE

KNOW ALL MEN THAT I, Mrs. Saroj Singh, Wife of Sh. Brij Bhushan Singh, R/o C-153, Gali No. 8, Shastri Park, Delhi, do hereby declare that I am the sole and exclusive owner in respect of property, i.e. One Shop on First Floor bearing Plot No. 124, registered on 31/07/2008 at 3103-3104, at Ward No. VI, Mohalla Chanderghat, Chanderghat, Bazar, Delhi. I further declare that I have lost/ misplaced the original Sale Deed in favour of Sh. Vinay Arora, which is registered as Document No. 6046, in Book No. 1, Volume No. 12889, on pages 112 to 124, registered on 31/07/2008 at the office of Sub-Registrar, Delhi. If anyone finds the said document please contact the undersigned.

MRS. SAROJ SINGHAL
R/O C-153, Gali No. 8, Shastri Park, Delhi

INBRIEF

ITS OFFICERS CELEBRATE SILVER JUBILEE REUNION OF 1994 BATCH

ITS officers celebrated silver jubilee reunion of 1994 batch on 26 February. Over 20 officers had come to attend the reunion at Indian Habitat Centre Lodhi Road New Delhi. Other officers celebrated it at different places as well like Bangalore and Udaipur. As Meena E- President and Ex- General Secretary of ITS association, told that many of them had come with their spouses and children. Besides telecom field, officers either had worked or are working on deputation in different ministries like Agriculture, Corporate Affairs, Environment & Forest, Home Affairs, Minority Affairs etc and also in important organisations like UPSC, CVC, Election Commission, NPPA, UID and various state governments.

NORTH DMC'S KAROL BAGH ZONE LAUNCHES A #14 DAYS CHALLENGE INVOLVING SIX ACTIVITIES

Mayor of North Delhi Jai Prakash on Monday informed that North DMC's Karol Bagh Zone launched a #14days challenge which is in accordance to the true spirit of Swachh Survekshan-2021. e. maximum participation of stakeholders with true spirit. The citizens have been requested to perform six activities regarding cleanliness and upload photos on Twitter, Instagram & Facebook at #14dayschallenge, #Swachhdelhi and tag the @NorthDMC or @kbcdd, @kbcdd1 and @KBC2 respectively. The six activities involve are daily segregating of the household waste into wet, dry & hazardous waste, converting wet garbage into compost at home using composting methods, avoiding banned plastic use. Citizens can upload their photos on their facebook, instagram and twitter pages daily for 14 days to complete the task every activity will give 10 points & extra points will be given as per likes and comments.

Rajasthan Co-operative Dairy Federation Limited

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS

Single Stage Tender for procurement of various items are invited by Rajasthan Co-operative Dairy Federation Ltd. for the procurement of "United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001001), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001002), Polythene Liner for Filling 25 kg. S.M.P. in two different sizes as mentioned in quality specifications (UBM No. CDF2021/001003), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001004), Milk Plastic Hoops for 25 kg. S.M.P. in two different sizes as mentioned in quality specifications (UBM No. CDF2021/001005), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001006), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001007), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001008), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001009), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001010), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001011), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001012), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001013), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001014), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001015), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001016), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001017), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001018), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001019), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. CDF2021/001020), United Carton for Milk Packing (UBM No. 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DOCYARD

DR COL VIJAY DUTTA

Senior Consultant
- Internal Medicine

INDIAN SPINAL INJURIES
CENTRE



Take care of your throat



Dysphagia, a medical condition that makes swallowing of food or fluid difficult, is one of the lesser-known side effects of COVID-19 infection. The condition has so far been observed as a fallout of viral and bacterial infections, pharyngeal and esophageal obstructions or other palate problems and neurological diseases. Dysphagia was witnessed in maximum cases of severe cases of COVID-19, especially those who developed acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and were ventilated.

Most of the COVID-19 patients also experienced a change in their voice, ranging from a rough one to a deeper-pitched one or a mere whisper. The inflammation of vocal cords is exacerbated by long periods of coughing

There are a few ways to feel better even if one has this condition:

- Think of baby food and bring your food to that consistency. Include a lot of fluid such as juices to the diet. As you get comfortable, slowly shift to a normal diet. Chew the food completely before swallowing
- Sit upright when you eat or drink. Start with liquids using straw. Do not lay down or bend while eating or drinking. Stand or walk for a minimum of 30 minutes after meals
- Small portion sizes help to ease the discomfort of dysphagia. Clear your mouth completely before taking the next bite

Most of the COVID-19 patients also experienced a change in their voice, ranging from a rough one to a deeper-pitched one or a mere whisper. The inflammation of vocal cords is exacerbated by long periods of coughing. Such an effort makes the vocal folds put extra effort to clear any mucus from lungs and throat, in the process making them swollen and inflamed.

Easing the sore throat and post-COVID voice problem can be done by following these steps:

- Keep yourself well hydrated with warm fluids. Drink about two liters of fluid (plain water and fresh juices) daily. Avoid caffeine or alcohol as they can aggravate the condition
- Warm saline gargles and steam inhalation for at least 15 minutes
- Try to rest your voice as much as possible.

If you are in hospital then you must keep a few things in mind that comprises immediately informing the concerned Doctor or paramedical staff immediately if you are feeling more short of breath during or after the meals.

If you are recovering at home, then you must be careful about a few things and directly inform your General Physician if you are facing problems while eating or drinking something and coughing or choking while having your food. Such patients should avoid shouting, smoking or chewing tobacco and going in dusty areas. Medicated lozenges can also be used.

SUMMERCoolERS

PAPAYA: Papayas are rich in Vitamin C, fibre and antioxidants which prevent cholesterol build up in your arteries and boosts immunity, apart from the several other health benefits.

It also helps in weight loss because the fibre content in papaya leaves you feeling full and clears your bowel movement.

It is also a rich source of phytonutrients and flavonoids that prevent your cells from undergoing free radical damage. Some studies have also linked the con-

sumption papaya to reduced risk of colon and prostate cancer.

The presence of various vitamins and nutrients also help in preventing the skin from free radical damage thereby keeping all the signs of ageing at bay.

Several studies have shown that eating papayas also help in maintaining and improving heart health.



Get ready for COVID jab

DR KANCHAN SANYAL lists the precautions one should take and things to keep in mind before going for the vaccine

With India beginning the COVID-19 vaccination phase 2 from March 1 administering vaccines to those above the age of 60 and people with other medical diseases, it won't be too long when people above 50 and less will also be able to receive the jab.

Despite the fact that the virus is a new and a highly transmissible one, the medical fraternity has learnt immensely from it in the last year. It has managed to fight the disease, analyse and lay down protocols for the treatments, and above all, have worked from all parts of the world together as one to produce reliable and safe vaccines in record time.

Therefore, as your much awaited turn rolls in, here are some precautions you should remember to adhere to before you go to the health facility for your inoculation. Some of these precautions apply to any vaccine you may have taken before this.

- Take normal diet the evening before the vaccine.
- Avoid alcohol before the injection (and for a few days after). This helps in reducing any mild side effects you may have.
- Clarify with your physician about your underlying illnesses and medical history (the Ministry of Health and Family Planning, Govt. of India has issued clear guidelines and your physician will be aware of this).

Do not worry about side effects. Any vaccine can have side effects but they are minuscule compared to the good they do to the individual and to the society

India has issued clear guidelines and your physician will be aware of this). The COVID-19 vaccine: The three basics of COVID-19 preventive measures will have to be followed (i.e. wearing a mask, hand hygiene and social distancing) at the

How to get your dose

India has embarked on the third and the largest phase of vaccination drive against Covid-19 which will reach out to around 27 crore of population aged above 60 or above 45 with co-morbid conditions.

However, registration is required to receive the vaccine doses. The Government has provided three modes for the registration of eligible beneficiaries — online, on-site and facilitated cohort registration.

The first is advance self-registration under which the beneficiaries will be able to self-register in advance by downloading the CO-Win 2.0 portal and through other IT applications such as Arogya Setu etc.

Eligible people can register themselves on the platform from Monday, March 1, 9 am onwards. The platform can be accessed via web or through a mobile application.

Eligible beneficiaries can register at the CO-WIN 2.0 portal through their mobile number following a step by step process. After registration, the application will show the government and private hospitals serving as Covid Vaccination Centres (CVC) with the date and time of the available schedules. The beneficiary would be able to choose the CVC of his/her choice and book an appointment for vaccination.

IANS

vaccination site and in public places. Cough/sneeze etiquette should be practiced in all areas.

■ Register yourself for the vaccine and go to the centre designated to you on the date intimated.

■ Do not worry about side effects. Any vaccine can have side effects but they are minuscule compared to the good they do to the individual and to the society.

Vaccines are voluntary, so

decide for yourself but remember that we already have a vast experience in vaccines, tried and tested in many diseases to make the world a healthy place for ourselves and our children.

With the COVID-19 vaccines, we have learnt to deal with this disease scientifically, clearly and with optimism.

The writer is Advisor, Wellness and Wellbeing, Columbia Pacific Communities

BEAUTY LIES WITHIN



For a flawless skin, lustrous hair and a slim figure, good health must be on top of the list, says

SHAHNAZ HUSSAIN

Good health and beauty are two sides of the same coin. For a flawless skin, lustrous hair and a slim figure, good health must be on top of the list. A healthy woman is also better equipped to deal with the stresses of daily life. A body that is healthy is imperative for preserving beauty and building up immunity.

The right diet is absolutely essential to good looks. A diet for beauty should be high in vitamin-rich foods and low in carbohydrates and sugar. The answer is to choose from a variety of foods, to ensure a balanced diet. Fresh fruits, raw salads, sprouted grains and yogurt should be included in the daily diet. Have whole grain cereals. Reduce tea and coffee and have freshly extracted fruit and vegetable juices, lassi and clear soups. Avoid fried snacks, rich gravies and desserts, and confectionary items. Add the juice of a lemon to a glass of water and have it first thing in the morning. Drinking adequate water helps to eliminate toxins and wastes from the system.

Exercise, together with a balanced diet, can work wonders. Not only does it build up stamina and strength, but improves blood circulation to the skin and scalp. Every tissue of the body needs oxygen, so begin your exercises by doing deep breathing in front of an open window. Check with your doctor before beginning regular exercise. Walking is good physical activity, as it exercises all the muscle groups. The ancient Indian doctrine of Yoga has attained universal popularity today. In fact, it has become very relevant to modern lifestyle, bringing about harmony of body and mind.

Pay attention to cleansing and daily hygiene. Improper daily hygiene can undermine the health in a number of ways. The skin is influenced by many external factors, like dirt, chemical pollutants, bacteria and virus. By daily washing, bathing and cleaning, we can remove impurities and keep ourselves free from infections. A daily bath, or shower, is a must, especially on returning home. During the ancient times, infusions of herbs were used to wash the body. Neem leaves in hot water and let it stand overnight. Use the water to bathe the next morning.

Adequate sleep is also essential for fitness. Sleep is a way of restoring energy to the body and is nature's best cure. It is a beauty treatment in itself.

A positive mental attitude is also important, because mind and body are closely related. All of us encounter a certain amount of stress and anxiety in our daily life. It is a matter of learning how to cope with it. We have to train our minds towards positive thinking and relaxation. Regular patterns of rest and exercise, along with hobbies and interests certainly help. Some people are so aware of the world around them. They are always keen to learn new things. Hobbies, interests and new activities can actually be very relaxing to the mind. They also give another dimension to the personality.

Indeed, the finest foundation for beauty consists of some common factors, which we often overlook.

The writer is founder of The Shahnaz Hussain Group

DadiKa Kehna

Toothaches are common, especially if one prefers to eat a lot of sweets.

ROSHANI DEVI shares easy home remedies that can help ease the pain without much hassle



Where all might have had a toothache at least once in a while. While as painful it is, it is also extremely annoying.

Here are a few remedies that can help relieve the pain.

Rinse with salt water. Salt water is a natural disinfectant. One can rinse their mouth twice to relieve the pain and inflammation caused by bacteria.

Use garlic. Garlic can help in killing the harmful bacteria that causes dental plaque and can also help in relieving toothache. Crush a clove of garlic and

apply it to the affected area and let it sit for five minutes. Alternatively, you can also chew a clove of garlic.

Cloves can help. Cloves are known to relieve toothache and reduce inflammation for many years. Dab a small amount of clove oil onto a cotton ball and apply it to the affected area. You may want to dilute the

clove oil with a few drops of a carrier oil, like olive oil, or water. Do this a few times per day. You can also add a drop of clove oil to a small glass of water and make a mouthwash. Use it twice daily for best results.

'Regular exercise is key'

Experts talk us through the thyroid disorders, reasons and how one can keep them at bay

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), one of the apex trade associations of the country successfully organised its annual edition of the webinar series on 'Illness to Wellness' campaign, themed around "Thyroid & Related Disorders - Impact on Health". ASSOCHAM organised this webinar with an objective to cascade mass awareness and disseminate knowledge & wisdom for prevention and treatment of thyroid.

The virtual event was graced by a team of eminent Gastroenterologists, hepatologists who shared their valuable inputs on causes, trends and recent advancements in the treatment of thyroid.

The ASSOCHAM's campaign running under a CSR initiative supported by SAVLON, aims at promoting healthy living with a keen focus on wellness and preventive health through healthy

habits, diet, exercise, and holistic health.

Sharing his perspective, Dr Joshi said: "Thyroid disorder occurs when thyroid gland does not work properly either permanently or temporarily. However, the disease is treatable and one needs to consult endocrinologists once in three months and in some cases only once in a year".

Dr Joshi also emphasised on following healthy lifestyle, balanced diet and follow regular exercise regime.

Addressing the ASSOCHAM webinar, Dr Tripathi talked about the various thyroid disorders in detail. He said, the commonest thyroid disorder is Hypothyroidism, which can affect the entire life span of a human from congenital hypothyroidism at birth, to juvenile hypothyroidism, adult onset hypothyroidism and even in the elderly age group. The

treatment of hypothyroidism is generally lifelong, but it is easy to begin and continue and is without side effects.

Dr Kapoor, in his address also explained thyroid is a butterfly shaped gland in the neck which weighs about 18 grams it is not a disease. The under functioning glands leads to hypothyroidism and the over functioning glands lead to hyperthyroidism.

On behalf of the chamber, Rajput said that following a regular exercise regime, maintaining healthy weight together with low fat, low sugar, low rice and high fibre diet can go a long way for everyone to keep such ailments at bay.

He added: "In India over 42 million people suffer from thyroid ailments and 1 in 10 adults suffer from hypothyroidism, a condition in which the thyroid gland doesn't produce the required hormones to meet the needs of the body. It can also cause serious complications during pregnancy."

INBRIEF

A Central Fabrication Unit for prosthetics and orthotics is being developed at Narayan Seva Sansthan with support from Rotary Foundation. The unit will provide artificial limbs and equipment to better NSS's global campaign for empowering the differently-abled. The cutting-edge technology installed at the unit will ensure quality and affordable prosthetics and will help to bring down the cost of the procedures.

During the programme Rotary governor of the District 6900, Rajesh Agrawal said: "To give a fresh start to the differently-abled, NSS is serving needy individuals by offering services such as free food, operative surgery, limbs, education, and skills. With setting up for artificial limb manufacturing, which will bring us additional accomplishment to change the lives of differently-abled people."

In a two-phase project, Global Grant by Rotary Foundation, Rotary Club Emory-Druid Hills (USA District-6900), Rotary Club Udaipur Mewar budget is USD 182995 passed in the first phase.

Speaking on occasion Prashant Agarwal, President, Narayan Seva Sansthan said: "Due to the Rotary Foundation, our various efforts to establish this unit have now been successful. NSS hopes that the installation of the central manufacturing unit will meet the demands and release of the patient load to achieve stability in the quality of equipment manufactured in a short period of time."



Nano influencers are proving to be the next big leap for social media. By TEAM VIVA

As the world experiences the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an upsurge in people turning active on social media. This phase has unlocked the creative minds and pushed people to explore relatively fresh opportunities. Aradhana Srivastava, Public Relations Expert from Savin Communication says, "Social Platforms have hidden potential, if cultivated fairly can yield exceptional output both in matter of content and volume."

Social Media has always been a highly interactive platform catering to users of a young generation, giving rise to a new community called "Influencers." These social media connoisseurs have turned into a driving force for the national economy in the most surprising way. They are the first preference of any brand because of their better reach among millions of Instagram users and creators.

Welcome the nano influencers

The latest community of influencers added to the Instagram family is popularly called "Nano Influencers." These are the social media warriors with the power to influence a small group of 1000-5000 people and have the ability to nurture communities with specific interests and influence.

Partnering with nano-influencers is fast becoming a major strategy point for



brands with budgetary constraints due to the pandemic. A report by Marketing Week projected that 52 per cent of brands are planning to collaborate with more nano-influencers in the forthcoming months and 44 per cent of brands who are already collaborating, plan to continue their association with

these new-age agents of social media growth. Engaging with such influencers is not only cost-effective but also helpful in reaching highly engaged audiences.

New-age celebs
Remember the ice bucket challenge? Those were the days when film



celebrities used to set trends that went viral but the situation has flipped now. Nowadays, it is the Nano influencers who are driving public opinion in a micro-manner than global celebrities. No wonder that this community has become the new-age celebs and has even motivated various brands to collaborate.

Taking over competition

Nano-influencers may take over from the micro-influencers as key brand partners in the coming years. Micro-influencers who have followers between 5k to 100k have been the premiere preference for any brand campaigns for the past couple of years but it is being observed that nano influencers have established a closer relationship with their audience and are considered a more reliable option to take the brand forward.

The need of the hour

Since there are thousands of nano influencers creating content for Instagram, brands look for a platform through which they can directly pick the right influencer for their needs. One such forthcoming platform is 'We The Influencers.' It is an online community of talented and enthusiastic influencers from all across the country. This platform will cater to a common room for both the brand and the influencer, allowing them to communicate and create fruitful collaborations.

A helpful companion

Marketing specialists are searching for creators with an individual approach and who enjoy the trust of their followers. Since the nano influencers tick both the boxes, they've become the ideal companion for brands looking for new ways to spread their message. What makes this association better is the fact that these young guns are also highly dedicated to their work and are open to learning new things.

TREND TOOL

Decoding fusion

Design your spaces by combining elegance with durability



Do you often find yourself juggling to achieve a fine balance between the elegance and design of our interiors? Trust us, it's not a herculean task. Undoubtedly, home decor must be planned very thoughtfully whether you are re-purposing the space or thinking of some minor tweaks. There are various elements and aspects to keep in mind, such as the climate in your city and the design aesthetics. Today, the evolving technology and innovations have ensured the integration of all these elements under one roof.

Parul Mittal, Director, Greenlam Industries Ltd shares a few simple decor themes that offer you the best of both worlds - durability and design.

A SOOTHING FACELIFT

The entry of your house is usually through the living room which sets the tone for the entire home and leaves the first impression. Therefore, a minimal and clean look is needed for such spaces. Calming shades give your mind, body and soul a certain level of relaxation. Throw muted shades of yellow

and grey to your cushions placed on a sofa set in muted blue. These colours will instantly infuse a comforting vibe around your space. The best way to distinguish your colour scheme is by keeping your walls, door and floor crisp white.

While visual impact of doors must not be compromised as they are some of the most visible design elements in the house, its resistance and lifespan should top your checklist.

WONDERS OF NATURAL WOOD

The majestic grandeur and simplicity of a natural element like wood is just limitless. Wood holds the power to make an unmatched statement and looks absolutely charming when used for home interiors. If you have cream or off-white interiors, opting for a darker shade of wooden doorset to complement the entire ambience. Keep your area spick and span by placing minimal kitchen essentials out in the open. Make it look more modern by showcasing

your silver crockery and glassware in open cabinets.

OPTIMISTICALLY YOURS

We all have stepped into a new year with positivity and hopefulness. How about we paint this outlook all over the house to ensure every touch point encourages you? Spill the pantone colour 'Ultimate Gray' on your walls to add an instant warmth and comfort. Since, we are talking about all the earthy tones, we suggest going for a crisp yet classic white shade for doors. It will not only exude sheer panache but also a strong sense of calmness. Make your space functional and minimal, this can be done by placing a statement sofa and a mini-breakfast table in opposite directions.

Every element of your house speaks to you and brings along a purpose to fulfill. The three distinct decor looks are an inspiration for designing a space that brings elan as well as ensures durability. So, think no further and get on with curating your own dream-like haven.

REMEMBERING HIS CANVAS

Artist SAYED HAIDER RAZA, who would have turned 100 this year, lives through his works even today. By UMA NAIR

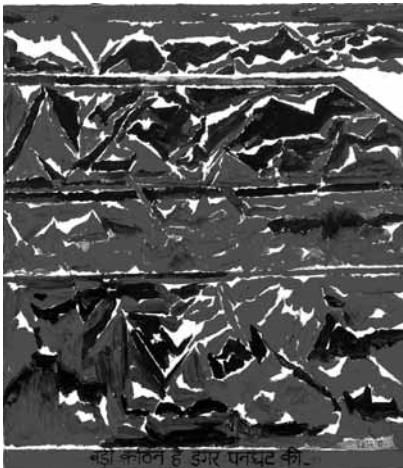
At the art gallery, Akar Prakar, there are canvases created by Sayed Haider Raza in his last few years. They are a testimony to his love for painting and clearly prove that he was a pilgrim of deeper intensities in geometry and symbolism.

Amongst all the works in this seminal show, it is *Shantibindu* that strikes a deep chord in this critic. In a conversation to me in 2004, the eve of his 85th birthday, he said, "My *bindu* is primarily a philosophical expression, an act of faith in the infinite, an affirmation of spirituality. When I sit down in front of one of my paintings to contemplate, I suddenly feel a great expansion of the spirit. I feel like a man liberated from the wants of material desires, a man who belongs to the vastness of the present and past."

Shantibindu tryst

Raza Sahib's tryst with the *Shantibindu* began in the 1990s. The black orb that went beyond the black sun into infinite realms and references gave way to a set of concentric geometric circles that formed a suffused ethereal *Bindu*, which looked like a symphony of peace created for a vista of harmonies. For Raza, the recurring *Bindu* became a new corollary on canvas with infinite variations.

The *Shantibindu* for Raza was an exemplification of *Purusha Prakriti* principles. These principles dwell on the infinite, on dualities and deeper philosophies of the inner spirit and outer realities of nature's relativity. Born of a meditative mooring,

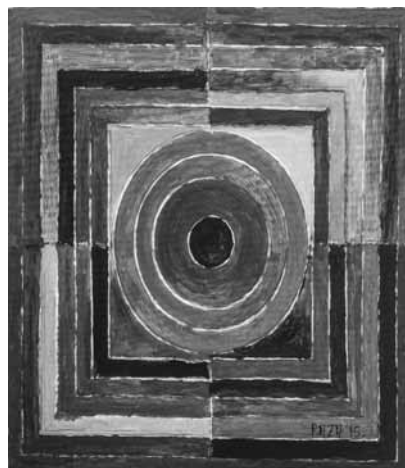


his *bindu* was the device of a spiritual firmament. The softly nuanced pastel toned circles resonate with a harmony emanating from the epicentre. Their terracotta and soft tinted colour tones form an elegant exemplar. The *Shantibindu* became

an iconic nucleus in which the central core was an energy that created a ritual.

Nostalgia and memory

Looking at this show highlights the power and prowess of his paint-



ings that come rushing into human memory. His early landscapes of European cities, churches, glowing ember like landscapes that spoke of his passion for nocturnes, his mid-night moorings of works like *Tapovan*, *La Terre*, *Saurashtra*,

Rajasthan and his *Shantibindu* series, all become a part of his pilgrimage of painting. India's avant grade artist who combined expressionist brushwork with the symbolism of geometry woven into personal memory lives through his works.

Ayushmann praises CISF

The armed forces of India have been on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic in India, protecting the citizens of the country while being in harm's way. Bollywood star Ayushmann Khurrana, who is currently shooting for his next, *Anek*, directed by Anubhav Sinha, has been deeply moved seeing the commendable work that the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) in Guwahati has been doing. The youth icon was requested to send a video message to the entire unit stationed in Assam and Ayushmann sent them a heartfelt thank you.

In the video, Ayushmann says, "I would like to congratulate all the majors and soldiers from the CISF Guwahati regiment on how right since COVID-19 unfolded, until now, they have contributed to the aviation security with patience and valour. I truly salute all your efforts to serve. I truly hope you stay safe and healthy."

Ayushmann has always been inspired by the army men in India who selflessly devote their lives to protect others. The actor has also been deeply moved by the pandemic and how it has impacted people from every strata. He has also composed some heartfelt poems on this sufferings of



people during the pandemic, which instantly became a rage in the country. The actor will be shooting for *Anek* right through March before jumping onto his next film, *Doctor G*.

TRENDBLAZER



KANGANA REMINISCES ABOUT CHILDHOOD

Bollywood actor KANGANA RANAUT has reminisced about her childhood as it is her birthday month.

Kangana shared a childhood picture on Instagram. In the image, a young Kangana is seen dressed in salwar kameez.

Alongside the image, she wrote: "My birthday month, growing up grannies told stories that after a sister another girl child birth disappointed everyone..."

fairtalk

ADAH SHARMA



"I've always felt more comfortable around animals than humans. I'm the most uncomfortable in social places like parties with people I don't know. But put me in a forest with animals and I feel at home. Animals are uncomplicated, easy to interact with. They live in the moment. I recently rescued an injured bird while shooting and named it Twitter."

dailytalk

VINAY PATHAK



"I remember our screening at the Berlinale where barring me, Udit and her parents, the rest of the audience in the screening theatre, which was a full house, was an entirely international audience. The way the audience reacted to the story after the screening was overwhelming. *Dust* is an Indian film with a global appeal and that is why we touched the right chords."

HOW ELLIE KEPT HER PREGNANCY PRIVATE

Singer ELLIE GOULDING reveals she used her husband Casper Jopling's coat to hide her pregnancy for the first six months.

Chatting on a show, Ellie was asked how her pregnancy is going and how she hid it. "It's different. I stole my husband's coat for about six months," she revealed.





India opener Rohit Sharma bats during nets session ahead of fourth Test against England

India's top guns go full throttle at nets

PTI AHMEDABAD

Big guns Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and senior opener Rohit were seen batting at the nets in a video posted by the BCCI on Twitter.

The fourth Test starts here on Thursday.

Captain Kohli, his deputy Rahane and senior opener Rohit were seen batting at the nets in a video posted by the BCCI on Twitter.

The three senior players drove, pulled and flicked against the fast

bowlers and spinners at the Narendra Modi Stadium here.

Head coach Ravi Shastri was seen interacting with Kohli and Kohli while the two star batsmen sat together for a discussion.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel, who bagged 11 wickets in India's thumping win in the pink ball third Test at the same venue, was seen rolling his arms over at the nets against some of the world's best batsmen.

They were also seen fielding with Rahane, standing next to Rohit in the second slip position, taking a one-handed diving catch to his right.

Eng didn't prepare well for spin challenge: Richards

PTI NEW DELHI

West Indian batting legend Viv Richards is not amused with past and present English cricketers "moaning and groaning" about the spin-friendly pitches in India and said the visitors did not prepare well for the challenge.

The newly-laid Motera track in Ahmedabad became a subject of debate after India crushed England inside two days in the third Test to go 2-1 up in the four-match series. The severe criticism came from former England captains like Michael Vaughan and a section of the British media.

All the chatter has not gone down well with Richards, whose incredible range of strokes and fearless approach to the game terrorised the best of bowlers in his prime in every corner of the cricketing world.

"I've been asked questions recently about the Test match that was played in India, the second and third Test match against England."

"And I am a little confused about the question really because there seems to be a lot of moaning and groaning about the wicket that they were playing on. Richards said in a video posted on his Facebook page.

"I just felt that the ones who are moaning, in my opinion, should realise that there are times that you're going to get a seaming track, a ball that is basically jumping off a good length and everyone thinks that's a problem for batters," he reasoned.



England all-rounder Ben Stokes plays shot against India during third Test in Ahmedabad

The 68-year-old pointed out that playing in India has mostly been about tackling quality spinners and that England may not have done their homework properly ahead of the tour.

Weighing in on the debate, the batting great said, "... But now you've seen the other side, and this is why I think it was given the name 'Test match cricket, because of the test of the mind and will and everything else that goes with it when you're competing."

"And the complaints have been that the wicket is spinning too much and all that sorts of stuff. This is another

side of the coin guys.

"People seem to forget that if you're going to India, you should expect that. You are going to spin land. You should basically prepare yourself to know what you're going to encounter."

Richards said that India have pushed England out of their comfort zone, weeks after the visitors started the series with a big win.

"Ever since that first Test match, England were in their comfort zone. They have now been taken out of their comfort zone at present and they have got to find ways and means to cope with what they are going

to encounter."

"Spin is also a part of the game, this is what a Test match brings. The Indian pacers have been brilliant over the past few years in terms of substance, the wicket-taking ability and stuff like that."

The legend urged the English team to work harder and face the challenge resolutely.

"...Now that you're in India, you are going to encounter things and have got to find a way. You're going to get dirty. There is nothing in the rule book that says I've got to score my runs in pretty, classical ways," he said.

England appoint Trescothick as batting coach

London: England on Monday appointed former opener Marcus Trescothick as the new batting coach of the national team, besides roping in Jon Lewis and New Zealand's Iwan Patel as bowling and spin bowling coaches on permanent basis.

These three are part of the four new appointments to England's coaching set-up, which is being headed by chief coach Chris Silverwood.

Trescothick will now replace Jonathan Trott, who replaced South African Jacques Kallis in the ongoing tour. Kallis had played the role of a batting consultant for England in Sri Lanka.

"...I'm really excited about the calibre of the individuals that we've appointed into these specialist roles. Marcus, Jon and Iwan have demonstrated their ability at the highest level and also show huge potential for the future," ECB performance director Mo Bobat said in a statement.

Trescothick, who scored over 10,000 international runs across formats between 2000 and 2006, is expected to take up his new role in mid-March after stepping down from his position as assistant coach at Somerset.

PTI

Maxi eager to learn from Kohli



PTI WELLINGTON

Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is chuffed about playing alongside and learning from Virat Kohli in the upcoming IPL, calling the Indian captain "the pinnacle of the game" for his dominance across formats. The Kohli-led RCB bought Maxwell, who was released by Punjab Kings, for a whopping \$14.25 crore at the auctions last month.

"It's (RCB stint) going to be next level," Maxwell told Australian Associated Press. "He's (Kohli) been the pinnacle of the game for a while as a multi-for-

'Virat is like modern day hero'

New Delhi: Australian great Steve Waugh feels that Virat Kohli is like a "modern-day hero" who represents the "new attitude of India" of taking everything head on with a mind set of nothing is impossible.

In a 60-minute documentary titled, *Capturing Cricket: Steve Waugh in India*, the former Australia captain said that Kohli is loved by the fans for his attitude of not being intimidated by an opposition.

"What they love about Kohli is that it's like the new attitude of India, get stuck in, don't be intimidated. Take everything on and anything is achievable and possible. But he's like the modern-day hero."

Waugh was quoted as saying in a media release after the launch of the documentary. The documentary captures the very essence and undying love for the game in India that the likes of Waugh and is brought by *discovery+*. PNS

Mumbai trounce HP by 200 runs

lyer-led side remain unbeaten in league stage to advance in Hazare knockouts

PTI JAIPUR

Domestic giants Mumbai trounced Himachal Pradesh by 200 runs in their final Elite Group D game here on Monday to remain unbeaten in the league stage of the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Mumbai had won their first four matches against Delhi, Maharashtra, Puducherry and Rajasthan.

Opting to bat at the Savai Mansingh Stadium, Mumbai posted an imposing 321/9, courtesy Shardul Thakur's 92, Suryakumar Yadav's 91 and Aditya Tare's 83 after a top-order failure.

Himachal were then bundled out for a meagre 121, with leg-spinner Prashant Solanki (4/31) shining with the ball.

After losing four for 49, Suryakumar began the rescue act and toyed with the Himachal attack, striking 15 boundaries on his way to a 75-ball 91.

He found an able ally in the experienced Tare (83 off 98 balls; 6x4; 1x6) who played the perfect second fiddle as the duo forged a 99-run fifth wicket stand to rally the innings.

After Suryakumar fell in the 31st over, Tare and Shardul added 112 runs for the sixth wicket, as they tackled the



Himachal attack with ease.

Shardul, one of the heroes of the Brisbane Test against Australia, hammered six boundaries and as many sixes, as he catered to 92 in just 57 balls.

Thanks to Shardul's hitting, Mumbai crossed the 300-run mark, but Tare's patient knock was equally important as he anchored the innings and supported the aggressors.

In the other two Elite Group D league games, Maharashtra thrashed Puducherry by 137 runs, while Delhi defeated Rajasthan by eight wickets.

SAURASHTRA IN Q/F

In Group E games at Kolkata, Saurashtra suffered a shocking 62-run loss at the

hands of Services but still managed to finish as group toppers and qualified for the knock-out phase.

Saurashtra finished with 16 points, four clear of Chandigarh, whose direct qualification hopes were dashed with an eight-wicket loss to Jammu & Kashmir at the Jadavpur University second campus in Sallake.

At the 22 Yards Academy in Sallake, Services rode on Rahul Singh Gahlaut's career-best 158 to post a challenging 301 for seven and in reply Saurashtra were bundled out for 233 in 43.1 overs.

Elsewhere at Eden Gardens, Kolkata, Saurashtra suffered a shocking 62-run loss at the

U'KHAND PIP ASSAM

Uttarakhand thrashed Sikkim by 145 runs to remain unbeaten in the Plate group, and clinch a spot in the knockout phase, pipping Assam by virtue of a better net run-rate.

Assam completed its engagements with a crushing 182-run win over Mizoram.

Both Uttarakhand and Assam finished with a win record but the former qualified for the next stage due to a higher NRR (3.273) as against the latter's 1.909. Meghalaya edged Nagaland to the third spot by virtue of a superior NRR despite securing 16 points. They were followed by Sikkim (4 points), Arunachal Pradesh (2), Mizoram (2) and Manipur (0).

Reds answer critics with win

AFP SHEFFIELD

Jürgen Klopp believes Liverpool can prove the doubters that have written their season off wrong after the Blues lost a four-game Premier League losing streak to win 2-0 at Sheffield United on Sunday.

The English champions' title defence has been decimated by injuries and they face a battle just to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish.

Klopp's men remain in sixth, but are now just two points behind fourth-placed West Ham and can leapfrog Chelsea in fifth when the Blues visit Anfield on Thursday.

"Plenty of people have written us off. That's fine," said Klopp. "With all the problems we have had, we're still around the exciting places."

Jordan Henderson has been added to Liverpool's long-term injury list, while goalkeeper Allison Becker was absent after



he lost his father this week.

But the Championship-bound Blades proved the perfect opponents for Klopp's men to restore some confidence as Curtis Jones' second-half strike and Kean Bryan's own goal got the Reds back to winning ways.

"This was about us showing we're still there," added Klopp.

"We play Chelsea on Thursday, we have to show it again. We have to win football games, we know that. There's no way into the Champions League without results."

Sheffield United are still 15 points adrift of safety at the bottom of the table and manager Chris Wilder admitted his side lacked the quality to challenge even a depleted Liverpool.

Milan back on track

AFP ROME

Milan won an intense battle with rivals Roma at the Stadio Olimpico in the Italian capital on Sunday night, as Stefano Pioli's side pushed for a first league title since 2011.

A Franck Kessie penalty gave Milan the lead five minutes before the break after Federico Fazio fouled Davide Calabria.

Jordan Veretout pulled Roma level five minutes after the break with an arrowed shot, but the away side were soon back in front.

Ante Rebic drilled home the winner eight minutes later after collecting a pass from Alexis Saelemaekers following a poor clearance from Roma goalkeeper Pau Lopez.

Off-form Milan star Zlatan Ibrahimovic had been substituted shortly before Croatia international Rebic scored the decisive goal.

"I told the lads that two games (losses) cannot take away the confidence build up

over a year," said Pioli. "It's an important win at a decisive moment in the season which takes us out of



Atlético keep rivals at bay

AFP VILLARREAL

Atlético Madrid bounced back from recent poor form with a hard-fought 2-0 win at Villarreal on Sunday that allowed the La Liga pace-setters to extend their lead to five points.

An own goal from Alfonso Pedraza and Joao Felix's powerful strike gave Atlético a precious win after a wobble which had allowed Barcelona and Real Madrid to gain ground in the title race.

Diego Simeone's side had come into the match off the back of a Champions League last 16 defeat to Chelsea and a league run in which they picked up just five points from

two very strange weeks." Earlier, Napoli's record goalscorer, Dries Mertens, returned from injury to help the southerners boost their Champions League hopes with a 2-0 win over local rivals Benevento, to



Joao Felix scores Atlético Madrid's second goal against Villarreal

their previous four matches. However, the win means Atlético held second-placed Barça at bay and crucially

kept the gap between them in the second in the 66th minute, with Gattuso's side holding on for the points despite Kalidou Koulibaly's sending-off 10 minutes from time.

half an hour for his 131st Napoli goal. Matteo Politano turned in the second in the 66th minute, with Gattuso's side holding on for the points despite Kalidou Koulibaly's sending-off 10 minutes from time.