

OPINION 6
THE UNIQUENESS OF
SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

WORLD 8
AT LEAST 4 PEOPLE SHOT DEAD IN
MYANMAR ANTI-COUP PROTESTS

SPORT 12
MUMBAI WIN VIJAY
HAZARE TITLE

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Didi resumes show in wheelchair

TMC chief says injured tigress more dangerous than one in woods; Shah holds roadshow in Midnapore



West Bengal CM and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee addresses a rally while sitting in a wheelchair to observe Nandigram Diwas, at Hazra Crossing in Kolkata on Sunday

PNS ■ KOLKATA
Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday roared back at the BJP warning her political rivals that an injured tigress is more dangerous than the one in the woods. Mamata led a roadshow to commemorate the Nandigram Day that eventually catapulted her to power. On March 14, 2007, 14 anti-land acquisition

protesters were killed in a police firing at Nandigram. Riding a wheelchair, the Chief Minister took part in the roadshow at the end of which she said, "I am out in the public with a broken leg and go on campaigning in this condition on a wheel chair... but I must remind one and all that an injured tigress is more dangerous than the one in the forests." "Bhanga pa niyei khela

hobe... khela hobe, jeta hobe (the game will be played with broken legs... there will be a game and victory will be ours)," Mamata said. The Chief Minister, who led the 5-km roadshow from Mayo Road to Hazra More near her residence, said, "We will continue to fight boldly. I'm still in a lot of pain, but I feel the pain of my people even more," adding "people advised me

rest but "if I go for bed rest, who will reach out to people... We have suffered a lot and will suffer more but we will never bow down to cowardice... we will never let Bengal be taken by the outsiders." Mamata who left for Durgapur on Sunday noon, will attend at least five back-to-back rallies at Purulia and Bankura — all in wheelchair. Meanwhile, Home Minister Amit Shah held a colourful roadshow here in West Midnapore district on Sunday as he sought to bolster the BJP's campaign in West Bengal ahead of the Assembly elections. The roadshow, which commenced at the local BJP office, "Premhari Bhavan", and concluded at Malancha petrol pump in the town, covering a distance of nearly one kilometer. Shah was accompanied by BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and party State president Dilip Ghosh. Thousands of supporters took part in the rally, which began after sundown, as residents stood on balconies and rooftops to witness the show. Shah waved at the spectators and showered rose petals on the participants of the roadshow, as the saffron party candidate for Kharagpur Sadar constituency Hiran Chatterjee, who is also a film star, stood by his side.

EC rules out attack on CM, removes DM, SP, Dir Security for lapses

PNS ■ KOLKATA
Four days after Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was injured while campaigning at Nandigram, the Election Commission of India on Sunday removed the District Magistrate of East Midnapore and suspended the district SP and the director in charge of her security. Also, the EC on Sunday concurred with reports from its two poll observers that there was no pre-meditated attack on Mamata in Nandigram, indicating that her injuries were the result of a security lapse. Not only this, the EC has also directed State Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay and Director General of Police P Neeraj Nayan to report by 5 pm on March 17, actions taken against the lesser officials in charge of the Chief Minister's security on the said day. Taking serious cognisance of the Wednesday incident which saw serious lapses in the security of the Chief Minister who gets Z-plus security, the EC removed East Midnapore DM Vibhu Goyal. He has been replaced by Smith Pandey who will take charge by Monday morning. The EC also suspended Superintendent of Police Praveen Prakash for alleged dereliction of duty. He has been replaced by another IPS officer SK Yadav. But the most noticeable action has been taken against Director Security Vivek Sahay, a senior IPS officer, who has been in charge of Mamata's overall security. Actions have been taken on the basis of reports submitted by the Chief Secretary, DGP Special Election Observer and police observers, sources said. The EC has also directed the State police administration to conduct a thorough enquiry into the role of lesser officials and report action taken against them within two days' time, sources said. "Vivek Sahay, IPS, Director Security, shall be removed from the post of the Director Security and be placed under suspension immediately. The charges must be framed against him within a week for grossly failing in discharge of his primary duty as Director Security to protect the Z+ protectee," the Election Commission said, with an additional remark that the Wednesday's incident was an accident and not attack. **Continued on Page 2**

3-mth high daily count evokes 2nd Covid wave fear

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
67% cases recorded from two States: Maha, Punjab
A mid concern that India is all set to witness the second phase of coronavirus, the country showed a steep rise in Covid-19 cases and deaths in the past 24 hours with 25,320 new infections and 161 deaths. The infection level in the country is back to last year's December as it has soared to 1.85 per cent from 1.55 per cent in a short interval. "The fresh cases of coronavirus in the last 24 hours are the highest daily rise in almost three months — taking the total tally to over 1.13 crore cases while the death count has increased to 1,58,607 on Sunday with 161 new fatalities, the highest in 44 days," said the Union Health Ministry. However, 67 per cent of the cases were recorded from two States only. Maharashtra has reported 15,602 cases in the last 24 hours whereas Punjab recorded its highest single-day tally of this year with 1,515 new cases of Covid-19. As the number of Covid-19 cases is rising across the country, the Centre has sounded a word of caution for States which are not yet seeing a surge but are at the threshold. Niti Aayog (Health) member VK Paul had recently said the situation of Maharashtra is worrying as part of the State is going back to strict lockdown. However, he shared his concerns for other States as well like Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh which are showing an upsurge in the daily new Covid-19 cases and have accounted for 87.73 per cent of the new instances of the disease reported in a day, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday. India's total Covid-19 active caseload has reached 2.10 lakh, the Ministry said. The total number of recoveries in the country has surged to 1,09,89,897 with 16,637 people recuperating from the disease in a day. The Ministry said 83.13 per cent of the new recovered cases are observed to be concentrated in six States. Maharashtra has reported a maximum number of 7,467 single-day recoveries. The Ministry said 161 deaths were reported in a day. **Continued on Page 2**

Metroman to make poll debut as BJP's pick from Palakkad

Kerala BJP chief Surendran to contest from 2 constituencies

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI / THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Metroman E Sreedharan will make his electoral debut from Palakkad in the April 6 Assembly polls, while BJP State president K Surendran will contest from two constituencies, including Konni, the epicentre of the Sabarimala stir in 2018. The BJP, which will be contesting in 115 of the 140 constituencies, released its candidates list for 112 seats in New Delhi on Sunday. Twenty five seats have been given to its four NDA allies — BDJS (Bharath Dharma Jana Sena), AIADMK, Janadhithipathy Rashtriya Sabha (JRS) and Kamaraj Congress,



Metroman E Sreedharan

party general secretary Arun Singh told the media in Delhi. "Metroman" Sreedharan had joined the BJP recently. Two film actors — Suresh Gopi (Thrissur), who is a Rajya Sabha MP and Krishnakumar (Thiruvananthapuram central) are also in the fray. Former Union Minister K J Alphonso will try his luck from Kanjirappally and former DGP Jacob Thomas from Irinjalakuda. **Continued on Page 2**

Nitish arms himself with RLSP merger

Kushwaha named parliamentary board chief of JD(U)

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) of Upendra Kushwaha which had quit the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) before the Bihar Assembly polls on Sunday merged itself with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's ruling Janata Dal (United). The development is seen as Kumar's attempt to fortify his position against ally BJP, which enjoys numerical superiority in the State Assembly. The merger took place at the JD(U) State headquarters in Patna where the Chief Minister welcomed Kushwaha, a former Union Minister, by presenting him with a bouquet. Soon after he was inducted into the JD(U), Kumar announced Kushwaha's appointment as the national parliamentary board president with immediate effect. Top JD(U) leaders like Rajeev Ranjan Singh alias Lalan, Sanjay Kumar Jha, and Vashisth Narayan Singh and key office bearers of the now-dissolved RLSP like Madhwa Anand and Fazl Imam Mallick were also present. **Continued on Page 2**



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar felicitates RLSP president Upendra Kushwaha after the party merged with JD(U) in Patna on Sunday

CAPSULE

BANKING SERVICES TO BE HIT ON MAR 15, 16
New Delhi: As employees of various public sector banks prepare to go on strike on March 15 and 16 over the Centre's decision to privatise two State-owned lenders, banking services are likely to be hit across the country.

QUAD: COMMITTED TO PEACEFUL INDO-PACIFIC
Washington: The leaders Quad have reaffirmed that they are striving to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is accessible, dynamic and governed by international law and bedrock principles such as freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes, and free from coercion.

DELHI RECORDS 407 NEW COVID-19 CASES
New Delhi: Delhi recorded 407 new Covid-19 cases on Sunday, crossing the 400-mark for the fourth consecutive day, while the positivity rate stood at 0.60 per cent.

Jagan sweeps Andhra local body polls much to TDP's humiliation

PTI ■ AMARAVATI
In a landslide of unprecedented scale that is now being described as "Jagan Wash", the ruling YSR Congress in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday swept the elections to the urban local bodies, literally burying the main Opposition Telugu Desam in 75 municipalities and 11 municipal corporations. The humiliation for the TDP was such that it could cross the double digit in only five ULBs while other opposition parties BJP and JSP made little gains. The Congress was nowhere in the picture. The YSRC attributed the resounding victory to the faith people reposed in the leadership of Chief Minister YS Jagan

Mumbai cop in NIA custody till Mar 25 in Antilia bomb scare case

PNS ■ MUMBAI
Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze, arrested in the probe into recovery of explosives from a car near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence on February 25, was on Sunday remanded in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) custody till March 25. The NIA, which arrested Waze (49) on Saturday night, brought him to the court in south Mumbai after taking him to a local hospital for his medical examination, an official said. The court remanded him in the Central agency's custody for further probe in the matter, he said. In its remand plea, the NIA submitted witnesses' statements to show Waze's involvement in the case. **Detailed report on P5**

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Shah: Cong allying with anti-nationals in Assam

PTI ■ MARGHERITA/NAZIRA (ASSAM)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday launched a scathing attack on the Congress for entering into alliances with political parties who are "out to divide the country", and asserted that the BJP does not practise vote-bank politics.

Shah, during his rallies in Upper Assam constituencies of Nazira and Margherita, claimed that the grand old party, despite "ruling the state for 15 years and having a prime minister who was a representative of the state", did nothing to solve the issue of illegal immigration.

Shah was referring to Mamohan Singh, who has represented Assam in the Upper House of Parliament.

"The Congress can go to any length to win an election. It has aligned with Badruddin Ajmal's AIUDF in Assam, the Muslim League in Kerala and the Indian Secular Front in Bengal. Assam cannot be safe in the hands of Ajmal.

"People can decide for themselves who is more concerned about their welfare — Prime Minister Narendra Modi or Badruddin Ajmal," Shah said at a rally rally in Margherita, currently held by BJP MLA Bhaskar Sharma.

The BJP, during the last five years, has successfully ousted infiltrators who had encroached land at Kaziranga National Park and occupied plots owned by religious bodies, the Union minister said.

"Now, if you vote for the Congress, your vote will go to Ajmal's AIUDF, which, in turn,

will encourage infiltration. You have to decide whether you want a government that shelters infiltrators or the one that will oust them.

"Five years ago, I, as BJP president, had promised to make Assam 'andolan mukt' (agitation-free) and 'aatankbad mukt' (militancy-free). We have fulfilled our pledge, and there is no longer any agitation or militancy in the state. More than two thousand militants have returned to the mainstream."

The Union Minister further alleged that it was the Congress that had opened fire at youths during the anti-foreigners agitation, and now "members of organisations, which spear-headed the movement, have joined hands with the grand old party, in an attempt to eat into BJP's vote base".

Mahila Cong chief in Kerala resigns over denial of ticket, tonsures head

Thiruvananthapuram: In an embarrassment to the Congress in Kerala, party's women's wing President Lathika Subhash on Sunday resigned from the post hurt over the denial of Ettumanoor seat to her, shortly after the candidates list for the April 6 Assembly polls was released in New Delhi.

The 56-year-old senior leader also shaved her head sitting in front of the Congress office here as a mark of protest.

Subhash, who met reporters at the party headquarters Indira Bhavan here, soon after the KPCC chief Mullappally Ramachandran announced the party list at New Delhi, said it was short of women candidates.

Of the list of 86 candidates

released today by the Congress, only 9 are women.

It may be for the first time that any leader in any political party in Kerala has taken such a drastic step in protest against the party leadership for denial of poll ticket.

A known woman face among party leaders and activists, Lathika Subhash had taken over as the head of Mahila Congress in 2018 from Bindhu Krishna, now a party candidate in Kollam.

A weeping Subhash said she tonsured her head as a symbol of protest for all the women in the party, who have been toiling hard for the success of other candidates, but have been sidelined and ignored by the leadership for years. **PTI**



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat assumes office as CM for the first time in Dehradun on Sunday **PTI**

Gujarat: Four of family booked for female infanticide

Mehsana: An offence was registered against four members of a family for allegedly killing a month-old baby girl in December 2019 at Kadi town of Gujarat's Mehnsana district in a case of female infanticide, police said on Sunday.

The infant's parents and grandparents had falsely told the investigators that she had died due to suffocation during breastfeeding, but her post-mortem revealed that she was strangled to death, police said.

The deceased infant's parents and grandparents were booked for murder at Kadi police station on Saturday night after the post-mortem report, a police official said.

The case was registered against them under IPC sections 302 (murder), 120 (B) (criminal conspiracy), and 34 (act done by several persons in furtherance of common intention), and effort

was on to arrest them, he said.

The parents of the murdered infant - Hardik and Rina Patel, who have a four-year-old daughter, were booked along with the infant's grandparents Nita and Upendra Patel, they said.

Deputy Superintendent of Police RR Ahir, who carried out the probe and is a complainant in the case, said that after the infant died, a case of accidental death was filed at Kadi police station on December 22, 2019, with the family members giving the cause of her death to suffocation during breastfeeding.

"However, there was suspicion over her death due to a mark on her neck. Her body was sent for post-mortem, which has now ascertained the cause of the death as strangulation, after which a case of murder was registered against the four members of the family," he said. **PTI**

Protest against Shia Waqf Board ex-chief at Bada Imambara in UP

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Thousands of Muslims staged a protest at the Bada Imambara here on Sunday against former Shia Waqf Board chief Waseem Rizvi who has filed a petition for removal of 26 verses from the Holy Quran.

Sunni and Shia clerics led the protest against Rizvi and demanded his immediate arrest. Rizvi has also been excommunicated.

Unprecedented security arrangements had been made in the old city on Sunday in view of the protests.

Barricades were set up from the Chhota Imambara to the Teele Wali Masjid and a strong police presence was evident at the spot.

Police personnel had also been deployed on the roofs of adjoining houses and buildings.

Kisan protest may continue till Dec: Tikait

Allahabad: The Bhartiya Kisan Union-led farmer agitation against the three central farm laws may continue till December this year, the outfit's national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said here on Sunday.

Tikait made the statement while talking to reporters here after his recent visit to the poll-bound West Bengal.

"This agitation possibly will stretch up to November or December this year," he said.

Talking about his West Bengal visit, Tikait said during poll campaigning there, the central government people have been asking farmers to give them one feastful of rice.

"I have advised Bengal farmers to ask grain seekers to fix an MSP of ₹1,850 per quin-



tal for paddy before giving them a single grain of rice," Tikait told reporters here.

He said after Bengal, he was planning to visit other parts of the country to press for the enactment of a law guaranteeing an MSP for various crops.

"In Bihar, the paddy is currently being bought by

traders at an abysmally low rate of ₹750 to ₹800 per quintal. I want a law guaranteeing the minimum support price for various crops," said Tikait.

He said he was not going to sit in Delhi alone but was planning to visit all over the country, including Madhya Pradesh on March 14 and 15, Ganga Nagar in Rajasthan on

these farm laws will ruin traders and lead to the closure of small business utilities and the collapse of small industries. These laws will bring in big multinational firms like Walmart.

March 17, Ghazipur's UP Gate border in Delhi on March 18, Odisha on March 19 and Karnataka on March 21 and 22.

During his visit here, Tikait also garlanded a statue of his late father and farmer leader Mahendra Singh Tikait at Tikait Park in Jhalwa near here.

The BKU spokesperson claimed the three central laws will lead to the closure of all small-time neighbourhood shops, leaving only big commercial malls to survive.

"These farm laws will ruin traders and lead to the closure of small business utilities and the collapse of small industries. These laws will bring in big multinational firms like Walmart," claimed Tikait.

"Had this government belonged to a political party, it would have talked to farmers and resolved the matter," Tikait said.

"But this government is being run by big business houses. It is bent upon selling the entire country," he alleged. **PTI**

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In the matter of M/s SPS Structures Limited (U45201DL2006PLC191071) having its registered office at 107, Godavari Apartment, Alaknanda, New Delhi, Applicant Notice is hereby given to the general public that the company intending to make an application to the Central Government under section 14 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with aforesaid rules and is desirous of converting into a private limited company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on 09.03.2021 to enable the company to give effect for such conversion. Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change/status of the company may deliver or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his interest and grounds of opposition to the concerned Regional Director (B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Parvavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi - 110003), within fourteen days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company at its registered office at the address mentioned below:

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Date : 15-03-2021 Place : New Delhi

Pakistani drone spotted in Punjab's Bamial, returns after BSF opens fire

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

A Pakistani drone entered the Indian territory on Sunday but was forced to return as BSF jawans spotted it and opened fire in its direction in Punjab's Pathankot district, a police official said.

The drone which came from the Pakistani side was sighted at Dinda post close to Bamial along the Indo-Pak international border," Pathankot Senior Superintendent of Police Gulnazer Singh Khurana told PTI over phone.

He said the BSF opened fire in its direction after which it returned to the neighbouring country.

Asked if the drone dropped anything inside the Indian territory before flying back, Khurana said, "A thorough search operation was carried out at the site, but nothing was found."

In December 2020, 11 hand grenades dropped by a drone flying in from Pakistan were recovered from a field near the International Border in Punjab's Gurdaspur district.

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3-mth high daily count evokes...

From Page 1

Six States account for 84.47 percent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties at 88. Punjab reported 22 fatalities and Kerala 12 while fourteen States and Union Territories have not reported any COVID-19 deaths in the last 24 hours. These are Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Meghalaya, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, Ladakh, Manipur, Mizoram, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Arunachal Pradesh. Meanwhile, the country is

Nitish... EC rules...

From Page 1

Kushwaha who carries a strong base of the sizeable Koeri caste pledged to make the JD(U) "the number one party" in Bihar and said that after having been witness to "many ups and downs" as the RLSP founding chief, he looked forward to making use of his experience under the guidance of Nitish Kumar.

Kushwaha was in political oblivion after his exit from NDA in 2017. He quit the coalition ahead of the assembly elections last year and ended up facing political isolation notwithstanding the support of his Koeri community which is the second most populous OBC group in Bihar after the Yadavas.

Jagan sweeps...

From Page 1

It is here that people have been opposing the capital trifurcation plan. It did relatively better in Visakhapatnam, which the government wanted to make the Executive Capital, but it would be the YSRC that would be ruling the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation. The TDP has hopes of

capturing only one municipality, Tadipatri in Anantapuramu district, with the backing of ally CPI and an independent.

It will be the YSRC's rule in 74 other municipalities across the three regions of the state.

In Yidukuru in Kadapa district, the TDP won 12, the YSRC 11 wards and the Jana Sena one in the 24-member council but ex-officio votes (of legislators) would tilt the balance in the ruling party's favour, helping it to bag the chairmans

post. Eleven out of the 12 municipal corporations have also fallen in the YSRC's kitty. Counting of votes in Eluru Municipal Corporation has not been taken up because of an order of the High Court.

According to the latest information revealed by sources in the State Election Commission, the YSRC bagged 1,754 out of the 2,122 wards in 75 municipalities. The TDP won 270, BJP eight, Jana Sena 19,

Independents and others 71.

Detailed results of municipal corporations were yet to come in as counting was continuing in some of them, the sources said.

In the last elections to the ULBs held in 2014, the TDP had won five out of seven municipal corporations and the YSRC two.

Of the 92 municipalities, TDP bagged 70, YSRC 18, Congress and CPI one each and others two.

Metroman to make poll...

From Page 1

Firebrand BJP leader Surendran, who had led the Sabarimala agitation in 2018 against entry of women of all ages to the Lord Ayyappa temple following the Supreme Court verdict, has been fielded from Manjeshwaram in Kasaragod district and Konni in Pathanamthitta district.

He had unsuccessfully contested the 2016 assembly polls from Manjeshwaram and had lost by a meagre 89 votes.

Former Mizoram Governor Kumanam Rajashekharan has been fielded from Nemon, the lone seat won by the BJP in the 2016 assembly polls when former Union minister O Rajagopal was elected.

Senior leaders CK Padmanabhan will take on

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at Dharmadam in Kannur, while P K Krishnadas will battle it out at Kattakada in Thiruvananthapuram.

Well known academicians and retired Calicut University Vice Chancellor Dr Abdul Salam has been fielded from Tirur and Manikuttan, the first tribal engineer, will be in the fray from Mananthavady (reserved) seat.

The saffron party, which has fielded 12 women candidates, has not given a seat to senior leader Shobha Surendran.

Rajashekharan, a former BJP state president, told reporters here that people in Kerala are yearning for a change from the alternate governments being formed over the years by the CPI(M) led LDF and Congress led UDF.

"Many known personalities are fighting on behalf of BJP in this election. The people are done with both the

fronts. The wind is blowing in favour of the NDA. The list of candidates is a representation of those who have made their mark in society. I am really confident about my candidature in the Nemon constituency," Rajashekharan told the media.

BJP state chief Surendran said the party lost Manjeshwaram constituency last time due to the "adjustment politics" between the Congress and the BJP.

"We lost Manjeshwaram last time because of the adjustment politics between the Congress and the CPI(M). We will fight to get back that constituency. Konni is dear to me due to the Sabarimala issue," he said. He evaded a direct reply when asked which constituency he would leave if elected from both seats, saying many leaders in the country have followed this format.

Govt urges corporates to join Switch Delhi drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has urged the corporate sector to join the 'Switch Delhi' movement by adopting electric vehicles and reserve five per cent of their parking space dedicated to such vehicles along with charging provisions.

The sixth week of the Government's Switch Delhi campaign will focus on creating and raising awareness about the user-friendly adoption of the electric vehicles in Delhi by actively involving corporate.

"The Delhi Government aims to further capitalise on the positive response received by the campaign and will involve corporate to be a part of the campaign," Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said.

Elaborating on the need to include Delhi's corporate in the campaign; Gahlot said "Delhi is well-known as an economic hub. The corporate here can put their resources to the best use by promoting EVs in Delhi. They can come forward and help us in making the Switch Delhi campaign a huge success."

The Government has



appealed to the corporate segment to take lead in switching to EVs. "I appeal to this segment to switch to EV cabs to facilitate the travel of their employees," he said.

The minister further urged the corporate to install charging stations at their office premises to encourage individuals to switch to an EV. "Globally, it has been seen that people generally charge their electric vehicles at home or the workplace. Many corporate employees are willing to switch to EVs if there is sound EV charging infrastructure in place at the workplace," he said.

"The Delhi Government is providing subsidies for the

installation of EV charging stations and the companies who adopt this proposal will be sure to benefit from the same," Gahlot said.

Switch Delhi is an eight-week mass awareness campaign by the Delhi Government to sensitize every Delhiite about the benefits of switching to EVs to the environment as well as to make them aware of the incentives and infrastructure being developed under Delhi's EV policy.

The campaign aims at informing, encouraging, and motivating each person in Delhi to switch from polluting vehicles to zero-emission electric vehicles.

Commissioner not submitting flyover report, claims AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA and chief spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj on Sunday alleged that the North Delhi Municipal Corporation's Commissioner is not submitting report of the Rani Jhansi flyover that took 25 years to complete under pressure from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

As the cost of completing the Rani Jhansi flyover increased by a humongous 409 per cent, the commissioner concerned is not willing to reveal the names of the guilty officers and politicians, Bhardwaj said.

Questioning the inordinate delay in completion of the Rani Jhansi flyover, constructed by the north Corporation in almost 25 long-years, he said that the cost of completion of this flyover was stated to be ₹175 crore, but with an exponential increase of 409 per cent the final cost came around ₹724 crore. This means that an unnecessary ₹546 crore was



wasted in completing the flyover, he added.

The 1.6-km-long flyover from St Stephens Hospital to Filmistaan Cinema was originally scheduled to be completed by September 2010 ahead of the Commonwealth games in the national Capital. However, it was completed only in August 2018 and inaugurated the same year in October.

2 held for duping people by posing as DSIIDC officials

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested two men for impersonating officials of Delhi State Infrastructural Industrial Development Corporation (DSIIDC) and cheating buyers of industrial plots on pretext of re-allocation.

The accused have been identified as Vikram Saxena, a resident of Dehradun in Uttarakhand and Mithun Bhatnagar, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur who were arrested by the EOW police team.

According to Mohammad Ali, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), EOW, a total of 15 complaints were received in which the complainants alleged that the accused Vikram Saxena and Ajay Saxena met them, who intro-

duced themselves as employees of DSIIDC.

"The accused also showed the victims original application form, which had been rejected earlier by DSIIDC. The duo lured them to take the rejected plot in lieu of extra expenditure," said the DCP.

"Around seven complainants became ready to pay extra expenditure to get their plots. The duo accused asked them to deposit money for other charges and file charges. Subsequently, they gave money but did not get the plots. A case under relevant section of Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered and investigation was taken up," said the DCP.

"During investigation it was revealed that Vikram used to work as an agent at DSIIDC and he came to know of a scheme for Industrial Plots in Patparganj. In order to cheat

persons, Vikram along with others started a company in the name of Dev Sewa Income Development Company (DSIDC) and opened a bank account in the name of DSIDC in the bank. They got the list of names and addresses of rejected applicants of this scheme from the official website of DSIIDC," said the DCP.

"He along with his brother Ajay Saxena and brother-in-law Mithun Bhatnagar started contacting the rejected applicants by impersonating themselves as DSIIDC officials. They started taking Demand Drafts in the name of DSIDC from them and deposited the same in account of DSIDC (Dev Sewa Income Development Company). In this manner, accused persons cheated the large number of victims to the tune of ₹8 crores," said the DCP.

30K litres of biodiesel seized at Manesar firm in G'gram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A joint team of CM flying squad, food and supply and fire departments conducted a raid at a private firm at IMT Manesar's Sector-7 and seized over 30,000 litres of lubricant oil (biodiesel) which had been stored for the purpose of selling illegally, the police said.

The team seized over 30,000 litres of oil and also took samples. An FIR has been registered at IMT industrial police station, Manesar.

Following a tip-off, DSP Underjeet Yadav of the CM Flying Squad formed a special team led by Inspector Krishan Kumar, which conducted the raid along with the officials of food and supply and departments.

The company was running in the name of Arohi Petrochem at Plot-61 located in Sector-7 of IMT, Manesar.

"The company stored biodiesel in large tanks without government permission or

without a valid license. During probe, about 30,000 litres of oil was seized. The owner of the plant Lokesh Kumar, who was present at the spot was failed to show necessary documents," Yadav said.

Meanwhile, a company official said that they have all required documents.

"We have been working in Manesar for the last two months. We bring lubricant oil from Gujarat and sold it in Delhi-NCR. The documents which was asking for, these documents are not necessary for this oil. We have been doing oil business for the last one year. This type of oil is called lubricant oil. It is most used for the machinery of oil companies. Mainly used in power press, hydraulic machine, CNC machine, VNC machine and generators. This oil does not work in fuel," the official said on requesting anonymity.

The police said action will be initiated against them after the sample report is received.

Power discoms seek progressive tariff rationalisation in Capital

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Power discoms in Delhi have proposed to regulator DERC that there should be a cost reflective, progressive tariff rationalisation as their combined standalone revenue gap in 2019-20 is nearing ₹3,000 crore.

BRPL, BYPL, and TPDDL have filed their separate petitions for triuing-up up to 2019-20 and aggregate revenue requirement (ARR) and tariff for 2021-22, ahead of tariff rationalisation by the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) this year.

The Commission has sought comments and suggestions from consumers and other stakeholders on the petitions by March 26. The Commission may hold a public hearing later on and will issue its tariff order considering views of all stakeholders, a DERC public notice said.

The petitions of three discoms show that their standalone revenue gap for 2019-20 has been computed to be around ₹2968 crore including ₹1565



crore of BRPL, ₹609 crore of BYPL and ₹794 crore of TPDDL.

The accumulated revenue gap of the discoms has reached a whopping over ₹50,000 crore as on March 31, 2020, as per their petitions. It includes ₹28,623 crore of BRPL, ₹19,213 crore of BYPL, and ₹3,810 crore of TPDDL, it showed. The BSES discoms BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) and BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) have proposed DERC to determine a suitable cost reflective tariff so as to recover the projected revenue gap.

The two discoms have also proposed subsidy of the Delhi government to be directly transferred to consumers through DBT, and excluding "dishonest"

consumers from the subsidy. They have also sought tariff for electric vehicle charging stations to be approved equivalent to average cost of supply.

Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) has proposed a separate flat rate for high power consumption in domestic category.

It has also proposed "progressive" tariff rationalization in domestic consumer segment as per the Electricity Act and National Tariff Policy. The discom's other proposals are mandatory online payment for consumers above 10 kW or bill more than ₹20,000, and new connection charges above 10 KW. Mandatory e-bill for load above 5 kW.

The TPDDL has also cited non availability of space in regularised and unauthorised colonies for infrastructure, and proposed that Delhi government provide land to it. It has also proposed to make Aadhar and PAN card mandatory for application of new connection and existing customers.

3 firing incidents in 48 hours, 1 dead in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In last 24 hours, a 47-year-old man was shot dead and two others got injured in three separate firing incidents in northeast Delhi.

In the first incident on Friday, Suhail and Gazi fired four rounds at a bike mechanic, Al Tasleem, over some repairing issue in Jafrabad area. Police said that there was no casualty.

While Suhail was arrested on the same day, Gazi was held on Saturday, police said.

According to a senior police official, couple of days prior to the incident, Suhail went to the shop of Tasleem for

repairing his bike.

"Tasleem was busy with other works, so he asked him to wait, following which an argument ensued between them. On Friday, Suhail came with Gazi who fired at the victim," he said.

The second incident took place on Saturday at Khajuri Khas where one Shorab Ansari (47), a shopkeeper, was shot dead by unknown persons while he was at his clothes shop.

"Police received information around 8.40 pm about the incident," said senior police official adding that Ansari was rushed to Jag Pravesh Chand Hospital where he was declared dead.

"During enquiry, police

found that Ansari was shot dead over some family dispute or some personal rivalry, the officer said, adding that police are trying to nab the accused persons," he said.

On the same day, one Manoj Sharma, 42, was shot at his cheek in Jafrabad. Sharma runs a Mother Dairy booth in the area and was admitted at GTB Hospital, police said, adding that they suspected that Sharma was shot over some monetary issue.

"Several police teams are working on the cases. In the incidents of Jafrabad and Khajoori Khas, the accused have been identified and efforts are on to arrest the accused," said the senior police official.

Opposition corners AAP Govt over affected water supply

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As large parts of trans Yamuna area here faced water crisis, the BJP and Congress on Sunday attacked the Delhi Government, accusing it of not making adequate arrangements to deal with the problem.

The Government, in a statement, said water supply in east and north east Delhi was restored by Sunday evening. The water supply was affected due to repair work.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, however, alleged that the "lie" of the Kejriwal government was exposed by the water crisis in the city.

"People are forced to buy



bottles of water at high rates. There were huge lines even in Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's Patparganj constituency to buy water," he claimed.

Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar said the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) was responsible for the 48-hour water crisis in

east Delhi.

"The Jal Board chose the repair work on Saturday and Sunday, even though there is need of more water by the households in the weekends. Most people were also unaware of the affected water supply as information about the same did not reach them in time," he said.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Government said adequate number of tankers were deployed in the affected areas.

Direct tapping supply was restored by Sunday evening, while supply from reservoirs was expected to resume late Sunday night or early Monday morning, a senior DJB officer said.

300 protests organised in Lutyens' Delhi between Mar 22, Dec 31 last year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 303 protests were organised by various groups and organisations in Lutyens' Delhi between March 22 and December 31 last year, police said on Sunday.

According to a senior police officer, 255 demonstrations, 32 dharnas, 13 marches and three strikes took place last year after the government started easing lockdown restrictions.

Police said the data, which is from March 22, 2020 till December 31, 2020, has around 284 days and according to it, approximately over one protest was held everyday.

According to the police,

some of the demonstrations which took place last year include, a protest in August, when members of Central Trade Unions had gathered for a demonstration at Jantar Mantar here in violation of Unlock-3 guidelines after the Delhi Police had registered a case against ASHA workers.

In September, members of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) gathered near the Pakistan High Commission to protest the alleged abduction of a Sikh girl in the neighbouring country.

The protest was held after a 22-year-old Sikh girl went missing in Pakistan's Punjab province.

HC to resume physical functioning from today Delhi fire dept gears up for summer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After a year, the Delhi High Court will resume from Monday its complete physical functioning, which was restricted due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

From March 15, all judges of the high court would hold physical hearing of cases.

Since March 2020, the high court has been holding proceedings through video conferencing and subsequently, a few benches started holding physical courts everyday on a rotation basis.

Some of them were also holding hybrid proceedings, wherein lawyers have the option to attend the hearing via video conference instead of appearing in person.



issued by the high court administration on March 12, limited numbers of litigants who are appearing in person and/or required to appear in compliance of the court's order/directions be permitted in the court premises.

The High Court on March 2 had issued certain guidelines to be followed upon resumption of physical court hearings

from March 15, including that visitors and advocates shall maintain social distancing as per government norms.

A circular issued by the administration branch of the high court earlier had said entry of litigants will be regulated as it was during the pre-COVID-19 pandemic period and facilitation counter/pass counter will also function in a

normal manner.

"All the visitors, including lawyers, shall maintain social distancing as per norms/protocol issued by the government of India/ Delhi Government and or this court," it had said.

The functioning of the high court was restricted to urgent matters from March 16, 2020. Thereafter, from March 25 last year, the functioning of the high court and district courts was further restricted and no physical hearing was being conducted due to the spread of Covid-19 cases.

An office order had said that all pending routine or non-urgent matters listed before it from February 22 to March 26 would be adjourned en bloc to dates between April 15 and May 20.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With mercury rising, the Delhi Fire Service (DFS) has started preparing itself for the summers. The DFS has also restricted leave for its staff to ensure maximum personnel are on standby. The official said that they have also overhauled all vehicles and equipment to make special arrangements to respond quickly to fires in agricultural fields.

The fire department will also conduct various public awareness and sensitisation programmes to educate people about steps to prevent fires. A small centre will also be set up near agriculture fields.

According to Atul Garg, director of DFS, until February, the department received a maximum of 35 to 40 calls about

fire-related incidents per day. "In March, the number of calls has doubled. Now, this is the first time that the maintenance contract has been given to authorised agencies so that the down time of vehicles can be reduced, they said.

"The fire department would need extra manpower. So, a preparedness plan has been chalked out to tackle a busy summer and it will be reviewed from time to time," he added.

According to the plan, in order to ensure that maximum firefighters are on standby, leave for all staff have been restricted. Leave will be sanctioned by the head of department at headquarters level and divisional officers at division level, the officials said.

The fire department said all vehicles and equipment

have been overhauled and kept ready for deployment. Further, this is the first time that the maintenance contract has been given to authorised agencies so that the down time of vehicles can be reduced, they said.

During summer, fire-related incidents are also reported from agricultural fields in rural areas of the city. The fire department is planning to station smaller units in these areas so that in case a fire breaks out, firefighters can reach the spot quickly and prevent any major damage to crops, Garg said.

"As per requests received from the local authorities in such areas, we plan to make special arrangements by setting up smaller units there. Outpost fire stations such as Narela and

Khera Dabur will be strengthened to deal with crop fires," he said.

Each fire station will also conduct various public awareness and sensitisation programmes to educate the public about steps to prevent fires. As part of the sensitisation programme, the fire department will conduct a half-day basic firefighting training for the staff of nursing homes and hospitals at the Fire Safety Management Academy, Rohini to better equip them to deal with any emergency, the officials said.

Standby services provided by the department for private affairs will also be restricted to ensure that maximum number of fire tenders are available for deployment during a firefighting operation, they said.

CBI to investigate Army officers' selection scam



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army has asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the alleged wrongdoing and corruption in officers' selection process in Punjab. It was suspected that some defence and civilians were involved in the racket.

The decision to ask the CBI to take over the probe was taken after malpractices came to light in one of the officers' selection centre in Kapurthala district of Punjab, sources said here on Sunday.

They said the alleged wrong practices were detected at a Service Selection Centre there. These centres carry out the Service Selection Board (SSB) tests for candidates who apply for being

selected as officers in the army, navy and IAF.

They said the detection came after a "proactive operation by the Army intelligence agencies. Since the scope of investigation involves multiple agencies, including civil entities, the Army has decided to hand over the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation," officials said.

Reiterating that the Army has zero tolerance towards corrupt practices in the recruitment process for selection of suitable candidates for the Indian Army, officials said the CBI was asked to take over the case.

Sources said the matter came to the notice of the Army headquarters and a probe started after complaints against a junior officer for being involved in malprac-

tics. Later on, it emerged that many other insiders and civilians could be involved, including some high-ranking officials. Therefore, it was decided that the probe should be handed over to the CBI which can probe all entities involved.

Incidentally, this development comes days after another recruitment racket was busted in Maharashtra some days back. Two serving officers allegedly involved in the scam. They allegedly leaked the army recruitment examination paper.

Officials said Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane has also clearly told his commanders that there would be zero tolerance towards cases of financial wranglings and moral turpitude.

EC asks candidates to follow security protocol during use of vehicle

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of blatant security lapses in which West Bengal Chief Minister got injured despite being Z plus protectee on March 10 in Nandigram, the Election Commission (EC) has issued guidelines saying all candidates including star campaigners must follow safety instructions during the use of any vehicle.

Attention is drawn to the Commission's letter to all chief electoral officers of states and Union Territories, which specifies the use of bulletproof cars by the persons provided with Z+ security cover as prescribed by Central Government, it said.

The guidelines said all candidates including star campaigners must follow safety instructions during the use of any vehicle including helicopter as prescribed under relevant laws to avoid any mishap or accident, which may endanger the life and property of individual(s) and/or public at large. "Star campaigners, who have been provided with security cover by the security agencies, must adhere to the security protocols laid down to avoid any security breach which may expose them to risk," it said.

It has been brought to the notice of the Commission that at some occasions, the Star Campaigners are not adhering to the security protocols laid down by the security agencies and exposing themselves to security risk during the campaign. "Attention has also been



drawn that the safety provisions as prescribed in the Motor Vehicle Act, 1988 [as amended] (applying seat belt etc.) are also not being followed in some cases thereby violating the existing statutory provisions punishable under law," it said.

The use of State-owned aircraft (whether fixed wing or helicopter) propelled at State cost or hired at State cost will not be permitted for any reason including security. In all cases where a party or a candidate hires a private aircraft/helicopter for any reason whatsoever the complete cost will be included as part of election expenditure without exception.

"In respect of persons covered by security, the use of State owned one bullet proof vehicle for the particular person (PP) will be permitted in all cases where the security agencies, including the intelligence authorities, have prescribed such use. The use of multiple cars in the name of stand-by should not be permitted unless so specifically prescribed by security authorities. The cost of propulsion of such bullet proof vehicles where such use of bullet proof vehicles is specified will be borne by the particular person whether he is in office or out, and whether he is a candidate

No relaxation can be made to any person with regard to the absolute ban on the use of Government owned/funded/hired means of transport for any reason other than security

or not," read the letter.

"No part of the present instructions may be treated as affecting any modification whatsoever in regard to the existing instructions regarding the travel and the provision of facilities including transport and security, for the Prime Minister even when he is travelling specifically for party and election work. The existing instructions should be scrupulously adhered to," it said.

It further stated that no relaxation can be made to any person with regard to the absolute ban on the use of Government owned/funded/hired means of transport for any reason other than security. These exclusions refer for example to age, state of health etc.; and to all manner of vehicles.

Rahul slams Centre over rising fuel prices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday slammed the Centre over the rise in fuel and gas prices and also the alleged sale of public sector undertakings.

Rahul and the Congress have been attacking the Government over high fuel prices, alleging that it has collected over ₹21 lakh crore by way of taxes on petroleum products ever since coming to power in 2014.

"The Central Government looting in broad daylight. 1. Massive tax collection on gas-diesel-petrol. 2. Snatching peo-



ple's share, employment and facilities by selling PSU-PSB to friends," he charged in a tweet in Hindi.

"PM's only method, benefit friends at the cost of the country," the former Congress chief alleged.

The Congress has been stalling proceedings in both houses of Parliament over the rise in prices of petroleum products and demanded a discussion on the issue.

Aviation Ministry opens bid for 392 new air routes under UDAN 4.1



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Civil Aviation Ministry (MoCA) has proposed 392 new routes under its flagship scheme UDAN 4.1 bidding process on the commencement of the "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav".

"The bid document has been uploaded on the Central Procurement portal of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) inviting the bids from interested airlines. The bidding process is expected to be completed by six weeks," read a statement by MoCA.

"Following the four successful rounds of bidding, the special UDAN 4.1 bidding round invites bids for priority routes which have not been covered under UDAN so far. This bidding round also includes routes specially requested by the state governments/Union Territory administrations and earlier cancelled/terminated routes," said Usha Padhee, Joint Secretary, MoCA.

The UDAN 4.1 round is focused on connecting smaller airports, along with a special helicopter and seaplane routes.

Ayurvedic formulations may revive cells of ailing kidney: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Researchers from Jamia Hamdard University have found that certain ayurvedic formulations can help rejuvenate cells of an ailing kidney by cutting down reactive oxygen species (ROS) which are caused due to the disturbances in level of potassium and sodium enzyme occurring in the body.

The conclusion was reached following administration of punarnava (an ayurvedic plant)-based NEERI KFT formulation, that comprises lotus leaves, patharchur and other major herbs to the subjects of chronic kidney disease, they said in a study.

As per the doctors, bringing ROS under control is very important in the treatment of the kidney as these are major

factors in damaging the renal cells.

The research, though conducted over quite a few number of subjects, showed a decline in the level of ROS in the controlled arm which was administered the NEERI KFT treatment.

During trials, only nine subjects were given different treatment for eight days. However, the researchers said that the number was enough to ascertain the primary endpoint of the trial.

"We found that the group which was administered NEERI KFT had a controlled level of antioxidant enzyme. This shows that anti-oxidant elements in the formulation not only function against ROS but also bring down its level," they stated.

The study also claimed that

the ayurvedic formulation was found to help in detoxifying kidney cells apart from reducing high levels of uric acid and electrolytes.

Professor at Banaras Hindu University Dr KN Dwivedi acknowledged the benefits of the ayurvedic formulations and said that at his institutes he has received many patients who have claimed that ayurvedic formulation Neeri KFT proved to be beneficial in curing kidney disease. Sanchit Sharma, Executive Director of the AIMIL Pharma said that the formulation was found helpful in delaying the need of dialysis as well. "It reduces the progression rate of degeneration and improves reparative capacity of renal cells nephron," he added.

Expressing similar views,



Bheema Bhatt, Medical Director of Ayurvedic Medicine at Medanta, Gurugram, said that in a large number of kidney patients having high creatinine and urea levels, Neeri KFT has been found to be bal-

ancing the level.

"I have prescribed the treatment to my patients and have received positive output so far," he said adding that due to poor lifestyle and diet habits, cases of kidney ailments are on

increase in the country. In the era of Covid-19, taking care of health is more important than ever, as contracting the virus can cause additional harm to your kidneys, health experts have warned.

Climate change shrinking rice crop, production: Study



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A model study conducted by a team of international researchers has revealed that due to climate change-induced water shortage, the growth stage of rice crop in India is shrinking while the time for total maturity from the day the rice is planted to the day it is harvested is getting shorter.

"The crops are maturing faster, and as a result, you don't get the full potential of the yield," said the team led by Prasanta Kalita, professor in the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering at University of Illinois and lead author of the study.

The researchers had collected data on rice yield and climate conditions, then used computer simulations to model future scenarios based on four global climate models.

"If farmers maintain current practices, rice yield will decrease substantially by 2050," Kalita said, pointing out that it was a

matter of concern given the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates, the world population will grow by two billion people and food demand by 60 per cent by 2050.

But various management strategies can mitigate the effects of climate change, and the researchers provide a series of recommendations, said the researchers in the article, "Predicting the water requirement for rice production as affected by projected climate change in Bihar, India" published in journal Water.

"Overall, the best approach to achieve a 60% increase in rice production while minimizing additional irrigation needs is a combination of conservation strategies and a 30 per cent reduction in post-harvest loss," they suggested.

"If you look at where they traditionally grow rice, it is countries that have plenty of water, or at least they used to. They have tropical weather with

heavy rainfall they depend on for rice production. Overall, about 4,000 liters of water go into production and processing per kilogram of rice," he said.

Climate change is likely to affect future water availability, and rice farmers must implement new management practices to sustain production and increase yield, Kalita said.

Kalita and his colleagues conducted the study at the Borlaug Institute for South Asia's research farm in Bihar, India where farmers grow rice

during the monsoon season, when heavy rainfall sustains the crop.

The researchers collected data on rice yield and climate conditions, then used computer simulations to model future scenarios based on four global climate models.

The purpose of the study was to estimate rice yield and water demand by 2050, and evaluate how farmers can adapt to the effects of climate change.

Traditional rice farming involves flooding the fields with water. Rice transplants need about six inches of standing water. If fields aren't level, it requires even more water to cover the crops, Kalita said. However, if farmers use direct-seeded rice instead of transplants, they can increase production while using significantly less water.

Another practice involves soil conservation technology. "The soil surface continuously loses water because of temperature, humidity, and wind. If you keep crop residue on the ground, it reduces the evaporation and preserves water. Furthermore, when the crop residue decomposes, it will help increase soil quality," Kalita explained.

The researchers also suggested implementing strategies to prevent post-harvest crop losses.

FAO estimates about 30% of crops are lost or wasted after harvest, so efforts to reduce those losses can further increase crop availability and food security. Ranjeet Jha, Richard Cooke, Praveen Kumar, Paul Davidson, and Rajkumar Jat, all from the University of Illinois were the part of the team which conducted the study.

BJP leader moves SC, seeks strict action against fake complainants in criminal cases



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A BJP leader has moved the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre for framing guidelines to ensure strict action against fake complainants in criminal cases and for compensating victims of such wrongful prosecutions.

The PIL has been filed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Kapil Mishra in the backdrop of a sensational case in which the Allahabad High Court, on January 28, declared rape convict Vishnu Tiwari innocent, observing that the motive behind the FIR was related to a land dispute.

Tiwari was arrested on September 16, 2000 after being booked for rape and atrocities under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and was in jail for 20 years.

The PIL, filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, has also sought "adequate compensation" for Tiwari for his wrongful conviction and life imprisonment in the fake case.

"Direct the Centre to frame guidelines and to make a mechanism to take strict action and to prosecute fake complainants as well as to frame guidelines to pay adequate compensation to victims of wrongful prosecutions and implement the recommendations of law commission Report...On miscarriage of justice," the plea said.

The BJP leader has made union ministries of Home Affairs and Law and Justice, the Uttar Pradesh government and the Law Commission as parties to his PIL.

It has also sought direct for setting up of a mechanism for speedy disposal of cases pertaining to undertrial prisoners prosecuted in special Acts and to frame guidelines for undertrial prisoners to decide their cases in a time bound manner.

"Direct the respondents (Centre and others) to frame rules to release poor persons who are victim of malicious and vague prosecution who are facing jail in the absence of not furnishing the adequate sureties/bonds,"

CBI books EPFO official for seeking bribe



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has booked an EPFO official of Mumbai for demanding bribe for submitting challan of teaching and non-teaching staff of a Thane-based educational institution.

The agency has booked Surjit Datta, an official of Employees Provident Fund Organisation on a complaint from Pradeep Anant Palaye working as advisor of Sahayog Shikshan Sangh Educational Society Bhiwandi, Thane, Maharashtra.

The complainant alleged that he had forwarded documents of 35 teaching and non-teaching staff on the official

email of Regional Office of EPFO, Thane for requirement of challan for depositing the PF subscription for the month of February 2021.

"It is alleged that the complainant had also personally visited the Regional Office of EPFO, Thane on March 1 and met Surjit Datta who is posted in that office and requested him to process the same. It is also alleged that during the visit, accused Surjit Datta demanded ₹2,500 per month as bribe for the smooth receipt of challan every month without any delay.

However, after negotiation, Datta agreed to accept ₹2,000 per month for the smooth receipt of challan without any delay and also agreed to upgrade the bank account details for depositing the bribe money in the same.

The agency has booked the EPFO official under relevant section of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Ministry says Govt never threatened social media platforms' employees

New Delhi: The Government has never threatened employees of any social media platform, such as Twitter, of jail term, the IT Ministry has said.

Reacting to reports that alluded to Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter employees being threatened with jail term, the Ministry said social media platforms are "obliged to follow the laws of India and the Constitution of India, just like all other businesses in India have to."

"As has been conveyed on the floor of Parliament, users of social media can criticise the government, the Prime Minister or any Minister but promotion of violence, rampant communal divide and stoking the flames of terrorism will have to be reflected upon," it said.

The Government had ordered Twitter to take down hundreds of posts, accounts and hashtags, that it saw violat-

ing rules. Twitter initially did not fully comply but fell in line after the government showed the rule book that contained penal provisions.

The IT Ministry went on to state that the recent guidelines pertaining to social media simply require the platforms to put in place a robust grievance redressal mechanism for users.

"None of the government communications, either written or oral, have ever threatened the employees of any of the social media platforms of jail term," it said.

The Government welcomes criticism and dissent. However, of late, repeated instances of abuse of social media to foment hate, discord and violence by terrorist groups from outside India and circulation of morphed images of women, revenge porn posing threat to the safety of users especially women users have become grave concerns," it said. **PTI**

EXPLOSIVE-LADEN SUV RECOVERY NEAR ANTILIA & MURDER CASE

Vaze sent to NIA custody till Mar 25

■ MUMBAI

A day after his arrest for his alleged links with the recovery of an explosive-laden SUV near industrialist Mukesh Ambani, a special court on Sunday remanded Mumbai's Assistant Police Inspector and encounter-specialist Sachin Vaze in the custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) till March 25.

After having questioned him intensely for 12 long hours over his alleged role in the explosive-laden SUV recovery case, the NIA arrested Vaze shortly before midnight on Saturday. After the arrest, Vaze was subsequently taken to the State-run JJ Hospital for a medical examination and a Covid-19 test.

Later on Sunday, Vaze was produced before NIA Special Judge Additional sessions Judge P R Sitre, who remanded him in the NIA's custody till March 25. Vaze has been booked under sections 120 (B) (criminal conspiracy) 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 465 (forgery) 473 (making or possessing counterfeited seal) and 506 -2 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian

Penal Code (IPC) and 4 (a)(b)(i) of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.

Vaze is the first accused to have been arrested by the NIA which registered an FIR in the explosive-laden SUV recovery case on March 8.

The NIA told the court that the case, which was initially investigated by the Mumbai police crime branch before being transferred to Maharashtra's Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS), was being handled by it now. It wanted to investigate the role of Vaze in the case.

On its part, the Prosecution refused to share the copy of the remand application with the lawyers of Vaze on the grounds of privilege and confidentiality.

Taking objection to the stand taken by NIA, Vaze's lawyer Sudeep Passbola claimed that the agency has no evidence to book his client in the case.

The court will hear the arguments of Vaze's lawyers on the right of the accused to have access to the remand application, on Monday.

Vaze has moved an application before the Bombay high

court challenging the grounds of his arrest.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Home Minister Amit Deshmukh said that the cases involving the recovery of gelatin sticks' laden SUV and subsequent death of Thane businessman Mansukh Hiren were being conducted by the NIA and Maharashtra's Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS).

Talking to media persons, Deshmukh said: "The matters relating to the recovery of gelatin sticks in a Scorpio vehicle found near Ambani's residence and the Hiren murder cases are being investigated by NIA and ATS. Action will be taken based on the truth that comes out of it."

Upping the ante on the issue, Maharashtra's former chief minister and current leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Devendra Fadnis said that Vaze's arrest was just the beginning and much more would come out in the case in the coming days.

"It's a big plot...The arrest of Sachin Vaze is just the beginning...in the days to come much more would come out...what was the conspiracy,

who asked him to do all this," Fadnis said.

"The NIA has arrested Sachin Vaze...This is one part of the crime, the other part is death of Mansukh Hiren...The planting of the Scorpio SUV near the residence of RIL Chairman Mukesh Ambani and the death of the vehicle Mansukh Hiran are serious issues. How can a person who planted the vehicle can be the investigating officer of the same case?" Fadnis asked.

It may be recalled that the police had recovered 20 gelatin sticks and a letter were recovered from what was later described as Mahindra Scorpio that was found abandoned in the vicinity of Mukesh Ambani's 27-storey residence "Antilia" on Carmichael Road in south Mumbai on February 25.

Mansukh Hiren, a Thane-based businessman whose "stolen" SUV with 20 gelatin sticks was recovered by the police near Industrialist Mukesh Ambani's skyscraper mansion "Antilia" in south Mumbai on February 25, was found dead in the Reti Bunder creek area at Mumbra-Kalwa on March 5.

After the recovery of Hiren's body, the role of Vaze came under the scanner with the wife of the deceased businessman Vimala suspecting that the police office might have had a role to play in the death of her husband. The Opposition BJP had demanded Vaze's suspension and arrest.

On its part, the Maharashtra government shunted Vaze out of the crime branch of the Mumbai police on March 10.

Meanwhile, the Maharashtra government transferred the case from Mumbai police to the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), which on March 7 registered Hiren's mysterious death as a case of murder.

On March 7, the NIA took over the investigations into the explosive-laden SUV recovery case. On March 8, the NIA registered an FIR under sections 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 465 (forgery) 473 (making or possessing counterfeited seal) and 506 -2 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and section 4 (a)(b)(i) of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.

BJP, Cong Kerala list out: Tears, resentment follow

■ KOCCHI

Confusion and chaos marked Sunday as the Congress and the BJP announced names of candidates for the April 6 Assembly election from Kerala. Though there were reports since Sunday morning that many senior Congress leaders would join the Hindutva party, nothing of that kind has happened till the time of going to Press. But Lathika Subash, president of Kerala Mahila Congress expressed her displeasure with the Congress High Command by shaving off her hair in full public view before tendering her resignation from the party post.

E Sreedharan, the legendary engineer from Ponnani would be the BJP candidate from Palakkadu while Dr Jacob Thomas, the agriculture scientist-turned-super cop would test electoral politics for the first time from Irinjalakkuda in Thrissur district as a nominee of the Hindutva party. K Surendran, Kerala BJP chief would contest from two constituencies, Manjeswaram (Kasaragod district)

Film actors Suresh Gopi

The Congress list has given rise to disappointment and dejection among a section of the leaders. Some of the leaders who failed to make it to the list were on the verge of tears for being overlooked while selecting the party candidates

and Krishnakumar would contest from Thrissur and Thiruvananthapuram respectively while former Mizoram Governor Kumanam Rajasekharan would be the party candidate from Nemom. The constituency has set the agenda for the 2021 assembly election in Kerala as it is described as a stronghold of the BJP in the State.

The significance attached by the Congress to Nemom could be understood from the fact that the party has decided

to field K Muraleedharan, member of parliament from Vadakara as the party candidate. It may be remembered that K Karunakaran, former chief minister and father of Muraleedharan had contested from Nemom and won with a big margin in the 1980s.

The Congress list has given rise to disappointment and dejection among a section of the leaders. Some of the leaders who failed to make it to the list were on the verge of tears for being overlooked while selecting the party candidates.

Padmaja Venugopal, daughter of late K Karunakaran will try her luck from the Thrissur assembly constituency. Bindu Krishna, the leader from Kollam, who had broken down on Saturday following reports that her name was missing from the list, found herself back in reckoning as she has been fielded from Kollam.

While the BJP is contesting from 115 seats in the State, the Congress will contest from 83 seats. The Congress has held back the names of two candidates while the BJP is yet to announce the names of 20 more names.

Tussle between management, students over internship eclipses image of Pondicherry Medical College

■ CHENNAI

Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences, a state-of-the-art medical school launched with the objectives of "reaching the unreachable" through compassionate practice in the profession of medicine and also to train and qualify the best physicians in the country is seething with agitation by a group of students.

Medical students and their guardians/parents are upset over the decision of the college management committee to extend the Compulsory Rotatory Residential Internship of those who have completed the academic course. "This is despite the fact that we have completed the internship as prescribed by the Medical Commission of India. Last year there was a lock-down because of the Covid-19 pandemic and all internees were put on duty in covid wards as part of the CRRI. But the college management is insisting that the Internship should be extended till April 15 to compensate for the days lost by lock-down," said a student who did not want his name to be quoted.

Many parents echoed the apprehension of the students. "These youngsters had put in enough time and days to complete their internship and it is cruel to ask them to work for another two months to atone for the

lock-down," said the father of a student in PIMS.

Prof Gurmeet Singh, vice-chancellor of the Pondicherry University, under whose jurisdiction the PIMS comes, said though he had written to the college authorities to curtail the period of internship. "I have issued orders to all institutes about which I have received complaints. If they fail to follow suit, they would have to listen to the music," the vice-chancellor told The Pioneer over phone from Puducherry.

Dr Renu G Boy Varghese, dean and director of the college refused to speak on the issue while Babu Daniel, member, management committee said the Pondicherry University has no authority to direct the college to meddle with the CRRI programme. "We are bound by the National Medical Commission regulations which are beyond the reach of the Pondicherry University. A college official had met the vice chancellor and briefed him about this directive and the VC has issued an order negating his previous order," said Daniel.

But students and guardians are rejected the contention of the college management. Even Dr Jacob Roy, former chairman of the college supported the stance of the students. "If there are students among the internees who do not have the mandatory attendance, let them com-

pensate it by working for an equal number of days. But those students who have completed the CRRI programme should be released from the college," said Dr Roy.

Daniel sees whole issue in a wider perspective. "Ours is a Christian minority institution and the then lieutenant governor Kiran Bedi was prejudiced against us. This forms the root cause of the present impasse," he said. In a representation to the PIMS authorities, parents of students point out that the latter were deputed to covid duties "with the bare minimum in terms of protection against an evolving disease and were given only two days of post covid duty off for seven days of duty. They also worked in non-covid areas of this hospital this time-in all the required departments for the stipulated period of time as part of their compulsory rotational residential internship."

One of the agitating students said that the dean had ordered an exit test to check the competence of the students who have completed the CRRI programme. "This is unheard of in any of the medical colleges in Pondicherry and is planned with ulterior motives," said father of a student who is well versed in NMC.

The chaos created by the internship controversy has upset the teaching and student communities in PIMS, a sad news.

2 brothers of SP leader held for framing opponent in rape case

■ ALIGARH

In the wake of the councilor election of Makdoom Nagar of Dehli Gate, the brothers of SP leader Shahzad Alvi filed a false case of gang rape at the Madarak police station. The case was prepared by the brothers of the SP leader by paying 20 thousand rupees to the woman to implicate their opponents. On disclosure in the police investigation, both the brothers of the SP leader have been arrested and sent to jail, while a report has been given against the woman under the court under section 182.

SP Crime Dr. Arvind said that a woman from Makdoom Nagar area had reached Madarak police station on Friday afternoon and informed that she was gang-raped by Akram, Shaheed, Mehdi, Urman and Kalim of Makdoom Nagar.

When the police immediately filed a case and started investigating the case, within hours, the entire distinction was revealed.

The woman admitted that when she went to the forest for defecation at four o'clock in the morning, Shahbuddin, the brother of SP minority cell's District President Shahzad Alvi, met her and gave Rs 20,000 to register the case.

The woman said that in the year 2017, Shehzad Alvi's wife and Akram's

wife Rukhsar contested the councilor's election, in which Rukhsar won the election.

Shahzad Alvi also went to jail in a quarrel on polling day. In the same lawsuit, there are warrants against these people again. This false lawsuit was designed to press for settlement in the lawsuit.

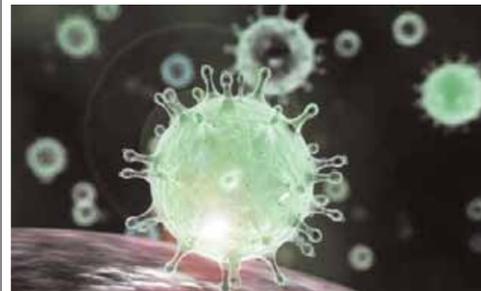
The misdemeanor case was dismissed after the woman admitted the truth in front of the police and while recording the statement in court. Simultaneously report of Section 182 against the woman has been given to the court for action. Here, Shahzad Alvi's brothers Abdul Rahman and Shahabuddin who were involved in this conspiracy have been arrested. Both have confessed to their act in the interrogation.

According to SP Crime Dr. Arvind, SO Madarak Rajiv and his team have disclosed a false case of rape in just eight hours. He told that in the afternoon the woman reached the police station and by evening, the truth was revealed.

According to SP Crime, the incident was reported to have taken place on 12 March.

But when Shahabuddin was arrested, a complaint without date (March 11 on mobile) was found in his mobile. According to the other facts which will come to light in the investigation, the charges will be increased.

WITH 16,620 NEW CASES, MAHA CROSSES 23 LAKH INFECTIONS MARK



■ MUMBAI

With no let up in the second wave of Covid-19, Maharashtra on Sunday crossed a grim milestone of 23 lakh infections, as the state added fresh 16,620 cases to the total pandemic infection tally.

After having recorded 15,817 and 15,602 cases on Pune, Friday and Saturday respectively, the infections crossed the 16000 mark on Sunday to touch a figure of 16,620 on Sunday.

However, the number of Covid-19 deaths came down from 88 on Saturday to 50 on Sunday.

With 15,620 fresh infections, the total infections in the state climbed from 2,29,7793 to 23,14,413. Similarly, with 50 new deaths the Covid-19 toll in the state went up from 52,811 to 52,861.

As 8861 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 21,34,072. The recovery rate in the state dropped marginally from 92.49 per cent to 92.21 per cent.

With five fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from 11,523 to 11,528, while the infected cases went up by

1963 to trigger a jump in the infections from 3,41,999 to 3,43,962.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state went up from 1,18,525 to 1,26,231. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 2.3 per cent to 2.28 per cent.

There are a maximum of 25,673 "active" cases in Pune, followed by Nagpur (16,964), Mumbai (12,535), Thane (12,332), Nashik (7,688), Aurangabad (7,148), Jalgaon (4,944), Amravati (3,997) and Akola (3,783).

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase from 4,36,303 to 4,39,562, while the total number of deaths in Pune went up from 8133 to 8144.

Thane district remained in the third spot --after Pune and Mumbai -- after the total number of infections rose from 2,81,704 to 2,93,052, while the total deaths climbed from 5869 to 5873.

Of the 1,75, 16,885 samples sent to laboratories, 23,14,413 have tested positive (13.21 per cent) for COVID-19 until Sunday.

Currently, 5,83,713 people are in home quarantine while 5,49,3 people are in institutional quarantine.

Barring Assam, BJP may lose all States, predicts Pawar

Pune: Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar on Sunday claimed that barring Assam, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is set to lose the upcoming Assembly elections in the other three States and a Union Territory.

Addressing the media in his hometown Baramati, Pawar said his assessment was based on the ground level situation and reports emanating from these states and UT.

About West Bengal, Pawar accused the BJP government at the Centre of "grossly abusing its power" to target Trinamool Congress supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is fighting a

single-handed battle for the people of her state.

"The people of West Bengal are self-respecting. If anyone tries to attack the Bengali culture and pride, the whole state will stand up unitedly and retaliate," warned Pawar.

He said in such a scenario, no matter what anybody may claim, he was confident that "Mamata Banerjee will return to power". In Kerala, Pawar said the NCP is in alliance with the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) and there is little doubt that they would attain a majority in the coming elections to retain power.

The poll scenario in Tamil Nadu seems to be in favour of

the opposition DMK and its chief M.K. Stalin, who would unseat the ruling AIADMK and the people of the state would wholeheartedly support him to take over the reins of the state, Pawar added.

On Assam, the NCP chief said the BJP is already in power there and its comparative position there seems good so far, and hence it would retain power in that northeastern state.

The multi-phased elections for Assam, and West Bengal begin March 27, while Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry will vote on April 6. Counting in all five polls will be held on May 2.

6 farm labourers killed in Andhra road accident

Amaravati: Six farm labourers were killed and seven injured in a road accident in Andhra Pradesh's Krishna district on Sunday, police said.

An auto-rickshaw carrying the labourers was hit by an unknown vehicle near the Gollapalli village of Nuzvid Mandal, Krishna district.

The four-wheeler, which rrammed into the auto, escaped from the scene. Police said they were trying to trace the vehicle.

Six labourers died on the spot while seven others were injured. The injured were admitted to hospitals at Vijayawada and Nuzvid.

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy have expressed shock

and profound grief at the death of six labourers in the road accident.

The chief minister announced Rs 5 lakh as ex-gratia each to the families of the deceased. He directed the officials to provide best treatment to the injured.

According to a statement from Raj Bhawan, the Governor was informed by the district officials that the farm workers belonging to Lion Thanda in Nuzvid mandal were proceeding in an auto-rickshaw towards Bapulapadu Mandal when an unknown vehicle dashed against their vehicle. The officials informed that the injured persons have been shifted to hospital and are being provided necessary medical care.

Light to moderate rain, snow forecast in Kashmir

Srinagar: Dry, overcast weather occurred in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on Sunday as the meteorological (MeT) department forecast light to moderate rain and snow during the next 24 hours.

"Weather to remain overcast with light to moderate rain in plains and snow over the higher reaches of Kashmir towards the Sunday afternoon and generally cloudy weather in Jammu", an official of the MeT department said.

Srinagar had 5.8, Pahalgam 0.6 and Gulmarg minus 2.2 as the minimum temperature.

Leh town of Ladakh had minus 2.7, Kargil minus 4.3 while the minimum temperature recorded in Drass town was not available.

Youth suffers pellet gun injury at Kashmir encounter site

Srinagar: A local youth suffered a pellet gunshot injury at an encounter site in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district, where a militant was killed.

Doctors at the SMHS hospital in Srinagar city said 22-year-old Arif Ahmad was admitted to the hospital with a pellet injury in his left eye.

The family alleged that the youth had suffered the injury when the security forces used force to keep civilians away from the encounter site. The encounter took place in the Rawalpura village of Shopian district where a local militant was killed.

The US made M-4 carbine rifle and 36 armour piercing rounds were recovered from the dead terrorist.

The encounter between the terrorists and the security forces began on Saturday evening.

9,800 dilapidated UP schools to be demolished

Lucknow: The Yogi Adityanath Government in Uttar Pradesh has ordered the demolition of over 9,800 dilapidated schools in the State.

The Government authorities have identified over 12,000 such schools where renovation or demolition is required.

Vijay Kiran Anand, Director General, education, said, "As many as 12,177 schools have been identified in Uttar Pradesh which are either dilapidated or need renovation. Out of these, 2,013 schools have to be renovated and the remaining 9,826 schools have to be demolished."

While 2,195 schools have already been demolished, action is still pending on other schools.

However, the demolition of these

schools would create problems for students studying in them unless they are provided alternative accommodation.

A senior official in the education department said, "In most of these cases, separate buildings have already been constructed on the same premises. However, in other cases, schools in vicinity of the dilapidated buildings have been identified and the students will be moved there accordingly."

Anand said, "The dilapidated buildings put a question mark on the safety of the students studying there and hence action will be taken with immediate effect."

He said that a committee would be formed under the district magistrates and action would be taken on the identified buildings.

Cop forces village head to rub nose on man's feet in UP

Pilibhit: In a shocking incident in Uttar Pradesh, a police officer, posted as a circle officer in Bisalpur police station, landed himself in a soup, for allegedly forcing the village head of Marauri Khas village, Sanjeev Awasthi, to rub his nose on the feet of an accused.

BJP MLA Ram Saran Verma said that circle officer Vineet Singh, accompanied by Bilsanda SHO Ravindra Kumar, had come to the village on Wednesday to resolve a dispute related to a temple's land.

Guddu, the accused, has been living illegally on the temple premises.

The police officer had come at the behest of Guddu, who Verma described as "a criminal involved in several nefarious activities". The MLA claimed that Singh

called the village 'pradhan' and directed him to first touch Guddu's feet and then made him rub his nose on them thrice.

MLA Ram Saran Verma said he had written to additional chief secretary, home, Avani Awasthi, DGP HC Awasthi and Pilibhit SP Jai Prakash Yadav, seeking immediate legal action against the police officer.

He has also called for an urgent meeting of the Gram Pradhan Sangh to decide future course of action.

Condemning the incident, district president of Pradhan Sangh, Ashutosh Dixit, said, "We have announced to fight a decisive battle and it will continue till a stern legal action against the erring circle officer is ensured."

J&K sees 105 new Covid cases, 66 recoveries

So far, 127,640 people have been infected with coronavirus in J&K out of which 124,746 have recovered, and 1,974 have succumbed

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir recorded 105 new Covid cases and 66 recoveries on Sunday while no Covid-related death was reported.

An official bulletin said of the new cases, 25 were from the Jammu division and 80 from the Kashmir division.

So far, 127,640 people have been infected with coronavirus in J&K out of which 124,746 have recovered, and 1,974 have succumbed.

The number of active cases is 920, out of which 212 are from the Jammu division and 708 from the Kashmir division.

Time to envision what we want to achieve in 25 years: Javadekar

New Delhi: Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar on Sunday inaugurated a photo-exhibition at National Media Center in New Delhi. The exhibition, set up by Bureau of Outreach & Communication is part of a massive awareness campaign by Ministry of I&B to celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

Addressing media on the occasion the Minister said this was an important moment for the country to reflect on how far we have come since independence as well as envision what we want to achieve in next twenty five years. This is the core belief that informs these exhibitions. The Minister added that freedom for the country came at a great cost, and this exhibition seeks to narrate the story behind those sacrifices. Shri Javadekar congratulated BOC for setting up the exhibitions.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Docile 'threat'

Does the Quad need more robust tactics to contain China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region?

The idea of a "free and open Indo-Pacific" was at its core, apart from the anti-COVID vaccine and climate change. But what apparently injected lifeblood into an alliance that has largely remained passive till now is Washington's belligerence towards Beijing after Joe Biden took over as the US President. Certainly, India supplying its indigenous COVID vaccines to nations across the world has strengthened its position which it seems to cautiously tap to counter its hostile northern neighbour. The US knows well that it's almost impossible to restrain the increasing Chinese influence without India's help. New Delhi, too, knows its importance and will do whatever it takes to constrict the fast-expanding economic and military interests of Beijing in the region. Both Australia and Japan, who are coerced by China, particularly in the maritime space, understand the strategic importance of bolstering ties with both India and the US. However, the Quad meeting had only a veiled reference to China which has all along opposed the grouping, claiming that it will lead to militarisation in the region. But the moot question is whether such docile attempts are enough to counter China? Will it work as a real deterrent to Beijing? What will be its repercussions? China will try to counter such efforts diplomatically and on other fronts. Being one of the permanent members of the United Nations Security

Council (UNSC), Beijing has the capacity to win favours and dent pliant commitments of any group against its interests.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the Quad will remain an "important pillar of stability in the region" while Biden mentioned that the group is committed to ensuring that the region is governed by international law and is free from coercion. India and the US seem to have an unequivocal stance against Beijing but it is only in the best interest of the former to tread cautiously as there are no permanent friends or foes in the global order and world diplomacy is a game of opportunism that is driven more by self-interests. Biden hinted to it in his first diplomatic address when he pledged to counter China's economic abuses and human rights violations but, on the other hand, asserted that he is ready to work with Beijing if it is in the US' interest. What message does it entail? India must also play its game cleverly, else it would end up serving the interest of the superpower in the Indo-Pacific region at the cost of its own gains. Remember, the US always loves to play the role of a judge who has to never pass a judgment. In case it does, it is used to pronouncing verdicts that suit its ends. It is in the best interest of India to get future-ready for countering China as it might wage a war on several fronts, unlike traditional warfare: Biological weapons, hacking internet services and remote-controlling it and increasing dominance in outer space. Are we prepared for it? As of now, the answers are not so easily forthcoming.

PICTALK



Tourists visit the Jantar Mantar on a hot afternoon, in Jaipur

PTI

Removing roadblocks

The UP Government's road safety measure to remove religious structures from public land must be hailed

In a move that will free up public land, decongest roads, pavements and highways and make walking and driving in Uttar Pradesh (UP) safer and easier, the Yogi Adityanath Government has directed that any encroachment, structure or construction of religious nature on public roads, streets, pavements and highways after January 1, 2011, should be removed immediately. The structures built earlier would be given six months for a planned removal. These instructions have been issued by the UP Government in compliance with the 2016 order of the Allahabad High Court (HC) and all senior administrative and police officials at the district level have been told to shift such encroachments to land given by the followers of that religion or private land proposed by the persons responsible for the religious structure's management. The order also stated that in case of any disobedience, the officials concerned would be held responsible and in contempt of the HC's orders. This move was a long time coming because anyone who has driven on Indian roads must have come across structures that jut out into an otherwise perfect road and force people to go around them.

Not only do these structures pose a big risk to drivers, especially at night as most of our roads are not well lit, particularly the highways, they cause traffic jams and bottlenecks, too. Though successive Governments have constructed hundreds of kilometres of roads and highways in UP and other States, they have failed to remove such encroachments, no matter how many accidents they cause or how many people are inconvenienced. This is owing to the fact that religion is a sensitive and emotive issue in India and comes above everything else. Hence, removing a religious structure from the side of a road or pavement is next to impossible without having a communal flare-up, as logical thinking and reasoning tend to take a back seat where our religious sentiments are concerned. Now, thanks to the HC's order, many such constructions in UP and Noida, in particular, will be removed, making life easier. However, the Government would do well to take the religious leaders of all communities into confidence and ensure that the encroachments are removed peacefully without hurting any sentiments. Plus, it will have to ensure that all religions are treated equally and there is no room for partisan behaviour that creates bitterness and communal disharmony.

The uniqueness of same-sex marriages

However odd these incidents may appear to traditional people, a free society should allow people to do what they prefer



PRAFULL GORADIA

Same-sex marriage is novel and different from the traditional sacramental or contractual coming together of a man and a woman. It would be a union legitimised by religion or law between two persons. It enables the couple to bear children who are, therefore, legitimate and not otherwise. Giving birth or procreation is a duty for the perpetuation of the human race. A primary function of marriage is legitimate procreation.

There are men and women who live together without being married, especially in Europe, but hesitate to produce children. There are others who do not hesitate. In Gujarat's Vadodara city, nearly 30 years ago, a leading lawyer introduced a novelty called "maatri karaan" (friendship contract). It laid down in a legal document all the necessary conditions about the future of the man's property and assets as well as other commitments. From an orthodox family, he had been married when very young. Subsequently, he was educated as a lawyer. His wife remained the woman she was expected to be.

The mental or intellectual gulf between the two grew wider. Their two children remained with the wife but he maintained them all, though he lived separately with a younger lady whom he had befriended. To reassure herself of future security, she requested for a contract and the lawyer acceded. Following their example, several others in Gujarat adopted this contract method. Seldom did the parties to the contract procreate; in that they did not fulfill their racial duty to nature. I have come across stranger incidents.

Two young ladies, one very distantly related to me and the other of Chinese origin, resided in Canada at the time. They became such close friends that they got married. In due course, the Indian met an Englishman, a bachelor, who had a great desire to have children. With the consent of the Chinese spouse, the Indian agreed and



had two children. A few years later, the Chinese also met someone with whom there grew a desire to have children. Last heard, the Sino-American combination had one child. The same-sex couple and their children stay together whereas the fathers visit them according to mutual convenience.

However odd these incidents may appear to traditional people, a free society should allow people to do what they prefer. But that does not mean that the current laws should have to accommodate new oddities. For such people, the legislatures should make separate laws so that the pioneers concerned do not feel insecure or outside the pale of society. Say, merely for illustrating my contention, let same-sex coming together be under a law called a 'unity contract' or anything else but not marriage.

Experts may have several explanations for what in the old days would have been called perversities, but are now sympathised with. In my own lay observation, homosexuality develops normally due to the denial of access or exposure to the other gender. Boarding



EITHER POLYGAMY SHOULD BE ALLOWED FOR ALL UNDER A DISTINCT, SEPARATE LAW OR, PREFERABLY, IT SHOULD BE PROHIBITED FOR ALL CITIZENS OF THE COUNTRY. BUT DIFFERENT PRIVILEGES TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE UNDER THE LAW ARE DISCRIMINATORY AND WRONG

schools occasionally report such cases and, lately, irregularities have come to the surface in religious institutions, too. Again, going by my experience of being an only child, I suffered from extreme shyness in mixing up with girls. Here, my parents should have noted this and played a part in bringing me out of my reserve. All they needed to have done is to clearly tell me that if I wanted to talk to a girl, I had to first say hello to her. I somehow had the notion that if I took the initiative, the girl might misunderstand and feel that I was taking liberties, which was so wrong! Nevertheless, I remained safe from any diversion.

Another unusual experience I have witnessed is of my aunt. About the time I was born, she fell in love with an older doctor. He was married in his village before completing his studies. In due course, he and his wife had three healthy children. The mental or intellectual chasm between them had grown considerably. Basically, the doctor's problem was similar to that of the Vadodara lawyer. He, therefore, responded to my aunt, they became friends and remained

so for years. When I was about eight years old, they came to see my grandfather for permission to marry. If he did not object, they would take a train to Goa and get married there. The reason was that the Bombay Provincial Law had prohibited bigamy by 1945 whereas the Goan rules permitted it.

They went to Goa, got married and, remarkably, all lived together until death did them part: That is the two wives, six children and the doctor husband who happily survived until he was 83. As I grew up, I awoke to a contradiction in the Bombay Provincial Law. My aunt and uncle had to go to Goa to escape the ban on bigamy but thousands others are in law exempted from it and permitted the privilege of polygamy. This discrimination is now prevalent across India. Either polygamy should be allowed for all under a distinct, separate law or, preferably, it should be prohibited for all citizens of the country. But different privileges to different people under the law are discriminatory and wrong.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WORLD COMMUNITY SHOULD HELP YEMEN

Sir — It is unfortunate that there is no solution in sight to end the humanitarian crisis in Yemen which seems to be unabated. The recent exclusive reports by the media have just highlighted the sorry state of Yemen as well as the plight of malnourished children in the region.

The World Food Programme has warned of malnutrition-related child deaths in huge numbers in the country. These disturbing issues cannot be brushed aside by pointing the finger at others. All the stakeholders, including the world community, must be held accountable for the ongoing crisis. Adding to the woes, famine has also been projected to raise its ugly head across the region. The international community should not think twice before helping Yemen through strong food assistance, medical aid and other financial backup programmes.

The US has urged Yemen's Houthi movement to halt an offensive on the Government-held city of Marib and join international efforts to find a political solution to the more than six-year-old civil war. But it seems that mere persuasions and requests are not enough. It's time for the world community to take some concrete measures. India must analyse the possibility of encouraging farming activities in Yemen. India can supply farming equipments, seeds, fertilisers and other essentials to boost agricultural in the war-torn nation. It can also extend its startup programme for the youth in the region to create employment opportunities. Empowering youth, women and other marginalised section will empower the country.

P Senthil | Mumbai

WOMEN SHOULD BE EXTRA VIGILANT

Sir — Women should be extra cautious while travelling in public transport and autorickshaws if they are alone. In Metro trains, there are special coaches for women; it provides some security, especially while travelling during odd hours but this alone is not sufficient. Special marshals should be

Rahul Gandhi's act is blasphemous



It refers to the editorial 'Incorrigible'. Saying that it is a bad habit that cannot be changed is an understatement. The Congress, or for that matter any other Opposition party, has all the right to criticise the policies of the NDA Government but to score a political point by crossing the line and calling our country "undemocratic" would be a blunder, to say the least. This raises questions over the manner in which the Opposition is functioning in our country. Politicians must remember that it's in good taste

Bal Govind | Noida

deputed to keep an eye on harassers and eve-teasers.

While travelling in an autorickshaw or a taxi, women must be careful, especially if they are alone. They must remain alert to avoid any danger whenever the autorickshaw driver or the taxi driver suddenly appears to be having an engine problem or tries to stop his vehicle at a deserted or isolated spot. In such a situation, they should immediately get out of the vehicle and stand somewhere where they are visible to the passers-by.

They must not remain inside the vehicle and should dial an emergency contact number or at least inform relatives. They must also give the vehicle's number to the person they are speaking to. Being extra vigilant will help avoid any mishap.

Jubel D'Cruz | Mumbai

MORE POWER TO WOMEN

Sir — Kudos to Mithali Raj for having joined

for them to take on the Government in a democratic and healthy manner. If they have any serious concern, they must raise the issue in Parliament but calling India "undemocratic" gives opportunity to others to point the finger at us and doubt our credentials.

We witnessed how a religious flag was hoisted on the Red Fort this Republic Day. The incident would be forever a blot on our democracy. Rahul Gandhi has shamed it further. It would have been prudent for Rahul to see whether he has any democracy in his own party which has not been able to conduct internal elections for many years and the leaders who criticise the Gandhi family are either shown the door or made to apologise. The Congress is on the verge of a split. Coming to his participation in Parliament, one does not need to be a political pundit to know that his participation is worse than his absence. He is more interested in holidaying abroad rather than taking part in Parliamentary proceedings.

England's Charlotte Edwards in the elite club of 10,000 run scorers. Raj's achievement to cross the milestone while cornering a boundary off Anne Bosch in the 28th over of India's innings during the third ODI against South Africa is praiseworthy.

She has played for more than two decades in the Indian cricket team and her performance has been priceless. She has become a source of inspiration for those daughters of the nation who intend to pursue cricket as a passion and profession. The Indian cricket board (BCCI) has always been considered a male-centric organisation but now with an exemplary performance, Mithali Raj has changed the definition. This achievement will definitely encourage other girls to join sports.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

SOUNDBITE

There should be love and harmony among all castes and religions in the country. People of all castes and religions should have access to equal opportunities.

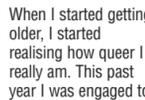


Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal



Macroeconomic and structural policies form the backbone of Turkey's new reforms. We will achieve our goals by working day and night to make Turkey one of the world's top 10 economies.

Turkish President — Recep Tayyip Erdogan



When I started getting older, I started realising how queer I really am. This past year I was engaged to a man, and when it didn't work, I was like, this is a huge sign.



Singer — Demi Lovato



Holy smokes! Pant has just played the greatest shot that's ever been played in cricket. Reverse sweeping Archer with a brand new white ball at 90mph for six.

Former England cricketer — Kevin Pietersen



The decision to suspend parts of the Northern Ireland Brexit protocol was lawful and right.

British PM — Boris Johnson

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

CREATING SHARED MINDSETS

There are hurdles and there are facilitations to grasping what is common to human species



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

There are some common elements of mind and temperament across the human species. This is notwithstanding the history of physical anthropology which has studied all parts of the human body and highlighted differences which arose out of extended use of topography, exposure to climate and even water. The colour of the skin, height differences, shape of the eye are among the more obvious differentiating features between races. Though all humans have the same organs, their size and intensity of functioning varies, too. For instance, the size of the brain of some groups is open to differentiation. This brings in the role and scope of abstraction in human life. Neurology at the present stage cannot explain all levels of the functioning of brain cells. However, one thing that is clear is that the ability of the brain to think is an important characteristic. Another aspect of life is the different ability among people to experience different emotions. For instance, all human beings at some point of time in life have felt let down. Everyone seeks support and, in moments of emotional upsurge, everyone claims one can do it alone. People who are low on confidence have nagging doubts that they could have done better and so on. The list is endless.

Two things which are almost universal are seeking happiness and wishing for help and support. Human behaviour has more in common than has been generally recognised. This has been reflected in poems, fine art, folklore, proverbs and more. However, this is not seen as a valid input to management theory. That is a loss. Some will recall a famous poem titled 'Three Coins'. The coins became three hearts and each of the hearts was seeking happiness. That may be quite another line of exploration and probably another story.



In the bid to understand what is common to human species and what is differentiated, there are hurdles and there are facilitations. The most important objective remains creating shared mindsets. This is aspired for between lovers, among family members, work groups and, indeed, where the spirit of nationalism is concerned. Herein lies the problem. How is this symbiosis likely? Or how can it be created? Creating symbiosis is at loggerheads with human aspiration for identity. This leads to dominating behaviour. Husband and wife go through this; parents, children and siblings go through this. In the workplace, any group of two or more has individuals genuinely believing s/he/they are capable and ought to dominate. This is the route of much conflict and worse, heartburn. The existentialist thinkers tried to solve this problem. They came up with the theory, "One can do whatever one wants, provided one allows everyone else also to do what everyone else, also, singly wants to do."

Critics of the existentialist theory argue that its logic takes away with the right hand what it gives with the left. One thing which is true is that the act of loving requires responding to needs. These needs can be physical, emotional, creative or, indeed, networking. Some people just like to talk. It does not occur to them that the more you talk the more vulnerable you become, because who knows with what purpose the person is listening or will ultimately use the input? Yet, all this is a part of creating shared mindsets. The core which surfaces is friendship. Each relationship is a special class of friendship. Various thinkers have tried to define it differently. The Freudian approach has used the psychoanalytic thrust while the Marxist approach was rooted in material requirements. Adler's approach was power play in relationships. All of the above total up to an unfinished story. That is the challenge of behavioural sciences.

(The writer is a well-known development professional. The views expressed are personal.)

Traditional & algorithmic bias-fraught data a reality

The offline biases that humans hold are codified into numbers. The figures often fail to capture the structural issues of the offline world into representative data points



KARTIK VENKATESH SHEFALI MEHTA

We have heard that data, like photographs, can't lie. However, these notions are changing in the modern world. Technology tools like Photoshop single-handedly disproved the statement regarding photographs and it is increasingly coming to the fore that data don't always necessarily tell the whole truth. Lee Baker, statistician and author of the book 'Truth, Lies and Statistics: How to lie with Statistics' said: "Data doesn't lie. People do. If your data is biased, it is because it has been sampled incorrectly or you asked the wrong question (whether deliberately or otherwise)." However, the concept of algorithmic bias is more nuanced and is gaining traction with the increase in automation and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in virtually all fields. The issue of bias is not a new concept. The human race throughout its evolution has seen various biases affecting its trajectory and how we perceive ourselves and our surroundings. The biases that impact our society have also crept into the functioning of technology because, it is, after all, conceptualised by individuals having their own priorities and notions. In the context of data bias, we can analyse whether data are biased when they are a result of an insufficient or non-inclusive sample or the person interpreting the data has an impact on the outcome or its interpretation.

However, beyond this straightforward notion of bias, with the proliferation of "smart" or AI-driven technologies, the concept of algorithmic bias is gaining ground. Algorithms often display or function with the same biases as those held by the individuals who create them. This is a matter of concern as information and communications, along with the use of AI-based technology, have found their way into every facet of human life. Such biases can be harmful especially to marginalised communities and individuals, who have faced discrimination in other walks of life and are now at risk in digital environments also.

In the age of automated decision-making, the machine learning models are trained on data that are available to the systems. This is often the raw material that these machines "learn" from and that forms a world view for the machine, within its limited scope of functioning. This makes it all the more crucial that the training figures for these models are unbiased. But are they really? Many have held that the offline biases that humans hold are codified into numbers. The figures often fail to capture the structural issues of the offline world into representative data points. The *Gender Shades* study by Buolamwini and Gebru highlighted disparate performance in commercial facial recognition systems. This scenario highlighted how designers fail to account for and think outside of their world view and identity, namely skin colour or sex — which results in adverse externalities for communities that hold vulnerable identities. The lack of dark skinned faces and female representation led to inaccuracy in predictions for those who fell within these categories. Earlier this year, a PhD student in Canada brought attention to issues with the videoconferencing service Zoom's algorithms pertaining to their virtual backgrounds and how it was causing the AI to "remove" the heads of African-American users while using virtual backgrounds. Zoom responded to these concerns and ensured that they were working to create a more inclusive platform for all. Inclusiveness in the phase of conceptualisation of



RIGHT FROM THOSE WHO DESIGN THESE ALGORITHMS TO THE DATA SETS USED TO CREATE THEM, WE MUST ENSURE THAT THESE ARE A REFLECTION OF OUR SOCIETY AND ARE AS DIVERSE AS SOCIETY ITSELF. IT IS ALSO IMPERATIVE THAT SUCH INDIVIDUALS REPRESENT VARIOUS FIELDS SUCH AS SOCIAL SCIENCE, LAW, ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHY IN ADDITION TO ENGINEERS, TO ENSURE THAT THE FINAL PRODUCT IS PRIVACY RESPECTING, ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE

Venkatesh is research coordinator and Mehta is strategic engagement and research coordinator, The Dialogue. The views expressed are personal.



such algorithms is a critical aspect.

Often the implications of algorithmic bias are more serious when biased datasets train algorithms for decision-making, particularly in areas such as crime, education and healthcare — the errors of exclusion are costly. There is a false equivalence between machine-generated results and on-ground reality which leads to denial of healthcare benefits, difficulty in finding jobs, profiling of a vulnerable group and so on.

In December 2019, a non-partisan entity of the US Federal Government, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), released a study that acknowledged the existence of demographic bias in facial recognition algorithms. The research, that was the first of its kind in studying the issue of "identification" over the issue of recognition, clearly showed that most facial recognition tracking (FRT) fared poorly in examining the faces of women, people of colour, the elderly and children. This is alarming as the use of FRT by law enforcement in the US and around the world, including in India, is increasing at a rapid rate and has real life implications where such biases could harm someone's life.

Even the healthcare sector has not been spared. Though the use of AI and machine learning is intended to make healthcare more inclusive and reduce the inequalities in services, it is increasingly being found that it exacerbates them instead. The issue of algorithms being formulated on data that isn't representative of

society, finds very serious and far-reaching implications in healthcare by impacting the effectiveness and functionality of automated diagnostic systems which are increasingly being employed across the globe. For instance, algorithms used to diagnose skin cancer lesions are largely trained using light-skinned individuals and show lowered efficiency pertaining to individuals with darker skin, thereby placing them at risk of not being diagnosed in time.

In India, we are very far from having open conversations about the need for accountability of algorithms and transparency for the same. Though India has recently begun its journey on creating a framework for data protection, but the policy attempts by the Government have not touched upon issues such as algorithmic inequality or transparency. The Government is rapidly digitising the approach to governance and embarking upon formulating India's data governance frameworks to build a more fair and equitable digital ecosystem. However, none of the frameworks governing digital programmes or the proposed data governance legislations address the issue of bias in data and algorithms. Another pressing issue with respect to the Government's employment of algorithms has also been a lack of transparency or the practice of auditing the outcomes of such algorithms to assess probable bias.

Though the Government has previously acknowledged the need to standardise AI systems and develop-

ment in India through the AI Stack, announced in 2019, not much progress has been made since. Many experts in the field have suggested that the way forward for India would be to formulate an algorithmic transparency and accountability Bill, which would incorporate safeguards such as algorithmic outcome auditing pertaining to the usage of automated decision-making.

There is a need to make data representative in a manner that it attempts to solve one aspect of algorithmic bias. By making the space more diverse, including members from disadvantaged groups to be part of the process and by looking at issues from an interdisciplinary lens — many outcomes involving exclusion can be pre-empted. Along with this, strong bias detection and mitigation frameworks that aim to constantly check and improve on existing design will ensure a more inclusive system.

Right from those who design these algorithms to the data sets used to create them, we must ensure that these are a reflection of our society and are as diverse as society itself. It is also imperative that such individuals represent various fields such as social science, law, ethics and philosophy in addition to engineers, to ensure that the final product is privacy respecting, ethical and inclusive. We must strive to not view the efficacy of algorithms or models myopically but broadly from a lens of inclusivity and in the hope that it serves the lowest common denominator just as efficiently as the majority.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WE WELCOME YASHWANT SINHA TO OUR PARTY. HIS PARTICIPATION WOULD STRENGTHEN OUR FIGHT AGAINST THE BJP IN THE ELECTIONS.

—TMC LEADER
SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY



FOR ME THE TIPPING POINT WAS THE ATTACK ON MAMATA IN NANDIGRAM. IT WAS THE MOMENT OF DECISION TO JOIN THE TMC AND SUPPORT MAMATA.

—FORMER UNION MINISTER AND EX-BJP LEADER
YASHWANT SINHA

Afghanistan: The same sell-out, a different day

The US is abandoning Afghanistan, just like it abandoned South Vietnam, and it's demanding that the puppet ruler give it political cover for withdrawal and take the blame

In a letter to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani recently, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken insisted that Ghani agree to share power with the Taliban insurgents in a transitional Government, to be followed at some point by some sort of election in the beleaguered country. Understandably, the Afghan leader views this as a shotgun marriage in which the Taliban will hold the shotgun.



GWYNNE DYER

Too bad, but the Biden Administration has inherited former President Donald Trump's deal with the Taliban to pull all US troops out of Afghanistan by May 1 this year and it has no intention of changing that. The "good guys" lost and US President Joe Biden has promised no more "forever wars", and Ashraf Ghani will just have to suck it up.

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

Secretary Blinken's letter to him was little short of brutal: "Over the last two months...I have kept you scrupulously informed of the progress of the negotiations. This is my final effort to point out to you the necessity for joint action and to convey my irrevocable intention to proceed, preferably with your cooperation but, if necessary, alone. The time has come for us to present a united front in negotiating with our enemies, and you must decide now whether you desire to continue to work together or whether you want me to seek a settlement with the enemy which serves US interests alone."

Hang on a minute. The date's wrong on this letter. Sorry. My incompetent intern has brought me the letter that President Richard Nixon wrote to South

Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu on December 17, 1972. That was just before Nixon signed the peace agreement with North Vietnam that gave the US a face-saving "decent interval" (two years after American troops left) before Hanoi collected its winnings by conquering South Vietnam.

Ah! Here's Blinken's letter to President Ghani. Completely different, apart from the large parts that sound exactly the same.

"I must also make clear to you, Mr President, that as our policy process continues in Washington, the United States has not ruled out any option. We are considering the full withdrawal of our forces by May 1st, as we consider other options."

"Even with the continuation of financial assistance from the United States to



your forces after an American military withdrawal, I am concerned that the security situation will worsen and that the Taliban could make rapid territorial gains." Blinken concluded by expressing the hope that Ghani "understands the urgency of my tone regarding the collective work outlined in this letter."

"Nice little country you've got here, Ghani", as mafia boss Tony Soprano might

have put it in the famous HBO series *The Sopranos*. "You wouldn't want anything bad to happen to it." Except that the US is no longer running a protection racket in Afghanistan. The US is abandoning Afghanistan, just like it abandoned South Vietnam almost 50 years ago. And it's demanding that the local puppet ruler give it political cover for its withdrawal and take the blame for its final defeat, also just like it did with President Thieu in South Vietnam 50 years ago. And the poor mugs went along with it, because what choice did they have?

This is not to suggest that the US should keep its last 2,500 troops in Afghanistan, let alone reinforce them again. It would have been better if American forces had left within a few years of the 2001 invasion. It

would have been even better if they had never invaded at all. One of the most quoted axioms of military history, right up there with "Don't march on Moscow", is "Never invade Afghanistan." The three greatest empires of the past century, British, Russian and American, have all tried and failed.

Afghanistan is always easy to conquer, because it is poor and disunited. It is impossible to stay there very long, because Afghans hate being invaded and every adult man is armed. The Taliban never had a foreign policy; they were exclusively interested in "reforming" their own country according to their extreme Islamist ideology. Their leader gave shelter to Osama bin Laden's crew because he had the same ideology, but there is no evidence that the Taliban knew he was

planning the 9/11 attacks. Washington's best course would have been to try to bribe enough mid-level Taliban leaders to hand bin Laden and Co over to it. (You can't buy religious fanatics, but you can sometimes rent them.)

Failing that, go in fast, grab the al-Qaeda bunch, and get out again. And if you must invade, quickly find a friendly strongman, put him in power and leave. Instead the US and its equally befuddled NATO allies stayed and stayed, finding an ever-changing array of reasons (some of them well-meaning) for chasing an ever-receding victory. And now it's down to this: Buy yourself some short-term political cover, get the hell out, and don't look back. It will be ugly afterwards, but it's much too late to change that.

4 shot dead in Myanmar anti-coup protests

AP ■ YANGON

At least four people were shot dead during protests in Myanmar on Sunday, as security forces continued their violent crackdown against dissent following last month's military coup.

Two of the victims were killed in Yangon, the country's largest city. One of them was shot in the head and another was shot in the abdomen, according to local media covering the demonstrations in Hlaing Thar Yar Township.

A third person died in the northern city of Hpakant when police fired into a crowd of demonstrators, local media reported. A fourth victim, a woman, died after being shot in the head in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, as security forces were conducting clearance operations.

social media showed crowds of people, some wearing hard hats and gas masks, running down a street amid sounds of gunfire. The demonstrators quickly sprayed vapor from fire extinguishers as they retreated.

The use of fire extinguishers - common now in protests across Myanmar - is intended to smother tear gas and also create a vapor screen that makes it harder for police to pursue or shoot demonstrators.

There were also reports of injuries from live rounds and rubber bullets in other parts of Yangon, including Insein district, where billows of black smoke could be seen after security forces reportedly set roadblocks on fire.

On Saturday, the civilian leader of Myanmar's government in hiding vowed to continue supporting a "revolution" to oust the military leaders who seized power in the



An anti-coup protester raises his hand with clenched fist in front of a crowd during a candlelight night rally in Yangon, Myanmar on Sunday. AP

February 1 coup. Mahn Win Khaing Than, who was named the acting vice president by

Myanmar's ousted lawmakers and is a member of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi's political party, addressed the public for the first time since the coup.

"This is the darkest moment of the nation and the moment that the dawn is close," he said in a video posted on the

shadow government's website and social media.

"In order to form a federal democracy, which all ethnic brothers who have been suffering various kinds of oppres-

sions from the dictatorship for decades really desired, this revolution is the chance for us to put our efforts together," he said.

He added: "We will never give up to an unjust military, but we will carve our future together with our united power. Our mission must be accomplished."

At the end of the message, he flashed the three-finger salute that has become a symbol of resistance to the military rulers.

Also Saturday, security forces again opened fire on demonstrators, killing four in Mandalay, two in Pyay in south-central Myanmar, and one in Twante, a suburb of Yangon. Details of all seven deaths were posted on multiple social media accounts, with some accompanied by photos of the victims.

The actual death toll is likely to be higher, as police apparently seized some bodies, and some of the victims suffered serious gunshot wounds that doctors and nurses working at makeshift clinics would be hard-pressed to treat.

8 hurt in bomb blast in Nepal

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

At least eight persons were injured on Sunday when a "pressure cooker bomb" exploded at a crowded Government office in Siraha district's Lahan in south-eastern Nepal, according to media reports.

The pressure cooker bomb exploded on the first floor of the Land Revenue Office at 12.40 pm, Assistant Chief District Officer Krishna Kumar Niraula was quoted as saying by *The Kathmandu Post* newspaper.

Eight employees - five men and three women - of the land revenue department were injured in the blast, the paper said.

"Three of the critically injured are undergoing treatment at Saptarishi Hospital, Lahan while the others are admitted at Lahan Hospital," said DSP Tapan Dahal.

Meanwhile, police said that they have recovered pamphlets

Eight employees — five men and three women — of the land revenue department were injured in the blast

published by the Jananatrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (Revolutionary), an armed outfit led by Jaya Krishna Goit, from the blast site, My Republica newspaper reported.

According to police, several pieces of pamphlets were found from the blast site but it is hard to read what is written on them.

"We can, however, see the signature of Jaya Krishna Goit," a police officer said.

Police has been investigating the case.

The Jananatrik Tarai Mukti Morcha is a group agitating for greater political and economic rights for the people of the Terai plains bordering India. PTI

Myanmar civilian leader vows 'revolution' against junta

Mandalay: The civilian leader of Myanmar's Government in hiding vowed to continue supporting a "revolution" to oust the military that seized power in last month's coup, as security forces again met protesters with lethal forces, killing at least seven.

Mahn Win Khaing Than, who was named the acting vice president by Myanmar's ousted lawmakers and is a member of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party, addressed the public on Saturday for the first time since the February 1 military takeover.

"This is the darkest moment of the nation and the moment that the dawn is close," he said in a video posted on the shadow government's website and social media.

"In order to form a federal democracy, which all ethnic

brothers who have been suffering various kinds of oppressions from the dictatorship for decades really desired, this revolution is the chance for us to put our efforts together," he said.

He added: "We will never give up to an unjust military but we will carve our future together with our united power. Our mission must be accomplished."

At the end of the message he flashed a three-finger salute that has become a symbol of resistance to the military rule.

Earlier Saturday, security forces opened fire at demonstrators, killing four in Mandalay, the second biggest city, two in Pyay in south-central Myanmar, and one in Twante, a suburb of Yangon, Myanmar's largest city. Details of all seven deaths were posted on multiple social media

accounts, some accompanied by photos of the victims.

The actual death toll is likely to be higher, as police apparently seized some bodies, and some of the victims suffered serious gunshot wounds that doctors and nurses working at makeshift clinics will be hard-pressed to treat. Many hospitals are occupied by security forces, and as a result are boycotted by medical personnel and shunned by protesters.

The independent UN human rights expert for Myanmar, Tom Andrews, said last week that credible reports indicated at least 70 people had died so far, and cited growing evidence of crimes against humanity by the military.

Other unofficial but carefully compiled tallies put the number of deaths since the coup at around 90. AP

For Biden, there's no place like a weekend home in Delaware

Wilmington: As he stood in the Rose Garden celebrating his first big legislative win, President Joe Biden gestured to the White House and said it's a "magnificent building" to live in. Except on weekends.

Of the eight weekends since Biden took office, he has spent three at his longtime home outside Wilmington, Delaware, including this weekend. Tentative plans for another weekend visit were scrapped due to Senate action on Biden's USD 1.9 trillion coronavirus relief plan.

Biden also spent a weekend at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland.

Many presidents have complained at one point or another about feeling confined in the

White House. Biden already has echoed earlier presidents in comparing the experience to living in a "gilded cage."

So trading the 132-room executive mansion for a less confining, more relaxing weekend hangout can help presidents unwind, said University of Chicago political scientist William Howell.

"What he wanted to be was president," Howell said. "It is not the White House per se that is the draw."

The White House defends Biden's leisure travel at a time when both he and federal health officials have been pleading with the public to take the coronavirus pandemic seriously, including by avoiding unnecessary travel.

"The president lives in Wilmington. It's his home. That's where he's lived for many, many years," press secretary Jen Psaki said recently.

"And as you know, as any president of the United States does, he takes a private airplane called Air Force One to travel there." "I think most Americans would also see that as a unique circumstance," she said of the government aircraft available to Biden.

No president travels alone, though, no matter how private the plane.

It requires that lots of other people travel as well. And the costs mount quickly.

Besides the Air Force flight crew, a president's travel party includes Secret Service agents,

White House staff, journalists and family.

Depending on the destination and purpose of the trip, lawmakers, Cabinet secretaries or other guests may fly with the president.

Biden occasionally brought some of his six grandchildren on trips when he was vice president, as well as during last year's presidential campaign.

Presidential travel doesn't come cheap.

Federal agencies spent an estimated \$13.6 million on four trips that then-President Donald Trump took to his waterfront Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, in February and March of 2017, the Government Accountability Office reported

in 2019.

The figure includes USD 10.6 million to operate government aircraft and boats, and USD 3 million for transportation, lodging, meals and other expenses for government personnel supporting the president on the road, the report said.

But not all presidential travel is the same.

Trump took the more familiar version of Air Force One, a modified 747, on the two-hour-plus flight to the commercial airport in West Palm Beach, Florida. Biden has flown a smaller version of the aircraft for the roughly half-hour flight to the Delaware Air National Guard Base. AP

Scotland Yard under fire over vigil policing, UK Home Secy Priti Patel calls for full report

London: Scotland Yard on Sunday defended its actions in policing a vigil in south London where a 33-year-old woman went missing and was later found murdered.

The murder of Sarah Everard, who disappeared on her way back home from a friend's place last week, has sent shockwaves across the UK as a serving Metropolitan Police officer appeared in court charged with her murder this week. An unofficial gathering in memory of the victim ended up in scuffles with the police and four arrests as the Met Police acted to break up the crowds under the current coronavirus lockdown rules.

"Police must act for people's safety, this is the only responsible thing to do. The pandemic is not over and gatherings of people from right across London and beyond, are still not

safe," said Met Police Assistant Commissioner Helen Ball.

"We repeatedly encouraged those who were there to comply with the law and leave. Regrettably, a small minority of people began chanting at officers, pushing and throwing items. After speaking with officers, the vast majority of people quickly left. Four arrests have been made for public order offences and for breaches of the Health Protection Regulations," she said.

However, scenes of clashes between people gathered at the vigil and police officers on Saturday evening were shared widely across social media and resulted in outrage from different quarters, including London Mayor Sadiq Khan "urgently seeking an explanation" from Met Police Commissioner Cressida Dick.

PTI

Pope renews appeal for Syria on 10th anniversary of conflict

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis has renewed his "heartfelt appeal" to all sides in the Syria conflict to demonstrate "signs of goodwill so that a glimmer of hope can be opened for the exhausted population."

The pope offered prayers for Syria during his traditional Sunday blessing in St. Peter's Square, noting that a decade has passed since the start of the "bloody conflict."

It "has caused one of the most serious humanitarian disasters of our times, with an unknown number of dead and wounded, millions of refugees, thousands missing, destruction and violence of every type, enormous suffering for the entire population, in particular the most vulnerable, including children, women and the elderly." Netanyahu did not elaborate.

Israeli PM avoided Saudi airspace because of Houthi missiles

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was deterred from flying to the United Arab Emirates through Saudi Arabian airspace last week because of the threat of missile fire from Iranian proxies in Yemen.

Netanyahu, whose comments came Saturday, had called off a visit to the Emirates last week over a spat with neighboring Jordan, which had temporarily closed its airspace to the Israeli prime minister's flight.

But rather than bypass Jordanian airspace and take a more southerly route across the Saudi skies, Netanyahu told Israel's Channel 13 "there were also problems a week ago in the skies of Saudi Arabia," referring to recent missile attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

rate, nor did he say his plane was targeted by the Iran-backed Houthis.

Yemen's Houthi rebels, who control the capital and much of the country's north, have escalated their cross-border attacks on critical Saudi infrastructure in recent weeks, crashing bomb-laden drones and missiles into the kingdom's Patriot missile batteries and revealing gaps in the country's defenses.

Last week, missiles and drones hit one of the world's largest oil shipping ports and halted air traffic toward the international airport in the port city of Jiddah. While Houthi-claimed attacks on Saudi Arabia rarely cause substantial damage, such strikes have roiled the world economy and raise the risk of a disruption in global oil supplies. AP

Pakistan: Hindu community pardons mob accused of vandalising temple

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

The Hindu community in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to pardon the mob that vandalised and burned down a century-old temple in the province.

The local clerics and members of the Hindu community held a meeting on Saturday to resolve the dispute.

As per the dialogue, informally called 'jirga', the accused have tendered an apology over the attack and a similar incident in 1997.

The Muslim clerics have assured full protection to the Hindus and their rights as per the country's Constitution.

A reconciliation statement from the meeting would be presented to the Supreme Court, in a bid to secure the release of the accused from detention.

On December 30 last year, a mob led by some local clerics and members of radical Islamist party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam vandalised the temple and an adjoining 'samadhi' and set it on fire in Terri village of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak district.

Speaking to the media after the meeting with the local Ulema, Pakistan Hindu Council Chairman Ramesh Kumar said the incident had hurt the feelings of Hindus across the world.

Kumar, who is also a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf lawmaker, said KPK Chief Minister Mahmood Khan had chaired the 'jirga' proceedings and thanked him for settling the matter amicably.

Mahmood Khan, in his address to jirga members, had condemned the attack strongly, calling it an attempt to pollute the peaceful environment

in the province.

The attack on the temple had drawn strong condemnation from human rights activists and the minority Hindu community leaders, prompting the Supreme Court to order its reconstruction.

Nearly 50 people have been arrested in the case.

Following the incident, India had lodged a strong protest with Pakistan. The Ministry of External Affairs had conveyed its serious concerns to the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi over the repeated instances of similar incidents and atrocities against the members of the minority community.

India had also called out the Pakistan government at the United Nations, saying the country's enforcement agencies stood as "mute spectators" when a historic Hindu temple was attacked.

MEGHAN BULLYING INCIDENT Buckingham Palace to get law firm to conduct probe: Report

London: Buckingham Palace plans to hand over an investigation into allegations that Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, may have bullied staff during her time as a frontline royal with Prince Harry in Britain to external investigators, a UK media report said on Sunday.

Earlier this month, the palace had confirmed that a probe would be conducted after 'The Times' published a leaked email from a staff member alleging that the former American actress drove two personal assistants out of the royal household and undermined the confidence of a third member of staff.

Now, 'The Sunday Times' reports that it has been decided that the inquiry would be handed to a third-party law firm to conduct an independent investigation, rather than an inhouse inquiry.

"Our commitment to look into the circumstances around the allegations from former staff of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex is being taken for-

ward but we will not be providing a public commentary on it," a Buckingham Palace spokesperson said.

Several former and current royal aides who could not give evidence in court during Meghan Markle's recent legal case about privacy against a British newspaper are expected to speak to the inquiry.

"The actual worst incidences haven't come out. There are some harrowing stories to tell," the newspaper quoted a royal source as saying.

The complaint against Meghan dates back to October 2018 when an email was sent by a member of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's staff to a senior courtier. The email was forwarded to the HR department, but the complaint did not progress.

The palace inquiry into the exact circumstances was announced days before Harry and Meghan's explosive interview with Oprah Winfrey was aired last weekend, in which the Duke and Duchess of

Sussex made a series of shocking claims around the lack of mental health support offered to a suicidal Meghan and unnamed royals raising concerns about the skin colour of their mixed-race son Archie.

"The issues raised, particularly that of race, are concerning. Whilst some recollections may vary, they are taken very seriously and will be addressed by the family privately. Harry, Meghan and Archie will always be much loved family members," read a Buckingham Palace statement, days after the interview.

Prince William, Harry's older brother, is the only senior royal to directly comment on the allegations as he responded to reporters' questions with: "We are very much not a racist family." The relationship between the brothers has been strained for some time and it emerged this weekend that they had "been in contact" for the first time since the Oprah Winfrey interview, reportedly via text message. AP

2,000 flights cancelled in Denver as heavy snowstorm arrives

Denver: More than 2,000 flights have been cancelled over the weekend at Denver International Airport as a major snowstorm strikes the region.

The National Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning, saying it expects 18 to 24 inches (46-61 cm) of heavy, wet snow to fall in Denver and Boulder from Saturday afternoon through Sunday night. Some areas along the Front Range foothills were expected to receive up to 30 inches (76 cm).

The Colorado Department of Transportation warned that road closures are highly likely and asked people not to make unnecessary trips. The highways most likely to be affected included Interstate 25 from Colorado Springs to Wyoming, including Denver and Monument Hill; I-70 to Limon; and I-76 to Ft. Morgan, the department said.

Denver International had a busy morning Saturday with passengers trying to beat the storm. AP

Minister says Afghan forces can hold their own

Kabul: Afghanistan's interior minister said on Saturday that Afghan security forces can hold their ground even if US troops withdraw, challenging a warning from the United States predicting a withdrawal would yield quick territorial gains to the Taliban.

Masoud Andarabi's comments in an interview Saturday with *The AP* were the first government reaction to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's warning issued in a sharply worded letter to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani last weekend. In the letter pressing Ghani to step up efforts to make peace with the Taliban, Blinken said, "I am concerned the security situation will worsen and that the Taliban could make rapid territorial gains" after the American military withdraws.

Andarabi said Afghan forces could hold territory, but would likely endure heavy losses trying to hold remote checkpoints without US air support. AP

London police under pressure over clashes at women's protest

London: London's Metropolitan Police was under heavy pressure Sunday to explain its actions during a vigil for a woman whom one of the force's own officers is accused of murdering.

Hundreds defied coronavirus restrictions to gather and protest violence against women, but the event ended with clashes between police and those attending.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said scenes from Saturday's vigil in south London were "upsetting" and she is seeking a full report on what happened from the Metropolitan Police. The capital's mayor, Sadiq Khan, said the police response was "at times neither appropriate nor proportionate."

Jailed terrorist Koufodinas ends hunger strike after 66 days

AP ■ ATHENS

Greek convicted terrorist Dimitris Koufodinas has ended a 66-day hunger strike that left him dangerously ill.

Koufodinas, 63, who is serving 11 consecutive life sentences plus 25 years for murders he committed as the main hitman of far-left armed group November 17, had begun the hunger strike demanding to be transferred to a prison of his choice. In a statement released through his lawyer, Ioanna Kourtovik, Koufodinas thanked the "progressive people" who showed solidarity in a "fight against an inhumane power system."

Several protest marches have taken place to support Koufodinas' demands and sympathisers have staged a series of arson and vandalism attacks in recent days.

Koufodinas also attacked the "governing family that has shown how ruthless it is in debasing the laws and the Constitution."

That is a reference to Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the scion of a political family. Koufodinas and another man murdered Mitsotakis' brother-in-law, Pavlos Bakoyiannis, in September 1989.

U.S. And U.K. Military officers were also among his victims before the armed group was dismantled in 2002 and he turned himself in.

Koufodinas had benefited from the previous leftist government's passage of a law that allowed him to serve his term at a minimum-security "farming" prison.

The legislation was repealed by Mitsotakis' conservative government.

Koufodinas' demand for a transfer was rejected by the government and the courts. His hunger strike led to kidney failure and doctors had described him as dangerously weakened.

Govt plans to sell residual stake in four airports

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Government aims to sell its residual stake in four airports as part of the ₹2.5 lakh crore asset monetisation pipeline.

The sale of Airport Authority of India's remaining stake in the four airports of Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad, as well as identification of 13 more airports for privatisation, has been planned for the next fiscal.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation will take approvals for divestment of equity stake of the AAI in the joint ventures running Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports.

For the 13 AAI airports identified for privatisation, the possibility of bundling of profitable and non-profitable airports will be looked at to make more attractive packages.

In the first round of air-



ports' privatisation under the Narendra Modi government, the Adani Group bagged contracts for six airports - Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, M a n g a l u r u, Thiruvananthapuram, and Guwahati - last year.

Adani Enterprises in January had signed the concession agreement with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) for operating and developing the Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram airports.

In a regulatory filing, the

company said that the concession period is 50 years from the commercial operation date.

"Adani Jaipur International Airport Ltd, Adani Guwahati International Airport and Adani Thiruvananthapuram International Airport, wholly-owned subsidiaries of the company have signed the concession agreement on January 19, 2021 with Airports Authority of India for the operations, management and development of Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram airports respectively," it said.

Rupee to slip on high oil prices

IAN S ■ MUMBAI

After sustaining its winning streak, Indian Rupee is expected to slip during the upcoming week on the back of high crude oil prices along with somber macro-economic data.

Accordingly, crude oil at over \$68 per barrel is expected to exert pressure on the currency as well as stroke domestic inflation.

Last week, the rupee recovered from 73.95 to 72.60 per USD on the passage of a \$1.9 trillion stimulus package in the US.

"Crude staying above \$68 per barrel is a damper for rupee. A range from 72.55 to 73.25 can be expected for the coming week," Sajal Gupta, Head, Forex and Rates at Edelweiss Securities told IANS.

"Nifty looks a bit wobbly on stretched valuations. Any close above 15,400 can lead to further strength in rupee but this looks less likely."

Besides, recently released inflation along with industrial production data are expected to dampen the rupee's prospects.

The retail inflation, measured in Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to 5.03 per cent in February from January's rise of 4.06 per cent.

India's factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), witnessed a contraction of (-)1.6 per cent in January.

"Somber economic data will put pressure on Indian currency, though we expect dollar supply to come in near 73.3 level. The pair has support near 72.26," said Devarsh Vakil, Deputy Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

According to Rahul Gupta, Head Of Research-Currency, Emkay Global Financial Services: "Market attention now turns to the US Federal Reserve's meeting next week, focusing on any comments about rising yields."

Tariff hikes push telecom revenue higher: Ind-Ra

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom industry's revenues continued to grow for the fifth quarter in a row during Q3FY21 to Rs 443 billion, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said in a report.

Accordingly, this trend was supported by the industry-wide tariff hikes implemented in the last 12-18 months, increasing penetration of high ARPU (average revenue per user) broadband subscribers, and increasing subscriber base.

Quoting the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India data, the report said industry-wide revenue continued to grow for the fifth quarter in a row in "3QFY21 to INR443 billion".

"Reliance Jio Infocomm continued to be the largest telecom player by revenue market share (RMS) in December 2020 with RMS of 39.3 per cent in 3QFY21, followed by 32.8 per cent RMS of Bharti Airtel 20.8 per cent RMS of Vodafone

Idea Limited and a 6.8 per cent market share of Bharat Sanchar Nigam." Besides, the number of broadband subscribers increased to 63 per cent of the overall wireless subscriber base in December 2020 from 62 per cent in November 2020 and 47 per cent in March 2019.

"In December 2020, the number grew by strong 5 million (November 2020: 6.9 million). This along with a rise in data tariffs reflects that the Indian telecom industry is moving towards a higher ARPU regime."

"The tariff differentials for the prepaid and postpaid tariff plans among the telcos are already narrowing down over the past one year." According to the report, post-paid tariff plans by Rjio and tariff hike announced by VIL for select plans, a few months back, indicated the inclination of industry players towards a higher ARPU regime in the long run.

"This is also reflected in the

growth in ARPU in 3QFY21 for all the telecom players, where in BAL and VIL reported an increase in ARPU by 2 per cent and Rjio reported an increase in ARPU by 4 per cent qoq in 3QFY21." BAL continued to report highest ARPU of INR166 per user per month in 3QFY21 compared to the ARPU of INR151 of Rjio and INR121 of VIL." Furthermore, the report cited that out of 856MHz spectrum sold in the recent auctions, Rjio has acquired the highest spectrum, adding up to a total of 488MHz through three bands 800MHz, 1,800MHz and 2,300MHz, while BAL has acquired 356MHz spectrum through five bands ranging from 800MHz to 2,300MHz. "That being said, the agency believes that both Rjio and BAL have the strong financial flexibility to make the immediate upfront payment and adequate cash flow buffers to cover yearly spectrum payments FY24 onwards."

ONGC's share in India's oil, gas production jumps to 70% from 53% 10 yrs back

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned ONGC, which is often perceived as a drag on the crude oil and natural gas produced in the country, has actually seen its contribution to the national production jump to over 70 per cent from under 53 per cent a decade back, petroleum ministry data showed.

While Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) maintained production levels, output by other operators has dropped, leading to an overall fall in India's output and a sharp rise in import dependency.

Its standalone production at 47.51 million tonnes of oil and oil equivalent gas in 2010-11 was 52.8 per cent of a total of 89.91 million tonnes of oil and gas produced in the country that year, the data showed.

Despite having majority of fields where natural decline has set after being in operations for more than four decades, ONGC maintained production throughout the last decade thereafter and had an output of 44.57 million tonnes of oil and oil equivalent gas in 2019-20, which was 70.3 per cent of India's total production of 63.353 million tonnes.

ONGC's output dropped to 43.54 million tonnes of oil and oil equivalent gas in 2015-16 (62.9 per cent of India's total production) but new discoveries as well as massive investment in extracting last drop from the ageing fields arrested

further fall and even led to a marginal increase.

Even when its production dropped when compared to previous year, ONGC's share in total production of crude oil and natural gas in the country continued to rise, the data which formed part of the review taken by the ministry a couple of weeks back, showed.

ONGC is focused on finding oil and gas reserves in Category II and III Basins, which do not have established hydrocarbon proficiency.

This helped accrete in place reserves of 2,246 million tonnes of oil between 2002 and 2015 and ultimate accretion of 1,014 million tonnes, the data presented at the review showed.

Of this, ONGC realised 830 million tonnes of oil and oil equivalent gas as production. It has approved 14 schemes for developing 135 million tonnes of reserves.

ONGC's share in national production rose from 52.8 per cent in 2010-11 to 54.9 per cent in the following year and to 58.7 per cent in 2012-13, 62.2 per cent in 2013-14, 62.3 per cent in 2014-15, 62.9 per cent in 2015-16 and 65.3 per cent in 2016-17.

In subsequent years it was 67 per cent, 68.4 per cent and 70.3 per cent in 2019-20 -- the latest year for which data was presented at the review.

During this 10-year period, India's dependence on imported crude oil to meet its demand rose from about two-third to 85 per cent.

Inflationary risks: Somber macros to dent equities

IAN S ■ MUMBAI

Rising risk of inflationary pressure as shown by the latest macro economic data will dent the equities market's upward trajectory during the week ahead.

Besides, rising bond yields in the US, expensive valuations and rising Covid-19 infections will dampen investors' sentiments, market observers cited.

"The CPI and IIP numbers that came out on Friday in India could dampen the equity markets early next week," HDFC Securities' Retail Research Head Deepak Jasani said.

"14,862 is a crucial support on falls for the Nifty while 15,336-15,432 is the resistance band. A fall below 14,862 could result in sharper and broader sell-off."

Accordingly, the retail inflation, measured in Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to 5.03 per cent in February from January's rise of 4.06 per cent.

India's factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), witnessed a contraction of (-)1.6 per cent in January.

"While the long term structure of the market continues to remain positive, it may face some hurdles in the near term due to concerns over the bond yields, commodity prices and risk of increase in inflation," said

Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"Even Nifty valuation at '21x FY22 EPS' is not inexpensive and demands consistent delivery of earnings."

At present, crude oil hover over \$68 per barrel. This price level is expected to exert pressure on the currency as well as stroke domestic inflation.

"The core of the market's worries is the rising bond yields across developed markets, especially the US, the high oil prices which are showing a tendency to hold on to the higher perches, and the consequent likely adverse impact on the price level in many larger economies like India and China," said Joseph Thomas, Head of Research, Emkay Wealth Management.

"There is an expectation that the demand for oil could go up by 5 million barrels per day, the rise accounted for mainly by China, India, and East Asia." Furthermore, bond yields are expected to remain volatile in the week ahead.

"The market will be keenly focusing on the upcoming US Fed policy meeting scheduled to be held on the 16th and 17th of March," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

"The market is waiting for a confirmation from Fed that an accommodative stance will be maintained even during an elevated inflation forecast."

BCD on solar PV cells to support OEMs: ICRA

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Imposition of basic customs duty (BCD) on imported solar PV cells and modules will support domestic OEMs, ICRA said in a note.

Earlier, the Centre had approved a proposal to impose a BCD of 25 per cent on imported solar PV cells and 40 per cent on imported solar PV modules, with effect from April 1, 2022.

As per ICRA note, while this move will support domestic OEMs, it is likely to result in an increase in solar tariffs.

However, clarification is awaited on the continuation of the safeguard duty (SGD) on imported cells and modules, which is currently at 14.5 per cent, valid till July 2021.

"This is expected to result into an increase in the capital cost for a solar power project by 23-24 per cent," said Girishkumar Kadam, Co-Group Head, ICRA Ratings.

"This in turn would result in an increase in tariff by about 45-50 paise per unit. Nonetheless, the bid tariff trajectory is likely to remain well below Rs 3 per unit and thus, would continue to remain cost competitive from the off-takers' perspective."

At present, the state-owned utility off-takers, average power purchase cost and variable cost of power purchase remain in the range of Rs 4-5 per unit and Rs 3-3.5 per unit respectively in many states.

As per ICRA note, while this move will support domestic OEMs, it is likely to result in an increase in solar tariffs

According to the note, for the project already bid out and having scheduled commissioning date post April 2022, wherein modules may be imported post this date, the levy of BCD is expected to be a change in law event under the power purchase agreement (PPA).

In such cases, the ICRA noted that timely approval by the respective regulatory commissions and pass-through of the tariff increase to the off-takers would be critical from the cash flow perspective for the project developers.

In addition, the module price trends remain a key monitorable for the solar power developers, in view of the recent firmness in the imported module prices, the note said.

"The imposition of BCD on imported solar cells and modules is expected to improve the competitiveness of domestic cell or module manufacturers," the note said.

"However, the extent of benefit would also depend upon the imported PV module prices, especially from China."

Bank credit grows by 6.63%, deposits by 12.06%

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Bank credit rose by 6.63 per cent to ₹107.75 lakh crore and deposits grew by 12.06 per cent to ₹149.34 lakh crore in the fortnight ended February 26, according to RBI data.

In the fortnight ended February 28, 2020, bank credit stood at ₹101.05 lakh crore and deposits at ₹133.26 lakh crore, the recent data released by the Reserve Bank of India showed.

Bank credit increased by 6.58 per cent to ₹107.04 lakh crore and deposits rose by 11.75 per cent to ₹47.81 lakh crore in the previous fortnight ended February 12, 2021.

Care Ratings in a report said the bank credit growth in the fortnight ended February 26 stood stable compared to the last fortnight and returned to the levels observed in the early months of the pandemic, when the loan growth ranged between 6.5% to 7.2% during April 2020. According to analysts, the growth in bank credit is driven by an increase in retail loans. Emkay Global Financial Services in its March 5 report said it expects overall retail credit growth, which is currently at 9%, to accelerate further, led by mortgages (contributing 51 per cent of retail loans) and back-end support by unsecured (cards/ personal loans) and vehicle loans.

"The current market conditions favour banks armed with lower funding rates, strong balance sheet, better

asset quality and strong captive customer base," Anand Dama, an analyst at Emkay Global, had said in the report.

Large private banks such as HDFC Bank (despite suspension in new card acquisition) and ICICI Bank have been at the forefront of retail growth momentum, while Kotak Bank too is finally showing signs of much-needed growth and trying to raise the retail game, the report had said.

Among state-run banks, SBI and Bank of Baroda, which have been the key players in the mortgage market, are changing gears in the auto finance space as well, the research report said.

Care Ratings believe that the increase in the credit outstanding during the next fortnight is anticipated as year-end transactions are expected to push up bank credit as banks undertake the year-end closing activities. This trend can be witnessed for the last three-four years. In the first nine months of the current fiscal, while the growth in credit was 3.2 per cent, bank deposits saw a rise of 8.5 per cent.

"While bank credit growth had contracted 0.8 per cent in the first half of this fiscal, it recovered sharply in the third quarter by growing around 3 per cent sequentially. In the fourth quarter, too, it should clock near 3 per cent sequential growth," Crisil Ratings Senior Director Krishnan Sitaraman had said in a report released earlier this month.

FPIs pull out ₹7,013 cr from Indian mkts so far this month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were net sellers to the tune of ₹7,013 crore so far this month in the Indian markets on profit-booking as jitters in global bond markets spooked investors.

As per depositories data, FPIs pulled out ₹531 crore from equities and ₹6,482 crore from the debt segment between Mar 1-13.

The total net outflow stood at ₹7,013 crore.

In contrast, they had pumped in ₹23,663 crore in Indian markets in February and ₹14,649 crore in January, on net basis.

"The flows into the equity markets have moderated significantly in the recent times, which could be largely attributed to profit booking as markets continue to be at elevated levels," said Himanshu Srivastava, associate director-manager research, Morningstar India.

The dollar index climbing above 92 and firmness in US 10-year bond yield impacted sentiments which may be seen as profit-booking since FPIs are sitting on huge profits, VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services, added.

IIFL bonds doubles investment in 87 months, issue closes Mar 18

IIFL Finance, India's largest retail focused Non-Banking Financial Companies, today said its bonds which offers up to 10.03% yield, effectively doubling investment in 87 months will close on March 18, 2021.

The Fairfax and CDC Group backed IIFL Finance's unsecured redeemable non-convertible debentures (NCDs), aims to raise up to Rs 1000 crore. It has already seen very good response from investors across India due to higher interest rate and higher degree of safety.

The IIFL Bonds offer highest yield of 10.03% p.a. for tenor of 87 months. The NCD is available in various options like monthly, annual and at maturity. The IIFL Bonds would be issued at face value of Rs 1,000 and the minimum application size is Rs 10,000 across all categories.

In the current scenario, the rate of interest offered by IIFL Finance bonds is very attractive compared with other debt products. Liquid funds offer average net yields of 2.8%-3%, ultra-short-term funds offer average net yields of around 3-3.5%, short-term funds offer average net yield is around 4%-4.25%, while banks

are currently offering an interest of around 5.1% for a 3 year fixed deposit.

These 10.03% rate is also getting locked in for 87 months. This is a big advantage as liquidity eases post Covid world for next few years, most experts believe that interest rates can head down and to lock-in good interest rate is a big advantage.

Today the interest rates on a 10-year government securities are at 6%. The credit rating has been AA by Crisil and AA+ by Brickwork. Through the crisis, credit rating of IIFL Finance has been reaffirmed by agencies, which indicates that the instruments are considered to have a high degree of safety for timely servicing of financial obligations and carry very low credit risk. Nirmal Jain, Chairman, IIFL Finance said, "IIFL has an impeccable track record of more than 25 years and all the bond issues and the debt obligations have always been paid on time."

IIFL Finance is one of India's largest retail-focused financial services companies. IIFL Finance's Loan Assets under Management is Rs 42,264 crore. Most importantly, 90% of the book is retail - which is focused on small ticket loans.

'India's merchandise exports expected to grow at 4.9% in Q4FY21'

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India's merchandise export is expected to grow at 4.9 per cent in Q4FY21, predicted Export-Import Bank of India in a report.

Accordingly, the report cited that total merchandise exports can amount to \$78.6 billion, growing at 4.9 per cent.

Similarly, the non-oil exports are expected to grow. They might reach \$73.9 billion, growing at 12 per cent during the fourth quarter of 2020-21.

However, aggregate exports for 2020-21 are forecast to amount to \$279.4 billion, witnessing a contraction of 10.8 per cent over 2019-20.

Besides, non-oil exports are forecast to amount to \$256.8 billion, witnessing a contraction of 5.6 per cent over 2019-20.

"The fall in India's exports of petroleum products could be attributed largely to the global slump in demand and especially in the transportation and logistics sectors," the bank said in a statement.

"Considering the global contraction in trade due to pandemic, non-oil exports from India has been resilient. Despite serious disruptions and logistical constraints exports from India have remained upbeat."

Bengal e-commerce startup plans to help small electronics retailers

IAN S ■ KOLKATA

Magitronix EComm, a startup firm, is focusing on buyers in small towns for its online marketplace and helping neighbourhood electronics shop owners who are not able to get access to the network of big e-commerce players, a company official said on Sunday.

The startup firm from West Bengal has also received approval from the department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) of the commerce ministry and will start transactions through its portal 'Ononya.Com', he said.

"We do not have any warehousing facility. Neighbourhood electronics shops will act as sellers. This is a startup with no funding from outside till now," Magitronix CEO Indrajit Ghosh said.

The offline sales of electronics shops across the country have been hit due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Citing a recent study released by IT body Nasscom and retail consultancy firm Technopak Advisors, he said, "The emergence of 'online+offline' (O+O) market is seen as a rising collaboration of digitally enabled retail stores."

President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurates newly built school, hostel buildings built by NTPC



New Delhi: President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, on Sunday inaugurated school and hostel buildings built by NTPC Rihand under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, at Sewa Kunj Ashram, Chapki at NTPC Rihand.

Along with Ram Nath Kovind, President, the inaugural function was also graced by Anandiben Patel, Governor of Uttar Pradesh and Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.

President Ram Nath Kovind was gracious to visit the NTPC stall set up near the newly constructed hostel and appreciated NTPC's endeavour in working towards the welfare of the society and said that this is true service to the Nation.

While appreciating NTPC's efforts Yogi Adityanath, Chief

Minister said that compassion and service towards the tribal population is testimony to true nationalism and NTPC has displayed it consistently through their good work for the communities.

DK Patel, Director (HR) NTPC, Balaji Iyengar, Executive Director, Rihand and other senior officials of NTPC were present on the occasion.

The buildings have been established by NTPC, Rihand at a total cost of about Rs.11 crore. The school comprises of 18 classrooms and the hostel facility has 24 rooms. NTPC has also installed a 40KW Solar Power System for said buildings, to ensure uninterrupted power supply. Further, additional rooms for the school are being constructed by NTPC Ltd. under its CSR initiative.

Consumer firms expected to reach pre-Covid sales levels in Q4FY21'

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Consumer companies are expected to either return to and in some cases exceed pre-Covid sales levels in Q4FY21, Motilal Oswal Financial Services said in a report.

Accordingly, it cited lower base in the previous year, increased mobility on the back of lesser Covid cases, strong rural demand, record high Rabi sowing, recovery in celebratory occasions, and improved consumer sentiment as factors behind the expected trend.

"Rural markets will lead growth on account of a good harvest, higher government spends, lower Covid impact, and a better agri outlook, with normal monsoons expected," the report said.

"Recovery in urban markets continues to be strong as life in the metros and larger cities moves back to normal with increased mobility." Besides, it pointed out that e-commerce showed its prominence over last year and general trade has returned to pre-Covid levels. Modern trade, it said is normalising now after facing headwinds caused by the pandemic in the past few quarters.



STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE

AYUSHI GUDWANI shares key drivers for fashion brands to stay relevant in today's time

With the onset of the pandemic and the uncertainty it brought for people and societies, every business across the globe has had to rethink their line of work in a different light. The need for formal clothing also underwent a major transition, especially with the lockdown and organisations adopting a work from home setup. Various fashion brands, especially the ones which were focussing on workwear apparel, have had to relook at and redefine their offering in order to stay relevant as a business.

There are some practices that brands should follow, which I believe are important drivers to stay relevant for businesses across domains in times like today, when faced with such unprecedented scenarios.

First would be to actively reach out and listen to your customers. For instance, whether one was required to keep their cameras on or off during WFH had an impact on how people were thinking about dressing to 'work'. For those who had their cameras on, focus was on top-wear and to look presentable, and while no one was looking for full length formal trousers, shorts that gave a polished look was helpful, should they have to get up in between. Listening to customers helps in identification of these nuances and varied scenarios and gives insights into changing needs and preferences. This brings to the second driver — that of innovation. As customers tell us what their problem is, it is upon the businesses to design solutions that address those problems. Adding properties of anti-wrinkle, moving to fabrics offering stretch like knits, shifting to more relaxed silhouettes are some of the key product innovations that brands can adopt. Lastly and most importantly, is agility in acting fast to counter the challenging times. Be it having to change your product offering overnight or reorganising teams or creating a new supply chain altogether, acting fast and decisively is key to staying ahead of the curve.

Having led my business with all these drivers all through the last year,



There is a need for clothes that would allow one to seamlessly transition from work to home and to an outing in the evening, keeping the look polished yet comfortable

there are a few things we can foresee for workwear and fashion. We see that many people are still in the WFH setup, while others have partially or fully started going back to office; but what will be common for all, after spending a year indoors, is a marked shift towards easy and comfortable clothing. In the new normal, while we won't see people moving back to pre-COVID structured and body-hugging styles, we will neither see them moving back to stay-at-home casual clothing for their office look. What is on the rise is something in between — styles that will help us break the monotony and make us feel a sense of freshness, vibrancy and positivity.

Thinking of specific categories, bottom-wear will undergo the most transition. People are moving away from formal trousers to those that are more comfortable and relaxed. We are likely to see more skirts and dresses than before as they bring that element of ease. Within topwear, people will opt for styles that require less ironing and give an elevated look. Shirts will become less relevant and tops with a fresh and vibrant feel, be it in pastel summer shades or brighter colours and prints, will be on the rise. Even smarter tees may be adopted and acceptable as a work-look. Fabrics like cottons and linens, being breathable, will be a go-to choice, and more relaxed and breeze fits silhouettes will be in trend. Overall, there is a need for clothes that would allow one to seamlessly transition from work to home to an outing in the evening, keeping the look polished yet comfortable.

(The writer is the founder and CEO of FableStreet.)

WEBBED



WHO KILLED SARA?

Hell-bent on exacting revenge and proving he was framed for his sister's murder, Alex sets out to unearth much more than the crime's real culprit. Starring Manolo Cardona, Ginés García Millán and Carolina Miranda, Season 1 releases on March 24 on Netflix.



PAGGLAIT

Widowed soon after marriage, a young woman grapples with an inability to grieve, quirky relatives and a startling discovery about her late husband. Starring Sanya Malhotra, Sayani Gupta and Ashutosh Rana, the film releases on March 26.



A WEEK AWAY

In this uplifting musical, a troubled teen takes a leap of faith by attending summer camp — and unexpectedly finds love, friends and a place to belong. Starring Kevin Quinn, Bailee Madison and Jahbril Cook, the film releases on March 26 on Netflix.

Rahman, Kamal advocate need for film preservation



Ahead of Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan being presented with the prestigious FIAF 2021 award by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) for his commitment and contribution towards the cause of film preservation, actor-filmmaker-politician Kamal Haasan and Oscar-winning composer AR Rahman, emphasised the need for film preservation and restoration.

"Roja, my first film that became a major success has been preserved by Film Heritage Foundation so that audiences can still enjoy it, almost 30 years later. In these unprecedented times when we are talking about survival, cinema has the power to help us survive. Film Heritage Foundation has been fighting a lone battle with very little support to save our films and music for six years now, and we need to support them when they are preserving our work as an integral part of culture and history for posterity," says Rahman.

He also called for support for Shivendra Singh Dungarpur led Film Heritage Foundation that is working towards preserving the film heritage of India.

Said Kamal Haasan, "Films are our heritage and if we forget where we came from, we might not be able to fix our destination at all. We need to preserve most of our great works that are lost now. Unlike in Hollywood, we have lived for the day and are repenting now. For the sake of the film industry, we owe our gratitude to the Film Heritage Foundation for doing what the industry should have done, for reviving that passion and reminding us what needs to be done for our film heritage."

Filmmakers Martin Scorsese and Christopher Nolan, who also share a long-standing relationship with India through their affiliation with Film Heritage Foundation, will bestow the award on Big B at a virtual presentation, on March 19.

TREND TOOL



WIPE THE BRUSHES CLEAN

Your makeup tools are the backbone of your beauty kit. Not cleaning them regularly can harm your skin, shares SHALINI TREHAN

Looking our best is one of the most quintessential things no matter the occasion. We often forget that not cleaning our makeup tools properly can harm our skin in more ways than one. The bacteria and germs on them causes your skin to react, which can later lead to acne and skin irritation.

One of the most simple ways to protect your skin is to ensure you clean your tools regularly. It is the only hygienic way to keep your skincare routine effective. You can avoid several rashes, skin irritations, acne issues and skin clogging by cleaning your tools frequently.

Here's a beginner's guide to get you started:

Scrub all metal tools with an old brush. Use an antibacterial soap and warm water to wash them.

- Clean the corners, edges and

curves of your tools with cotton or a q-tip with rubbing alcohol to rid away from the lingering bacteria.

- Wipe down your plastic material tools such as toe separators and cuticles sticks with rubbing alcohol after every use.

- Clean your powder brushes at least two to three times a week. You can wash them with gentle cleansers or mild shampoo.

- Brushes used for liquid foundation, concealers and eye shadows should be cleaned daily, if possible. Ensure that they are dried before

use. Do not keep them damp or wet because that can also cause bacteria to grow and gather mould.

- Towel dry your tools to get rid of excess moisture. You can also squeeze the delicate whisks before towel drying.

- Brushes can also be dried by hanging them upside-down in a dry place.

- Ideally, change your tools every year. Most cosmetics come with a time until they can be best used. Often, they can be used even after the expiry but don't use them

beyond a reasonable time. Old and outdated cosmetics are harmful.

- You can use disposable brushes and applicators to avoid any kind of germs and infections. Regular tools are popular and some times expensive. Disposable tools can also be cost-effective and retain your flawless skincare routine.

- Every week clean the edge of jars, tubes, caps and covers of all cosmetics and makeup tool storage.

- Clean out the leftover product from the edges and lipsticks with clean cotton pads.

The cleaner your products, dresser, storage and tools are, better effective your skincare routine will be. Keep your storage space dry and tidy. It is essential that all your makeup products are kept away from the sun and heat providing sources. Clean your cosmetics and makeup frequently so they last longer and give you exciting results on every occasion. A clean vanity bag is a secret to healthy skin and your sparkling beauty.

(The writer is the co-founder of Recode.)

TRENDBLAZER



KIRTI KULHARI SLEEPS AT WORK

Actor **KIRTI KULHARI** was in the mood for some weekend fun on social media, posting a picture that shows her catching forty winks at work.

Kirti posted a picture on Instagram Stories, where she is seen sleeping on a sofa dressed in a powder pink ensemble. Her back is towards the camera in the picture.

On the image she wrote: "When you go to work and all you wanna do is sleep."

fairtalk

EMRAAN HASHMI



'It's so amazing to see the discipline that Amitabh Bachchan sir has even after being in the industry for decades. Our industry is not very discipline-oriented, which can be a little difficult at times. He has inspired me and so many others to walk the same path. He is extremely punctual. It is motivating to see the respect he gives to his craft.'

dailytalk

RANA DAGGUBATI



'Haathi Mere Saathi is a story with a soul. It's a film rooted deep in emotions and an enormity that can be realised only on the big screens. Just like the Southern industry, I strongly feel that our movie has the potential to bring the Hindi audience to the theaters too.'

NOW REALISING HOW QUEER I AM: DEMI

Singer **DEMI LOVATO** started realising how queer she really was as she got older.

Lovato noted how cutting her hair represented "a symbolic shedding of the heteronormative box (she) was confined in for years."

She added, "When I started getting older, I started realising how queer I really am. This past year I was engaged to a man, and when it didn't work, I was like, 'this is a huge sign'. Now that I wasn't going to spend my life with someone, I felt this sense of relief that I could live my truth."



WILL THE VALLEY THRIVE?

Kashmiri handicrafts have a huge market if allowed a strategic promotion. In the past, it incurred massive losses due to lack of high-speed internet, says MUDASSIR KULOO

Worried about the dying art forms of Kashmir, particularly its handicrafts, a group of young men from the valley have come together to promote its different art forms in national and international markets through an online platform.

Arif Irshad, a 29-year-old documentary filmmaker, has been photographing Kashmiri handicraft products for different e-commerce websites. Seeing the traditional artisans and artforms suffer at the hands of modernisation, he along with three young men formed an e-commerce website 'Kashmir Origin' in 2018. Through the website, they promote Kashmiri handicrafts and provide a platform for artisans to sell their products. "Hundreds of artisans have associated with us since we began the venture. We provide online support and worldwide platforms to these talented artisans and support them to promote their products. To attract international buyers, we also assist them to adapt the traditional artforms to the contemporary taste of art lovers," said Arif, a resident of Srinagar's Natipora.

Arif, who has shot over 20,000 products for different e-commerce websites, during his interaction with the artisans, realised their struggles and sufferings. "They would share how without earnings, they were unable to make their ends meet," said he. It was then that he along with Maurifat Ahmad, Adil Ahmad and Sameer Ahmad started the e-commerce website. Except Arif, all three co-founders belong to the families of artisans and have closely experienced the difficulties that pose a great threat to this community in Kashmir.

The worldwide popularity of Kashmiri handicrafts can be attributed to the high-quality, precision and the fact that they are handmade. Gulf and European countries form a major customer base for Kashmiri carpets and Pashmina shawls. Presently, handicrafts bring around ₹1,700 crore as foreign exchange every year to Jammu & Kashmir. Despite the popularity, the art



(and artisans) has suffered greatly as it remains largely unorganised with poor exposure to newer technologies and lack of proper marketing.

In Kashmir, there are approximately 2.5 lakh people associated with handicrafts including carpets, papier-mache, shawl weaving, wood carving and copper crafts, who are finding it difficult to feed their families and earn a livelihood. Several artisans have been forced to switch to other jobs. Elaborating on how they are helping artisans, Arif informed that the intermediaries were creating obstacles for artisans to grow their business. "Artisans associated with Kashmir Origin contact customers directly. They go live on social media platforms and make video calls to show customers how various handicraft items are produced. We put their items on top e-commerce websites where they get better returns," shared Arif.

While sharing his experience of how the e-commerce website has benefitted artisans in the last couple of years, Abdul Rashid Khanday, a 45-year-old shawl weaver from Srinagar's Eidgah said that their products are now getting global recognition. "People across the world

now know about our products and their authenticity. We get the money immediately after selling our products. This wasn't the case earlier. Also, we are now directly dealing with the customers as the role of intermediaries has been reduced through this intervention," he informed.

Shedding light on other reasons for decline of Kashmiri artforms, Abdul said, "Machine-made products have gained popularity among artisans as it doesn't require much hard work. Another reason is that some people are selling fake products as Kashmiri art," he rued.

To tackle the issue of fake Kashmiri products in the market, they have started placing a Geographical Indication (GI) tag on Kashmiri shawls. "Kashmiri artisans produce shawls of pure quality. Some people here, however, purchase shawls from other states and cheat customers by selling them as Kashmiri ones. To stop this practice, we have started placing a GI tag on products of our artisans," Arif told us.

GI tags are indications which identify a product as originating in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or characteristic of the product is essentially attributable to its geographic loca-

tion and origin. All this information is available on the website along with other details of the products.

"Customers, based on the information provided on the website, can now choose from a wide range of products. Before 2018, customers hardly had any knowledge about Kashmiri products or the artisans who make these products. Through this platform, customers can now know everything about products prior to making any purchase. They purchase things only after satisfaction and there is no scope of cheating. If anybody is not satisfied with the quality of product, he can file a complaint and also send feedback," shared another Pashmina shawl weaver, Shabir Ahmad, 41, a Srinagar resident.

Ahmad believes that one of the reasons why artisans have been suffering for so long is due to the poor implementation of government schemes meant for artisans. "We have no knowledge about such schemes. This unawareness is required to be addressed immediately only then our community will be able to benefit from such schemes," Ahmad said. He believes that setting up a marketplace in Kashmir for artisans to showcase their

work at a platform will help sustain both art and the artists.

Like Ahmad, Arif also believes that Kashmiri handicraft items have a huge market if promoted properly. The artforms of the region, he believes, require strategic promotion. Although online businesses have flourished in the valley in the last few years, the biggest hindrance has been the low internet speed. Post August 5, 2019 (revocation of J&K's special status), the internet was suspended for months in Kashmir. After 551 days of ban, the 4G internet was restored last month (February 2021). The low internet speed had caused heavy losses to the young entrepreneurs.

"We were not able to open our website and check customers' orders when the internet services were blocked and later, when only 2G was allowed. To run an online setup properly, high internet speed is a prerequisite. We suffered 75 per cent losses because customers in Kashmir were not able to access the website due to no or low internet speed," said Arif who is hopeful that restoration of 4G internet in the valley will help them recover from the losses.

—Charkha Features



Prioritise human growth

For a nation to mark all stages of development, it's important for its citizens to reach that level on the personal front, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

It has been increasingly realised over the past few decades that for all kinds of development, it is important for human beings to be developed at a personal level. Even if a country is industrially, economically or technologically considered as a developed country, it cannot, in real terms, be considered as "developed" or "advanced" if the human beings dwelling in that nation are backward.

As a result, the term - Human Resource Development (HRD) - was coined, which defines that 'human development is essential for development of all resources.' This has become an integral part of every industry, business, administrative services, etc. as it provides them with opportunities and avenues for the development of their staff and service personnel who, in turn, brings the benefit of their development to the organisation. This aspect of development has now become so popular that in many countries, the ministry of education has been renamed as the Ministry of Education & Human Resource Development. However, during the last one decade, it was felt by many that human beings are not a resource in the sense as natural and other resources are. Hence, they are not to be considered as a means for economic development and the latter need not be considered as the goal. Because development of human beings is, in itself, a goal and not a resource or a means.



Thus, the development of human beings need not be for some economic or other material or extraneous gains but it is, in itself, a gain. It is an end rather than a resource. There is no doubt in the fact that development of human beings would bring, in its wake, other kinds of developments and benefits. Hence, considering human beings to be a resource would mean that we are reducing their dignity and value. Off lately, this kind of argument or perception or philosophical objection has been gaining more strength so much that during the last decade or more, some thought that it would be wise to change the term from Human Resource Development to 'Human Response Development'. Perhaps, the school of thought is that while this term does away with the objectionable world, 'resource' retains the initials of the whole term that has now gained currency and popularity. In this replacement, though the emphasis is on the term, 'response', and also on 'human', which also gives the sense of 'human', the complete term, however, does not convey the actual concept or philosophy and it falls short of giving expression to the necessity and the importance of this new discipline.

However, most of the corporate gurus feel that it's necessary to have a proper term for it because this is an age in which we all are talking of some kind of development, be it industrial, urban, social or economic, etc. Hence, it becomes very important that this term should distinguish itself from all these kinds of developments. If we call it 'Human Capabilities Development', then it would have almost the same meaning as 'The Development of Human Potential'. In that case, it would be better and simpler to name it something like 'Human Development' for human beings have capabilities or potential for good as well as for bad but we do not intend to develop the potential for the negative. The term, 'Self-Development' would also be appropriate because unless the human being himself or herself makes effort for his or her own development, no salubrious change in a human being can occur.

Keeping aside all this discussion about what the term should be called, one thing that is undeniable and is acceptable to all is that that the development of human beings themselves is the most essential, for, else, the society suffers from illiteracy, crime, ill-health, undignified treatment to one another and so many problems that arise from lack of observance of human and moral values. So, as it is said, 'What's in the name?' What we as a society need to focus is on a holistic and an all-round development of a human being, whereby s/he achieves her/his highest potential while helping others to achieve the same.

Are you dealing with the stressful symptoms of PCOS? Be it missed periods, excessive hair growth on the face or body, weight gain, acne and fertility issues. The pandemic made it all the more difficult to consult our doctor face-to-face to deal with these problems, but digital healthcare platforms have made it easier for women dealing with such queries to consult the right doctor.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have accelerated the shift towards digital healthcare practices in India, but its adoption among women in 2020 - especially in non-metro cities - has been significant. Registering an overall growth of more than 212 per cent from the previous year, online consultations emerged as one of the preferred modes of consulting doctors by women in India, according to data from Practo.

According to Practo, more women in non-metro cities opted for online consultations in 2020 - growing at an average rate of 550 per cent, compared with 400 per cent recorded among women in metro cities. This means that even as the majority (65 per cent) of the total number of online consultations done by women in 2020 were from metro cities, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of women from non-metro cities adopting telemedicine. In fact, this trend has been developing over the past three years.

PCOS, skin allergy, weight loss, thyroid, depression, hair-fall, and UTI were some of the most discussed queries by women from non-metro cities

Change your circumstances

Dealing with stressful symptoms of PCOS? Here is what women can do about it



last year, says the health platform.

Women with PCOS have numerous cysts in their ovaries, caused by an overproduction of hormones called androgens. Polycystic ovary syndrome

(PCOS) is a condition that prevents the ovaries from functioning properly. PCOS is also a red flag for the inception of type 2 diabetes, explains Prabha Acharya, Homeopath, who also consults on Practo.

For few women, gaining weight can influence their hormones. If you're obese or overweight, this might help get your hormones back to normal. Losing 10 per cent of your body weight may help your menstru-

al cycle become more predictable. This should help you get pregnant.

Therefore, weight loss prior to conception helps improve live birth rate in obese women with or without PCOS. In simple words, living a healthy lifestyle and following diet, with regular exercise, no smoking, less stress, and control of diabetes and other medical conditions prescribed by your doctor should improve your fertility odds. To lose weight on a PCOS diet, re-frame your thinking to eating to live, not living to eat.

Here are quick tips from the doctor:

- ◆ Drink a lot of water and keep yourself well hydrated.
- ◆ Eat foods low on the glycemic index. Low glycemic index foods are carbohydrates that

break down slowly in the body, not causing a dramatic spike and then drop in insulin levels. Eat oats, brans, whole grains, broccoli, apples, etc. Avoid foods that are sugary and starchy such as: syrups, sugar, jams, scones, white bread products etc.

- ◆ Eat more fruits and vegetables for good fiber intake. Fiber helps promote healthy estrogen metabolism which aids in the reduction of elevated levels of androgens. E.g. whole grains, apples (with skin), green leafy vegetables, etc.
- ◆ Eat small frequent meals in a day and avoid skipping any meal and especially the first meal of the day i.e. breakfast.
- ◆ Include lean protein in your diet. E.g. lean chicken, fish, egg, nuts, legumes, pulses, low fat dairy products, skimmed milk, etc.
- ◆ Eat healthy Omega-3 fats in diet. Sources: fatty fish, olive oil, walnuts, flax seeds, etc. And avoid foods that are high in saturated fat, such as meats, cheeses, and fried foods.
- ◆ Get some sun rays for 10-15 minutes for your Vitamin D requirement. Great food sources of vitamin D are cod liver oil, eggs, salmon, etc.
- ◆ Exercise daily. Exercise plays a huge role by keeping weight in check, this helps regulate the hormones and increases chances of ovulation. Distress yourself. Try yoga.
- ◆ Avoid drinking aerated drinks. Avoid processed, junk food, quit smoking and alcohol. Regular visit to doctor for follow up.

Follow your plan and most importantly believe in yourself because only you have the potential to change your circumstances!

“ We generate fears while we Sit. we overcome them by action. —Dr Henry Link ”

HEAD INJURIES WORSEN COGNITIVE DECLINE

People who experienced head injuries in their 50s or younger score lower than expected on cognitive tests at age 70, a new study suggests.

The findings of the study indicated that head injuries did not appear to contribute to brain damage characteristic of Alzheimer's disease, but might make people more vulnerable to dementia symptoms.

"Here we found compelling evidence that head injuries in early or mid-life can have a small but significant impact on brain health and thinking skills in the long term," said lead researcher Sarah-Naomi James from the University College London (UCL). "It might be that a head injury makes the brain more vulnerable to, or accelerates, the normal brain ageing process," James added.



CANCER CELLS MAY EVADE CHEMOTHERAPY

Cancer cells can dodge chemotherapy by entering a state that bears similarity to certain kinds of senescence, a type of "active hibernation" that enables them to weather the stress induced by aggressive treatments aimed at destroying them, a new study suggests.

The findings, published in the journal Cancer Discovery, indicated that this biologic process could help explain why cancers so often recur after treatment. "Acute myeloid leukemia can be put into remission with chemotherapy, but it almost always comes back, and when it does it's incurable," said senior author Ari M. Melnick from Weill Cornell Medicine. In the study, the researchers found that when AML cells were exposed to chemotherapy, a subset of the cells went into a state of hibernation, or senescence, while at the same time assuming a condition that looked very much like inflammation.



HEALTHY DIET LINKED TO LOWER STROKE RISK

Consuming higher amounts of healthy plant-based foods and lower amounts of less healthy plant-based foods may reduce the risk of stroke, according to a new study.

The study indicated that healthy plant-based diets - defined as rich in foods such as leafy greens, whole grains, and beans, and including lower levels of foods like refined grains, potatoes and added sugars - may lower overall stroke risk by up to 10 per cent. "Our findings have important public health implications, suggesting that future nutrition policies to lower stroke risk should take the quality of food into consideration," said first author Megu Baden from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

The researchers found that a healthy plant-based diet - in addition to being linked with 10 per cent lower overall stroke risk - was associated with a modest reduction in risk of ischemic stroke, the most common type of stroke, which occurs when blood flow to the brain is blocked.



1 IN 3 WOMEN EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE GLOBALLY

One in three women, around 736 million, are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner in their lifetime, says a World Health Organisation (WHO) report.

According to the report, this violence starts early - one in four young women (aged between 15-24 years) who have been in a relationship will have already experienced violence by an intimate partner by the time they reach their mid-twenties. Intimate partner violence is by far the most prevalent form of violence against women globally, affecting around 641 million. However, six per cent of women globally report being sexually assaulted by someone other than their husband or partner, the report said. Given the high levels of stigma and under-reporting of sexual abuse, the true figure is likely to be significantly higher.



COVID-19 CAN AGGRAVATE KIDNEY PROBLEMS

While the effect of COVID-19 is well known on cardiovascular diseases or lungs, health experts on Thursday warned that COVID-19 patients with kidney problems need to be highly cautious too, or it may damage their kidneys.

According to the experts, many individuals who develop COVID-19 experience kidney damage or acute kidney injury (AKI), also known as acute renal failure (ARF). AKI is a sudden episode of kidney failure or kidney damage that happens within a few hours or a few days. It causes a build-up of waste products in the blood and makes it hard for kidneys to keep the right balance of fluid in the body. It can also affect other organs such as the brain, heart and lungs. "Kidneys get affected in cases where COVID-19 infection is severe. It further causes AKI in about 10 to 20 per cent of hospitalised patients," Deepak Kalra, Additional Director-Nephrology, Fortis Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, said.



VK AERIAL SHOW



India level T20 Series in style with debutant Kishan's blitz and Kohli's solid knock giving a 7-wicket win

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Ishan Kishan's fearless half-century on debut and skipper Virat Kohli's perfectly paced knock set up a series-levelevelling seven wicket win for India in the second T20 International against England here on Sunday.

Kishan smashed 56 off 32 balls at the top of the order and felt completely at home on the big stage, having played enough IPL cricket in a similar environment.

Chase master Kohli (73 not out off 49 balls) took charge after Kishan's dismissal to power India to victory with 13 balls to spare.

The Indian bowlers put up a disciplined effort to restrict England to 164 for six in 20 overs after Kohli opted to bowl.

India did not have the best of starts in the chase as they lost KL Rahul in the opening over for naught, caught by Jos Buttler behind the stumps off left-arm pacer Sam Curran.

Kishan, known for his attacking batting, made a formidable England attack look ordinary with his disdainful hitting. His sensational knock comprised five fours and four sixes.

Kishan and Kohli took the attack to the opposition to stitch a quickfire 95-run stand for the second wicket.

Kishan was caught plumb in front of the wicket by Adil Rashid in the 10th over but he had done his job by then.

Kohli and Rishabh Pant (26 off 13) then shared 36 runs for the third

AB'S CHAT HELPS KOHLI GET BACK TO HIS BEST

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Shifting his focus to the basics and a "special chat" with his Royal Challengers Bangalore teammate AB de Villiers helped India skipper Virat Kohli to comeback to his best in the second T20I.

Kohli, who did not have the best of times in the preceding Test series by his standards and got out cheaply in the first T20, made an unbeaten 73 off 49 balls to power India to a seven-wicket win.

"I had to shift the focus back to the basics. Probably thinking of too many variables on the outside. I've always taken pride in doing the job for the team, so more happy about that than scoring 70 odd."

"Kept my eye on the ball. The management spoke to me about things. Anushka is here so she also keeps speaking to me about things. And I had a special chat with AB de Villiers before this game and he told me just to watch the ball. So I did," Kohli said at the post-match presen-

tation.

He shared a 94-run stand for the second wicket with debutant Ishan Kishan, who made a sensational 56 off 32 balls.

"Special mention to Ishan. I tried to do what I can but he just took the game away from the opposition. Quality innings on debut. When you play in the IPL with such dominance like he has, against quality bowlers."

"We've seen him hit international fast bowlers for big sixes. He knew he was hitting the ball well but he was calculated, not reckless. Today that counter-attacking innings of his and our partnership was something the team needed," said Kohli praising the young southpaw.

"I think we ticked all the boxes we wanted to. Especially in the first innings with the ball. To give away only 34 in the last five, it was very smart bowling. Especially Wasly (Washington Sundar), he had only one left-hander to bowl to and he used the big boundary to the right-handers better."

wicket before the latter gave a simple catch to Jonny Bairstow off Chris Jordan in the 14th over to raise England's hopes.

But it was not to be as Kohli anchored the chase perfectly. The

skipper ended the game with a six off Jordan.

Earlier, Indian bowlers pulled things back brilliantly in the last five overs to concede 34 runs in the last five overs.



SA take ODI series

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The South African women's team's top-order batters fired in unison and helped their team clinch the five-match series against India with a seven-wicket victory in the fourth ODI here on Sunday.

Chasing 267, Lizelle Lee (69), Laura Wolvaardt (53), Mignon du Preez (61) and Lara Goodall (59 not out) shone as the visitors completed the task in 48.4 overs for an unassailable 3-1 lead in the rubber.

A poor squad selection by new committee under Neetu David cost India dearly as the hosts paid the price for ignoring Shafali Verma's flair in batting and Shikha Pandey's experience in bowling.

The win meant seasoned Punam Raut's third ODI hundred and veteran Harmanpreet Kaur's scintillating 35-ball 54 went in vain.

South Africa were in the game when the opening duo of last match centurion Lizelle Lee and skipper Laura Wolvaardt were going great guns, putting on 116 runs in 23 overs.

Mixing caution with aggression, both kept the scorecard moving at a fairly rate until Harmanpreet Kaur effected a having the dangerous Lee trapped in front of the wicket for a 75-ball 69.

Joined by Lara Goodall, Wolvaardt could not stay long enough after Lee's dismissal, getting out shortly after reaching her half century.

Goodall got a life when Sushma Verma missed a stumping and in the next delivery, the batter stepped out and played an inside-out shot for a boundary.

After that, Goodall hit off-spinner Deepti Sharma waist-high full toss outside off to the cover boundary.

Du Preez then smashed left-arm spinner Radha Yadav for three successive boundaries—two through the point region and one into the deep square leg fence—as the visitors brought the equation to 61 runs in the last 10 overs.

Du Preez had, in fact, set the ball rolling by hitting Poonam Yadav for a six and four in the 34th over, lifting her team from 148/4 to 162. They needed 97 in the last 15 overs.

Du Preez carried on in the same vein until she fell to Rajeshwari Gayakwad while trying to loft one over mid-on.

But Goodall stayed till the end to guide her team to victory.

Earlier, the 31-year-old Raut struck 10 boundaries in her unbeaten 104.

Raut added 103 runs for the third wicket with skipper Mithali Raj (45 off 71 balls), who became the only player in women's cricket to complete

Our bowlers need to prep better: Mithali

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Indian women's ODI team skipper Mithali Raj on Sunday said her bowlers lacked the right kind of preparation before entering the five-match series against South Africa.

"Even if we scored more than 266, it wouldn't be enough, the way the South Africans batted. Our bowling department needs to work on preparation before a series. We lacked that," Mithali said at the presentation ceremony.

"We are not a bad fielding side but there are things we can improve on," she added.

"We missed Jhulan's experience but it was an opportunity for the other bowlers to step up and take responsibility. Our spin department is experienced. I expect them to come back stronger," Mithali said.

Laura Wolvaardt, who set the tone with a 116-run opening wicket stand with Lizelle Lee, called it a "massive team effort".

"I'm fresh to the job and I used the senior players for advice and help. The plan was to be as attacking with the ball upfront as we could be. We have a world-class attack. One in the top four has to bat through for us. It's something we haven't done in the past," Wolvaardt said.

7,000 ODI runs before getting out in the second powerplay.

Failing to make most of a chance she got in the previous over, Mithali drove one in the air for Shabnim Ismail to complete a good running catch.

The century partnership laid the foundation for a challenging total against a South African side that won both their matches in the five-match series while chasing.

After Mithali's dismissal, Raut joined forces with the flamboyant Harmanpreet to add another 88 runs in quick time.

Harmanpreet was in her element straightaway, hitting two boundaries to kick-start her innings. In her inimitable style, the India T20 captain went about playing her strokes as the 200 came up in the 41st over.

What aided Harmanpreet's free-flowing game was the presence of a well-settled Raut at the other end, who was content to keep the scoreboard ticking as her swashbuckling partner went after the South African bowlers.

Tare Shaw win Hazare for Mumbai

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Skipper Prithvi Shaw's Smarauding 73 off 39 balls followed by former skipper Aditya Tare's unbeaten hundred guided Mumbai to their most deserving Vijay Hazare title triumph with a crushing six-wicket victory over Uttar Pradesh in one of most lopsided final on Sunday.

Opting to bat, UP rode on opener Madhav Kaushik's unbeaten 158 to post 312/4, but it was overshadowed by the Shaw blitzkrieg which set the platform for Tare to finish off the chase in style with as many as 51 balls remaining.

This is Mumbai's fourth Hazare title and the one to remember for Shaw (827 runs), who now holds the record for highest runs scored in single edition of this competition.

Shaw (73 off 39 balls; 10x4, 4x6) and fellow opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (29; 3x4; 1x6) gave the side an aggressive start by conjuring 89 runs in 9.1 overs.

Shaw started with a cover-drive, off left arm seamer Yash Dayal. He got a life on 5, after being dropped by Karan Sharma at mid-off, and he then smashed three fours in the second over off Aaqib Khan.

He then took on Dayal, hammering two boundaries and a six over mid-wicket, his trademark pull-shot, as Mumbai raced to 32/0 after three overs.



Shaw continued his onslaught and notched up his 50 in only 30 balls, with a six, another pull shot, but then holed in the deep off Shivam Mavi when another hundred looked imminent.

Jaiswal and Tare added 38-run stand but the left handed opener gave Shivam Sharma his first wicket, after being caught by Mavi but Mumbai were already on course with a run-rate of 8.5 runs per over.

However, Tare kept the

momentum going as he hammered Dayal for three boundaries in the 33rd over, even as Shivam Dube (42 off 28 balls; 6x4, 1x6) played a fitting cameo.

Tare completed his century in 91 balls, his first in List A cricket, with a single. The Tare-Dube duo took Mumbai on the cusp of a win, adding 88 runs for the fourth wicket before the former skipper played a back cut between point and short third man to complete the formalities.

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Only option was to rectify mistakes & come back stronger: Shaw

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

He had no option but to go back to drawing board, rectify his mistakes and come back stronger like never before which Mumbai captain Prithvi Shaw did with aplomb after being dropped from the Indian team.

The former India U-19 captain after a disastrous Adelaide Test was benched for the next three and then dropped from the national team for the England series.

However it did wonders for the right-hander, who created a national record in Mumbai's Vijay Hazare triumph, ending with 827 runs in the tournament.

"It was a bit difficult but you know, my only thing was go-back and work hard, just those small mistakes, what was happening in Australia, just to fill those blanks and come back stronger."

Shaw said at the post match presentation when asked how did he come back strong after the Australia tour.

With a pronounced back-lift and the bat coming down at an angle from gully,



made Shaw a candidate for bowled and leg before to deliveries coming in. However nothing of that sort has been visible in the Hazare Trophy where he smashed four tons including a record double hundred against Puducherry.

Did captaincy help his batting "I (have been) doing captaincy from a very young age, so I have done U-14, U-16 and U-19. I have done India-A as well. I really enjoy captaining the side and you know focused every ball, so I just love doing this and it affects my batting as well, so I am more focused," said Shaw.

Afghans win 2nd Test, level series

IANS ■ ABU DHABI

Afghanistan beat Zimbabwe by six wickets in the second Test at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium here on Sunday to square the series 1-1.

In a match that went down to the final session of Day 5, Rahmat Shah's 58 and his 81-run stand with opener Ibrahim Zadran (29) helped Afghanistan chase down a target of 108.

Zimbabwe captain Sean Williams was unbeaten on 151 earlier as Rashid Khan's seven-wicket haul helped Afghanistan dismiss Zimbabwe for 365.

Zimbabwe started the second session on 330/8 and Afghanistan took 12 overs to take the last two wickets. Rashid took the last wicket, having bowled as many as 62.5 overs in the innings. Earlier, a partnership of 187 runs between Williams and Donald Tiripano helped Zimbabwe escape an innings defeat and even gave them a chance at drawing the match.

The series thus ends 1-1 after Zimbabwe had won the first Test by 10 wickets. Zimbabwe were chasing their first series win since 2011. The two teams now face each other in a three-match T20I series from Wednesday.

AGENCIES ■ TURIN

Lautaro Martinez scored a superb late winner to stretch Inter Milan's Serie A winning run to eight games and send his side nine points clear on top with a 2-1 victory over relegation-threatened Torino.

Romelu Lukaku fired Inter in front from the penalty spot after 62 minutes but Antonio Sanabria soon levelled, before Martinez steered a header into the bottom corner with five minutes remaining.

"It was a tough match, we knew Torino are down towards the bottom of the table and needed points, but we did too to stay at the top of the table," Martinez told Sky Italia. Inter moved up to 65 points. Second-placed AC Milan can close the gap back to six points if they beat Napoli later on Sunday.

Torino remain in 18th place with 20 points, two adrift of Cagliari above them but with a game in hand over the Sardinian side.

With coach Antonio Conte looking on from the stands as he sat out a suspension, Inter struggled to break down a well-drilled Torino side.

But substitutes Christian Eriksen and Alexis Sanchez made an impact from the bench,

Inter move closer to Scudetto



as the Dane was involved in the move leading to the penalty and Sanchez provided the cross for Martinez's winning header.

"They certainly changed the game," Inter assistant coach Cristian Stellini told Sky Italia. "Eriksen had some physical problems but he was fine and ready for the match. We expected the two of them to provide a change of gear."

"We were prepared for a close match and knew they could be dangerous coming off the bench."

Martinez headed a good chance wide from close range early on, but the home side came closest in the first half when Lyanco's header came back off the post.

Inter went in front when Armando Izzo tripped Martinez in the box to hand Lukaku the chance to score his 19th league goal of the season from the penalty spot. Sanabria fired in from close range after Inter failed to clear their lines from a corner, but a perfectly executed header from Martinez restored the visitors' lead late on.

Arsenal win North London derby

AFP ■ LONDON

A first Premier League goal for Martin Odegaard and Alexandre Lacazette penalty saw Arsenal come from behind to beat 10-man Spurs in the north London derby.

Mikel Arteta's side dominated much of the match, but fell behind to an outrageous goal from Erik Lamela, who was later shown a red card.

The Spurs substitute, who had replaced the injured Son Heung-Min early on, produced a brilliant rabona effort that curled into the bottom corner of Bernd Leno's goal on 33 minutes. But Arsenal, who hit the woodwork twice in an excellent first-half display, deservedly equalised on the cusp of half-time when Odegaard's shot took a deflection to wrong-foot Hugo Lloris. Arsenal continued to look the better side after the break, and the equaliser came from the spot when Davinson Sanchez



fouled Lacazette and the Frenchman converted.

Spurs huffed and puffed and thought they'd equalised late on when Harry Kane's header found the bottom corner, only for the offside flag to go up. And Kane, who was given very little service, went close again late on when his free-kick cannoned back off the post.

But chances were in short supply for Spurs all afternoon, particularly after Lamela, who had been flourishing with bookings throughout the match, was shown a second yellow for an arm to the face of Kieran Tierney. And Arsenal held on for the win that their performance very much deserved.