

OPINION 8
STOP ROMANTICISING
INTERFAITH MARRIAGES**WORLD 11**
STOP MURDERING PROTESTERS:
UN TELLS MYANMAR MILITARY**SPORT 14**
POLLARD HITS 6
SIXES IN AN OVER

LUCKNOW, FRIDAY MARCH 5, 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3



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12 VIVACITY

Covid resurgence: Cases soar to 8 weeks high

Over 17,000 cases in 24 hours; 6 States account for 88.76% of Covid deaths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a case of serious concern on the Covid-19 front, the overall daily cases on Thursday surged past 17,000 — the highest in eight weeks — with just six States accounting for 88.76 per cent of the new deaths pushing India's death toll to 1,57,435 and cases to 1,11,56,923.

As many as 89 fatalities were recorded in the last 24 hours with Maharashtra reporting maximum 42, Kerala 15 deaths and Punjab reported 12 deaths.

However, 23 States and UTs have not reported any deaths due to infections in the last 24 hours. The rise in new cases of this magnitude was last reported in the early week of January, pointed out experts.

The rate of active cases has also been rising gradually, pushing it to 1.55 per cent. As per the Ministry's data, there are 1,73,413 active cases at present after 14,031 patients were discharged in a day.

The experts have pointed out that number of possibilities could be due to the stride ranging from the lax attitude of people towards following Covid protocols to the likeability of "mutations and new strains" causing the surge, as has been studied by the laboratories involved in the Covid detection across the country.

According to State



An elderly woman hands over a document to register for the Covid vaccine at a private hospital in Guwahati on Thursday AP

Governments, the recent surge is due to the rise in marriage ceremonies and State and local bodies elections. In mid-February, officials had said the average daily new infections oscillated between 9,000 and 12,000 while the deaths were between 78 and 120 while on February 9, India had reported 9,110 new cases, the lowest this year so far. Last year, the lowest 9,633 cases were recorded on June 3.

The 23 States/UTs which have not reported any Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours are: Madhya Pradesh, Haryana,

Rajasthan, J&K (UT), Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Puducherry, Assam, Lakshadweep, Nagaland, Sikkim, Ladakh (UT), Tripura, A&N Islands, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Daman & Diu, Dadar & Nagar Haveli and Arunachal Pradesh.

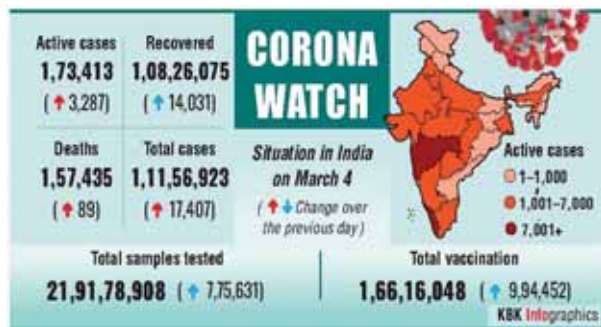
So far, 1,66,16,048 doses of vaccine have been administered in the country since the drive began on January 16.

Meanwhile, the latest round of seroprevalence survey conducted in Hyderabad has showed that about 54 per cent

of the population in the city has been exposed to the virus and developed antibodies against it.

The study was jointly conducted by the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), the ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) and the pharmaceutical company Bharat Biotech.

"The data indicate that the population of Hyderabad might be slowly moving towards herd immunity, which will be certainly accelerated by the ongoing vaccination effort," said Doctor Rakesh Mishra, the CCMB director.



We are giving jabs to foreign nations but not vaccinating our own people: HC to Centre

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Thursday asked the Centre to explain the rationale behind keeping strict control over class of persons who can be vaccinated against Covid-19 currently as under the present system those above the age of 60 years or with comorbidities can receive vaccination.

The high court said the two institutes which have developed the vaccines COVISHIELD and COVAXIN — Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech — have more capacity to provide the vaccines but it seems that their full capacity is not being exploited.

"We are not utilising it fully. We are either donating it to foreign countries or selling it to them and are not vaccinating our own people. So there has to be that sense of responsibility and urgency," a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said.

The high court directed the two institutes to file separate affidavits on their capacity to manufacture the vaccines on per day/ week/ month basis and also the current optic of the vaccines and how much unused capacity is lying.

They also have to indicate if they can scale up their production capacities, it said.

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UK strains more contagious: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid cases of new variants of mutated SARS-CoV-2 emerging in India, a new modelling study has found that a variant of the virus that causes Covid-19 in the UK in November 2020 is more transmissible than pre-existing variants.

The study should come as a warning to India where number of infections with the mutant UK, South Africa, and Brazil variants of SARS-CoV-2 jumped to 242 on Thursday.

The new Covid-19 UK strain is more contagious and spread faster, and vaccines could be less effective on these patients, according to a new modelling study published in the journal Science.

However, the study has its limitation as it was based on a relatively smaller number of intervention and vaccination scenarios.

The research noted that without stringent control measures such as limited closure of educational institutions and a greatly accelerated vaccine roll-out, Covid-19 hospitalisations and deaths across England in 2021 will exceed those in 2020.

Researchers, including those from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine estimate that the novel variant has a 43-90 per cent higher reproduction number than pre-existing variants of SARS-CoV-2 in England.

Reproduction number indicates the average number of people who will contract a contagious disease from one infected person.

After emerging in November last year, evidence began to emerge in December that VOC 202012/01 was rapidly outcompeting pre-existing variants in southeast England, the researchers said.

They noted that as of February 15, the variant comprises roughly 95 per cent of new SARS-CoV-2 infections in the UK, and has now been identified in at least 82 countries, including India.

India is taking all steps to speed up vaccination pace and hopes to inoculate around 30 crore people by August this year in the second phase.

Estimates of its growth rate, disease severity and impact are crucial for informing policy responses, according to the researchers.

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CAPSULE

12 FROM MYANMAR TAKE REFUGE IN MIZORAM

Aizawl: At least 12 people from Myanmar crossed into India and took refuge in Mizoram around a month after neighbouring country's military ousted the elected Government of Aung San Suu Kyi, officials said on Thursday.

NAXAL BLAST KILLS 3 SECURITY PERSONNEL

Ranchi: Three security personnel were martyred and two injured in a Naxal-triggered IED blast in the forests of Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on Thursday.

KEJRIWAL, PARENTS GET COVID VACCINE

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who along with his parents took their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine on Thursday, appealed to all eligible people to come forward and get vaccinated, asserting that there's "nothing to fear".

'UNDER GST, PETROL PRICE CAN COME DOWN TO ₹75'

Mumbai: Petrol price can go down to ₹75 a litre across the country if brought under the ambit of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), but there is a lack of political will, which is keeping Indian oil product prices at one of the highest in the world, economists at SBI said on Thursday.

Fertiliser factory a big gift to farmers: CM

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR/LUCKNOW

Describing the revival of the fertiliser factory of Hindustan Fertilizer and Chemicals Limited as a great gift for farmers and youth, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that it was the biggest investment for Gorakhpur.

He said that some skill development centres would also be opened in this fertiliser factory so that the youth could get training there and be able to get employment.

The chief minister said that in 2016, the foundation stone of this fertiliser factory was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and soon it would be dedicated to the nation by him.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was talking to the reporters after inspecting the fertiliser factory on Thursday with Union Fertilizer and Chemicals Minister DV Sadanand Gowda.

He said that the prime minister's vision of a self-reliant India was being realised with a large investment in Gorakhpur as a fertiliser factory at a cost of about Rs 8,000 crore.

"No one expected a new



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath holds a child as he interacts with women during a mega credit camp held in Gorakhpur on Thursday PTI

plant would replace a compost factory that had been closed for 26 years, but this was made possible by the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

The chief minister said that the memories of Gorakhpur were linked with this factory since a long time. "In 1967-68, the Toyo Company of Japan had set up a very good plant here for the Fertiliser Corporation of India. The urea made here was popular among farmers up to UP, Bihar and Bengal. It is a matter of pleasure that today the same Toyo Company has set up a plant for Hindustan Fertilizer and Chemicals Limited," he

said. Yogi Adityanath said that due to the progress of the agriculture sector and timely supply of fertilisers and other facilities to farmers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision was being realised.

He pointed out that under the leadership of PM Modi, even during Covid period the supply of fertilisers was not interrupted in the entire country, including Uttar Pradesh.

"This supply chain was possible only with the guidance of PM Modi. In a global pandemic of coronavirus, the uninterrupted supply chain is nothing short of an achievement,"

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Production from June 30: Gowda

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR/LUCKNOW

Union Fertilisers and Chemicals Minister DV Sadananda Gowda on Thursday announced that the fertiliser factory in Gorakhpur will become operational from June 30 instead of the targeted July-end. He credited the Yogi Adityanath government for taking due interest in timely completion of the factory despite being affected by the coronavirus pandemic for a year.

Gowda was speaking to reporters after inspecting the fertiliser factory of Hindustan Fertilizer and Chemicals Limited (HURL) along with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Gorakhpur. He said that 98 per cent work of this fertiliser factory had already been completed. The Union minister said that this factory was a dream of Yogi Adityanath as an MP and now it was going to be fulfilled. Gowda said that earlier the country had to import 80-90 lakh metric tons of fertiliser. He said with Prime

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Some OTT platforms show pornographic content: SC

Apex court wants ways to screen programmes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said that a few over-the-top (OTT) platforms show some kind of pornographic content at times, and there should be a mechanism to screen such programmes.

A Bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to place before it the recent guidelines of the Government to regulate social media platforms on Friday, when it would hear the plea of Amazon Prime Video's India head Aparna Purohit challenging the Allahabad High Court order rejecting her anticipatory bail in connection with FIRs lodged against her over web series "Tandav".

"A balance has to be struck as some OTT platforms are also showing pornographic materi-



als on their platforms," the bench, also comprising Justice RS Reddy, said.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Purohit, termed the case against her as "shocking" saying this woman is an employee of Amazon and she is neither a producer nor an actor but still she has been made an accused in around 10 cases relating to the web series across the country.

Tandav, a nine-episode political thriller starring Bollywood A-listers Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia and Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub, started streaming recently.

OTT guidelines for self-classification to boost audience experience: Min

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid concerns among some AOTT (Over-the-Top) players about the new digital media rules, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar on Thursday said his Ministry will partner with the industry to make the audience experience better and asserted the guidelines focus on self-classification of content instead of any form of censorship.

Javadekar, after a meeting with representatives of OTT platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar and Alt Balaji, also said that they have welcomed the Government's new guidelines.

The Centre on February 25 notified rules for OTT platforms and digital news media, requiring them to have a grievance redressal system.

Bengaluru, Shimla most liveable cities in India



Pune, Bhubaneswar 2nd in Ease of Living Index 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bengaluru has been rated the most liveable city in India in the Government's "Ease of Living Index". The others, in the order of ranking, are Pune, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Surat, Navi Mumbai, Coimbatore, Vadodra, Indore and Greater Mumbai.

The lowest on the list are: Bareilly, Dhanbad and Srinagar. Interestingly, in the 2018 "Ease of Living Index", Pune was ranked the most liveable city in the country. It was followed by Navi Mumbai and Greater Mumbai, which have slipped to the sixth and the 10th rank respectively in the 2020 edition of the East of Living Index.

Besides, Shimla topped the list among 62 cities having less than one million population followed by Bhubaneswar, while Muzaffarpur in Bihar occupies the bottom place in the rankings.

The city ranking based on the Ease of Living Index 2020, was released by Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday. Chennai, Surat, Navi Mumbai, Coimbatore, Vadodara, Indore and Greater Mumbai are the other seven cities that have found place in the top 10 among the million-plus

cities.

Of the 49 cities ranked on livability index in the "million-plus population" category, Delhi ranked at the 13th position, Meerut at 36 and Faridabad 40 position and Bareilly, Dhanbad, Srinagar are at the bottom at 47, 48 and 49 position respectively.

Tirupati was at the fourth position and Chandigarh fifth in 2018, but in the 2020 Ease of Living Index, Tirupati and Chandigarh have slipped to the 46th and the 29th position respectively.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency Varanasi was ranked 33 position in 2018 which has been ranked at the 27 position in 2020.

Unlike the first ease of living index (EoLI) report of 2018, the latest ranking of cities in 2020 has put 111 cities in two categories, million-plus and cities having population less than a million. "These cities have emerged as models of development who will inspire others to perform better. Further, their peers will also benefit from emulating their best practices," Puri said.

Interestingly, no city from West Bengal figures in the ranking list. The assessment exercise was carried out last year just before the lockdown. Performance of the cities have been measured on four broad parameters — governance and social, physical and economic infrastructure. According to officials, the Ease of Living Index is an assessment tool that evaluates the quality of life and the impact of various initiatives for urban development.

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Hurriyat chief Mirwaiz set free, all curbs lifted by admin

PNS ■ JAMMU

Chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has been set free by the local administration in Srinagar.

The administration lifted the restrictions imposed on his free movement days before the Centre scrapped special status of J&K under Article 370 and split the erstwhile State into two Union Territories in the first week of August 2019.

Interestingly, even after the announcement was made public and his well wishers congratulated him on the various social media platforms deployment of security forces remained visible outside his residence.

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Assembly adjourned sine die

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh assembly was adjourned sine die on Thursday after the House passed the annual budget for 2021-22, the largest budget so far in the history of the state.

The government presented the last budget of its current tenure on February 22 with an outlay of Rs 5,50,270.78 crore. This was the first ever paperless budget to be presented in any state assembly of the country.

The first paperless budget of Uttar Pradesh, which intends to make the state 'atma nirbhar' (self-reliant) as the finance minister put it, includes new schemes worth Rs 27,598.40 crore. The budget comprising 95 grants of different departments was passed without any debate and the UP Finance Bill 2021 was passed by the assembly with a voice vote. The last budget in February 2020 was also passed by the assembly without debate.

The budget session of the assembly commenced on February 18 and was to conclude on March 10.

During the brief budget session of 15 days, there were 10 sittings of the House spanning 65 hours and 31 minutes. The proceedings were disrupted for 2 hours 45 minutes due to adjournments, thus the total time of proceedings was 62 hours 45 minutes.

During the 10 sittings of the House, the members tabled 192 short notice starred questions, 1,301 starred questions and 1,671 unstarred questions. Of the total questions tabled, the government answered 1,311 questions.

During the session, 18 bills were tabled and passed by the assembly.

In the debate over the motion of thanks to the Governor's address to the joint sitting of the state legislature, 48 members participated in the debate while 116 members

Speaker thanks all MLAs as budget session ends

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker Hriday Narayan Dikshit on Thursday thanked all the members on the concluding day of the budget session.

He said that all party leaders and members participated in substantive discussions. Praising the quality of the proceedings, the speaker said that time was not only important in the proceedings, the quality of the debate and the importance of in-depth deliberations on the issues should also be evaluated. He said the biggest feature of this session was that this time the proceedings of the House were conducted in a very harmonious and smooth manner.

He said there were arguments from both sides and there were interruptions but it did not disrupt the proceedings of the House.

The speaker lauded the opposition saying that they made an outstanding contribution to the smooth conduct of the proceedings of the House.

He said that democracy was the most preferred and sought after political system in the world. "Where there are movements for the demand of democracy in many places in



"Where there are movements for the demand of democracy in many places in the world, India has an ancient tradition of democracy"

the world, India has an ancient tradition of democracy," he said, adding that as Uttar Pradesh was the largest state in the country, the proceedings of its assembly were watched by other state legislatures and people across the country.

He said on the question of law and order, there were several important debates in the assembly. "Of course, the opposition has its own figures and arguments against the government and the government has its own facts and figures, but both sides main-

tained the seriousness of the debate and dignity of the House," the speaker said.

He said both the government and the opposition conducted in a responsible manner in debates over the issue of stray cattle and the problem of sugarcane farmers.

The speaker praised all party leaders including leader of opposition Ram Govind Chaudhary, Bahujan Samaj Party leader Lalji Verma, Indian National Congress leader Aradhana Mishra and Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party.

UP Fundamental Rules (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

Despite protests by the opposition parties, the assembly also passed the UP Repeal Bill, 2021.

The opposition objected over the undue haste and tabling of the bill after the entire agenda of the House was completed. Leader of opposition Ram Govind Chaudhary

ODOP is basis of self-sufficiency of MSME sector: CM Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that One District One Product (ODOP) scheme was the basis of self-sufficiency of micro, small and medium scale industries as after agriculture, the traditional enterprises associated with ODOP had contributed the most to the economy of the state during the most challenging times of coronavirus pandemic.

"The MSME sector, including ODOP, are important tools of financial inclusion of the poor, farmers, women and youth of villages while making them self-reliant and empowered," the chief minister said and added, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target of increasing the economy of the country to 5 trillion US dollars by 2024, in which the contribution of UP has to be one trillion US dollars," he said.

The chief minister was addressing the people present in the huge loan disbursing camp held at Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Park (Numaish Grounds) located in the planetarium on Thursday evening. He said that through ODOP, MSMEs had guaranteed employment with less capital and its results had made a positive impact across the state.

In the last four years, the state govern-



ment has provided employment to crores of people by providing loans to 50 lakh MSME units from banks. This has improved the economy of UP. Previously, where Uttar Pradesh's economy used to be at the fifth and sixth positions in the country, now it is at the second place. The per capita income has increased from Rs 45,000 to Rs 95,000.

Yogi said that migrants returning to the villages during the coronavirus period were earning their livelihood by joining local and traditional enterprises. He said the state government was also working to create jobs by creating MSME clusters. He also referred to the increased busi-

ness of terracotta craftsmen and the profits they earned on Diwali.

The chief minister said that more than seven crore Jan Dhan accounts had been opened in the state, out of which 17.5 lakh were in Gorakhpur alone. He said due to this, people were getting the benefits of the government schemes without corruption and directly in their bank accounts.

The chief minister said that the CD ratio of banks in Uttar Pradesh had increased as compared to the previous regime. "Our goal is to take it to 75 per cent," he said.

During the programme, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, along with providing loan certificates to the beneficiaries of several districts, spoke to them and asked them to use the loan to strengthen themselves and others.

The chief minister also inspected ten stalls in the exhibition ground and encouraged the entrepreneurs and gave them tips on gathering information about the finished product and subsequent marketing.

Former Union Minister of State for Finance Shiv Raj Pratap Shukla, Rajya Sabha member Jaiprakash Nishad, MLA Dr Radha Mohan Das Aggarwal, Baroda UP Bank President Devendra Pal and others were present in the programme.

Rape victim ends life after threats by kin of accused

Lucknow (PNS): A rape victim committed suicide in Sambhal on Thursday after her family was harassed and threatened to withdraw the police case. According to reports, a girl hailing from Bahjoi locality of Sambhal was raped by a local youth in August last year after which she lodged a report and the local police arrested the accused and sent him to jail.

The accused is still in jail. Sources said that ever since the cops arrested the accused, his family and cohorts were putting pressure on the victim's family to withdraw the case.

For the last few days, they mounted pressure on the family and even threatened them with their lives if they did not withdraw the case and went

ahead to record their statement in the court. The victim, finding the life of her family members in danger, especially after learning about the Hathras incident, decided to end her own life. She hanged herself from the ceiling of her house on Thursday to end the ordeal of her family.

Her family alleged that the girl committed suicide due to pressure of the rape accused to withdraw case.

A case has been registered in this regard by the police and the body was sent for post-mortem. Further investigations are on.

Barely three days ago, a farmer was killed in Hathras for daring to lodge a report against the assailant for molesting his daughter.

SP will remove EVMs if voted to power: AKY

Lucknow (PNS): Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday pledged to remove electronic voting machines (EVMs) if his party was voted to power in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.

Claiming that nobody had faith in

EVMs, Yadav said that even the US conducted the election using paper ballots. At the same time, he stressed that it was unwise to campaign against EVMs at this juncture.

Yadav said, "I am saying this even today. Nobody trusts EVMs. In America,

elections were held and the counting went on for many days. People will regain trust only through ballots. But this battle cannot be fought now. That's why we want to ensure that at least all the Samajwadi Party workers cast their vote. If all of them cast their vote, the BJP

will be defeated automatically. And after forming the government, the Samajwadi Party will remove the EVMs first." The SP chief, who was in Jhansi on Thursday, said that the focus for the 2022 UP assembly elections would remain on ensuring that SP wins the polls.



NOTICE

Notify that Original Allotment Letter No. 259/PO/07 Registration No. 285 2478 issued in favour of Ramu, Plot No. SS 461, Sector F, LDA Colony Kanpur Road Lucknow has been lost. Ramzan Khan S/o Noor Mohammad.

NOTICE

Notify that the original allotment letter of Plot No. D-2/401, Vastukhand, Gomtinagar, Lucknow favouring Smt Meera Devi Gupta w/o Shri. Vishwanath Gupta registered to me on 28/9/2006 has been lost, use of which is illegal. - Rajendra Kumar Choudhary s/o Shri Ram Vilash Choudhary, Lucknow

NOTICE

INFORMATION

The general public is informed that the original Sale deed of Arazi No. 379 area 0.7500 hect. of 1/5 part area 0.1500 hect. Village Rampur Bhimsen, Kanpur Nagar, whose is registered in Sub-Registrar Office Zone-2, Kanpur Nagar in Book No.-1 Volume No.-9082 on page no. 297 to 316 at serial number - 5967 on dated 07/09/2018. It is in the joint name of Mohit Chandra Jain and his wife Visakha Jain, which is lost somewhere in the court compound, Kanpur Nagar. If it is misused by any person, he will be responsible for it themselves. **Rakesh Singh (Advocate)** Mob. 9935535754

Girl in love with four compelled to marry one through lottery

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bizarre case of 'kaun Banega pati' in Rampur, a girl having affairs with four youths had eloped with all of them but after she was pressured to marry one of them, she was left with no option but to decide her husband through lottery.

Interestingly, till the last moment the girl could not decide whom to marry amongst the four.

According to reports, a girl belonging to a minority community in Azeemnagar locality of Tanda town in Rampur district had affairs with four youths belonging to three neighbouring villages. Last week she decided to live with all the four so she eloped with them and stayed with them for two days before the family traced her with the help of police. The family wanted to get a case registered against the youths but as the girl was an adult and said that she had willingly eloped with the four youths, the senior citizens of the area influenced the family to find an amicable solution.

To decide the matter, panchayats were held at different levels during the last three days and finally the girl was asked to choose one youth for 'nikah'. However, the girl claimed she was in love with all the four and that she was confused with whom of the four to go ahead for 'nikah'. Finally, the panchayat called a boy, put the name slips of all the four youths in a box and asked him to pick up one slip. Later, 'nikah' of the girl was solemnised with the youth whose name slip was picked by the boy.

Priyanka tip-toeing 'soft Hindutva' to regain lost ground in UP

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW

Tip-toeing the 'Soft Hindutva' agenda of her party in a bid to shun its 'pro-Muslim' image, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is likely to visit the state capital after over a year with a 'darshan' at Mankameswar temple on coming Mahashivratri next week.

Interestingly, to ensure that the message should not go that she spared just some time for the 'darshan' in the temple during her political visit to the city, the Congress leaders have spared almost a full day for the purpose and are planning another schedule for the next day.

Eying a better result for the party in the next assembly election and also to overcome the trauma of coalition politics with Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party in the last parliamentary elections, which was later dubbed by the BJP as an alliance only to consolidate Muslim vote bank, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra tip-toed the 'Soft Hindutva' approach through her recent kisan panchayats in Uttar Pradesh and also by making religious tour. She took a dip in the Sangam on Mauni Amavasya (a sacred day on which millions take a dip in the holy rivers across India) at Prayagraj.

Priyanka Vadra also paid obeisance at the famous Mankameswar temple in the town. It is believed that the wishes of a person are fulfilled by paying obeisance at the temple. Congress president Sonia Gandhi had also visited the temple in 2001.

Vadra also met Shankaracharya Swami Shwaroopanand Saraswati. The



Congress leader took the dip at the Sangam like an ordinary devotee, without any protocol, in view of the Mauni Amavasya bathing. She also had a brief boat ride in the river. Clad in a maroon kurta, she also offered coconut and flowers at the Sangam. She wore rudraksha beads on her wrist.

Interestingly, she willfully avoided making the tour 'political' by maintaining a distance from the media persons and also by not replying to their questions. She also offered flowers as a tribute to former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at the Anand Bhavan and spent some time with the children at the orphanage there.

Just a day before Prayagraj's visit, Priyanka paid obeisance at the famous Shakambari Devi temple near Saharanpur where she was seen meditating for some time as the priests chanted hymns. The Congress leader then visited the Raipur Khanqah Dargah in Saharanpur where she offered a 'chadar' before addressing a well attended 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' there. She was seen carrying beads of rudraksha.

To woo the Dalits also, Priyanka just like in the last year, again visited the Sant Ravidas temple in Varanasi on Ravidas Jayanti last Saturday and also had langar (community feast) with other devotees. Later during her recent Mathura visit for the kisan rally, Priyanka visited Bankei Bihari temple and offered full prayers and chanted hymns.

Now, besides planning to offer prayers and in her remaining kisan panchayats in the state, Priyanka would come to Lucknow and visit Mankameswar temple in Daliganj to offer prayers on occasion of Mahashivratri.

Interestingly, Priyanka's temple hopping and the dip at the holy Sangam has been praised by several Hindu seers, who are currently camping on the bank of the Ganga in view of the ongoing Magh Mela (an annual religious event).

"Congress may regain its past glory if its leaders keep visiting temples.... former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi also regularly visited temples," said a prominent seer after Priyanka's visit.

BJP leaders said that the temple visits by Priyanka proved that Congress was following the path shown by the saffron party. However, close aides reacted saying mixing personal faith with politics was uncalled for as the Congress was a party for everyone, of each religion and caste.

They claimed that the rudraksha beads worn by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was not new in the family and even late Indira Gandhi wore it in her regular public appearances and so trying to search for some other meaning would not be fair to her.

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Asad Nagar Dasherha Bagh near Fatima Masjid Naka Satrikh Barabanki 225001 (UP).

OFFICE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER
CONSTRUCTION UNIT UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM
COLLECTORATE COMPOUND, RUDRAPUR, DISTT-UDHAM SINGH NAGAR

L.No 301/Tender/14
E-Tender Notice
Date: 03.03.2021

1. Name of the work:- CONSTRUCTION OF BOUNDARY WALL WITH GATE & TILES WORKS AT KABRISTAN VILLAGE - PANDARI, BLOCK - SITARGANJ (UDHAM SINGH NAGAR)
2. Estimated Cost:- Rs. 53.85 lakh
3. Period of Completion:- 04 Month
4. Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:- 04.03.2021 (17.00 hrs)
5. Last date/Time of receipt of bids in the portal:- 30.03.2021 (17.00 hrs)
6. Date & Time of Technical bid Opening:- 01.04.2021 (12.00hrs)
7. Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid:- Er. Om Prakash, Collectorate Compound, Rudrapur (Udhham Singh Nagar).
8. Pre-bid meeting details (if required) Date & Place:- 10.03.2021 (13.00 hrs) Rudrapur.
9. For further details, details of subsequent Amendment/correction documentation etc. may obtained from the e-Procurement portal www.uktenders.gov.in
PROJECT MANAGER


बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा
Bank of Baroda

Branch : Civil Lines
Jhokan Bagh, Jhansi
e-mail : jhokan@bankofbaroda.com
Regional Office : 2nd Floor, 118/330, Gumti No. 5, Kaushalpur, Kanpur-12

Cancellation of e-auction to be held on 10.03.2021
Public in general is informed that e-auction published in this newspaper on dated 19-02-2021 which was scheduled to be held on 10.03.2021 has been cancelled/withdrawn by the Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda, Civil Lines, Branch Jhansi.
Date : 05-03-2021 • Place : Jhansi/Lalitpur • Authorised Officer

यू.पी. प्रोजेक्ट्स कांस्पोरेशन लिमिटेड
(उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार का उपक्रम)
निर्माण संख्या:- परियोजना प्रबंधक, निर्माण इकाई-7, गोमती बैराज, बाबां तट, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ।
ई-मेल : pm.uppcpl7@gmail.com, वेबसाइट:- www.upprojects.org

पत्रांक : 64/पीसीएलए/परिपत्र/इकाई-7 दिनांक: 03.03.2021
अल्प कालीन ई-निविदा सूचना
एतद्वारा इस इकाई के अन्तर्गत जनपद अयोध्या में घाघरा नदी के दाहिने तट पर स्थित ग्राम रामपुर पुवारी माझा की बाढ़ से सुरक्षा हेतु ड्रेजिंग एवं चैनलाइजेशन कार्य हेतु निविदा सूचना संख्या -05/पीसी.एल./परिपत्र./इकाई-7/2020-21 दिनांक 03.03.2021 द्वारा ई-टेंडरिंग के माध्यम से आइटम दरों के आधार पर ऑनलाइन निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती है। उक्त कार्य की बिड दिनांक 06.03.2021 से दिनांक 12.03.2021 अपराह्न 3:00 बजे तक ऑनलाइन सबमिट की जा सकती है, जो दिनांक 12.03.2021 को अपराह्न 4:00 बजे अयोध्या नगर के कार्यालय में खोली जायेगी। निविदा से सम्बन्धित आवश्यक सूचना, निविदा प्रपत्र, निविदा शर्त एवं ऑनलाइन निविदा अपलोड किये जाने व डाउनलोड किये जाने की तिथि आदि का समस्त विवरण www.upprojects.org एवं <http://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध है।
परियोजना प्रबंधक



O-1173

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAIPUR

e mail - serw_kpd@yahoo.com

No. Tender Online RCK - 09 / 20

Letter No.- 488

Date :- 23/2/21

e-Procurement NOTICE

1. **Name of the work**
2. **Class of Contractor**
3. **Time for Completion**
4. **Detail Projects**
5. **Other Details**

- : Construction of MCS Building Works in the District of Kendrapara & Jaipur .
- : **B, A & Special Class** as specified in the column 7 of the Annexure.
- : As specified in the Column-8 of the Annexure.
- : **As per Annexure attached**
- :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jaipur	Tender Online RCK - 03 / 21	08.03.2021 at 11.00 AM	23.03.2021 to 5.00 PM	22.03.2021 up to 5.00PM	24.03.2021 at 12.00 PM	05.04.2021 at 12.00 PM

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in

OIPR-25129/11/0014/2021

**Superintending Engineer,
Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jaipur**

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Sub-inspector shoots self near Vidhan Bhawan

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A sub-inspector shot himself in full public view in the parking lot at Gate No. 7 of Vidhan Bhawan under mysterious circumstances on Thursday afternoon. Police claimed to have recovered a suicide note and said the S-I ended his life. Nirmal Kumar Chaubey (51) was posted at Banthra police station and was on duty at Gate No. 7 of Vidhan Bhawan in view of the ongoing UP Assembly session.

Chaubey, who was a native of Varanasi, was staying in Chinhat and had joined the UP Police in 1989. The incident took place around 3:15 pm when policemen deployed near the Secretariat heard a gunshot and rushed to the parking lot, in front of Gate No. 7, only to find Chaubey lying in a pool of blood and writhing in pain. He was immediately rushed to



Investigation underway at the Gate No. 7 parking lot where sub-inspector Nirmal Kumar Chaubey (inset) shot himself dead on Thursday

Civil hospital where doctors declared him brought dead. Lucknow Commissioner of Police DK Thakur said

Chaubey shot himself with his service revolver, which was recovered from the spot. "Chaubey suffered injuries in the left portion of his chest," he said. A CCTV footage showed that Chaubey was alone when he shot himself.

The police said that in the suicide note which was recovered from Chaubey's pocket, he had written that he was taking the extreme step. He also requested help for his family.

"He wrote a letter addressed to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and stated that he was suffering from some disease and was on medication. Chaubey urged the CM to take care of his family," the police said. The family of the deceased was informed about the incident.

Chaubey's colleagues said he was mentally upset for several months and used to take medicines for that.

12,773 get Covid vaccine jabs

Sluggish CoWIN portal causes inconvenience

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A total of 12,773 people were administered Covid vaccine jabs in Lucknow on Thursday. District immunisation officer Dr MK Singh said it was one of the best figures and a massive rush was seen at all the hospitals where the vaccination was carried out.

Those vaccinated included 3,669 beneficiaries above 60 years of age, 1,514 aged between 45-49 years. Besides, 1,842 health workers were also vaccinated and 5,043 got their second vaccine dose. A massive rush was witnessed at the 64 vaccination centres, including government and private hospitals.

Dr Singh admitted that there was some inconvenience faced by people due to the huge rush and sluggish CoWIN portal. "The technical snag was something which we handled by doing manual registration and then uploading the data on the portal," he pointed out. He said the portal was not function properly till late afternoon. "However, there was no law and order issue due to the massive rush. To get direct feedback, I took stock of the situation at RMLIMS, Apollo Medics and Lok Bandhu hospitals," he added.

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash, who also inspected some Covid vaccination centres, said he directed the hospital authorities to follow Covid-19 protocols. He also cautioned private hospitals against charging more than Rs 250 from the beneficiaries.

Rakesh Khatri, a former PWD engineer who received the vaccine jab at RMLIMS, said the arrangements were good. "I reached the hospital at 10 am but had to wait for a couple of hours for vaccination as nearly 450 people had reached before me. The area was neat and clean and the nodal officer



Rush for vaccination at Civil hospital on Thursday

Pioneer

was nice and all ears to each one of us. My wife also got vaccinated and neither of us felt any side effects," he said.

However, some of the beneficiaries were not satisfied with the arrangements. A resident of Gomtinagar said there was a lot of mismanagement.

"There was no apparent system and the staffers were telling us to stand in a queue to get tokens. The CMO and the hospital director reached there and said the process would get smoother with time," he said.

RMLIMS director Dr AK Singh said people had started collecting since 9 am. "The beneficiaries included several retired judges, police officers and bureaucrats. A total of

1,231 people were given vaccine jabs at the hospital," he added. A senior doctor from Civil hospital said that with the CoWIN portal functioning slowly, they faced problems for quite some time. "We faced a lot of issues owing to the slow portal and some of the senior citizens had to bear the brunt of it," he said.

Nodal officer for Covid immunisation at KGMU Dr Nishant Verma said there was chaos-like situation in the morning with some people losing their cool. "The CoWIN portal takes a few minutes to enter the data and if you have 50 people in the queue, there will be a problem. There were more walk-in registrations in comparison to pre-registra-

tion," he said. He added that some senior citizens found the registration process difficult. AK Singh, a retired 70-year-old doctor who got himself vaccinated, said his daughter had done pre-registration for five people, including himself, his wife, two other relatives and a neighbour.

Nodal officer at Lok Bandhu Hospital Dr Arun Tewari said the vaccination started after 11 am. "We stopped walk-in registration after vaccinating 80 people because we would not have been able to manage them beyond that figure. However, we continued with the pre-registered ones and those who had to be given the second dose," he pointed out.

Police announce cash reward on Dhananjay

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow police on Thursday announced a cash reward of Rs 25,000 on absconding former MP Dhananjay Singh for his alleged involvement in the sensational murder of history-sheets and former block pramukh of Mau Ajit Singh in Lucknow on January 6.

In an e-byte, DCP (East) Sanjeev Suman confirmed the announcement of cash reward on Dhananjay Singh and said six teams had been pressed into service to arrest him. He said the police teams raided Swastika city in Ahimamau along with areas in Gudamba, Surya Apartment on Sultanpur road and Sharda apartment in Gomtinagar Extension. The teams recovered some clues about Singh but could not find him. The police were rummag-

ing through the dossiers to find out Singh's ill-gotten property in UP and other places.

"We have got details of Singh's properties in different districts and states, and more are expected to be traced. We are writing to the Income Tax officials and Enforcement Directorate, asking them to seize Singh's properties.

"The slain shooter Giridhari had also amassed huge wealth and police are looking out for the same," he said. He added that the police would also ask Income Tax and ED officials to seize Giridhari's properties.

The police searched five locations of mafia-turned-politician Dhananjay Singh on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, after which the reward was announced.

Earlier, the police had arrested six shooters, including Giridhari alias Doctor, who confessed to his crime. Later, he was killed in a police encounter.

Sources said the police have prepared a list of Singh's properties, including six flats and a house, two farmhouses, a lab in Gomtinagar, and illegal companies in Delhi, Jaunpur, Mau, Fathegarh & Barabanki. The list also includes a petrol pump and brick kiln in Jharkhand.

The police have also found huge movable and immovable assets in the name of Giridhari, including brick kilns in Azamgarh, a farmhouse and illegal liquor shops.

On February 20, Lucknow's chief judicial magistrate Sushil Kumari had issued a non-bailable warrant against Dhananjay Singh for

plotting the murder of Ajit Singh.

The court order followed a plea by investigating officer Chandrasekhar Singh that Dhananjay Singh was on the run since police raid at his Gomtinagar house and was yet to surrender despite a case having been registered against him. Senior officials said the role of the former BSP MP was being probed and the evidence pointed towards his involvement in the conspiracy.

The police said that the murder was engineered to prevent Ajit Singh from testifying in court against mafia don Kuntu Singh, who was accused of killing former MLA Sarvesh Singh Sipu in 2013. The Mau block pramukh (Ajit Singh) was a witness and his testimony was scheduled, days before he was peppered with bullets.




ब्याज माफी योजना-2021

दिनांक 3 मार्च, 2021 से
तीन माह की अवधि तक के लिए लागू



- योजना के मुख्य बिन्दु**
- ब्याज माफी योजना के परिणामस्वरूप व्यापारी को संपूर्ण ध्यान जी०एस०टी० पर केन्द्रित करने का अवसर।
 - व्यापारियों को उत्पीड़नात्मक कार्यवाही से मुक्ति।
 - आवेदन केवल विभागीय पोर्टल पर, कार्यालय आने की आवश्यकता नहीं।
 - व्यापारियों के लिए स्थानीय स्तर पर सहायता हेतु प्रत्येक लोकेशन के लिए 'हेल्प डेस्क'।
 - रु० 10 लाख तक के छोटे व्यापारियों के लिए ब्याज माफी में ब्याज एवं अर्थदण्ड की शत-प्रतिशत माफी।
 - रु० 10 लाख से अधिक रु० 1 करोड़ तक के व्यापारियों के लिए ब्याज माफी में ब्याज में 90% व अर्थदण्ड में शत-प्रतिशत माफी।
 - बड़े व्यापारियों को भी आकर्षक छूट।



दिनांक 31.12.2020 तक उत्तर प्रदेश व्यापार कर अधिनियम-1948 केन्द्रीय बिक्री कर अधिनियम-1956, उत्तर प्रदेश आमोद एवं पणकर अधिनियम-1979 एवं तद्वर्धन निर्मित नियमावली (मनोरंजन कर), उत्तर प्रदेश प्रवेश कर अधिनियम-2007 एवं उत्तर प्रदेश मूल्य संवर्धित कर अधिनियम-2008 (VAT) एवं उत्तर प्रदेश केबिल टेलीविजन नेटवर्क (प्रदर्शन) नियमावली, 1997 में निर्धारित समस्त आदेशों से सृजित मांग पर ब्याज माफी योजना-2021 लागू।

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मिशन रोज़गार

निष्पक्ष एवं पारदर्शी भर्ती प्रक्रिया के अन्तर्गत

उत्तर प्रदेश लोक सेवा आयोग द्वारा आयोजित सम्मिलित राज्य / प्रवर अधीनस्थ सेवा परीक्षा-2018 में चयनित उपजिलाधिकारियों को नियुक्ति पत्र वितरण

मुख्य अतिथि

योगी आदित्यनाथ

मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश द्वारा

डॉ. दिनेश शर्मा

उप मुख्यमंत्री
उत्तर प्रदेश

सुरेश कुमार खन्ना

मंत्री, वित्त, संसदीय कार्य एवं चिकित्सा शिक्षा विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

दिनांक: 5 मार्च, 2021 | समय: अपराह्न 4:00 बजे | स्थान: लोक भवन सभागार, लखनऊ

चयनित उपजिलाधिकारी प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं की तैयारी करने वाले अभ्यर्थियों को निःशुल्क कोचिंग के लिए मुख्यमंत्री अभ्युदय योजना में शैक्षणिक योगदान प्रदान करेंगे

युवाओं के साथ, योगी सरकार

नियुक्ति विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश शासन

One held for hoax call to blow up Taj Mahal

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Agra police took a heave of relief when a call received by them on Thursday morning about a bomb in the Taj Mahal turned out to be a hoax after an intensive search was carried out on the premises with the help of a dog squad. The cops later arrested the caller and were interrogating him.

A similar call was received to blow up the Womens' Helpline 1090 later in the day in Lucknow but it also turned out to be a hoax



NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
INTRODUCTION OF
25kV AC TRACTION
WARNING TO ROAD USERS

It is notified for the information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25kV AC Electric Traction over the Nandganj (excl.) - Ghazipur City (incl.) section of North Eastern Railway, height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings with clear maximum height 4.78m above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wires (Contact wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.5m above the rail level at level crossings. Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances. The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows:- (i) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the Railway line. (ii) Danger to the materials of equipment carried or the vehicle itself (iii) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

Chief Electrical Engineer/CON, CPRI/EL-107 Gorakhpur

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No. 9979445955
Do Not smoke Bidli/Cigarette in train



कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत
परिपथ मण्डल गोन्डा ई-टेन्डरिंग
निविदा सूचना
फर्मों/उकेदारों से निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु सीलबन्ध निविदायें दो भागों में दिनांक 10.03.2021 को 14:00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। (1) अत्यकालिक ई-निविदा संख्या 102/ईओपीसी(गोन्डा)/2020-21: विद्युत परिपथ खण्ड, बहराइच के अन्तर्गत 220 केलीडी उपकेंद्र बहराइच पर 132 केलीडी गोन्डा-बहराइच लाइन के लीलो के कारीडोर में आने वाले पेड़ों की कटाई-छटाई सम्बन्धी कार्य। धरोहर राशि रु० 2000.00 निविदा भाग-1 खुले की तिथि 10.03.2021 को 15:00 बजे, निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य रु० 236.00 (कर सहित)। 2. अत्यकालिक ई-निविदा संख्या 103/ईओपीसी(गोन्डा)/2020-21: विद्युत परिपथ खण्ड, गोन्डा के अन्तर्गत 132 केलीडी उपकेंद्र मनकपुर पर केबिल ट्रेन्च की सफाई एवं पेन्टिंग सम्बन्धी कार्य। धरोहर राशि रु० 2000.00 निविदा भाग-1 खुले की तिथि 10.03.2021 को 15:00 बजे, निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य रु० 236.00 (कर सहित)। निविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क (नान रिस्कन्डिबल) एवं ईओपीसीओ अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत परिपथ खण्ड, गोन्डा के बैंक खाते में (बैंक का नाम-पंजाब नेशनल बैंक खाता सं- 0181002100120697, आईएफएससी कोड-PUN00018100) आरओपीसीएच/एनईएफडी के माध्यम से निविदा की अंतिम अपलोड तिथि से एक दिन पूर्व तक जमा की जायेगी तथा बैंक में जमा किये जाने का साब्य तथा योज्य यूटुडीआरओ सं०, खाली का नाम निर्णकर्ता बैंक अधिकारी द्वारा हस्ताक्षरित एवं निविदादाता द्वारा प्रतिहस्ताक्षरित प् इन्सिस्पर की स्कैन्डप्रति, ईएमडी के लिए बैंक गारंटी की स्कैन्ड कापी, जारीकर्ता बैंक के कन्फर्मेशनमेल की प्रति भी निविदाप्रपत्रों के साथ इलेक्ट्रानिकली साफ व पनीय अपलोड की जायेगी, अन्यथा कि स्थिति में निविदादाता द्वारा प्रस्तुत निविदा को स्वतः निरस्त समझा जायेगा। साथ ही निविदा के भाग-1 में तकनीकी बिड (बिन कार्ड, इन्क्वेटेस रिटर्न, जीएफएलडी पंजीकरण की स्वयं प्रमाणित छायाप्रति एवं तकनीकी अनुभव इत्यादि), संलग्न करना अनिवार्य है। धरोहर राशि/निविदा शुल्क जमा न होने अथवा किसी प्रकार की त्रुटि होने पर निविदा का भाग-2 जिसमें दरे दी जानी है, नही खोली जायेगी। भाग-2 में दरे एवं वाणिज्यिक नियम व शर्तें होनी चाहिये। तथा हार्ड कापी कार्यालय व जमा करने की आवश्यकता नहीं होगी। किसी भी स्थिति में निविदा के Retender होने पर निविदा की निविदा शुल्क (नान रिस्कन्डिबल) एवं धरोहर धनराशि पुनः जमा की जानी अनिवार्य होगी, अन्यथा कि स्थिति में निविदादाता द्वारा प्रस्तुत निविदा को स्वतः निरस्त समझा जायेगा। निविदा का भाग प्रथम एवं द्वितीय-(प्राइजबिड दरे एवं शर्तें) दिनांक 10.03.2021 को 14:00 बजे तक www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड की जा सकती है। निविदा का प्रथम भाग दिनांक 10.03.2021 को 15:00 बजे एवं भाग-2 (प्राइज पाई) निविदा शुल्क एवं धरोहर धनराशि प्राप्ति की पुष्टि होने के पश्चात सार्वजनिक रूप से खोली जायेगी। निविदा खुले की तिथि पर अवकाश होने की स्थिति में निविदा अपने कार्य दिवस पर निष्क्रिय समय पर खोली जायेगी। निविदाओं को बिना कोई कारण बताये निविदा/निविदाओं को अस्वीकार/विभाजित करने का अधिकार अधोहस्त्यारकर्ता के पास सुरक्षित रहेगा। धरोहर/निविदा राशि रहित व सशर्त निविदायें स्वीकार नहीं की जायेगी। कृपया विस्तृत जानकारी हेतु, डाउनलोड, अन्य संबंधी एवं निविदा प्रस्तुत करने के दिनांक तक विस्तार आदि के सम्बन्ध में कृपया www.etender.up.nic.in की वेबसाइट पर लॉगइन करें। मुख्य अभियन्ता विद्युत परिपथ मण्डल गोन्डा संख्या-3023/ विओएमओ/गोन्डा/ई-टेन्डर नं०-102 से 103/2020-21 दिनांक 02.03.2021 राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचाये

call. The three gates of the Taj Mahal were shut after information of a bomb on the premises was received on Dial 112 of UP Police.

Tourists inside the complex were evacuated and shops outside were closed after an anonymous caller claimed to have planted a bomb at the Taj Mahal. “The caller said there was some corruption in his SSC results... He said he had planted a bomb on the Taj Mahal premises and that it will explode in some time...,” SP (Protocol) at Agra, Shivram Yadav, disclosed soon after the search operation was completed by the police along with the sleuths of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) looking after the security of the Taj. However, later they found the

call to be a hoax following which they resumed the entry of tourists after about three hours. The police traced the anonymous call through surveillance and arrested one person from Firozabad.

According to the police, the arrested individual has certain mental health issues. The youth was reportedly angry at the cancellation of army recruitments and hence he made the fake call. Agra Inspector General of Police Satish Ganesh said that the threat of a bomb in the Taj Mahal only proved to be a rumour. He said the police had searched the premises as a precautionary measure but it did not find any explosives. The accused has been arrested and strict action will be taken against him, he added.

Differently-abled man hangs self

Lucknow (PNS): A 35-year-old differently-abled man was found hanging inside his house in PGI police station area on Thursday. Police said he committed suicide, but did not explain the reason. The deceased was identified as Bablu Rawat of Amol Kalli Paschim area. He was found hanging with a cloth sheet tied around his neck around 10:30 am on Friday. Sub-inspector Arvind Kumar Singh said the deceased was unmarried. The

police sent the body for autopsy and started further probe.

THEFT

Thieves made off with tools used in repair of two-wheelers and spare parts from a garage in Gosainganj on Wednesday night. Bablu of Bajupur village said he had closed the shop on Wednesday night and found it burgled burgled on Friday. He said the thieves decamped with goods worth thousands of rupees.

IISR bid to multiply, supply healthy seed material

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Indian Institute of Sugarcane Research has initiated specific outreach activities for multiplication and supply of healthy seed materials of new cane varieties. Principal scientist AK Sah said that for that, new varieties with high yield and sugar potential have been identified and their multiplication process is on in farmers' fields.

“Sugarcane is planted in more than 10 lakh hectares in Uttar Pradesh and in about 5-6 lakh hectares in other north Indian states like Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Bihar etc under the current planting season (February-March) every year. The major variety grown in these states is now severely infected with pests and diseases, and availability of healthy seed material of this variety is under question. Due to this reason, farmers are now in a dilemma about going on with the cultivation of this variety. If they continue the cultivation with infested seed material, it will wreak havoc in terms of yield and quality of canes for supply to sugar mills,” he noted.

He said that under this situation, IISR has initiated specific outreach activities for multiplication and supply of healthy seed materials of new cane varieties.

“For the current season of

cane planting in northern states in about 15 lakh hectare area and 30,000 nursery-raised plants per hectare may require roughly 45,000 million plants. Preparing a nursery of 45,000 million plants requires 30 million quintals of healthy canes of different new varieties. If we calculate the requirement of seed material with conventional systems of planting, it may be many times higher than the planting with nursery-raised plants. To meet the requirement of this huge seed material is really a challenge for the R&D system,” he said.

He added that collaborative concerted efforts by research institutes, development departments, sugar mills and farmers are needed to address the issue.

“IISR is producing healthy seed material of new varieties in its research farm and distributing the same to farmers and sugar mills for multiplication as seed material under the supervision of experts. During October-February, more than 3,000 quintals of healthy seed material was distributed directly from its research farm to the farmers and more than 10,000 quintals of healthy seed material was produced in farmers' fields in Sitapur, Lakhimpur, Hardoi, Pilibhit, Saharanpur, Bijnor, Basti and Gonda,” he pointed out.

He said that the seed cane crop of new varieties is also

planted under outreach programmes in farmers' fields and it will result in production of more than 20,000 quintals of healthy seed material in coming autumn season — October 2021 to February 2022.

IISR scientists have also visited fields in different districts of UP to identify and select cane fields with standing crops free from pests and diseases, which may be recommended for planting as seed crops. The cane in all these fields is supposed to be utilised for seed purpose only.

At the same time, IISR is also extending its expertise to Tripura and other N-E states for scientific cane cultivation.

“The Tripura government has requested IISR for technical help in cultivation of cane. One officer from Tripura is undergoing training at IISR to learn recent techniques of cane cultivation and seed material of new variety suitable for Tripura is also being given for multiplication in the research farm of Tripura. IISR is planning to extend technical support to the Tripura government and other states in cane cultivation, jaggery making, and inter cropping with the aim to increase cane area, cane yield and enhancing farmers' income in tribal dominated state of Tripura, Sikkim and other N-E states,” Sah said.

Academy Audit Team inspects BBAU depts

Lucknow (PNS): The Academic Audit Team inspected various departments of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University on Thursday. The university is moving ahead with the goal of achieving better NAAC grades.

The spokesperson said that in this regard, all aspects are being taken care of by the university administration. Vice-Chancellor Sanjay Singh inspected the offices, classrooms and laboratories of all the departments. Dean of

Academic Affairs Rana Pratap Singh, DSW BS Bhadauria, finance officer Sanatan Nayak, registrar S Victor Babu, members of NAAC Internal Committee and engineering section accompanied the audit team.

K'taka Cong MLA does a Salman Khan with shirtless protest, suspended

Bengaluru: Karnataka Assembly speaker, Vishweshwara Hegde Kaageri on Thursday suspended Congress MLA B K Sangamesh for one week for displaying ‘indecent and disrespectful’ behaviour in the Assembly by taking off his shirt.

Sangamesh, who won the Assembly seat from Bhadravati constituency in Shivamogga district, will not be allowed to enter the Legislature till March 12. This incident took place when the Congress party was in front of the speaker to Oppose the ruling party's decision to take-up debate on - one nation one election - for two days starting from Thursday.

However, Sangamesh had his own reasons to oppose in this manner alleging that ruling party BJP leaders were harassing his family members and him by filing false complaints against them. Sangamesh protesting by removing his shirt was similar to a 2010 protest in which Goolihatti Shekhar a minister in Yediyurappa's cabinet ripped off his shirt in the Assembly and was disqualified. Furious over the Sangamesh's way to protest, the speaker Kaageri adjourned the house soon after and suspended the MLA from Bhadravati, for a week.

Karnataka leader of the opposition, Siddaramaiah, described the ‘One Nation, One Election’ push as being

Sangamesh, who won the Assembly seat from Bhadravati constituency in Shivamogga district, will not be allowed to enter the Legislature till March 12

part of the agenda of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological mentor of the ruling BJP, as his party MLAs raised slogans against the issue.

The idea mooted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after taking office in 2014, many BJP leaders have backed the proposal to hold all elections together, from Lok Sabha to state assemblies and local bodies, arguing that this will orient various elected bodies fully towards development as the current cycle of frequent polls across the country hampers work. But Congress members decided to protest against the ruling party decision to hold two-day special session on - one nation one elections and trooped into the well in front of the speaker. The moment, Sangmesh removed his shirt, KPCC president and Congress MLA JN Ganesh who rushed towards him made him wear his shirt besides covering him.

IANS

Jawan's body found hanging inside sentry post in Srinagar

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

An Army jawan was found dead here on Thursday in a suspected case of suicide, officials said.

Rifleman Anup Kumar (28), who was posted on sentry duty at the Badamibagh cantonment in Jammu and Kashmir, was found hanging from the ceiling of the sentry post at the main gate at Batwara here with a light machine gun's loop.

Kumar hailed from Haryana's Bhiwani, the officials said, adding that the reason behind his taking the extreme step was not immediately known.

Book on PM to be highlight of Lucknow Book Fair

Lucknow (PNS): A book on the prime minister titled “Narendra Modi - Ek Sakaratmak Soch” will be the highlight of Lucknow Book Fair kicking off at Bal Sangrahalaya lawns on Friday.

Key organiser Manoj Kumar Chandel said the author of the book arrived at Lucknow on the eve of the book fair launch. Author Apurva Shah, who is a Gujarat-based businessman, said he has come up with a new edition of the book which reflects on the positive thinking of the prime minister. “We have created a book on PM Narendra Modi. It has a unique shape and it has been registered as a unique creation in the India Book of Records. The book contains subjects

like positivity, and a way to success through the example of the prime minister. This book includes the background of his childhood and early life. It also features good habits and has content which will help the younger generation learn the lessons of life,” Shah said.

“The book has been written in such a manner that everyone from youngsters to elders can easily understand the topics. It is available in Hindi and English. One fascinating part of the book is that it is shaped as a cut-out of Modi and it will attract people. We have launched the fifth edition of the book. More importantly, we have updated the content of the book in recent times,” he added.

CITYBRIEFS

WOMEN'S DAY

Jaipuria Institute of Management celebrated International Women's Day with ‘Qissa Jhansi Ki Rani Ka’, a tale of Rani Laxmibai, by two city artistes on Thursday. The chief guest was additional CEO of Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) Neha Jain. Himanshu Bajpai and Pragya Sharma narrated the folklore of freedom fighter Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi. They narrated the childhood stories of Rani Laxmibai and her transformation journey from being a 13-year-old Manu to the queen of Jhansi. Himanshu Bajpai is famous for the ancient form of storytelling called ‘Dastangoi’ while Pragya Sharma has achieved the status of being UP's first female ‘Dastango’ under the mentorship of Bajpai.

ANNUAL INSPECTION

General manager of North-Eastern Railway Vinay Kumar

Tripathi will conduct the annual inspection of Sitapur-Budhwal rail section under Lucknow zone on Friday. Senior officials, including DRM (NER, Lucknow) Monica Agnihotri, will also be present during the inspection. The general manager will take stock of railway level crossings, passenger amenities, upkeep of different railway stations and train operations.

CMS STUDENT SELECTED FOR ADMISSION

Utkarsh Singh, a meritorious student of City Montessori School, Gomi N a g a r Campus I, has been selected for admission by two prestigious universities of USA — Arizona State University and The University of Texas. Utkarsh attributed his achievement to his mentors and CMS teachers.



Didi may fight from Suwendu stronghold

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is almost certain to contest from only one seat — Nandigram. Sources in the Trinamool Congress said that the Chief Minister, a sitting MLA from Bhawanipore where she has been living for decades, would not contest from her present seat and would move to Nandigram in East Midnapore instead.

Considered a “den of the Adhikari family” led by former Bengal Minister and BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari and his father Sisir Adhikari, a veteran MP, Nandigram has a Muslim vote share of about 23.5 per cent.

In Banerjee's place, party MLA and Minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay will contest from Bhawanipore, sources said adding the first list of the party's candidates would be out on Friday. The TMC had trailed by a few thousand votes from the Bhawanipore

Assembly segment in the 2019 general elections.

Suwendu, a former pointsman of Banerjee, in Nandigram, had earlier challenged the Chief Minister saying if she contested from this seat he would ensure that she was defeated by at least half-a-lakh votes.

This after Banerjee told a huge rally at Nandigram that she would contest from this place which was “lucky” for her.

Banerjee's calculations are however different. According to TMC sources Nandigram — a former Left bastion — which still has a considerable number of Left supporters who have been at the receiving end of political violence perpetrated by the TMC men then led by the Adhikari's might not vote for him enabling the Chief Minister to scrape through with a solid 62,000 votes of the Muslims.

Meanwhile, in a related development after Rashtriya Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party

12 people from Myanmar take refuge in Mizoram after coup in February

PTI ■ AIZAWL



Deputy Commissioner of Champhai, Maria CT Zuali, said that four people from Myanmar have crossed over to the district recently.

The entry of people from the neighbouring country has been communicated to the state Home Department and Home Minister Lalchamliana will issue a statement on the matter in the assembly on Monday, an official said. More than 100 people from Myanmar also attempted to cross the international border to seek refuge in Mizoram recently, the Champhai deputy commissioner told PTI. However, they were stopped

by Assam Rifles personnel guarding the border, she said. Assam Rifles Deputy Inspector General Digvijay Singh said that the force was directed not to allow any illegal entry from the neighbouring country.

Zuali said that the state government has recently issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in view of the possible influx of refugees from Myanmar following the coup. “Although civil society organisations are willing to harbour refugees from Myanmar, the Mizoram government can't act on its own without the direction of the Centre as it is an international affair,” she said. Besides, the state government will not have sufficient resources to feed the refugees unless assistance is received from the Centre, she added.

Mizoram shares a 404 km long porous border with Myanmar where the military junta took over the government on February 1. A number of pro-democracy protestors were killed in clashes with security forces there.



Prabhat Pheri on safety being flagged off at BLW in Varanasi on Thursday

Pioneer

National Safety Week inaugurated at BLW

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A week-long 50th National Safety Week was inaugurated by the Department of Safety, Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) with the 'Prabhat Pheri' which was flagged off from the main gate of the Officers' Club by the Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer (PCME) VK Saxena here on Thursday. Under the leadership of Chief Safety Officer (CSO) Nitin Mehrotra, this 'Prabhat Pheri' after circling Surya Sarovar roads ended at the Basketball ground in the Cinema Hall Complex via

Central Market. The procession was participated by the officers and employees apart from personnel of Civil Defence and volunteers of St. John's Ambulance Brigade and Scouts and Guides.

Subsequently, suggestions for improvement of safety were sought at the workplace by distributing safety pamphlets and safety badges among the officers and employees at Administrative Building and workshops by supervisors of Safety department. In addition, training was given in the Loco Division on the use of safety equipment and fire fighting

after administering pledge. An online painting competition for children will be organised on Friday at Central Market at 11 am, while an awareness campaign will be held to apprise the people of prevention of fire incidents, checking of electrical wiring and loose connections in the Gumti Bazar of Western Market from 4 pm.

Besides, on the instructions of General Manager (GM) Anjali Goyal, various other programmes on safety will also be organised. Street play will be staged at BLW Main Gate on March 6, while the GM

will inaugurate disaster management training 'Mathan' on March 8 and the personnel of Railway Protection Force (RPF) and volunteers of Civil Defence, St John's Brigade and Scouts/ Guides will present a live drill demonstration on how to prevent fire incidents and discharge rescue operation. On March 9 at Administrative Building's Block Section, training on fire-fighting equipment would be given apart from safety pledge, quiz. On the last day on March 10, the winners of various competitions would be awarded at a prize distribution function.

Enthusiasm seen among 60+ for vaccination

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Thousands of old aged persons and health workers got their first and second doses of COVID-19 vaccines respectively at different centres here on Thursday. In comparison to many previous days and vaccination sessions organised for health and frontline workers, more enthusiasm was seen among the people of 60-plus. The old aged persons got their first vaccine doses at 11 centres while the health workers were vaccinated for second shot at 17 centres as they had received their first doses last month.

The enthusiasm among the 60 plus people was seen as apart from those who had already got their names registered on Co-Win portal, many others also reached at different centres and they were also vaccinated. Besides, many above 45 persons with comorbidities were also vaccinated as per COVID-19 guidelines. Though the health workers had not shown encouraging response on many occasions when they were invited for first shot, now most of them turned out at their respective centres



Old aged persons after getting vaccinated at Women's Hospital in Varanasi on Thursday

Pioneer

for getting the second doses, realizing the importance of completing the course.

The health workers were vaccinated for second dose at CHC Arajiline, CHC Cholaapur, PHC Badagaon, UPHC Durgakund, UPHC Chowkaghat, Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyaya (DDU) Hospital, ESIC Hospital, BHU Trauma Centre, Sir Sundarlal Hospital (SSH) BHU, PHC Harahua, CHC Misirpur, UCHC Manduadih, UCHC Shivpur, Central Hospital BLW, District Women's Hospital, LBS Hospital Ramnagar and Government Ayurveda

College.

Apart from them, the 60 plus people were vaccinated at DDU, SSH BHU, Central Hospital BLW, LBS, Women's Hospital, Shree Shiv Prasad Gupta Hospital, PHC Pindra, PHC Chiragaon, PHC Kashi Vidyapeeth, PHC Sewapuri and CHC Arajiline.

Earlier, in view of increase in cases of COVID-19 in parts of the country, all 230 passengers who came here from Maharashtra by flights on Wednesday were tested for COVID-19. Out of them, 68 who were tested earlier have shown their negative reports.

Apart from them all 162 passengers who landed here were also found negative in antigen tests.

However, all these passengers were instructed for a week-long home quarantine. For the last few days, the number of positive cases has started increasing, once again, in the city as nine positive patients were detected a day earlier while three in the morning hours during the day whereas on three recent days, even not a single case was found.

FOUR TEST POSITIVE: Four more have tested COVID-19 positive, increasing the tally of confirmed cases to 22,017 by Thursday evening. With no COVID-19 death being reported in the last 24 hours, the death toll remains at 377. With two COVID-19 patients having been cured in home isolation, the number of COVID-19 patients recovered in the district so far is 21,589 including 18,609 in home isolation and 2,980 in Covid hospitals. As present 41 active cases are under treatment in the district. The recovery rate in the district is 98.06 per cent and the mortality rate 1.71 per cent.

Harish elected president of HPGC students' union

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), student wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), bagged the prestigious post of president in the election of students' union of Harishchandra PG College but the other three posts of vice-president, gneral secretary and library secretary went to the Samajwadi Chattrra Sabha, student wing of the Samajwadi Party (SP).

On the prestigious post of president, the ABVP candidate Harshit Gupta secured 1,503 votes and won the election by defeating the SCS candidate Ayushman Yadav by a comfortable margin of 364 votes. Ayushman got 1,239 votes. In the direct contest, the SCS candidate Aman Yadav was elected the vice-president by securing 1,816 votes. He defeated the ABVP candidate Pratik Kumar Kannoujia by a margin of 958 votes. Pratik got 858 votes. On the other prestigious post of general secretary, the

SCS candidate Nitin Kumar Yadav stood victorious as he bagged 1,897 votes and defeated the ABVP candidate Vipul Seth by a margin of 1,106 votes. Vipul got 791 votes. The SCS candidate Shakti Sahani won the post of library secretary by securing 1,895 votes and he defeated the ABVP candidate Manoj Kumar Yadav by a margin of 1,189 votes. Manoj got 706 votes. Bhanu Pratap Singh and Shesh Nath Yadav were elected unopposed as the representatives of science and education faculty respectively. Anshu Yadav was elected as the representative of commerce faculty. The chief election officer Dr Aashok Kumar Singh announced the results and administered the oath to newly elected office-bearers of the students' union in a brief swearing-in ceremony in the presence of the Principal Dr Jyotsana Chaturvedi. The certificates were also given to elected office-bearers. Earlier, the voting passed off peacefully. About

34.50 per cent voters turned up the college to use their franchise. There are a total of 8,112 electorates. As many as 14 polling booths were made to ensure smooth voting. There were separate polling booths for the girl voters. An elaborate security arrangement was made to ascertain peaceful voting. The candidates of various posts made their last ditch efforts to woo the electorate. Even they did not hesitate in touching the feet of the voters to seek their favour.

SARAS MELA ENDS: The 10-day Saras Mela, organised under the auspices of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) at Deendayal Hastkala Sankul, popularly known as Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC), at Badalapur concluded on Wednesday. The chief guest of the concluding function was the Divisional Commissioner (DC) Deepak Agrawal. The fair, in which around 100 stalls were set up, registered the transaction

worth over ₹ 50 lakh. A stall of Assam was awarded the Best Display Award, while a Saharanpur stall got the award of Best Seller. It was the third such fair organised in the district to help the rural women display and sell their products.

Prior to the function, the DC visited various stalls of women self-help groups (SHGs) from different districts and states, asking the latter about the sale and facilities at the fair apart from their visits to different temples, ghats and other places in the city. Sindhu Singh and Sangeeta associated with the SHGs narrated their success stories while sharing experiences from the stage. The DC distributed the keys to two beneficiaries under the Aajeevika (Livelihood) Gramin Express Yojana, keys of 21 community toilets to the SHGs for supervision, certificates of successful women motivation producer organisations and fair price shops to five SHGs under public distribution system (PDS) etc.

Education is first foundation of development: Governor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, who is also the Chancellor of UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University, while presiding over the 15th convocation of the university said, education is the first foundation of development. 'We can bring about a drastic change in the society through education,' she added.

Education is an effective medium of both knowledge and culture. The development

of human society is possible only through education. Education is the most important aspects of achieving the goal. The role of distance education is important in providing all the opportunities for full development of the talent without any discrimination and in realising the concept of a civilised society, the Chancellor said.

The chief guest of the convocation Mukul Kanitkar, a renowned thinker from Nagpur, said that the young

generation of India should self-introspect themselves for bright future, spiritual and intellectual tradition. It is absolute duty of the teachers to influence the students through their sense of ethics and knowledge. Kanitkar discussed in detail the National Education Policy 2020 and said that it was a boon for the youth.

Speaking high about distance education the chief guest said that the Covid lock-downs and its guidelines compelled people to adopt this path of

education because it was not at all possible for a student or a teacher to visit the college.

The Governor, the chief guest, and the Vice-Chancellor Prof KN Singh inaugurated on the occasion the newly constructed Atal auditorium on the Saraswati campus of UPRT Open University.

In the convocation Lakshmi Gupta of Gorakhpur was awarded the Chancellor's Medal. As many as 28,659 students were awarded degrees, while 19 received gold medals.

Two hardened criminals shot dead in police encounter



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Two hardened criminals of the Mukhtar Ansari gang were gunned down by the UP STF here in the trans-Yamuna area of Naini near Someshwar Nath Temple tri-junction on Thursday morning. They were identified as Vakil Pandey and Amjad alias Pintu. These sharp shooters had done to death Anil Tyagi, a deputy jailor in Varanasi in a broad daylight shoot out. The Deputy SP UP STF Navendu Singh informed that Gyanpur MLA Vijay Mishra, who is in jail at present, had written a letter to the Home Ministry asking for protection as there was a threat to his life from the above two

sharp shooters of Mukhtar Ansari gang. They were supari killers and had also been working for Munna Bajrangi. They had also worked for then former Block Pramukh of Chaka Dilip Mishra.

Residents of Bhadohi, the above two criminals were history sheeters and had a reward of ₹ 50,000 on their head.

This encounter is considered to be a great success of the STF. The police and the STF had been searching for the above two contract killers since Vijay Mishra shot a letter making mention of threat to his life from Vakil and Amjad.

STF DSP told media that after getting information they reached Naini where two per-



sons on a bike were stopped during vehicle checking, but they tried to flee from the scene by opening fire on the police. The police surrounded them strategically and challenged them. They fired several rounds. When the police retaliated in the same language, then criminals sustained gunshot injuries and fell on the ground. They were taken to SRN Hospital where the doctors declared them dead.

Later the criminals were identified as Vakil and Amjad with ₹ 50,000 reward on their heads. According to the STF sources the above shooters were here in Prayagraj to kill a political leader. Sources said that after Munna Bajrangi's

death, and Mukhtar Ansari's confinement in jail the two Bhadohi criminals Vakil and Amjad had started working for Dilip Mishra.

The killers of the Varanasi deputy jailor these contract killers were given supari to kill the deputy jailor of Ranchi by Aman Singh, the main accused of the murder of a coal trader.

The police have recovered from the spot pistols of 9 mm and 32 bore with cartridges, and a bike.

It may be mentioned here that Mukhtar Ansari, who is languishing in a Punjab jail, is trying his level best to stay there, instead of being transferred to any jail in Uttar Pradesh owing to Yogi terror.

HC directs police to see that one and all wear masks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Allahabad High Court observed that 'while normalcy is returning, the people are forgetting that they have to protect themselves from the deadly COVID-19'. The court also directed the police to see that one and all wear masks and non-compliance entails penalties.

Hearing a PIL relating to COVID-19, a division bench comprising Justice Siddhartha Varma and Justice Ajit Kumar further observed, 'From the newspaper reports as also from the individuals present in our chamber we have been informed that life was gradually coming back to normal and people were going back to work, etc. It has also been informed that while normalcy was returning people were forgetting that they had to

protect themselves from the deadly COVID-19 virus. It has also been informed that marriages and other social functions were taking place without observing any of the guidelines framed by the state government for COVID-19'.

Fearing that the virus might once again engulf the Uttar Pradesh state, the court once again reiterated its earlier directions that people must observe hundred per cent masking, and also directed the police to see that one and all wear masks.

'Non-wearing of masks should entail penalties as have been enumerated in the Pandemic Act and other relevant laws,' the court directed.

Besides, the court directed that the crowding should be stopped with immediate effect. In addition to it, the court also directed that the

control of number of guests in marriages and other social functions, etc., should be observed and any violation should be strictly punished.

'Schools and colleges, where small children go, should not be asked to start physical classes. If, however, for any reason schools are physically functioning then all guidelines issued by the state government should be followed in letter and spirit,' the court further directed.

The court also directed that the institutions where students above the 10th class have to compulsorily attend classes, it should be seen that they observe social distancing and that they also wear masks.

In addition to it, the court also directed that the eateries should see that no food is served in the open, that is to

say, people should take covered food in packets and should eat them at their home. 'Within the restaurants, tables should be laid in such a manner that social distancing is properly observed,' the court directed.

Regarding its earlier stand, the court said, 'With the decrease in the number of cases country-wide and also with the decrease in the number of corona cases in the city of Prayagraj, we had put our guards down.'

In the recent past, it has been noticed that the population of the state of Uttar Pradesh as also the administration, being guided by the fact that the number of cases were lessening, had reduced the strictness vis-a-vis the wearing of masks.' The court passed these directives on March 1.

Working in HC remains disrupted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Working in the Allahabad High Court remained disrupted as the boycott of work initiated by the lawyers in protest against the Education Service Tribunal Bill continued for the ninth consecutive day on Thursday.

The Allahabad High Court Bar Association (HCBA) had been protesting against the Bill, which provides for setting up of the principal bench of the Education Service Tribunal at Lucknow, instead at Prayagraj. In a resolution passed on Wednesday, HCBA again resolved to continue to boycott judicial work on Thursday on the same issue. On Thursday, a meeting of the lawyers was organised near the High Court along with several leaders of traders' organisations in protest against the said Bill.

The speakers criticised the state government for gradually shifting all important organisations from Prayagraj to Lucknow. Regarding the Education Tribunal, they said that it would weaken the judiciary, as the jurisdiction of Allahabad High Court would be lessened by it.

According to HCBA joint secretary (press) Rajendra Kumar Singh, in the meeting, which was presided over by HCBA president Amrendra Nath Singh and conducted by secretary Prabhaskar Mishra, it has been resolved that in order to intensify their on-going agitation, the corporators of Nagar Nigam will be invited to Friday's meeting to discuss the said issue with them.

CASH LOOTED: Hours after two notorious criminals were killed in an encounter

with the STF, miscreants committed robbery and loot of Rs 1.5 lakh in the Mauaima area of Prayagraj on Thursday afternoon. The bike-borne miscreants looted the bag containing Rs 1.5 lakh from Tini branch operator at gunpoint who was returning to the village with his friend after withdrawing the money from the bank.

Police and SOG made a hectic effort to trace the looters but failed to do so. The police suspected that the criminals of Pratapgarh had committed the crime on the exact information.

Nisar Ahmed, a resident of Mahraura village in Mauaima, operates the Tini branch of the State Bank. He went to the Ismailpur branch of the State Bank on Thursday afternoon with Ashrafal of the village and withdrew a sum of Rs 1.5 lakh. Then at about 2 o'clock

they both left for Mahraura. Ashrafal was riding a bike. Nisar was sitting on a pillion with the money.

Both of them reached near the Harakhpur Forest Department office when two miscreants riding an Apache bike stopped and snatched a bag containing money from Nisar at gunpoint. Thereafter, the robbers escaped at a high speed.

After the miscreants ran away, Nisar and Ashrafal raised an alarm and informed the police about it. A crowd of people also gathered. On receipt of information, police also reached the spot and reviewed. The police scanned the footage of CCTV cameras installed nearby so that the robbers could be identified. SOG also arrived on the spot. The criminals of the area are being raided.

Govt making all efforts to solve women’s problem: Shukla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Member of State Commission for Women (SCW), Ranjana Shukla, while chairing a Mahila Jansunwai Evam Jagrukta Chaupal at Narwal, said the Uttar Pradesh government was committed to the uplift of women of the state and thus it was making every effort to solve the problems of women.

She said UP was introducing more welfare measures for women and added that it was essential to create awareness so that women at the grassroots level could be aware of the government efforts and avail themselves of the facilities as well.

She said there were umpteen schemes run by the UP government, the prominent

ones being Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana, Uttar Pradesh Rani Laxmibai Mahila Evam Bal Samman Kosh and many schemes for the uplift of women, especially those belonging to the Scheduled Castes who were being given financial assistance. She said the rural women should understand that these schemes were meant for their uplift and thus grab the opportunity.

She said the SCW was very sensitive towards victimisation of women and crime against them and thus it had adopted umpteen measures to prevent atrocities, especially domestic violence.

She said similarly dowry

victimisation and dowry murders and all legal problems related to women were being taken up on a war footing to ensure justice to them.

She advised women to remain aware of their rights and also to educate girls in the family.

She said every police station had now been vested with a special help desk at tehsil and police station levels and women could without any hesitation approach the police stations and register their complaints.

Circle Officer Geetanjali Singh informed the women about the 112 Police Sewa and 1090 Women Power Helpline and said in case of any complaint they should immediately inform the police and take quick help. She said it had been

decided to keep the complainant's name secret.

Shukla said for safety and security of women Anti-Romeo Squads had been deployed at schools, colleges and malls.

istrict Probation Officer Abhay Kumar also addressed the women and informed them about the welfare schemes. He also informed them about Widow Pension, Disabled Pension, PM Awas Yojana, and many others schemes run by the government. He also discussed in detail the welfare schemes for women.

Later women who had done commendable services for the welfare of women were felicitated.

A large number of women police and district officials were present on the occasion.

UP Metro celebrates National Safety Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (UPMRC), which is executing the Kanpur Metro Rail project, has always given the utmost priority to compliance of safety standards and measures. In line with this, the UPMRC celebrated the National Safety Day at its Casting Yard in Lakhnapur on Thursday. On this occasion all the officials of UP Metro and civil contractor AFCONS' staff along with the labourers took a safety pledge.

The UPMRC has been celebrating safety week since March, 2021 which will continue till March 6 and during this period, UP Metro has been training its new recruits and labourers and making them aware of the need to follow safety norms strictly. For the purpose of spreading awareness, UP Metro has installed banners at different



The staff of UPMRC observed National Safety Day on Thursday.

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locations at the construction site.

UPMRC MD Kumar Keshav said with the objective of ensuring safe execution of works at the construction and work sites, the company had been continuously making efforts to provide compulsory training in relation to

health, safety and environment (SHE) to the staff and workers of the site staff and contractor.

He said UP Metro also adhered to the international standards of safety during the implementation of the Lucknow Metro Rail Project, for which the project was

felicitated with the Gold award in 2019 under the Project, Infrastructure category of the International Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). He said compliance with all international standards was being ensured by UP Metro in Kanpur as well.

Safety oath administered at OPF

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Ordnance Parachute Factory General Manager DK Bangotra, while addressing the staff and officials on National Safety Week on Thursday, administered the safety oath to the officials and staff of the unit.

He said one must keep in mind that in areas where production was carried out, safety rules had to be followed in letter and spirit. He said safety of an individual in an organisation was of prime concern and this day reminded one to remain vigilant at work place every time.

He said vulnerability assessments were useful for detecting security issues within one's environment and by identifying potential security



The GM, OPF, DK Bangotra administering oath on National Safety Day on Thursday

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weaknesses, these assessments help reduce the risk. He said these assessments also helped to learn more about assets in a meaningful way that allowed them to improve overall security posture. He said it was the prime responsibility to dis-

cover inventory assets on the network, discover vulnerabilities of the assets and remediate discovered vulnerabilities.

He said one must always keep in mind 5 Ws - What, When, Who, Where and Why.

He said it was important for an individual to understand what safety equipment was. He said similarly one should know what was When which meant one should know when to wear the safety gears, then another W was Who should wear it and where one should wear it and finally Why should one wear it.

Joint GM Sunil Chaturvedi discussed safety rules and measures and said that the OPF would conduct essay and speech writing, poster contests, slogan contests and other activities between March 6 and 8.

AGM Shishir Sinha, AGM Ashish Kumar and Works Manager Aisha Khan and other officials and staff members were present on the occasion.

People of all ages affected by obesity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Obesity Day was observed on Thursday to create awareness among people living with obesity to come forward and share their experiences with others. The day also encourages practices to achieve and maintain healthy weight.

The medical condition of obesity is excessive increase in body fat and it can lead to diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart risks.

The theme of this year's Obesity Day was 'Everybody needs Everybody'.

This was stated by noted dietician Dr Preeti Chawla while addressing press persons on World Obesity Day on Thursday.

She said as per World Health Organisation (WHO), the rate of obesity had tripled and people from all ages and in both developed and developing countries were affected by obesity.

She said people who were overweight needed respect, care, protection and policy change, and WHO had urged that everybody should come together to drive a change.

She said the four main objectives of World Obesity

Bariatric surgery apt solution for obese people

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

People with obesity often develop related medical problems, also known as comorbidities, that pose significant health threats, and bariatric surgery or the weight loss surgery is the apt solution for obese people, according to senior consultant Dr Pradeep Joshi and associate consultant Dr Saurabh Verma.

They said this medical procedure not only improved the quality of life but also gave a slimmer body in less time.

Dr Joshi and Dr Verma said patients with obesity were more likely to have high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, sleep apnea and back and joint pain.

They said weight loss surgery could help them lose weight, thereby drastically improving health problems such as diabetes and hypertension.

They said bariatric surgery was done only when diet and exercise do not work or when the patients have serious health problems because of their weight. They said bariatric surgery involved making changes to your digestive system to help one lose weight.

Day 2021 were increasing awareness, encouraging advocacy, improving policies and sharing experiences. She added that in addition the objective was that policy makers prioritise obesity as a health issue and thus create the required support system for people with the condition.

She said this day was also an opportunity for people living with obesity to come forward and share their experiences with others.

Dr Chawla said obesity was generally caused by eating too much and moving too little and added that if one consumed high amounts of energy, particularly fat and sugars, but did not burn off the energy through exercise and physical activity, much of the sur-

plus energy was stored by the body as fat.

She said several factors could play a role in weight gain, including diet, lack of exercise, factors in a person's environment, and genetics. She said with the crisis of time people did not have time for exercise. She said research had shown that genetics played a role in obesity as genes could directly cause obesity.

She said genes also may contribute to a person's susceptibility to weight gain. She said scientists believed that genes may increase a person's likelihood of becoming obese but that outside factors, such as an abundant food supply or little physical activity, may also be required for a person to put on excess weight.

She said some hormone problems may cause overweight and obesity, such as underactive thyroid, Cushing syndrome and polycystic ovary syndrome. She said some medicines also may cause weight gain, including some corticosteroids, antidepressants, and seizure medicines. She said in addition to this stress, emotional factors and poor sleep was also a reason.

Six startups selected for Kolhapur Mission, IIT-K SIIC support

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kolhapur Startup Mission launched by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur's Startup Incubation and Innovation Centre (SIIC) in partnership with Kolhapur Incubation Centre and DY Patil Education Group has received overwhelming response. It received more than 600 entries from different startups between January 15 and 31.

The Kolhapur Startup Mission aims at inviting and empowering start-ups in Kolhapur to solve the city's civic issues through innovative ideas and technology and supporting new entrepreneurship.

The winning startups were Aquafont Infra, Riverbin, Samudhyoga Waste Chakra, Kolhapur-based Eco Green India and innovations by Tejaswini Mali and Ronak Sutaria.

Based on the eligibility criteria, the organisers selected 133 applications for the second round and the same were evaluated on the relevance and innovations by the SIIC team. Of these, 60 entries were further selected for the third round and were evaluated by a panel of experts. After a detailed assessment, 15 entries were selected for the final presentation held on March 2.

After detailed deliberations and discussions, the panel chose six startups that will receive technical, financial and co-incubation support from Kolhapur Innovation Centre and SIIC IIT-Kanpur.

The focus areas for which the entries were invited included water management, waste management, air quality management, education, public health, e-governance, agriculture and mobility and transportation.

KLC ushers in good news for Kanpur’s shoe industry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The commencement of construction of the leather mega cluster at Ramaipur here has ushered in good news for the city's shoe industry. As per reports, the industry would soon get a horde of skilled craftsmen with the establishment of the proposed training institute at Kanpur-Unnao Leather Cluster (KLC) Development Company.

The Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Department has submitted a detailed project report and sought a fund of Rs 25 crore for the KLC from the Central government.

KLC Director Rajendra Kumar Jalan said a memorandum of understanding would be signed between the KLC and the MSME department after the government approved the DPR. To be established on the lines of Footwear Training Institute in Agra, the new institute is expected to train 600 individuals. In addition to this, around 200 individuals would be coached through the outreach programmes of the institute. The institute, which expects to start courses from the upcoming financial year, would host programmes to teach designing, cutting and stitching with a timeline of six months to two years. Proposed to be developed over an area of 14,000 square feet, this facility shall start welcoming students from July onwards. Jalan said the shoe industry would benefit from this training centre in multiple ways. He said while this initiative would definitely lead to a boom in employment opportunities, the trained individuals would be equipped to start their own entrepreneurial ventures too.

YOGA CAMP: Under the Mission Shakti campaign, Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) organised a one-day Yoga training camp on Thursday. Addressing the female employees, Nodal Officer Renu Pathak said the development of mind was possible in a healthy body. Pathak said with the help of a healthy mind and body, women could quickly discharge their duties towards family, society and the workplace.

2 pairs of unreserved express spls between Chhapra Kacheri-Thawe to run from today

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of passenger will run two pairs of unreserved express special trains between Chhapra Kacheri-Thawe from March 5 as follows. These special trains will be run as express (unreserved) special trains keeping Covid-19 in mind so that there is no extra rush in them and to ensure compliance of its prevention guidelines. In the larger health interest of passengers travelling in these special trains and their co-passengers it is necessary to comply with Covid-19 safety norms issued by the Government of India.

05122 CHHAPRA KACHERI-THAWA EXP: CPRO PK Singh said the 05122 Chhapra Kacheri-Thawe unreserved express special train will from March 5 except Sunday six days a week leave Chhapra Kacheri at 05.40 hrs and after stopping at Tenua Dumaria, Khairah, Banni Mahman Patti, Bahura Halt, Banni Mahman Patti, Khairah, Tenua Dumaria Halt, and reach Chhapra Kacheri at 13.20 hrs. A total of 10 coaches will be attached in this train.

05124 CHHAPRA KACHERI-THAWA EXP: The 05124 Chhapra Kacheri-Thawe unreserved express special train will from March 5 except for Sunday six days a week leave Chhapra Kacheri

Dhama Halt, Mashrakh, Rajapatti, Alehpur Halt, Katalpur, Dighwa Dubauli, Trivikramdeo Nagar, Brijkishore Halt, Sidhwalia, Sher, Ratan Sarai, Manjagarh and Gopalganj and reach Thawe at 09.20 hrs. In return journey the 05121 Thawe-Chhapra Kachheri unreserved express special train from March 5 will leave Thawe at 09.45 hrs and after stopping at Gopalganj, Manjagarh, Ratan Sarai, Sidhwalia, Brijkishore Halt, Trivikramdeo Nagar, Dighaba Dubauli, Katalpur, Alehpur Halt, 11.16 hrs from Raja Patti, Mashrakh, Gunrajpur Dhama Halt, Parsa Kerwan Halt, Shamkauria, Agauthar, Tehda Halt, Marhaura, Shilhauri Halt, Tejpurwa Halt, Paterahi, Bahura Halt, Banni Mahman Patti, Khairah, Tenua Dumaria Halt, and reach Chhapra Kacheri at 13.20 hrs. A total of 10 coaches will be attached in this train.

05124 CHHAPRA KACHERI-THAWA EXP: The 05124 Chhapra Kacheri-Thawe unreserved express special train will from March 5 except for Sunday six days a week leave Chhapra Kacheri

at 14.10 hrs and after stopping at from Tenua Dumaria, Khairah, Banni Mahman Patti, Bahura Halt, Paterahi, Tejpurwa Halt, Shilhauri Halt, Marhaura, Terha Halt, Agauthar, Shamkauria, Parsa Kerwan Halt, Gunrajpur Dhama Halt, Mashrakh, Rajapatti, Alehpur Halt, Katalpur, Dighwa Dubauli, Trivikramdeo Nagar, Brijkishore Halt, Sidhwalia, Sher, Ratan Sarai, Manjagarh Gopalganj and reach Thawe at 17.45 hrs. In the return journey, 05123 Thawe-Chhapra Kachheri unreserved express special train from March 5 except Sunday will depart from Thawe at 06.20 hrs and after stopping at Gopalganj, Manjagarh, Ratan Sarai, Sher, Sidhwalia, Brij Kishore Halt, Trivikramdeo Nagar, Dighawa Dubauli, Katalpur, Alehpur Halt, Rajapatti, Mashrakh, Gunrajpur Dhama Halt, Parsa Kerwa Halt, Shamkauria, Agauthar, Tehda Halt, Marhaura, Shilhauri Halt, Tejpurwa Halt, Paterahi, Bahura Halt, Banni Mahman Patti, Khairah and Tenua Dumaria Halt and reach Chhapra Kacheri at 22.00 hrs. A total of 10 coaches will be attached in it.

Two pairs of unreserved express trains between Aunrihar-Jaunpur from today

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration will run two pairs of unreserved express special trains between Aunrihar-Jaunpur for the convenience of passengers. Compliance of Covid-19 norms is necessary. The 05133 Aunrihar-Jaunpur unreserved express special train from March 5 will daily leave Aunrihar at 07.45 hrs and after stopping at Faridaha, Dudhaunda, Dobhi, Kerakat, Gangauli, Muftiganj and Yadavendra Nagar reach Jaunpur at 09.10 hrs. During the return journey, the 05134 Jaunpur-Aunrihar unreserved special train from March 5 will daily leave Jaunpur at 09.40 hrs and after stopping at Yadavendranagar, Muftiganj, Gangauli, Kerakat, Dobhi, Dudhaunda and Faridaha will reach Aunrihar at 11.00 hrs. The 05143 Aundhihar-Jaunpur Unreserved express special will from March 5 daily leave Aunrihar at 16.20 hrs and after stopping at Faridaha, Dudhaunda, Dobhi, Kerakat, Gangauli, Muftiganj and Yadendra Nagar will reach Jaunpur at 17.50 hrs. In the return journey the 05144 Jaunpur-Aunrihar unreserved special will from March 5 daily leave Jaunpur at 18.10 hrs and after stopping at Yadvendranagar, Muftiganj, Gangauli, Kerakat, Dobhi, Dudhaunda and Faridaha will reach Aunrihar at 19.45 hrs.

PRRB-MAU EXP: The railway administration will for the convenience of passengers between Prayagraj Rambag (PRRB)-Mau run a pair of unreserved express special train as follows, CPRO PK Singh said. The 05138 Prayagraj Rambag-Mau unreserved express special will from March 8 run six days a week except Sundays will run from Prayagraj Rambag at 06.10 hrs and after stopping at Daraganj, Jhusi, Rammathpur, Saidabad, Handia Khas, Bhati, Atraura, Jangiganj, Sarai Jagdish, Gyanpur Road, Alamau Halt, Ahimanpur, Madhosingh, Katka, Kachhwa Road, Nagatpur, Baherwa Halt, Raja Talab, Hardatpur, Bhulanpur, Manduadih, Varanasi, Varanasi City, Sarnath, Kadipur, Rajwari, Aunrihar, Mahpur, Sadat,

Hurmujpur Halt, Jakhnian, Dullahpur, Naik Dih, Pipri Dih, Paniara Halt and will reach Mau at 12.00 hrs. In the return journey the 05137 Mau-Prayagraj Rambagh unreserved express special from March 7 will six days a week except Saturdays run from Mau at 14.45 hrs and after stopping at Paniara Halt, Pipri Dih, Naik Dih, Dullahpur, Jakhnian, Hurmuzpur Halt, Sadat, Mahpur, Aunrihar, Rajawari, Kadipur, Sarnath, Varanasi City, Varanasi, Manduadih, Bhulanpur, Hardatpur, Raja Talab, Baherwa Halt, Nagatpur Kachhwa Road, Katka, Madhosingh, Ahimanpur, Almau Halt, Gyanpur Road, Sarai Jagdish, Jangiganj, Atraura, Bhati, Handia Khas, Saidabad, Ramanathapur, Jhusi and Daraganj and reach PRRB at 20.20 hrs.

DIVERSION: In view of doubling of Nandganj-Ghazipur City section on Varanasi division of NER pre-NI work from March 13, NI work from March 21 to 25 and due to the block taken of the third line at Ghazipur city station from March 5 the short termination/short origination, diversion and control of special trains will be as done as follows. The 02234 Anand Vihar Terminus (ANVT)-Ghazipur City special train to run from ANVT on March 5, 8, 12, 15, 19 and 22 will be short terminated at Aunrihar Jn. The 02233 Ghazipur City-Anand Vihar Terminus special to run from Ghazipur City on March 6, 9, 13, 16, 20 and 23 will be run from Aunrihar Jn. The 09041 Bandra Terminus-Ghazipur City special to run from Bandra Terminus on March 5, 7, 12, 14, 19 and 21 will be short terminated at Aunrihar Jn. The 09042 Ghazipur City-Bandra Terminus special to run from Ghazipur City on March 7, 9, 14, 16, 21 and 23 will be run from Aunrihar Jn. The 02220 ANVT-Ghazipur City special Aunrihar Jn to run from Anand Vihar Terminus on March 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21 and 23 will be short terminated at Aunrihar Jn. The 02219 Ghazipur City-ANVT special to run from Ghazipur City on March 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22 and 24 will be run from Aunrihar Jn. The 03121 Kolkata-Ghazipur City special to run from Kolkata on March 7, 14 and

21 will be short terminated at Ballia station. The 03122 Ghazipur City-Kolkata special to run from Ghazipur City will on March 9, 15 and 22 be run from Ballia station. The 03125 Kolkata-Ghazipur City special to run from Kolkata on March 11 and 18 will be short terminated at Varanasi City station. The 03126 Ghazipur City-Kolkata special to run from Ghazipur City will be run from Varanasi City Station on March 5, 12 and 19. The 01061 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Jaynagar special to depart from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus will from March 12 to 19 and on March 23 and 24 will be diverted via Aunrihar-Bhatni-Chhapra. The 04016 Anand Vihar Terminus-Raxaul special to depart from Anand Vihar Terminus will from March 12, 14, 19 and 21 will be diverted via Aunrihar-Mau-Phephna-Chhapra. The 05115 Chhapra-Delhi special to depart from Chhapra on March 13 and 20 will be diverted via Phephna-Mau-Aunrihar. The 02562 New Delhi-Jaynagar special to depart from New Delhi will from March 13 to 24 will be diverted via Aunrihar-Bhatni-Chhapra. The 05116 Delhi-Chhapra special to depart from Delhi on March 14 and 21 2021 will be diverted via Phephna-Mau-Aunrihar. The 04008 Anand Vihar Terminus-Raxaul special to depart from Anand Vihar Terminus on March 16, 18 and 23 will be diverted via Aundhir-Mau-Phephna-Chhapra. The 09066 Chhapra-Surat special to depart from Chhapra on March 17 and 24 2021 will be diverted via Chhapra-Bhatni-Aunrihar. The 04018 Anand Vihar Terminus-Raxaul special to depart from Anand Vihar Terminus on March 20 will be run by controlling it by 15 minutes. The 01061 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Jaynagar special to run from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus on March 22 will be run by being controlled by 25 minutes.

Woman run over by train

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

An old woman was run over by train in Bhaurahi village under Chunar police station on Wednesday. It is learnt that Kahani Devi (75), wife of Sarvjeet, was going to her field when she was run over by the train. The police sent her body for the post-mortem examination.

MEGA LOK ADALAT: The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) will organise a mega Lok Adalat on March 5 and 7 to settle family disputes on the direction of District Judge Lal Chand Gupta following the instructions of State Legal Services Authority. Principal Judge Family Court Diwaker Chaturvedi said such initiative had been taken for empowerment of women before International Women's Day on March 8. He appealed

to lawyers to convince their clients to avail the benefits of Lok Adalat to get rid of cumbersome legal proceedings. He said matters were to be settled through counselling and mutual compromise. DLSA secretary Amit Kumar Yadav-II said registration was on.

DIRECTIVE: D M Praveen Kumar Laxkar directed the officers concerned to take personal interest in the disposal of complaints lodged on the occasion Sampoorn Samadhan Divas otherwise there was no justification for such days at all. He said this while presiding over the Sampoorn Samadhan Divas meeting at Chunar tehsil on Tuesday. He attended the meeting along with SP Ajay Kumar Singh and heard the problems of complainants. He disposed of eight complaints on the spot and directed the officials concerned to dispose of the rest within 15 days. On a complaint that bill was raised without electric connection the DM directed the official concerned to dispose of the case. He made it clear that such cases should not be repeated at all. The meeting was attended by SDM Surendra Bahadur Singh, tehsildar Arun Giri, ACMO, PD DRDA, Rishimuni Upadhyay, POICDS, PK Singh and others.

INJURED: A youth was seriously injured when his motorcycle was hit by a truck on Mirzapur Revla road near Patehra Pandey village under Laganj police station. The accident took place when Lavkush (21) of Bastara Pandey village was on the way to national highway 7. The motorcycle caught the fire and its rider came under it. The locals rescued the victim and police sent him to a hospital.

J&K delimitation panel's term extended for a year

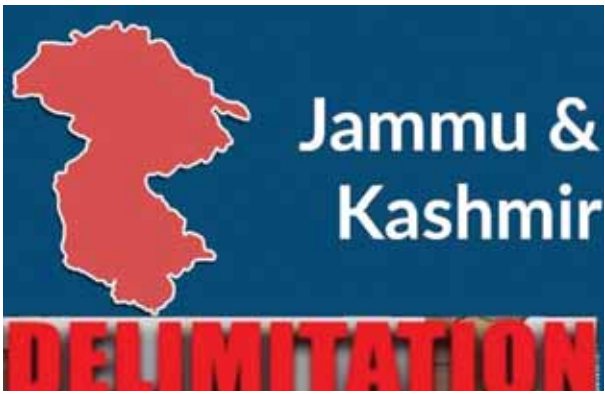
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a move indicating that the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir's wait for regaining its Statehood would not be over anytime soon, the Centre has given a one-year extension to the Delimitation Commission, headed by retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, mandated for redrawing the boundaries of Assembly and Lok Sabha seats in the UT. It means, the Assembly and Parliamentary polls will only be held after the delimitation exercise, and for conducting the polls, the UT has to be declared a State first.

Interestingly, the north-eastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland have been excluded from the mandate of the Commission.

The Union Ministry of Law & Justice has issued a notification extending the tenure of Justice (Retd.) Ranjana Desai, delimitation commissioner by one year. The commission's term was coming to end on March 5, 2021. According to the notification, the Commission's mandate would now only be to carry out the exercise in Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory.

Union home minister Amit Shah had last month told the Lok Sabha that Jammu and Kashmir will get back the status of a state at an appropriate time. The home minister was replying to the discussion on the Jammu



and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill of 2021 in the Lok Sabha.

Sources said there were some legal issues in notification part relating delimitation in the four north-eastern states. "So possibly a fresh notification may be issued after addressing the legal anomalies", sources added.

The Commission has held its first meeting last month in which the National Conference members skipped the meeting saying that the party has challenged the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act in the Supreme Court and the matter is pending.

The panel was set up last year to redraw the electoral constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir and four northeastern States — Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. However, the one-year extension is only for Jammu

and Kashmir.

The proceedings of the commission, which has five MPs from the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir as ex-officio members, have been boycotted by the National Conference (NC) that has three representatives in the panel.

Before Parliament passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act in August 2019, the effective strength of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly was 87, including four seats from Ladakh, which is now a separate Union Territory without a legislature. The strength of the realigned Jammu and Kashmir Assembly is 107 now with 24 seats to continue to remain vacant as those fall in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The Government had in August 2019 revoked Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

IITs, IIMs, DU et al: 12 Indian institutes in top 100 rankings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Twelve Indian institutions have made it to the top 100 of the world. IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi, IIT Madras, IIT Kharagpur, IISC Bangalore, IIT Guwahati, IIM Bangalore, IIM Ahmedabad, JNU, Anna University, University of Delhi, and O P Jindal University have found top billing in the latest QS World University Rankings by Subject 2021.

Amongst these top 100 ranked institutions, IIT Madras has been ranked 30th in the world for Petroleum Engineering, IIT Bombay has been ranked 41st and IIT Kharagpur has been ranked 44th in the world for Minerals and Mining Engineering, and University of Delhi has been ranked 50th in the world for Development Studies.

Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' while addressing and unveiling the QS World University Rankings expressed his happiness and congratulated the Institutions for securing positions in the top 100 in the QS Subject Rankings for the year 2021.

He said, over the last few years the Government's continuous focus on improvement and reform in Indian higher education has resulted in significant improvement in

the representation of Indian institutions in globally acclaimed and reputed rankings like QS. These rankings and ratings have fostered healthy competition amongst Indian Institutions motivating them towards global excellence, he added.

Nishank said India's higher education system plays a vital role in driving the nation's competitiveness. "Today, India is a leading nation with the highest number of higher education institutions across the globe with significant progress in the last few years in terms of enrolment in higher education which now stands at 37.4 million.

He also highlighted the achievements of the Government in addressing the gender gap in higher education, wherein now women constitute 48.6% of the total enrolment," said Nishank on the occasion.

CEO, NITI Aayog Amitabh Kant, Chairman, UGC, Prof Dharendra P Singh; Chairman, NAAC, Dr Virendra S Chauhan, Chairman, AICTE, Dr Anil D Sahasrabudhe; Vice President, QS Rankings, Ben Sowter, Head of Evaluation, QS Rankings, Leigh Kamolins, Head of Institutions and other dignitaries were also virtually present on the occasion.

Dwarka e-way to open for public use by Aug 15, 2022



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's First Grade Separated Urban Expressway, called Dwarka Expressway in national Capital region, will be thrown open for the public by August 15 in 2022, marking the 75th anniversary of India's Independence. Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari made an announcement in this regard on Thursday.

Gadkari during the review of the progress of the 29-km state-of-the-art Dwarka expressway directed the stakeholders of the project to expedite the construction activities and help further decongest Delhi NCR and look forward to reduce pollution quickly.

The project is part of the Centre's ambitious Bharatmala Project and with a cost of ₹8,662 crore "it will be the first-ever elevated Urban Expressway in India and will immensely help reducing the

air pollution in Delhi-NCR," Gadkari said while addressing the media after the inspection of project.

Being built in four packages, total length of the Expressway is 29 kilometres out of which 18.9 kilometre length falls in Haryana while remaining 10.1 kilometre length is in Delhi. It starts from Shiv-Murti on National Highway-8 and ends near Kherki Daula Toll Plaza.

The Minister said that the project, once complete, will be an engineering marvel of India as it has several unique features. This will have longest (3.6 kilometre) and widest (8 lane) Urban Road Tunnel in India. The project's road network will also comprise of four levels, i.e., tunnel / underpass, at-grade road, elevated flyover and flyover above flyover.

It will also comprise India's first 9-kilometre long 8-lane flyover (34-metre wide)

on single pier with 6-lane service roads. There will be a fully automated tolling system with 22 lanes toll plaza. The entire project will be equipped with Intelligent Transportation System (ITS). The project has a total estimated consumption of two lakh MT of steel, which is 30 times of that of the Eiffel Tower. The total estimated consumption of 20 lakh Cum of Concrete is six times of the Burj Khalifa building.

Gadkari said that the Dwarka Expressway would also be the first instance of a project where Tree Plantation of approximately 12,000 trees has been undertaken, keeping protection of the environment in view. He further said that "based on this experience, the method will be replicated across the country".

The Minister stated that Delhi-Gurgaon section of National Highway-8, a part of Delhi-Jaipur-Ahmedabad-Mumbai arm of Golden Quadrilateral (GQ), is presently carrying traffic of over three lakh Passenger Car Units (PCUs), which is much beyond design capacity of this 8-lane highway, leading to severe congestion and with the construction of the present project, 50 to 60 per cent traffic on National Highway-8 will be reduced. The project will also provide around 50,000 direct or indirect employment opportunities.

Rahul: Centre carries out raids on pro-farmers people

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Thursday accused the Centre of carrying out raids against those who are pro-farmers. He used three popular Hindi idioms — 'Ungliyon pe nachana', 'Bheegi billi banna' and 'Khisiyani billi khamba nochne' — which he believed are meaningful in the current perspective amidst the ongoing confrontation between the Government, farmers.

Rahul's scathing comments on the Modi-led Government came as income-tax raids continued at the homes and offices of Bollywood personalities Taapsee Pannu, Anurag Kashyap and others. In his three-pronged attack, Rahul alleged that the Central Government makes the Income Tax department dance to its tunes, friendly media gets cowed down before the Centre and the Central Government raids those supporting farmers. He used the hashtag 'ModiRaidsProFarmers' with his tweet in Hindi to take a dig at the Government.

Pannu and Kashyap, both known to be outspoken in their views on a range of issues, were shooting in Pune and are understood to have been questioned by the tax sleuths as part of the preliminary questioning that takes place during raids. The searches against Pannu and Kashyap as well as his partners who

Cong blames Modi Govt sans concrete proof, hits back BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday hit back at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and his party for criticising the Modi Government on all issues "without any evidence" be it that of Coronavirus vaccine, Election Commission's poll date announcement, abrogation of Article 370 or the Income Tax raids on the Bollywood stars.

Addressing a press conference here, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia alleged that the Congress and the other opposition parties are attacking a constitutional body like the Election Commission for announcing the eight-phased poll in West Bengal. He said casual criticism against key institutions "weakens democracy".

Pointing to the criticism attracted by the IT raids, this week, against some film stars, Bhatia said "not making law work in the country is in the character of the Congress" and claimed that the Modi-government has given a "free-hand to probe cases on the basis of merit without discriminating as who is a star or not.

He accused the Congress of discrediting the key institutions saying it was during the UPA regime when the Supreme Court had called CBI a "caged parrot".

The BJP leader accused Congress of playing politics around Covid vaccine, EC and the IT raids on

Bollywood stars and attacking the government "without any evidence".

Bhatia asked Rahul to answer questions which BJP president J P Nadda had asked him like the one as "why he doesn't attend Parliamentary Defence Committee meetings?". "Rahul asks many questions but runs away when he is posed with some basic queries" Bhatia said.

He said Congress leader should at least answer question asked by the Congress dissident G-23 group leaders as why his party has tied up with a "communal outfit" like Indian Secular Front in West Bengal. "Is it Panth Nirpek?", he quizzed, hoping Rahul would heed the advice of his party leaders.



India should be ready to face Sino-Pak challenges at border: CDS Rawat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Flagging the fast-changing war fighting doctrines all over the world, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat on Thursday said India faces bigger threats than other military in the world and it should prepare to face the twin challenge to its security from China and Pakistan.

The country should also undertake reforms in the defence sector, especially to conduct joint battles in digitized battle space, he stressed.

Underlining these priorities here on Thursday, Rawat said with China's growing military prowess, it will make all efforts to assert its dominance in states around India and the strategically important Indian Ocean region.

"Threats for which our military must be organised primarily comes from China and Pakistan. In future, China will continue to assert itself, seeking to establish domi-

nance in States surrounding India and in the IOR," Rawat said.

Stressing the need to take note of transformational concepts, the CDS said the armed forces and defence establishment has to be prepared for threats for military primary arising from China and Pakistan.

Making these points in his address in a webinar on "Transformation: Imperatives for Indian Armed Forces" organised by the College of Defence Management (CDM), Secunderabad, Rawat said India is facing complex security and a challenging environment.

Calling for reforms in the Indian defence sector, Rawat said organisational structure for conventional wars or limited conflicts already exists, but they need to be re-modelled, re-equipped and re-oriented to conduct joint battles in digitised battle space to have necessary flexibility for other types of operations.

Plea seeks Supreme Court order to Govt to appoint CBI Director



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the post of CBI Director lying vacant for over a month now, a plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Centre to forthwith appoint a regular chief of the premier anti-corruption investigation agency.

In its petition, the NGO Common Cause has alleged that the Government has failed to appoint a regular CBI Director as per section 4A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, on the expiry of term of Rishi Kumar Shukla on February 2 and instead appointed Praveen Sinha as an interim Director of the agency till appointment of a regular chief or until further orders.

The plea, filed through advocate Prashant Bhushan, has also sought a direction to the Centre to initiate and complete the process of selection of

the CBI Director well in advance, at least one to two months before the date on which the vacancy to the post is about to arise.

"The director of the CBI is the final authority in the organization. He supervises all the work in the CBI and is responsible for the constitution of investigating teams for probing cases. Hence, this court and later on Parliament have made determined efforts to enhance the functional autonomy of the CBI director and limit the extent of executive discretion in the matter of appointment of this key functionary," the plea underscored.

The appointment of CBI director is made on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister, leader of the single largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India or any judge of the Supreme Court nominated by the CJI.

SC: Ensure elderly's treatment on priority in pvt, Govt hospitals



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed that elderly people be given priority in admission and treatment at private hospitals besides at government medical institutions amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

A bench of justices Ashok Bhushan and R S Reddy modified its earlier order of August 4, 2020, by which it had directed only government hospitals to give priority in admission and treatment of elderly people looking at their vulnerability to coronavirus.

The bench took note of submission of senior advocate Ashwani Kumar, petitioner in person that except Odisha and Punjab no other state has given details about the steps taken in pursuance of the earlier directions issued by the top court on his plea.

The top court granted three weeks' time to all the

THE TOP COURT GRANTED THREE WEEKS' TIME TO ALL THE STATES TO RESPOND TO THE FRESH SUGGESTIONS MADE BY KUMAR TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO THE ELDERLY PEOPLE

states to respond to the fresh suggestions made by Kumar to provide relief to the elderly people.

During the hearing, Kumar said the states need to issue fresh Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in pursuance to the directions issued by the court.

HP farmer takes aromatic way to boost income

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Straying cattle in his farm-land, the monkey menace in his region and the uncertain income from conventional paddy and maize crops pushed Ajay Sharma, a farmer from Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district, to start experimenting with aromatic plants like wild marigold a few years ago. The risk he undertook then has started yielding results now.

Sharma and around 40 farmers who formed a Self Help Group (SHG) in the region have started reaping benefits from Marigold flower cultivation, used in a plethora of industries like perfumery and pharmaceuticals.

However, this could be made possible with the help of interventions made by scientists from Society for Technology and Development (STD), Mandi Core Support group, SEED Division, Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the Union Science and Technology Ministry and the CSIR lab Indian Himalayan Bioresource Technology



(IHBT), Chamba district is among 112 most backward (aspirational) districts of the country identified under the Aspirational Districts' Programme piloted by NITI Aayog in January 2018 where the Central Government has special focus to help farmers become Atmanirbhar (self-sustaining), given that the district has shown relatively lesser progress in key social areas.

Under the Government's Aromatic Mission, the STD initiated cultivation and processing of aromatic plants (wild marigold, improved variety from the stable of IHBT) involving the farming community in technical collabo-

ration with the Palampur-based CSIR lab in Parwai village, Bhatiyat Block in Chamba.

The SHG called Green Valley Kissan Sabha Parwai has been formed and linked to Himachal Gramin Bank, Parchhod, for further financial help, said IHBT scientist Rakesh Kumar.

He said that as a value addition, a distillation unit of 250 kg capacity has been installed at Parwai village while scientists from the IHBT trained the farmers into agrotechnology of wild marigold, extraction of oil, packing, and storage of oil started cultivating wild marigold and distill-

ing oil from it.

The extracted oil is being sold at ₹9,500 per kg and used in preparing perfumes and essences by pharmaceutical industries. The income of farmers which was around ₹40,000 to ₹ 50,000 per hectare from traditional crops has increased to about ₹1,00,000 per hectare by cultivation and extraction of wild marigold oil, said IHBT Director Sanjay Kumar.

Rakesh Kumar added that the initiative was started in 2016-17 as a pilot project and have expanded in Mandi and surrounding villages.

According to him wild animals are not attracted to the wild marigold and the crop is ready to be harvested within five or six months.

"We have set up 50 oil processing units, 35 of them in Himachal Pradesh and the rest in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Mizoram. These facilities can also process other aromatic crops such as lemongrass and palmarosa, etc., besides wild marigold," added the scientist.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Burmese Spring

The Army, unmoved by global appeals, is back to repressive tactics to quell pro-democracy protests

All hell has broken loose on the streets of Myanmar as the security forces resorted to unbridled violence to crush peaceful anti-coup protests, reminding one of the Chinese crackdown in Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989 and the bloodshed in Libya and Yemen in the Arab Spring of 2010. Though the official number of people killed in the “Burmese Spring” is being put at 38, the United Nations (UN) says the number is close to 50. However, the activists put the toll even higher as the armed forces continue to use lethal weapons on the protesters, resulting in unarmed teenagers, women and youth being killed for demanding what is rightfully theirs. No one is surprised at the recent show of brutality by the Tatmadaw, which had been in power in Myanmar since 1962 and had just about tolerated the *quasi*-democracy that began in 2011, even though the parliamentary elections and other reforms had been initiated by the military itself under global pressure. The February 1 coup, which returned the military to full power, had seen a major pushback from the repressed citizenry that obviously did not want to be living once more under the shadow of the ruthless Tatmadaw, which had gained notoriety for having crushed pro-democracy movements in 1988 and 2007 by shooting protesters. Though the forces had initially shown some restraint when the protests began, the Army became increasingly repressive each



passing day as the demonstrations showed no signs of abating.

In fact, the movement swelled as more people rallied together to protect their democracy and seek the release of their democratically-elected leaders. The military regime had to face global embarrassment and resort to firing the country’s ambassador to the UN a day after he gave an impassioned speech to the UN General Assembly in New York, pleading for international help in restoring democracy in his nation. Rattled by the unwanted global attention, the Tatmadaw became increasingly aggressive, thus inviting global sanctions. Now, the military, which has long been documented to be engaged in human rights abuses in conflict zones, seems to be past caring if the revelations by the UN’s Special Envoy Christine Schraner Burgener are to be believed. When Burgener warned the military that the UN Security Council and member States were likely to take strong measures against it, she was told: “We are used to sanctions, and we have survived those sanctions in the past.” Warned of global isolation, the Tatmadaw’s answer was: “We have to learn to walk with only few friends.” This is a worrying line of thought because when a regime that has a history of brutality and repression becomes indifferent to the consequences of its actions, there is not much the global community can do. For the people of the beleaguered country it means double trouble: The wrath of the authoritarian regime on the one hand, and the economic hardship that the sanctions bring, on the other. Whatever the global community has to do for the beleaguered citizens of Myanmar it must do fast, because the people there are running out of time.

PICTALK



People build barricades to block police in Mandalay, Myanmar

Stop romanticising interfaith marriages

If a Muslim man and Hindu woman marry, it is recommended they do it under the Special Marriage Act, which doesn’t have unequal rights



PRAFULL GORADIA

At my niece’s wedding in a church, the officiating priest began by declaring: “Marriage is a union; divine and indivisible.” This is a succinct way of expressing that marriage is a sacrament; no breaking until death does the union part.

The *Dictionary of Islam* by Thomas Patrick Hughes (published by Rupa & Co) calls marriage a *nikah*, a word that in its literal sense means a conjunction. It is a contract till the husband wants it. He can divorce his wife at pleasure by giving a notice of three months. The wife does not have this privilege. If she wants to separate, she has to follow the procedure of *khul*, which entails finding a *qazi* and convincing him under the rules of *fiqh* or dogmatic theology of Muslims.

If a Muslim man and Hindu woman fall in love, it is recommended that they marry under the Special Marriage Act, which does not have unequal rights nor requires the woman to change her religion or name, whereas a *nikah* insists that both partners be of the same religion, i.e. Muslim. If the man does not wish to divorce, he can take another wife.

It is rare to find an interfaith marriage where the bride is a Muslim and the groom a Hindu. Perhaps the reason is that it is impermissible for a non-Muslim to marry a Muslim woman as he would have legal authority over her. The tenets of Islam say that God doesn’t allow non-Muslims to have authority over Muslims. A Muslim man can marry a non-Muslim woman, but not *vice versa*.

This seems unfair, but the Islamic rationale is that a non-Muslim man will not respect his Muslim wife’s faith. These tenets also hold that while Muslims believe in all previous religions and Prophets of God and respect them, a non-Muslim does not return the favour. A non-Muslim husband might not explicitly express this, but a Muslim wife cannot expect her husband to respect her faith. Muslims believe in only the



revealed religions of the Book, not other religions. A Muslim woman marrying a non-Muslim would eschew respect of the wife’s religion.

Some time ago, celebrated IAS couple Tina Dabi and Athar Aamir Khan filed for divorce in Jaipur, two years after they had tied the nuptial knot. Their love story and marriage in 2018 had made national headlines. A video made by Tina, in which she alleged that her Muslim husband tortured her for wearing a *burqa*, converting to Islam, reading *namaz* and adopting ‘Khan’ in her name, went viral.

Even without divorce, a Muslim male can marry up to four wives at a time; with divorce, there is no limit on the number of wives he can have. Hinduism and Christianity insist on only one wife. For marrying a Muslim boy, girls must know the possibilities they face. If the boy is Muslim, his faith enjoins upon him to produce as many children as possible so that they achieve demographic preponderance. This is borne out by the *Hadith* (*The Traditions*, the second holy book after the *Quran*; *The Dictionary of Islam* by Hughes). Concerned Hindus

understandably use the word ‘jihad’ in this context.

It is time to stop romanticising interfaith marriages blindly. Marrying Muslim men does entail legal outcomes for non-Muslim women. Today’s political discourse is less than open in that it tends to ignore arguments of those who have issues with such marriages. Selective quoting and presentation of only particular views as acceptable does not help the cause of any informed debate. The current secular outrage over interfaith marriages souring is focused on romanticising interfaith marriages as a virtue by itself and treating all such alliances as the same, which they regretably are not.

The rights of women under the Hindu Marriage Act or Special Marriage Act vary greatly from the rights of those who wed as per the *Sharia*. This has particular outcomes, as under *Sharia*, non-Muslim women have to first convert to Islam because this is a condition for marriage. Thus, any non-Muslim woman marrying a Muslim man instantly forfeits all her rights as she transits from a legal regime with more rights to one with fewer rights. This

is not reversible, as Islam does not permit apostasy. Many women who convert for the sake of getting married, believing they can continue to practice their faith, are quickly belied of this notion; the faith they marry into doesn’t permit this either.

Moreover, Hindus hold marriage to be a sacrament where even divorce is considered an anathema (though allowed legally). Under *Sharia*, it is only as a contract where a man can divorce his wife orally and instantly by simply saying *talaq* thrice (till it was banned). This is the chasm between the two worlds.

Non-Muslim women must be made aware of these consequences. The blind eulogy and advocacy of interfaith marriages and pretending that all such alliances are of the same nature is dishonesty. Rosy and romanticised pictures of interfaith marriages carry the serious propensity of harming non-Muslim women, who might make hasty and misinformed decisions only to repent and suffer later.

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



ANY NON-MUSLIM WOMAN MARRYING A MUSLIM MAN INSTANTLY FORFEITS ALL HER RIGHTS AS SHE TRANSITS FROM A LEGAL REGIME WITH MORE RIGHTS TO ONE WITH FEWER RIGHTS. THIS IS NOT REVERSIBLE, AS ISLAM DOES NOT PERMIT APOSTASY

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BE SENSITIVE TOWARDS HEARING LOSS

Sir — The World Hearing Day was on March 3 and, sadly, it went past like the problems of the hearing impaired go unheeded! It is really shocking to know that according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), one in four people will suffer from hearing problems by 2050. The world body has raised the alarm, stating that currently one in five people has hearing problems but most often it is just ignored. The same amount of care and attention that we give to other ailments is not given to problems related to hearing except when we have severe pain in the ear or similar such problems.

The WHO has called for global action and asked the nations to take immediate measures to check this ‘silent danger’. According to medical reports, almost 60 per cent of hearing loss in children is due to factors such as ear infections and birth complications that can be prevented through public health measures. According to the WHO, over one billion young adults are at risk of permanent, avoidable hearing loss due to unsafe listening practices, stressing the need to make people aware of this danger. Early identification of hearing loss and ear diseases are the key to the effective management.

Modern medicine with modern technology and implementation of certain safety norms can end such difficulties provided that the Governments, health organisations, NGOs and other agencies come forward to mitigate the problem.

M Pradyu | Kannur

RAHUL IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PAST

Sir — This refers to the editorial ‘*Mea culpa*’ (March 4). Verily speaking, the Nehru-Gandhi family’s contribution to the country is unmatched and cannot be questioned. The ‘Grand Old Party’ has a chequered performance sheet having caustic memories of the Emergency, communal riots and Bofors scandal. But Congress’ former president Rahul Gandhi should not be held responsible for them, as he was just a child or minor when these incidents took place. Personally, Rahul is an man of stern rectitude and a honest political leader who possesses the grit

Congress must correct its course



It refers to the editorial ‘*Split house*’ (March 4). The state of affairs within the Congress is gloomy, to say the least. The ‘Grand Old Party’ seems to be totally bereft of a centralised command which can control its affairs. Due to the lack of a powerful leadership, the Congress rank and file are working at their whims, fulfilling their vested interests and making whatever statements they feel like, without caring about the party. These

unfortunate things are happening at a time when the party faces elections in four States and a Union Territory. There has always been friction in the party but it seems to have blown out of proportion and is hurting the poll prospects of the Congress.

While cadres of other political parties in the poll fray are investing all their energy in campaigning, big leaders of the Congress are indulging in fights among themselves. It’s high time Rahul Gandhi took note of it and took steps to ensure that the party stays united. It is also the duty of the old guard to show more responsibility and talk with other leaders in order to resolve their differences. Merely, making allegations and counter-allegations would serve no good. If this state of affairs continues, it will further shrink the party’s vote bank as people would choose not to vote for the party which is divided because of internal feuds and has a weak leadership. The Congress must mull over this issue immediately or must ready itself for another poll drubbing.

Bal Govind | Noida

to contest even his party’s decisions if he doesn’t agree with these.

Moreover, he put in his papers as the party chief, taking moral responsibility for the Congress’ drubbing in the last general elections. On the other hand, it was his personal charisma appealing to the masses that helped the ‘Grand Old Party’ make a comeback by wresting the States of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh from the formidable BJP. The realisation of the past mistakes of the Congress comes across as a welcome gesture from this young and charismatic political leader. As the saying goes, “The sins of the parents are visited on the children”!

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

MERGE CHANNELS TO INCREASE VIEWERSHIP

Sir — It is welcome that the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha TV channels have been officially merged into one single entity, Sansad TV. It will help curtail the expenditure that is incurred in running the two TV channels.

Subhash Agarwal | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

My request for 27 per cent reservation for socially and economically backwards in Government jobs in Odisha has remained unaddressed till date.



Union Minister
— Dharmendra Pradhan

China is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system.

US President
— Joe Biden

The issues of drug abuse and crime against women are somewhere interconnected, and the youth of the nation suffers the most owing to these transgressions.

Actor
— Ravi Kishan

It was important to be positive and play your shots on that pitch, back yourselves to clear the boundary — just happy that I managed to contribute to the team’s cause at that point of time

West Indies captain
— Kieron Pollard

The Modi Government is using the economy’s collapse since the pandemic to rush headlong into its mission of handing over large portions of India’s wealth to its favourite crony capitalists.

Interim Congress President
— Sonia Gandhi



Political gambit?

Sasikala’s retirement comes as a boost for the AIADMK. But how long will she keep still?

In a stratagem that has left Tamil Nadu’s political circles stunned, VK Sasikala — considered by many the closest aide of the late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa — has declared that she will “stay away from politics and public life” while also “praying” for the AIADMK to retain power in the April 6 election. She unequivocally spelt out the reasons for her decision, too: That the AIADMK cadres need to stay united rather than fighting among themselves, so that the party can continue to rule even after Jayalalithaa and keep the “evil DMK” out of power, “as was Amma’s wish”. Chinnamma, as Sasikala is fondly called by her followers, had aired the same sentiment even on the day she came out of Bengaluru jail after serving a four-year sentence in a corruption case and undertook the road journey from Karnataka to Tamil Nadu. The latest surprise was delivered even as the central leadership of the BJP, which is allied with the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, had been mounting pressure on the regional outfit to work with Sasikala and her nephew’s party, the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK). The move clearly translates into an unexpected advantage for the beleaguered party — already facing anti-incumbency and with the odds stacked against it as the State alternates between the AIADMK and DMK Governments — and a major setback to AMMK leader TTV Dhinakaran.



With one deft stone, she has killed two birds: Sasikala has taken the moral high road, projecting the image of a leader whom the masses want to see in an office of authority but who doesn’t hanker after power; and, at the same time, she has shielded herself from any blame that might have come her way, should the AIADMK perform poorly in the elections. This possibility, however, is bleak as the Congress is already considering an exit from the DMK-led front since it’s not being offered a “respectable number of seats”. Of course, Sasikala’s current assertion keeps her safely away from the party’s inner turmoil and political heat and dust in the State without compromising her chances of springing back on to the centre stage at an opportune moment later. There’s nothing that could stop Sasikala from re-entering politics after assessing the poll results. For Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, it would be tough to keep his hold on the party when he is no longer in the top seat. That is when Sasikala would probably time her comeback.

FIRST COLUMN


VACCINE FIRST,
POLITICS LATER



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India began one of the largest vaccination drives attempted globally on January 16 and opened it up for frontline workers in February. The second phase of the inoculation drive began on March 1, with the doors thrown open to citizens above a certain age and fulfilling specific criterion. At the launch of the second phase, the nation woke up to a visual of Prime Minister Narendra Modi getting vaccinated at a Government facility. It was a wide message, ranging from taking the India-developed vaccine, being conscious of the home State of healthcare staff administering the shot and the sartorial choice of a *gamcha* from Assam. However, there was another story unfolding mid-day onwards in many of the vaccination centres around the country as many senior citizens failed to get vaccinated on days one and two despite managing to register successfully on the CoWin website.

Despite the glitches, this is a remarkable feat for our country which, till the same time last year, was not aware of the horror waiting to unfold and, therefore, didn't even have basic toolkits of personal protective equipment handy. The reason it is vital to mention this is so that we keep learning every moment and improvising on the deliverable processes, like we did in 2020.



It is a welcome step that a sizeable chunk of private hospitals has been roped in for the second phase of the vaccination drive. However, it seems like they are being treated like lesser institutions when it comes to supply and execution logistics. Many private hospitals reported one queue for walk-in registrations and those registered with confirmed time slots through the CoWin website. This led to crowding, which is an in-your-face blunder to be avoided during these times. The private sector is equipped enough with stipulated processes for vaccination and with some guided information, could manage the drive with proper social distancing. Ideally, the authorities should have done a workshop with key hospitals and taught the staff to manage a demand-driven hybrid model vaccination exercise. At some stage the Government has to think about opening up the vaccination drive for corporates and the money spent should be treated as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Most of the corporates are willing to either take up a vaccination drive for their staff under the CSR head or allow staff to pay, provided the exercise like Aadhaar registrations moves to their premises. RS Sharma, the current chief of the National Health Authority, is aware of the private-public cooperative plumbing required to make India's vaccination pipeline a model worth emulating. He is also aware of the role technology is going to play in the exercise and the digital divide in the country over access and use of factual information. The confusion between the use of the CoWin app vs the CoWin website needs to be addressed. Also, vaccine hesitancy among certain sections of society is triggered by opinionated fake information on social media. It is time for all technocrats involved in the process to start tackling the barrage of misinformation and talk about the facts on all platforms available.

Another aspect of the inoculation programme is driven by politics. Already there have been some remarks regarding the Prime Minister's picture on the vaccine completion certificate, specially from States bound for elections. Universal vaccination against the dreaded virus is a shared project of all leaders at the Central and State level. Any attempt to subvert the process by creating barriers may not go down well with the electorate or be good for the leader's image. Of course, the optics need to be high for any candidate facing the electorate in a few days, however it would be good if they start showing their commitment. Most of the leaders getting into campaigning ahead of polls would do well to get vaccinated, both for safety and for sending a loud message for public good.

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

Economy riddled with corruption

Graft is a huge, insidious problem in our country that has eaten into every aspect of our lives, be it in rural or urban India



MOIN QAZI



“A survey conducted by Transparency International (TI) last year found that India has the highest rate of bribery in the Asian region. The survey titled, ‘Global Corruption Barometer (GCB), Asia’ revealed that the nation also had the highest rate of people using personal connections to access public services. The country has a bribery rate of 39 per cent while 46 per cent people use ‘familiarity’ to get access to services. The report noted that ‘slow and complicated bureaucratic process, unnecessary red tape and unclear regulatory frameworks force citizens to seek out other solutions to access basic services through networks of familiarity and petty corruption (in India).’

The nation's quest for economic dynamism has been severely stifled by chronic corruption. The country needs to urgently modernise its institutions and end the culture of rent-seeking and cutting corners if it wants the wheel of its economy to roll seamlessly. Corruption is both anti-national and anti-poor because the resources meant for poverty alleviation schemes get siphoned off by dishonest politicians and bureaucrats. It is among the most debilitating economic illnesses that afflict large parts of the world. India is now caught in a situation where many sectors are steeped in endemic corruption, including those charged with controlling it — from the legislators who write the laws, to the judiciary which makes them roadworthy and the police which is charged with enforcing them.

In the last four decades, despite several Government programmes for the welfare of the rural poor, poverty remains endemic. Either the nets were not cast wide or there were too many holes blown into them. The cruel reality is that much of the public spending does not reach the poor. It is either sponged off by the delivery mechanism consisting of consultants, advisors, their equipment and studies — or it gets pocketed. This has become a touchstone for all public-funded programmes and is now parroted in all Indian development literature. Low-level graft remains pervasive. Much of the Western world aid is running down the bureaucratic ratholes. Corruption is a huge, insidious problem in our country that has eaten into every aspect of life. It can lead to distrust in the Government, generating civil strife, violence, and conflict.

While the poor do not have the money to bribe public servant to avail services that are their right, they have a vote that the politician wants. The politician does a little bit to make life a little more tolerable for the poor — a seat in a good school for the lucky few, a Government job for the even luckier, on occasion the unexpected munificence of a loan waiver or, more commonly, a phone call that helps them get a police case registered. For all this, the politician gets the gratitude of his voters. However, he then also has little reason to improve the system by reforming it.

The state of affairs is grim, as every village official must be paid not just to expedite the application form for development schemes but specifically for not obstructing it. There is no easy solution to the problem. The corrupt police officials have a rollicking time at the expense of helpless citizens. In fact, there is no link between corruption and poverty. It is easier to convert a corrupt constable rather than an officer into an honest person. Higher officials get so carried away by the glamour and competition evident among their peers, and the aspirations of their families, that malpractices and bribes become a part of their lives. Surely education is a failure here. Voters favour a familiar family pedigree, partly because of a cultural reverence for the family and because of feudal habits that go back centuries. These traditions are more important in politics than individual qualities or merits in India and they strike at the very core of democracy. Grassroots activists and student leaders with no patronage matter little, and given the huge money and muscle power involved in elections, outsiders can only dream of power. In fact, the impact of nepotism goes beyond politics, with the reign of dynasties extending to most businesses too.

Like the mythological hydra, corruption is a many-headed foe that insinuates itself into every part of the social fabric — weakening the body politic and jeopardising prospects for economic growth. It can wither only after the heads are lopped off.

It has been a long-standing problem that successive Governments have battled and mostly failed to quell. In his magnum opus ‘Arthashastra’, written nearly three centuries before the Christian era, Kautilya, the classical master of statecraft, observed:

“Just as it is impossible to know when a fish moving in water is drinking it, so it is impossible to find out when Government servants in charge of undertakings misappropriate money”

The phrase, “probity in public life” has become an oxymoron. The time to start popping the corks would be when corrupt officials are actually convicted and penalised. Unfortunately, our criminal justice system has a truly pathetic record on this front. As long as that remains true, much publicised arrests serve little or no purpose. They certainly do not act as effective deterrents to potential bribe-takers or bribe-givers. Corruption is too often seen as merely a moral issue. Not enough people realise just how crippling an economic factor it can be. The cost of the bribes clearly must be factored into the business model and hence into the costs.

The country's economic system is fused with many strands of corruption and organised systems of tax evasion. Cases of people greasing palms to get a college scholarship, tax refund or mortgage from a State-owned bank are now commonplace. Petty corruption includes slipping banknotes to the police and to officials to get paperwork done. Businessmen have to offer “seed money” to avoid red tape.

Writer and former diplomat Pavan Varma suggests that the persistence of corruption in India also reflects a strain of amorality in our character: A willingness to tolerate corner-cutting and rule-breaking in the successful pursuit of wealth and power. “Corruption, of course, is not unique to India,” he writes in ‘Being Indian’. “What is unique is the level of its acceptance, and the creative ways in which it is sustained. Indians do not subscribe to antiseptic definitions of rectitude... Their understanding of right and wrong is related far more to efficacy than absolute notions of morality.”

Most Indian businesses cannot survive or remain competitive without stashing away undeclared earnings. Almost everybody who has sold a house has taken one part of the payment in cash and evaded tax on it. Huge quantities of secret wealth are still a part of our system.

The solution lies in ensuring that the Central Bureau of Investigation remains free of Government interference and that whistle-blowers, witnesses and journalists working on corruption cases are protected. The Government must realise that increasing corruption can act as a speed breaker in the Indian growth story. There is a need for a strong political will to untangle it. Without a strong civil society or an independent judiciary to check Government power, the political class can become complacent. We have a long distance to cover to get rid of corruption and it may require longer sprints as time is running out.

IN THE LAST FOUR DECADES, DESPITE SEVERAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES FOR THE WELFARE OF THE RURAL POOR, POVERTY REMAINS ENDEMIC. EITHER THE NETS WERE NOT CAST WIDE OR THERE WERE TOO MANY HOLES BLOWN INTO THEM. THE CRUEL REALITY IS THAT MUCH OF THE PUBLIC SPENDING DOES NOT REACH THE POOR. IT IS EITHER SPONGED OFF BY THE DELIVERY MECHANISM CONSISTING OF CONSULTANTS, ADVISORS, THEIR EQUIPMENT AND STUDIES — OR IT GETS POCKETED

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

YOU PUT NAILS ON ROADS AND PREVENTED FARMERS FROM ENTERING THE CAPITAL OF THE SOVEREIGN COUNTRY, BUT YOU BEAT A RETREAT AGAINST CHINA. —MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER UDDHAV THACKERAY




YOU ARE MAKING INSULTING STATEMENTS AGAINST OUR SOLDIERS WHO DEFENDED (THE COUNTRY FROM) CHINESE AGGRESSION. —MAHARASHTRA FORMER CHIEF MINISTER DEVENDRA FADNAVIS



Technology for pedagogy in music strikes the right note

It helps to build highly effective differentiated learning experiences, which are rather challenging otherwise in a group setting with traditional teaching approaches



NILESH THOMAS

Technology has been one of the mainstays of music education, particularly contemporary music and its production and sound engineering since the late 2000s. However, the adoption rate was probably slower than anticipated due to the general resistance to change and the reluctance to shift to newer methods of learning and teaching. Interestingly, music technology, which we should clearly differentiate from the technology for pedagogical purposes, has been adopted widely and is frequently adapted by music educators in line with music industry practices.

The year 2020 presented many with a make-or-break situation due to the pandemic and music education providers, both institutions and teachers were swift to drop all inhibitions and embrace technology to aid pedagogy.

The writer is Dean, The True School of Music, Vijaybhoomi University. The views expressed are personal.

Most interestingly, private tutors — who probably argued the most against technology-driven learning and teaching in place of the tried and tested traditional approach of in-person instruction — were the first to jump on the bandwagon. Consequently, they taught music using every possible technological means, from Skype to Zoom to Google Hangouts. In most of such cases, the technology integration started and ended with these video calling apps that allowed remote teaching and learning and did not extend to more immersive and interactive learning systems.

Increasingly, we are now seeing larger music schools tapping into comprehensive learning management systems (LMS), customised mobile apps and subscription-based music learning services such as music notation applications, ear training applications with content libraries, backing music tracks and practice tools for instruments, voice instruction and so on, that integrate into LMS or remote teaching using video calling apps.

LMS are excellent cloud-based tools to extend learning beyond face-to-face time, and more importantly to build a social learning ecosystem around the class. There are a number of such solutions available now, mostly on a per-user subscription model that is increasingly becoming affordable in markets like India and South Asia.

LMS allow teachers to administer independent learning content to a class or individual learners, provide feedback to students using text, audio or video, conduct online assessments that could be auto-graded and so on. More importantly, LMS allow students to interact with each other, share and discuss topics of interest online, and learn from each other's works. This provides invaluable benefits over just focusing on instrumental or voice mastery.

Newer learning technologies that either work as stand-alone mobile or web-based apps or integrate into LMS help further enhance the music learning experience. Many schools employ music notation and ear training applications with preloaded content libraries for independent learning and practice.

For example, music teachers are able to assign an exercise with a predetermined difficulty level and a target practice score to student groups or individuals. The students can then practice the material on their own with the app giving highly specific feedback on how well they are doing, and the areas that need improvement. Once the student attains the target score, the teacher assigns a new difficulty level, much like a game.

Similar gamified learning technologies also exist for instrument and voice learning. Many of these systems provide comprehensive content libraries organised in terms of progressive difficulty levels. Teachers are able to assign target goals for practice, and once a student achieves the desired proficiency, conduct an assessment within the app, using similar content to validate the learning and progress to the next level. Some of these systems give detailed visual heatmaps of a student's performance, with granular feedback on areas that have met expectations and those needing improvement.

Technology-enabled pedagogy also helps to build highly effective differentiated learning experiences, which are rather challenging otherwise in a group setting with traditional teaching approaches. One of the biggest benefits of technology-enabled pedagogy is its focus on student-centred learning, taking the attention away from the teacher as the sole enabler of learning. With technology-enabled learning, the teacher has the flexibility to adopt a more efficient role of a learning facilitator, provide necessary personalised interventions and allow each learner to grow at their own pace while focusing on the core areas to be developed. Teachers can drop the one-size-fits-all approach that works rather poorly in creative arts education.

While this recent and swift adoption of technologies for pedagogical purposes is mainly driven by the pressure to enhance remote learning in light of the social distancing and lockdown conditions necessitated by the Coronavirus pandemic, they are more than likely to find a permanent place in music education since both students and teachers will find obvious enhancements to their learning and teaching experiences.

Institutions are likely to adopt and scale such technologies aggressively since they introduce efficiencies and help collect extremely valuable data that will help design newer and more effective curriculum, learning programmes and delivery methods.

FDI rises 40% to USD 51.47 bn: Govt data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India grew 40 per cent to USD 51.47 billion during April-December 2020-21, according to government data released on Thursday.

India has attracted 22 per cent higher FDI inflow (including re-invested earnings) of USD 67.54 billion during the first nine months of the current fiscal as against USD 55.14 billion in the same period of 2019-20.

“FDI equity inflow grew by 40 per cent in the first nine months of 2020-21 (USD 51.47 billion) compared to the year ago period (USD 36.77 billion),” the commerce and



industry ministry said.

The inflows increased by 37 per cent in the third quarter (October-December 2020) of 2020-21 to USD 26.16 billion.

In December, FDI surged 24 per cent to USD 9.22 billion, the data showed.

The measures taken by the government on the fronts of FDI policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of

doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country, according to the ministry.

The foreign inflows are a major driver of economic growth and an important source of non-debt finance for the economic development of India.

“The steps taken in this direction during the last six and a half years have borne fruit, as is evident from the ever-increasing volumes of FDI inflows being received into the country. Continuing on the path of FDI liberalisation and simplification, government has carried out FDI reforms across various sectors,” the ministry said.

ICICI, HDFC, SBI will have to offload ₹1.2 lakh cr if RBI caps stake in insurance arms: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Just State Bank of India, HDFC and ICICI Bank will have to offload equity worth Rs 1.21 lakh crore if the central bank goes ahead with its reported plan to make banks cap their stakes in insurance arms at 20 per cent, says a report.

Quoting unnamed RBI officials, a media report earlier this week said the monetary authority is not comfortable with banks owning controlling stake in non-core businesses like insurance ventures which are capital guzzlers and wants banks to cap ownership in insurance arms/ companies at a maximum of 20 per cent.

It was also reported that the RBI recently approved Axis Bank’s plan to buy Max Life

only after it agreed to directly hold only 10 per cent and also capped the overall holding at 20 per cent.

Current regulations allow banks to own over 50 per cent stake in insurance arms.

If the RBI forces promoter banks/NBFCs to lower their stakes to 20 per cent, this can significantly increase free float in the four listed insurance arms of HDFC, ICICI Bank and SBI worth Rs 1.2 lakh crore alone, Kotak Securities said in a report on Thursday.

HDFC owns 50 per cent in HDFC Life and bringing it down to 20 per cent would mean offloading equity worth Rs 44,100 crore at today’s market value.

While in case of ICICI Prudential Life which is 51 per cent owned by the bank, it will

be Rs 22,100 crore worth of shares flowing into the market, and Rs 21,700 crore worth of shares from ICICI Lombard in which the bank owns 52 per cent.

SBI which owns 55 per cent in SBI Life will have to sell shares worth Rs 32,200 crore.

The total value their excess holding is worth Rs 1,20,100 crore, says the report.

Almost all state-run banks and large private sector banks also have unlisted life and non-life insurance ventures.

Calling for maintaining the status quo, the report said banks owning insurance companies has been a win-win for all and that there are many positives in that structure such as insurance stake sales have supported banks’ provisioning in challenging times.

WhatsApp expands voice, video calling to desktop PCs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

WhatsApp on Thursday said it has rolled out one-to-one voice and video calls on its desktop app, a move that will now allow users to make calls through their laptops or desktop PCs.

The Facebook-owned company said voice and video calls on the platform are end-to-end encrypted, and so WhatsApp can’t hear or see them whether the call is made from phones or computers.

“We’re starting with one-to-one calls on the WhatsApp desktop app so we make sure we can give you a reliable and high-quality experience. We will be expanding this feature

to include group voice and video calls in the future,” it added.

WhatsApp said there has been a significant increase in people calling one another on WhatsApp over the last year and often for long conversations.

“Last New Year’s Eve, we broke the record for the most calls ever made in a single day with 1.4 billion voice and video calls. With so many people still apart from their loved ones, and adjusting to new ways of working, we want conversations on WhatsApp to feel as close to in-person as possible, regardless of where you are in the world or the tech you’re using,” WhatsApp said.

Sensex, Nifty drop over 1 pc amid global equity retreat

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Snapping its three-session winning run, benchmark BSE Sensex plunged by around 599 points to crack below the key 51,000-level on Thursday due to heavy selling in financial, energy and IT stocks amid a meltdown in global shares.

Asian and European markets tumbled as another rise in US bond yields fanned

fears of higher inflation that may prompt central banks to raise interest rates.

Intra-day, the 30-share BSE barometer fell as much as 905 points before ending the session at 50,846.08, showing a decline of 598.57 points or 1.16 per cent. Of 30 Sensex shares, 25 closed with losses.

The broader NSE Nifty closed down by 164.85 points or 1.08 per cent at 15,080.75

with 38 of its constituents ending in the red zone.

On the Sensex chart, HDFC, L&T, SBI, Axis Bank, Bajaj FinServ and HDFC Bank were major laggards.

Mortgage major HDFC fell the most by 2.62 per cent. Bajaj Finserv dropped 2.49 per cent, SBI by 2.28 per cent, Axis Bank by 2.24 per cent, HDFC Bank by 2.1 per cent and ICICI Bank by 1.73 per cent.

Larsen & Toubro declined by 2.31 per cent, NTPC by 1.6 per cent, Bharti Airtel by 1.24 per cent and Reliance by 1.17 per cent. IT stocks Infosys, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, and TCS also saw losses of up to 1 per cent. ded lower today mainly on weak global cues...Financials and Metals indices were keg drags today, while FMCG, Pharma and IT indices were resilient.

Rupee retreats by 11 paise to 72.83, ends 2-day winning run

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee on Thursday declined by 11 paise to close at 72.83 against the US dollar due to a rebound in the greenback in overseas markets and muted domestic equities.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 72.99 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 72.62 and a low of 72.99.

It finally ended at 72.83 against the American currency, registering a fall of 11 paise over its previous closing.

Startup Harvesting starts e-commerce platform to help farmers sell produce

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Agritech startup Harvesting on Thursday said it has started an e-commerce portal to help farmers sell their produce to wholesale buyers.

The portal HFN.Mandi.Com is a free online service for farmers to connect and transact with buyers, a company statement said.

HFN Mandi leverages technology to provide nationwide farmers and buyers on a single transparent online platform. It aims to provide farmers with larger market access and better price realisation.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	15026.75	15202.35	14980.20	15080.75	-164.85	
ULTRACEMCO	6429.00	6830.00	6994.45	6755.00	254.50	
ADANIPORTS	733.25	765.70	715.85	751.55	21.70	
SHREECEM	2245.00	2850.00	2735.05	2850.00	894.75	
GRASIM	1306.00	1340.00	1300.50	1353.10	35.00	
DREDDY	4492.00	4583.35	4444.00	4567.00	64.45	
SBIIFE	899.70	924.80	892.40	915.00	8.55	
WIPRO	428.90	444.30	427.50	439.00	3.50	
ASIANPAINT	2380.00	2435.00	2350.00	2416.00	13.90	
BRITANNIA	3450.00	3514.80	3450.00	3500.05	18.90	
HEROMOTOCO	3398.00	3460.00	3368.25	3429.90	5.55	
UPL	61.00	63.15	59.10	61.50	0.90	
HINDUNILVR	2028.00	2203.50	2174.00	2195.05	1.55	
MARUTI	7080.00	7175.20	7011.00	7123.00	-1.70	
ITC	208.80	211.30	207.60	209.80	-0.15	
NESTLEIND	1665.95	1670.95	1645.00	1667.90	-19.35	
KOTAKBANK	1803.90	1910.40	1881.00	1897.20	-2.50	
DIVISLAB	3550.00	3571.00	3543.05	3557.95	-9.40	
EICHERMOT	2250.00	2633.00	2545.35	2590.00	-9.05	
TITAN	1452.00	1487.65	1450.55	1469.00	-5.60	
BPCL	44.00	47.265	45.925	46.50	-1.85	
HCLTECH	952.00	969.90	951.35	960.25	-5.00	
TCS	3023.00	3081.45	3016.05	3024.90	-16.20	
CIPLA	807.40	818.00	803.70	808.00	-4.50	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3875.00	3927.60	3841.00	3878.00	-23.10	
INDUSINDBK	1078.00	1116.00	1077.00	1093.00	-6.75	
INFY	1335.00	1363.85	1325.90	1334.60	-8.95	
HDFCLIFE	721.00	728.00	713.00	722.50	-5.00	
TECHM	960.00	994.70	955.60	969.00	-7.00	
POWERGRID	223.05	229.25	223.25	225.85	-1.65	
M&M	841.85	858.30	834.80	844.90	-7.15	
ONGC	113.95	117.10	112.80	111.00	-1.00	
BAJFINANCE	5430.00	5567.15	5401.00	5492.00	-50.90	
SUNPHARMA	62.00	63.75	61.60	61.85	-5.90	
IOC	101.50	103.10	101.15	101.50	-1.10	
BHARTIARTL	540.00	560.00	538.00	559.95	-6.35	
RELIANCE	2180.00	2189.95	2157.70	2174.00	-28.10	
GAIL	145.50	146.85	143.35	145.00	-1.95	
NTPC	111.50	113.00	110.50	110.80	-1.80	
ICICIBANK	618.75	630.90	615.80	612.80	-10.30	
COALINDIA	154.00	154.90	151.70	152.20	-2.70	
SBN	398.70	403.50	394.45	396.80	-8.25	
HDFCRANK	1548.55	1571.00	1539.10	1553.00	-33.85	
IT	1473.00	1494.35	1458.00	1464.00	-32.90	
AXISBANK	731.10	751.45	731.00	737.00	-16.95	
BAJAJFINSV	10150.00	10280.00	10077.75	10148.00	-247.60	
TATAMOTORS	339.00	345.40	337.30	340.00	-8.50	
TATASTEEL	713.00	766.90	743.65	757.60	-19.55	
HINDALCO	352.00	357.70	347.00	349.90	-9.45	
HDFC	2610.00	2610.00	2568.00	2584.90	-70.00	
JSWSTEEL	415.10	421.40	411.05	415.50	-12.65	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	35440.00	35998.25	35327.40	35777.45	64.70	
CONCOR	577.00	643.95	575.05	615.95	37.60	
AMBUJACEM	281.50	294.30	278.75	292.00	10.80	
ACC	1774.20	1906.00	1765.25	1858.65	62.15	
HINDZINC	315.25	334.40	310.20	323.90	5.85	
ICICIPRULI	484.90	501.00	482.30	496.60	6.40	
SIEMENS	1902.50	1962.00	1902.50	1941.00	24.50	
DABUR	511.55	527.50	515.15	529.50	6.40	
GICRE	198.00	204.00	196.35	200.50	2.40	
ICIL	513.50	528.80	513.20	523.50	6.10	
ADANITRANS	823.90	854.95	805.40	837.00	9.00	
CADILAH	442.00	454.00	440.80	451.00	4.50	
INDIGO	1751.00	1819.45	1736.50	1795.00	12.40	
NMDC	135.00	139.00	133.00	137.40	0.90	
INDUSTOYR	254.00	261.50	253.15	259.30	1.50	
ADANUGREEN	1176.00	1198.00	1165.00	1182.80	6.50	
HAVELLS	1155.00	1185.80	1146.00	1169.75	5.80	
OFSS	3235.00	3300.00	3190.00	3241.00	12.85	
UPL	1213.50	1241.00	1207.65	1227.40	4.00	
PCGH	13049.00	13136.95	12586.65	13014.00	37.20	
BANDHANBNK	350.00	362.65	346.00	357.70	0.80	
BOSCHLT	1540.00	1560.00	1514.00	1528.00	33.45	
TORNTPHARM	2495.00	2513.90	2468.05	2501.85	4.50	
DLE	319.00	327.20	316.50	324.75	0.55	
ABBOTINDIA	14613.00	14855.00	14590.00	14636.00	22.10	
LTI	3880.30	4015.00	3811.15	3916.60	4.85	
BERGEPAINT	723.90	739.95	720.00	732.15	0.60	
GRASIM	1225.00	1299.00	1224.20	1239.10	0.20	
CIPLA	1605.00	1635.00	1603.00	1617.00	0.20	
MOTHERSUMI	227.50	236.30	226.35	233.00	0.00	
PNE	43.00	44.30	42.45	43.50	-0.05	
PIDILITIND	1758.40	1775.00	1744.80	1759.00	-5.60	
PETRONET	253.00	260.00	252.75	254.50	-1.05	
AUROPHARMA	874.90	884.80	868.55	876.70	-3.80	
PFC	132.40	138.70	132.00	132.95	-0.60	
ALKEM	2844.85	2858.70	2805.15	2828.00	-14.10	
MARICO	408.00	412.00	403.70	407.00	-2.05	
BANKERBODA	85.00	87.80	84.15	85.15	-0.40	
MUTHOOTFIN	1318.00	1344.80	1308.05	1311.00	-7.50	
BIOCON	399.00	407.10	398.30	399.60	-3.10	
TATACONSUM	62.90	64.35	62.80	63.20	-4.90	
BAJAJHLNG	3620.00	3676.40	3611.25	3635.55	-28.90	
MCDOWELL-N	562.00	569.00	560.65	563.00	-4.65	
DMAT	3129.90	3213.85	3115.00	3141.00	-26.70	
LUNR	1051.00	1067.80	1041.10	1051.90	-9.05	
SBICARD	109.00	109.65	108.130	109.70	-9.30	
GODREJCP	698.00	699.40	690.00	692.70	-6.70	
HINDPETRO	248.00	251.80	245.35	246.20	-2.70	
HDFCAML	3130.00	322.80	3120.00	3153.90	-35.00	
NAUKRI	4955.00	5039.00	4951.95	4989.00	-61.70	
PEL	1964.00	1988.00	1940.00	1955.30	-37.80	
ICICIGI	1499.00	1500.00	1462.00	1467.00	-29.90	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
RELIANCE	2179.70	2189.65	2158.00	2175.70
INFY	1337.70	1363.80	1326.15	1330.30
HDFCBANK	1550.00	1570.70	1540.00	1553.20
TATAMOTORS	340.80	345.30	337.25	339.20
HDFC	2616.60	2616.60	2569.00	2583.20
LAURUSLABS	364.90	382.50	363.20	368.35
ADANIPORTS	735.00	765.70	715.75	752.10
TCS	3030.00	3081.55	3019.90	3047.70
SBN	399.80	403.45	394.60	395.80
AXISBANK	732.80	751.00	732.05	736.75
TATAPOWER	104.60	114.00	102.80	109.35
ADANIANT	914.75	938.70	905.20	918.55
DLF	318.70	332.60	316.35	326.25
IRCTC	1884.35	201.60	1873.65	1961.55
BHEL	50.45	56.10	49.80	54.25
PNB	43.00	44.35	42.00	43.60
HINDUNILVR	2189.00	2203.00	2174.00	2196.70
BAJFINANCE	5425.00	5565.00	5400.00	5486.95
ICICIBANK	620.40	636.00	615.70	620.90
TATASTEEL	753.00	767.05	743.95	758.10
SUNPHARMA	625.00	636.45	615.65	618.65
ZEEL	220.00	231.65	216.55	225.55
IBREALST	103.00	119.35	101.10	115.85
ASIANPAINT	2380.35	2435.00	2358.25	2417.90
WIPRO	430.10	444.25	423.85	438.85
BHARTIARTL	540.90	545.95	537.90	539.45
IDEA	11.01	11.15	10.90	11.00
MARUTI	7120.00	7173.85	7016.90	7133.45
BANKBARODA	85.50	87.80	83.45	85.80
HCLTECH	953.50	968.95	951.80	958.25
ULTRACEMCO	6405.10	6830.40	6397.55	6776.50
LT	1475.00	1488.95	1458.25	1462.10
IBULHSGFIN	245.50	250.45	242.20	243.40
M&M	845.00	898.20	834.70	845.75
TATACHEM	769.00	752.25	760.00	772.10
CONCOR	579.90	643.90	578.00	615.60
TATAELXSI	2550.00	2745.20	2544.80	2677.55
INDUSINDBK	1075.10	1115.95	1069.75	1092.10
ITC	209.65	211.25	207.60	209.70

MYANMAR COUP

Protesters, undaunted by killings, march again

Nay Pyi Taw: Demonstrators in Myanmar protesting last month's military coup returned to the streets Thursday, undaunted by the killing of at least 38 people the previous day by security forces.

New protests were held in at least three areas of Yangon, the country's largest city, that have been scenes of violence for the past few days. Police again used force to try to disperse the crowds, according to social media accounts.

Protests also continued in Mandalay, the second-biggest city. A formation of five fighter planes flew over the city on Thursday morning in what appeared to be a threatening show of force.

The UN Special envoy for Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, said 38 people were killed Wednesday, a figure consistent with other reports.

The death toll was the highest since the Feb. 1 takeover, when the military ousted the elected government of leader Aung San Suu Kyi. More than 50 civilians, mostly peaceful protesters, are confirmed to have been killed by police and soldiers since then.



People build barricades to block police in Mandalay, Myanmar on Thursday

AP

The UN Security Council has scheduled closed-door consultations on Friday on calls to reverse the coup — including from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres — and stop the escalating military crackdown.

Any kind of coordinated action at the United Nations will be difficult since two permanent members of the Security Council, China and Russia, are likely to veto it. Some countries have already imposed or are considering

their own sanctions.

UN Envoy Schraner Burgener said she warned Myanmar's army that the world's nations and the Security Council "might take huge strong measures."

"And the answer was, We

are used to sanctions and we survived those sanctions in the past," she said. When she also warned the army that Myanmar would become isolated, she said, "the answer was, We have to learn to walk with only a few friends."

The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar, which for

five decades had languished under strict military rule that led to international isolation and sanctions. As the generals loosened their grip, culminating in Suu Kyi's rise to power after 2015 elections, the international community responded by lifting most sanctions and pouring investing into the country.

AP

I'll shoot whoever I see: Myanmar military threatens protesters on TikTok

Singapore: Armed Myanmar soldiers and police are using TikTok to deliver death threats to protesters against last month's coup, researchers said, prompting the Chinese video-sharing app to announce it was removing content that incites violence.

Digital rights group Myanmar ICT for Development (MIDO) said it had found over 800 pro-military videos that menaced protesters at a time of increasing bloodshed - with 38 protesters killed on Wednesday alone according to the United Nations.

"It's just the tip of the iceberg," said MIDO executive director Htaik Htaik Aung, who noted that there's "hundreds" of videos of uniformed soldiers and police on the app.

A spokesman for the army and junta did not respond to a request for comment.

One video from late February reviewed by Reuters shows a man in army fatigues aiming an assault rifle at the camera and addressing protesters: "I will shoot in your fucking faces... and I'm using real bullets."

AFP

Stop murdering protesters: UN tells Myanmar military

Geneva, Switzerland: At least 54 people have been killed and over 1,700 detained since Myanmar's February 1 coup, the UN rights chief said Thursday, demanding that the military "stop murdering" protesters.

The comments come after the deadliest day of protests in Myanmar, with at least 38 dead Wednesday in rallies where security forces were seen firing into crowds.

UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet urged security forces to "halt their vicious crackdown on peaceful protesters."

"Myanmar's military must stop murdering and jailing protesters," she said in a statement.

"It is utterly abhorrent that security forces are firing live ammunition against peaceful protesters across the country," she added.

Bachelet added that she was "also appalled at the documented attacks against emergency medical staff and ambulances attempting to provide care to those who have been injured."

The UN rights office said it

had corroborated information that at least 54 people had been killed by police and military officers since February 1.

"The actual death toll, however, could be much higher as these are the figures the office has been able to verify," it stressed.

The killings have escalated sharply in recent days.

The rights office had verified 30 of the 38 deaths reported by other UN entities on Wednesday, saying the killings by security forces had taken place in Yangon, Mandalay, Sagaing, Magway and Mon.

Another person was documented killed on Tuesday and 18 people on Sunday, with five prior to that.

It said it was difficult to document injuries, but that "at a minimum, hundreds have been wounded during protests."

Since the coup, more than 1,700 people have also been "arbitrarily arrested and detained in relation to their participation in protests or engagement in political activity," the statement said.

AFP

New Zealand man charged over threats to Christchurch mosques

Wellington: A New Zealand man is facing criminal charges after allegedly posting online threats against two Christchurch mosques that were the sites of a terrorist attack that left 51 people dead.

Police on Thursday arrested the 27-year-old man and charged him with threatening to kill.

If found guilty, he faces a maximum prison sentence of seven years.

Police Superintendent John Price told reporters the threats were made earlier this week on the website 4chan, which has been used as a forum in the past by white supremacists.

The arrest comes as Muslims prepare to mark the second anniversary of a white supremacist gunman's attack at the mosques.

Price said there would be an enhanced police presence at the mosques during the com-

memoration of the March 15, 2019, attacks.

He said that had been planned before the threats came to light.

Price declined to give details of the alleged threats or name the man ahead of his first scheduled court appearance on Friday.

"Any threat made on our community and our people is a threat on our society, and will not be tolerated," Price said.

"Any messages of hate or people wanting to cause harm in our community, they will be held to account."

Police initially arrested two men and executed search warrants at two Christchurch addresses. One of the men was later released without being charged.

In the 2019 attack, gunman Brenton Tarrant slaughtered worshippers at the mosques during Friday prayers.

AP

House passes sweeping voting rights bill over GOP Opposition

AP ■ WASHINGTON

House Democrats passed sweeping voting and ethics legislation Wednesday over unanimous Republican opposition, advancing to the Senate what would be the largest overhaul of the US election law in at least a generation.

House Resolution 1, which touches on virtually every aspect of the electoral process, was approved on a near party-line 220-210 vote. It would restrict partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts, strike down hurdles to voting and bring transparency to a murky campaign finance system that allows wealthy donors to anonymously bankroll political causes.

The bill is a powerful counterweight to voting rights restrictions advancing in Republican-controlled state-

houses across the country in the wake of Donald Trump's repeated false claims of a stolen 2020 election. Yet it faces an uncertain fate in the Democratic-controlled Senate, where it has little chance of passing without changes to procedural rules that currently allow Republicans to block it.

The stakes in the outcome are monumental, cutting to the foundational idea that one person equals one vote, and carrying with it the potential to shape election outcomes for years to come. It also offers a test of how hard President Joe Biden and his party are willing to fight for their priorities, as well as those of their voters.

This bill "will put a stop at the voter suppression that we're seeing debated right now," said Rep Nikema Williams, a new congresswoman who represents the Georgia district that deceased

voting rights champion John Lewis held for years.

"This bill is the Good Trouble' he fought for his entire life."

To Republicans, however, it would give license to unwanted federal interference in states' authority to conduct their own elections — ultimately benefiting Democrats through higher turnout, most notably among minorities.

"Democrats want to use their razor-thin majority not to pass bills to earn voters' trust, but to ensure they don't lose more seats in the next election," House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy said from the House floor Tuesday.

The measure has been a priority for Democrats since they won their House majority in 2018. But it has taken on added urgency in the wake of Trump's false claims, which incited the deadly storming of the US Capitol in January.

FROM PAGE 1

WE ARE GIVING JABS TO FOREIGN NATIONS BUT NOT VACCINATING OUR OWN PEOPLE: HC TO CENTRE

"Union of India (UoI) shall file an affidavit disclosing the capacity to transport the vaccines while maintaining the whole chain particularly to the NCT of Delhi. The Union of India shall also indicate the extent to which it is presently being used," the high court said.

"The UoI shall explain the rationale behind keeping strict control over class of persons who can be vaccinated as notified in our last order. Under the present system, persons above 60 years of age and between 45 to 60 years with co-morbidities can receive vaccination."

"An affidavit to be filed by the UoI disclosing the rationale for such classification," it said.

It also asked the Delhi government to carry out inspection of medical facilities available in court complexes here and to report if COVID-19 vaccination centres could be set up there and also the short comings in facilities.

The high court asked all the authorities to file their affidavits by March 9 and listed the matter for further hearing on March 10.

The high court was hearing a PIL initiated by it to examine the demand of Bar Council of Delhi (BCD) to declare all people associated with the judicial functioning, including judges, court staff and lawyers as "frontline workers" so that they could receive COVID-19 vaccination on priority and without limitations of their age or physical condition.

It also asked the Delhi High Court Bar Association and BCD to disclose the strength of members registered with them to get an idea of number of people to be vaccinated in the judicial system in the national capital.

During the hearing, the counsel for Bharat Biotech sought to know the target audience for vaccination and whether the ambit was entire judiciary.

Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma and advocate Anil Soni, representing the Centre, informed the court that selection of class of people for vac-

cination was a policy decision which was taken by an expert body.

Sharma informed the high court that a similar petition is pending before the Supreme Court and will come up for hearing on Monday.

To this, the bench said the issue here is to find out if the whole judicial system, including judges, lawyers and court staff, can be prioritised without age and co-morbidities limitation.

On Wednesday, the high court had taken suo motu cognisance and initiated on its own a public interest litigation on the basis of a communication received from the BCD.

It had said there is a clear pattern emerging that the number of COVID-19 positive cases increases with greater intermingling and congregation of people.

It had said premises and court rooms of the high court, which is scheduled to resume physical functioning from March 15, and some of the district courts are air-conditioned and with increased footfall, there is likelihood of the rate of infection amongst those who attend the courts spiking, once the full-fledged physical functioning of courts in Delhi resumes.

It had noted that in the first round, frontline workers, particularly of the medical community were covered, and others such as the police force have already been covered.

The court had referred to a communication sent to the chief justice by BCD Chairman Ramesh Gupta requesting that appropriate directions be issued to the concerned authorities to make available necessary infrastructure in court premises, particularly in dispensaries for vaccinating the members of the judicial system by treating them as frontline workers.

The bench had said that the need of the hour is to vaccinate the masses, in view of the raging pandemic, on a war footing so as to secure the life and health of all those who step out of their homes to attend to their avocations and professions.

UK STRAINS MORE CONTAGIOUS: STUDY

After analysing 150,000 sequenced SARS-CoV-2 samples from across the

UK, they found that the relative population growth rate of VOC 202012/01 in the first 31 days following its initial observation was higher than that of all 307 other virus variant lineages.

To understand possible biological mechanisms for this, the researchers used age and regionally structured mathematical model of SARS-CoV-2 transmission to test several assumptions, including that the variant has a higher viral load or longer shedding period.

They identified increased transmissibility as the model that best explains the variant's rapid spread.

The team used modelling to further analyse how interventions could reduce the potential burden of this new variant in the UK. The researchers concluded that a substantially increased vaccine roll-out and school closures for 2021 may be needed to prevent Covid-19 deaths and hospitalisations in 2021 from exceeding those in 2020 in the UK.

FERTILISER FACTORY A BIG GIFT TO FARMERS: CM

he said.

The chief minister said that the state government extended all cooperation to facilitate the construction of the factory in a time-bound manner. He said in fact, from the very first day of his tenure in March 2017, he ensured that no obstruction should come in execution of the development plans.

Yogi Adityanath said that Gorakhpur was touching new heights of development. He said apart from the fertiliser factory, AIIMS would also be fully serviceable in the district as another major investment.

On the occasion, the chief minister made a major announcement that after using the huge water reservoir of Chilualta in the manure factory and the township settled here, the remaining water would be cleaned and made pure for drinking purposes. He said this water would be supplied to the people of the city under the 'Har Ghar Nal' scheme of Jal Jeevan Mission.

The chief minister said that the Chilualta water body would become a source of large supply of surface water.

He recalled that till 2017, this area of eastern Uttar Pradesh had been affected by encephalitis. He said from

1977 to 2016, 1,200 to 1,500 children died every year in the medical college alone due to encephalitis and a similar number of deaths was reported in homes and villages. He said from 2017, the state government controlled the disease by making coordinated efforts to make the Health Department a nodal department.

In order to eradicate encephalitis, open defecation was prevented by providing toilets in every household under the Swachh Bharat Mission, as well as ensuring the supply of pure water. It resulted in a drop of 75 per cent in encephalitis incidence and 95 per cent fall in the number of deaths due to this disease.

Former Union Minister of State for Finance and Rajya Sabha Member Shivpratap Shukla, Rajya Sabha Member Jayaprakash Nishad, MLA Dr. Radha Mohan Das Aggarwal, Ministry of Fertilisers and Chemicals Secretary Rajesh Kumar Chaturvedi and senior officials of Hindustan Fertilisers and Chemicals Limited (HURL) were present.

PRODUCTION FROM JUNE 30: GOWDA

Minister Narendra Modi's vision of self-reliance, new plants were being set up at five places, including Gorakhpur, to end dependence on imports. He added that these plants would ensure production of 62 lakh metric tons of fertiliser.

"With the start of the fertiliser factory in Gorakhpur, the farmers of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar will get urea fertiliser on time and at a reasonable price. PM Modi's foresight saw 60 per cent increase in the sale of fertilisers despite the Covid pandemic," he said. The Union minister said that on the initiative of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a plastic park would soon be set up in Gorakhpur and it would create a large number of jobs.

BENGALURU, SHIMLA MOST LIVEABLE CITIES

In this category, Bhubaneswar was ranked second, Silvassa came third. They were followed by Kakinada, Salem,

Vellore, Gandhinagar, Gurgaon, Davangere and Tiruchirappalli. Muzaffarpur was at the bottom of the list of 62 cities that were ranked on livability index in the "less than million population" category.

The Ministry also drafted a report on the "Municipal Performance Index 2020" in a bid to determine elements that prevent efficient local governance in service delivery mechanisms, planning, financial systems, and governance practice. In the million-plus category, Indore has emerged as the highest ranked municipality, followed by Surat and Bhopal while Guwahati, Kota and Srinagar ranked lowest. Among municipalities catering to a population of a less than a million, New Delhi Municipal Council has emerged as the leader, followed by Tirupati and Gandhinagar while Shillong, Imphal and Kohima municipalities were ranked lowest.

The MPI examined the sectoral performance of 114 municipalities (with Delhi being assessed separately for NDMC, and the three Municipal Corporations) across five verticals which comprise of 20 sectors and 100 indicators in all totality. The five verticals under MPI include services, finance, policy, technology and governance, the report noted. The Citizen Perception Survey (CPS) was undertaken from January 16 to March 20, 2020. A total of 3.22 million citizens from 111 cities participated in the survey.

HURRIYAT CHIEF SET FREE, ALL CURBS LIFTED

Mirwaiz too avoided stepping out of his residence on Thursday. Section of media claimed he was set free on Wednesday, but no official statement was issued by the authorities in Srinagar.

Meanwhile, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti has welcomed Mirwaiz's release from "arbitrary detention".

"Good to hear about Mirwaiz's release from arbitrary detention. I hope that hundreds of Kashmiri men languishing in jails in and outside J&K will also be released soon. It's time they returned home to their families," Mufti tweeted.

India pushes for Chabahar port in international transport route

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With India underlining the need for enhancing connectivity for development, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday proposed the inclusion of Chabahar port in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

The port is in Iran and India helped in its construction. The location of the Chabahar port has the strategic advantage and potential to provide connectivity among India, Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and other Commonwealth of Independent States countries, and boost trade.

Located in the Sistan-Balochistan province on the energy-rich Iran's southern coast, the port can be easily accessed from India's western coast, bypassing Pakistan. Elaborating upon the importance of the Chabahar port, Jaishankar said the shift in the fulcrum of global economic growth towards Asia is creating unprecedented opportunities for connectivity in the region.

Highlighting these points here on "Chabahar Day" at the Maritime India Summit 2021, the Minister expressed hope that member states involved with the INSTC will agree on expanding membership of this project.

Jaishankar said India has also proposed the inclusion of Chabahar in the INSTC route. It is an important trade corridor project, wherein India is partnering with 12 countries to establish an economic corridor, he said. The International North-South Transport Corridor is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode transport project for moving freight among India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

"We also welcome the interest of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan to join the multilateral corridor project. Establishing an eastern corridor through Afghanistan would maximise its potential," he said.

"I am hopeful that during the INSTC Coordination Council meeting, member states would agree to the expansion of the INSTC route to include the Chabahar Port and also agree on expanding the membership of this project," Jaishankar said. He also said as the world goes through a fundamental re-balancing, correcting many distortions of the past, it is only natural that connectivity should be central to that exercise. The shift in the fulcrum of global economic growth towards Asia is creating unprecedented opportunities for connectivity in the region, the Minister said.

BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

The crafts industry needs a fresh set of structural reforms to move ahead, shares SREYA MOZUMDAR

India's handcraft market, the true epitome of India's vibrant culture and heritage, has a glorious history of several centuries. However, the once-prosperous Indian craft sector of the country has been in deep trouble since the beginning of the pandemic. A source of sustenance of a conservative estimate of staggering 9-10 million artisans, craft is one of the worst-affected sectors that is trying to find ways to revive itself. The current situation signals the need for a fresh set of structural reforms for the crafts industry to move ahead.

The striking appeal of premium handcraft goods produced by Indian artisans has fascinated not just the domestic market but also the global one. To put it in context, Indian handicrafts and handlooms are a ₹24,300-crore industry and contribute ₹10,000 crores to India's export earnings annually, according to the Twelfth Five Year Plan. Additionally, the Indian Trade Portal asserts that India is the second-largest exporter of handloom products globally. The exports of Indian handloom products were valued at USD 353.9 million in the period 2017-2018.

The reality on the ground, however, seems different. Despite a show of promise and potential, the Indian craft sector doesn't get the serious attention it should. The Fourth All India Handloom Census (2019-2020) says that the total number of households engaged in weaving and allied activities amounts to 3.14 million; two-thirds (66.3 per cent). Already facing this uncertain livelihood situation, the crafts sector is now fighting for survival amid the pandemic. Low pay, lack of exposure, financial constraints, and inadequate client coverage are some of the most common challenges faced by India's craft sector in the post-lockdown era. It is no surprise then, that the ongoing pandemic has only made the struggles harder. Speaking statistically, an initial estimate by EPCH pegs the possible losses of the handicrafts sector to the tune of ₹8,000-10,000 crore post pandemic.

According to 'The Unlock

Edition' survey conducted by the All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association (AIACA), wage losses, cashflow crunches, cancellation/withholding of orders, and supply disruptions in the raw material value chain make for some major challenges faced by India's craft enterprises.

The sector has been suffering from a lack of access to credit and working capital. According to the Sixth Economic Census, India has an overwhelming presence of micro-businesses and small proprietary businesses. Though craft businesses in the country fall within the spectrum of such businesses, their operations are unorganised, which hinders their ability to avail financing and credit from the formal financial sector. Over 80 per cent of small proprietary businesses in India are self-financed. Barely two per cent borrowed from financial institutions.

Artisanal trade is the second largest employer among the developing countries behind agriculture, articulating unique expressions of arts, culture and heritage. In a report 'Policy Gaps Study on the Crafts Sector in India' presented by AIACA, the challenges being faced by artisans/entrepreneurs in the crafts sector are well analysed. First, there are large-scale gaps in fulfilling the mandates of the government schemes themselves, in terms of infrastructure provision, access to credit, skills training, marketing etc. The lack of penetration by scheduled banks into rural areas, lack of financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills among the artisans and lack of institutionalisation of craft persons are significant inhibitors. An enabling fiscal and tax environment is required in order to drive entrepreneurial activities by artisans.

Women artisans have struggled to be recognised as potential earners and entrepreneurs in their own right because of various reasons — working double hard to be taken seriously as an entrepreneur/earner; lack of female mentors and role models; restrictive gender roles, revealed by the funding patterns of investors and the 14 per cent statistic (i.e. of



women running only 14 per cent of Indian businesses and most self-financed). Women in our country rarely own property that could serve as collateral for start-up loans. They have less education than men, on an average. When they do work, they receive lower wages than their male counterparts and generally occupy low-skill jobs in agriculture and services, often in the informal economy.

Moving ahead, it is amply clear that the need of the hour necessitates a revisiting of traditional approaches towards income generation and livelihoods. There is a need to redefine the mechanics of work with women artisans and entrepreneurs and look at promoting well-grounded, economically and environmentally sustainable models of social business and enterprise as a way ahead. Here are a few revival measures that will help alleviate the financial as well as marketing difficulties of the sector:

- Individuals and NGOs must come together to take the initiative of raising funds for relief distribution to promote craft businesses and keep the tradition of handicrafts alive.
- Since the crafts sector is slowly losing its grip, steps should be

taken to conduct branding and marketing campaigns to promote the distinctiveness of Indian art and craft. We must reposition the sector as crafts and creative enterprises (CCEs) and engage it deeper with e-commerce.

- Reskilling and rebuilding capabilities in the sector will help quicken the recovery and make the sector resilient, especially for smaller artisans.

- Broad financial recommendations include expectations of a stimulus from the government for craft based enterprises, including measures like reduction/deferral in GST across categories, soft loans and interest free working capital loans to aid production and the easing of access to raw material supplies.

Globally, many countries have announced large bailout packages in the form of soft loans or government-backed collateral-free loans, tax holidays, a moratorium on liabilities to protect their small businesses. In India, the Government has announced a special economic package viz. *Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan* with relief and credit support measures for various sectors including MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). This is in line

with the GOI envisioning a contribution of \$2 trillion from micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as India eyes becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2024, along with a target of generating fifty million additional jobs from the sector. The definition of Small and Micro enterprises have been changed (as per the Finance Minister's announcement on May 13, 2020), with a revision of upwards limits, a focus on annual turnover and a removal of the differences between service and manufacturing MSMEs. This would clearly have an implication for craft enterprises in the country.

The road ahead: This sector currently needs a helping hand to prevent widespread job losses and deal with bank loan defaults. Considering the gravity of the current situation, multiple stakeholders across the crafts value chain — entrepreneurs, merchandisers, NGOs and craft cooperatives and coalitions — have come together to revive the sector. Their support would be critical to ensure the sustainability of India's craft enterprises at this critical time.

(The writer is the Executive Director of AIACA — All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association.)



LFW, FDCI to present joint fashion week

Seems like the good old days of Indian fashion are back... After more than a decade-and-a-half, Lakme Fashion Week (LFW) and the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) will present a joint fashion week.

The Phygital Fashion Week ushers in an era of positivity to drive growth in the industry in the post-pandemic world. Leaders of the industry — FDCI, Lakme and RISE Worldwide make history with this event, kickstarting of an era of effective co-operation and meaningful initiatives.

Combining forces Lakme Fashion Week jointly organised by Lakme & RISE Worldwide (formerly IMG Reliance) and FDCI will present a joint schedule this season at LFW. The event will have a special 'unity logo' designed to mark this occasion.

It will feature the best of curation and designers from Delhi, Mumbai and across India. FDCI & LFW will jointly present the Opening Show on March 16 and will culminate with the Lakme Absolute Grand Finale on March 21. The event will also feature talent discovery programme GenNext for designers as well as promote modelling talent through FDCI's #GetNoticed Model Hunt besides other innovations. Both FDCI and LFW will continue their buyer programmes launched last season as well.

Sunil Sethi, Chairman FDCI commented, "The Fashion Design Council of India for decades has tirelessly

worked to make the design industry lead from the front and leave a global footprint. The pandemic has darkened the clouds, this will add a silver lining to the business of fashion and help sharpen the needs of the fast-changing world. Lakme, RISE Worldwide and FDCI will now have a shared purpose and belonging as we both reinvent the wheel in uncertain times. We are delighted to present this fashion week together."

Ashwath Swaminathan, Head of Innovations at Lakme said, "Our association with the Indian fashion industry runs deep as Lakme has been a key driver of its growth for the past 20 years. We look forward to this partnership opening up new avenues of growth for all stakeholders. We continue to remain true to the pillars of the Lakme Fashion week which are discoverability, sustainability and talkability as we present the best in Indian fashion and beauty this season to a global audience."

Jaspreet Chandok, Head - Lifestyle Businesses at RISE Worldwide said, "Our ultimate goal is the development of ecosystems that we operate in and we feel this partnership will help elevate the fashion industry to new heights. We are glad to partner with the FDCI and look forward to jointly present Lakme Fashion Week this season as we RISE as one."

(The show is going to take place from March 16 to 21 and the schedule will be released shortly.)

Don't put a tag

Singer SHILPA RAO says it is time we started addressing everyone equally and giving accolades irrespective of gender

With *Indian Pro Music League* (IPML), Zee TV is gradually changing the face of music reality shows. While the world of sports has seen several league competitions, this unique music league has six teams representing different regions of India, battling it out against each other in a musical championship. Each of these six teams supported by leading Bollywood and sports celebrities has top playback singers as their captains, one reality show star, and one fresh voice. Celebrated singers - Mika Singh, Kailash Kher, Sajid Khan, Shaan, Ankit Tiwari, Javed Ali, Asees Kaur, Bhoomi Trivedi, Aakriti Kakar, Payal Dev, Neha Bhasin, Shilpa Rao are captains of these six zonal teams.

At the shoot of an forthcoming episode, the women singers made a very pertinent observation about the industry and spoke up about the change they believe we should all invest in, rather than just celebrate one day in the entire year as 'Women's Day'.

Addressing fellow team captains like Aakriti, Neha,



Bhumi and Payal, Mumbai Warriors captain Shilpa Rao said, "I feel *yeh* female singer *ka tag hat jana chahiye* for all of us. We are all singers, be it male or female. It shouldn't make any difference. It's

about time that we start addressing everyone equally and give deserved accolades regardless of their gender." (The show airs every Saturday and Sunday at 8 pm on Zee TV.)

TREND TOOL

Disney's most-awaited animated classic of the year, *Raya and The Last Dragon* has won several hearts globally with critics and ardent fans already raving about the masterpiece. Here are five things you must know before you dive headfirst into the land of Kumandra with Raya on a quest to find the last dragon.

◆**Kelly Marie Tran and Awkwafina to voice the titular roles**

Set in a mystical world called Kumandra, the story of *Raya and The Last Dragon* is inspired largely by Southeast Asian cultures. Adding to that authenticity, Kelly Marie Tran will voice the lead character Raya, making her an addition to the long list of Disney's warrior princess after Elsa (*Frozen 2*), Mulan, etc. Along with her, the Crazy Rich Asian-fame Awkwafina aces the voice of Sisu, a dragon from the fantasy lands of Kumandra.

◆**The mystical land of Kumandra**

The story of Raya is set in Kumandra, a kingdom divided into five different lands that she has to venture through to find the last dragon. The lands of heart are covered with rock formations to secure the sacred Dragon Gem, while Tail lands are isolated desert islands. The snowy mountains sheltering fierce warriors are the Spine lands and at the head of the Dragon river lie the opulent Fang lands with manmade canals for security. At the centre of these four lands, lie the Talon lands, vibrant and bustling market area, a crossroad for merchants of all five lands, connected by the Dragon river. A cinematic journey through these unique and different regions will be a sight you cannot miss.

◆**Southeast Asian influence**

Vastly influenced by the Southeast Asian heritage, *Raya and The Last Dragon*



Watch out for... ...when you head to the theatres to see *Raya and The Last Dragon*



ensured that the influences were kept authentic. The two groups of filmmakers made research trips throughout Southeast Asia, including Laos, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore. In fact, Raya's fighting style was inspired by Pencak Silat from Malaysia

and Indonesia, as well as weapons modelled from Kali and Arnis martial arts found in the Philippines. Her distinctive sword was inspired by the keris, a blade that is revered in countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia. It is the very first Disney animated film that features a Southeast Asian warrior Raya.

◆**Women power breaking barriers on and off-screen**

The character sketch of Raya breaks the conservative cookie-dough cutter approach to the creation of a princess. The titular characters Raya and Sisu are female characters who are mighty, intelligent and brave enough to face their troubles. Breaking the patriarchal boundaries off-screen, the film presents an all-female

technical leadership team led by Technical Supervisor Kelsey Hurley, and Associate Technical Supervisors Gabriela Hernandez and Shweta Viswanathan.

◆**Work from home**

The pandemic has caused several glitches to film production houses all over the world in the past year, but did you know that this film was made from the homes of its crew members? Yes, almost 450 artistes and crew members managed to create all shot production for *Raya and the Last Dragon* while working from their homes. It is also known that more than 900 employees have worked remotely to contribute to this film and other forthcoming projects of Walt Disney Animated Studios.

(The film releases today.)

TRENDBLAZER



SHREYA GHOSHAL ANNOUNCES PREGNANCY

Singer **SHREYA GHOSHAL** took to Instagram to share the news of her pregnancy with fans. The singer posted a picture of herself flaunting a baby bump.

Dressed in a blue and green ensemble, the mom-to-be poses with her bump in the picture and is visibly glowing. "Baby #Shreyaditya is on its way! We are thrilled to share this news with you all. Need all your love and blessings as we prepare ourselves for this new chapter in our lives," she posted.

fairtalk RAVI KISHAN



'I strongly believe that drugs and sexual abuse are interconnected. We have to fight against drug consumption that leads youngsters towards sexual crime against women. We have to understand that we do not have that many number of policemen as compared to the population we have. So, at times we normalise a lot of crime and do not report them.'

dailytalk VAANI KAPOOR



'Holistic lifestyle has been a part and parcel of my life even before I made my debut in Bollywood. I have always wanted to lead a healthy lifestyle and working out and eating right was always a priority for me. I want to build something of my own in the health and nutrition space in the coming years and I have been researching the same for years now.'

CHEYENNE NO LONGER CRAVES ALCOHOL

Actor **CHEYENNE JACKSON** has revealed that staying off alcohol during lockdown required effort but his life is better off without it. "The craving for alcohol has been lifted. Our lives are better (without alcohol) and we find something else to do. And it usually involves being with the kids, doing something to get your mind out of that," says he,



FOR THE LOVE OF OATS

RAGHAV GUPTA shares why oats have emerged as the go-to breakfast cereal

The breakfast cereal market has been projected to hit \$75 billions the next five years, and oats as a category is stacked up against hundreds if not thousands of processed competitors. Yet, unlike most of its sugar-coated, colour-coded, attractively shaped counterparts, oats have maintained a clean image, especially in the health-food section. Apart from being a great source of complex carbs, it also have several other nutritional benefits which makes it a hit among health experts and fitness enthusiasts alike.

Scientifically known as Avena Sativa, oats are one of the world's most ancient whole-grains. Whole oat grains are called oat groats, and look a lot like wheat. The best part about the grain is that the texture and mouth-feel of oats can change as the treatment and processing changes.

There are many variations in the way oats are processed to make steel cut oats, rolled oats, instant oats, oat flour and oat bran. On a scale of 1 to 10 of processing, you could say that whole-grain oat groats and steel cut oats are a '1' because they are least processed, while rolled oats, instant oats would be a '5' and oat flour would be a '10'.

Yet surprisingly, the nutritional value of the cereal remains pretty much unchanged throughout the spectrum right from whole oats to oat flour, compared to other grains like corn or maize.

Even the byproduct which is called oat bran is a nutrient dense food with as much as 12-15 grams of protein per 100 grams of bran. This also makes it a lucrative option for manufacturers since the grain offers infinite ways to experiment with it.

Susan Downey divulged in a tête-à-tête with an American magazine on how her husband and *Avengers* star Robert Downey Jr bought his own packs of oats to the sets. Which gets you thinking if Iron Man's eating it, there's definitely more to this grain than what meets the eye. Isn't it?

The most known benefit of oats is its high protein content, which makes it a great post or even pre-workout snack. Around 100 grams can contain upto 12-13 grams of protein, which is equivalent to protein from two whole eggs. They are also a good source of iron since 100 grams can contain upto 4.5 mg of iron.

However, what makes them truly special is its fibre component i.e Beta Glucan. Oats are one among the only two grains that have abundant beta glucan. It is one form of soluble dietary



fiber that's strongly linked to improving cholesterol levels and boosting heart health.

Oats also contain antioxidants that are beneficial for good health. In fact, they are the only grains to contain avenanthramides, a unique antioxidant.

One study has reported that the antioxidants in oats work together with Vitamin C to prevent LDL oxidation, thus, lowering the risk of heart diseases. Apart from these, oats also have numerous trace elements like Magnesium, Zinc, Phosphorus

and Vitamin B1 and B5.

Interestingly, over a hundred years ago, Dr Bercher Benner, the original inventor of oat-based muesli intended it to be the cure for tuberculosis! There's also tons of evidence and studies showing the multiple

benefits of including oats in the diet.

Urmi Kothari, a wellness and fitness expert based out of Mumbai, explained how the cereal can be a great way to beat cravings and include whole grains in one's diet. Kothari, who also specialises in creating nutrition and fitness plans for women suffering from PCOS uses social media to advocate for oats as an effective ingredient to combat the disease. There are also others like Dr Rini Selvagitson, an Onco physiotherapist and rehabilitation specialist from Tata Memorial who suggests oats as nutritious meal options for building strength to patients and clients alike.

From aiding better digestion, improving skin health to reducing LDL, there are plenty of known and proven benefits of oats for everyone.

You must be wondering which type is right for you? Well, here comes the part where personal tastes and preferences come into play. If you're putting a salad together, par-boiled steel cut oats would be a great addition in place of quinoa. For baking, oat flour or oat bran is a great option to fortify or use as an alternative to regular refined flour. If you're pressed for time, instant oats or Muesli is your best bet.

There are also many healthy flavoured versions available in the market. Whatever the mood, chances are there's a oat-based alternative out there for everyone.

(The writer is the founder of Oateo Oats.)



Mix it up

Want to throw a last-minute party without the hassle of arranging drinks? Here is a list of mixers that come in handy

Who doesn't like to party with friends and family but hosting one can be dreadful, let alone an impromptu party. Serving old school cola, beer and hard liquor drinks straight out of the refrigerator is passe' now. It's time to get out of the rocks and get mixing. Nowadays, mixers are in trend and there are a plethora of options in the market to choose from. While mixing carbonated/fizzy soda is the go-to choice for many, newer options like organic mixers with natural flavours and tonic water are also gaining popularity and successfully creating a niche in the market. Be it a summertime pool party, a house warming party or an impromptu get-together of close friends and family, these mixers have been saviours of multiple parties and saved a lot of hassle for the hosts. Here is a list of mixers that come in handy:



they drink. Their beverages are designed to be naturally delicious with fewer calories and less sugar, which means the products have zero artificial sweeteners, flavours or colouring. They aim to offer a great tasting drink, which is loaded with the goodness of nature. The products range from flavoured tonic water to ginger ale.

COOLBERG: It's the first non-alcoholic beer that has successfully created a buzz in the market with its taste and flavourful fizz. The company offers seven different flavours of fizzy drinks that have not just created a niche as a non-alcoholic beer brand but also as a mixer for multiple delicious cocktails and mocktails entailing that will make you forget the old school drinks on the rocks. It tastes refreshing and leaves a lasting aftertaste.

SVAMI MIXERS: Find the perfect match for your gin with deliciously balanced tonic water from Svami. A staple mixer for all the gin lovers. From infused tonic water, zesty ginger to spiced ginger tonic water, these mixers can up your classic G&T game. They are gradually gaining popularity among industry experts and party lovers. Like the Kamasutra, Chess & Zero, Tonic Water is a proud invention from India and building on this provenance, Svami claims to use the finest botanicals and handpicked quinine to craft their tonics. So, for your next cocktail party, it can be a great choice.

JADE FOREST: From zero artificial ingredients in their drinks to the way they make people feel, Jade offers a bespoke range of natural mixers. The brand wants to inspire people to rethink what

SEPOY & CO: It is one of the only Indian mixer brands. They have successfully created a premium mixer that offers various low-sugar botanical mixes of the finest oils and flavours. They take pride in their vast range of flavours crafted with discipline and the intention, uncompromisingly to delight. Their rich in taste flavours can make any cocktail or mocktail flavour-some.

MONIN: It is an Internationally-acclaimed, premium French brand delivering innovative, gourmet flavour solutions built on a bedrock of more than a century of traditional artisanal beverage know-how. Having remained a family-owned company since 1912, it is now a trusted partner and a brand of choice for hospitality professionals in more than 150 countries. A dynamic market leader and a major player on the international stage of the drinks industry, they offer an unrivaled product portfolio. Their range includes syrups, fruit mixes, sauces, frappes, liqueurs and smoothies. They are available in more than 150 flavours and in 19 different formats.

R E C I P E S

DUCK UPPU KARI

WHAT YOU NEED

For marination:

- Duck meat cut into small cubes: 1000 gm
- Ginger and garlic paste: 1.1/2 tsp
- Turmeric powder: 1/2tsp
- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Salt to taste
- Gingelly oil: 100 ml
- Dry red chilli: 2
- Garlic chopped: 20 gm
- Green chilli slit: 4
- Shallots onion slice: 250 gm
- Coriander powder: 3 tsp
- Fennel powder: 1 ½ tsp
- Garam masala: 1/2 tsp
- Black pepper powder: 1 tsp
- Curry leaves: 10

METHOD

- Wash and pat dry duck cubes.
- Add salt, ginger and garlic



paste, turmeric powder, red chilli powder and mix well. Keep aside for two hours.

- Heat oil in a heavy bottomed pan, add mustard seeds and red chillies. When mustard starts spluttering, add chopped garlic and sauté until golden colour.

- Add green chilli slit and onions and sauté until onions get translucent.

- Now add marinated duck till the meat is seared and moisture evaporates.
- Stir in the dry spice powders including coriander, fennel, garam masala and red chilli.
- Add enough water and simmer covered with a lid on moderate to low heat occasionally stirring.
- When the duck is cooked

and the sauce thickens, remove the lid and add curry leaves, black pepper powder and further cook stirring to ensure it does not burn at the bottom and the reduced sauce coats the meat well.

- Adjust seasoning if need be and serve hot with veechu parata.

Courtesy: Executive chef Mir Zafar Ali at The Leela Palace, Bangalore.

VANILLA BEAN BUNDT CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Unsalted butter: 250 gm
- Plain flour: 250 gm
- Baking powder: 1½ tsp
- Salt: ¼ tsp
- Caster sugar: 225 gm
- Vanilla pod (split lengthways, seeds scraped out with the edge of a knife): 1
- Eggs: 4 eggs
- Edible flowers
- Whipped cream
- Fresh strawberries
- Bundt tin

METHOD

- Heat the oven to 180°C. Generously butter the inside of the bundt tin using a brush to get into the corners. You need to be very generous with the butter, otherwise the cake won't turn out perfectly.
- Sift the flour, baking powder and salt into a large bowl.
- In another large bowl, using an electric whisk or in the bowl of your stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream together the butter,



sugar and vanilla seeds until very pale and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, whisking well after each addition.

- Make sure to scrape down the sides in between. Using a metal spoon, fold in the flour mixture carefully, so as to not knock out the air that's been whisked in.

- Spoon the mixture into the greased bundt tin and then smooth the top. Then bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until

a skewer/toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean.

- Leave the cake to cool in the tin for 15 minutes, then turn out on to a wire rack to cool completely.
- Add on edible flowers to decorate, if you'd like. Cut into slices and serve with whipped cream and fresh strawberries or any other berries you'd like.

Courtesy: Chef Tanaya Sharma.

YAM FISH CURRY IN GOA ORGANIC MASALA

WHAT YOU NEED

- Yam: 3 cup
- Red pepper
- Coconut milk: 5 cup
- Onion (medium): 1
- Salt to taste
- ORCO hand-ground organic fish masala
- Organic ginger powder
- Organic cinnamon powder: 1/4

tbps

- Garlic: 4
- Organic Kashmiri chilli powder: 3 tbps
- Organic paprika powder:
- Balsamic or apple cider vinegar: 1/4 cup

METHOD

- In a steamer or pressure cooker, cook the yam pieces for 10 to 15 minutes until tender.



Pierce the yams with a fork on all sides to allow the organic masala to be absorbed. Keep aside.

- While the yams are steaming, grind together all the organic masala ingredients into a fine paste.

- This paste can stay for three months so if you like, you can make a large batch and store in the fridge.

- In a pan on medium flame, add one cup of water, the organic

masala and the onion and stir. Cook until the water is almost gone and you are left with a thick paste.

- Add the cooked yam pieces, coconut milk and salt. Stir thoroughly to mix and boil it.

- Once boiling, lower the heat, add the red pepper slices and turn off the heat.

- Serve hot with rice or millets.

Courtesy: ORCO



Windies skipper Kieron Pollard reacts after he hits Akila Dananjaya for six sixes in an over

Pollard hits 6 sixes in an over

AFP ■ COOLIDGE

West Indies captain Kieron Pollard on Wednesday became only the third man to hit six sixes in an International over in his team's four-wicket T20 victory over Sri Lanka.

The feat came in the sixth over of a bizarre West Indies innings, bowled by off-spinner Akila Dananjaya who moments earlier in his previous over had been celebrating taking a hat-trick.

Pollard followed in the footsteps of South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs against the Netherlands in the 2007 World

Cup and India's Yuvraj Singh, who also achieved the feat in the 2007 T20 World Cup against England.

Pollard was eventually out for 38 off 11 balls as the West Indies chased 132 to win at the Coolidge Cricket Ground, reaching their target in the 14th over when Jason Holder clobbered his side's 13th six.

"I felt I could hit six sixes after the third one," said 33-year-old Pollard.

"Once I had five sixes I knew I had the bowler on the back foot. He was going around the wicket and it was difficult for him. I just told

myself: 'Go for it'."

Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews hailed his opposite number. "Pollard as we know is very destructive," Mathews told the post-match presentation.

"What I told Akila was to go for his wicket even if he gets hit for six sixes. If he misused one we could have got him out. Unfortunately it didn't happen."

Only eight men have hit six sixes in an over in all forms of cricket with fellow West Indian Garfield Sobers the first to do so in an English county game in 1968.

Axar, Ashwin undo Poms batting graft

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England's batsmen lost the battle of both mind and skills in yet another shoddy performance to surrender the momentum to India with Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin calling the shots on the opening day of the fourth and final Test here on Thursday.

After five innings, England crossed the 200-run mark but a total of 205 in 75.5 overs was certainly not what Joe Root had expected when he called it right at the toss on a day which would have ideally been best for batting.

There was turn and bounce but the pitch was far from being a minefield that some of the England batsmen save Ben Stokes (55, 121 balls) made it out to be.

For India, spinners Axar Patel (26-7-68-4), Ravichandran Ashwin (19.5-4-47-3) and Washington Sundar (7-1-14-1) toyed with the already messed up minds, clueless on how to deal with the conditions.

Mohammed Siraj (14-2-45-2) also played his part to perfection with the semi-new and old ball, hurrying the batsmen with sheer pace as he did with Jonny Bairstow.

India ended the day at 24 for 1 with wily old James Anderson (5-5-0-1) accounting for an out-of-form Shubman Gill (0). Rohit Sharma (8 batting, 34 balls) and Cheteshwar Pujara (15 batting, 36 balls) were holding fort for the home side.

A cursory look at the England line-up, loaded with an extra batsman, will reveal that four — Stokes, Bairstow (28, 67 balls), Dan Lawrence (46 off 74 balls) and Ollie Pope (29 off 87 balls) got starts but failed miserably on the conversion part.

The others came in and went without breaking a bead of sweat. It was as if already in their minds, they were playing on a track they thought would turn square.

Stokes was a cut above the rest both in defence and offence before a moment's indecision cost him his wicket.

Washington angled one in



Axar Patel celebrates with his Indian teammates after he takes wicket of England batsman on Day 1 of 4th Test

PTI

4th Test. Day 2
Live from 9:30am IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

eries have scarred the English batsmen, was again menacing in the first session with Siraj giving him good support.

Stokes and Bairstow, during their 48-run stand, showed that if one can trust their defences, batting wasn't impos-

sible. Both played the spinners close to their body on most occasions and especially on the front-foot.

But on a track like this, no batsman would feel completely set and that's what happened with both Bairstow and Stokes.

Sindhu, Srikanth & 2 others in Swiss quarters



PTI ■ BASEL

Olympic Silver medalist P V Sindhu and former champion Kidambi Srikanth advanced to the quarterfinals of the singles competition along with two other Indians at the Swiss Open badminton tournament here on Thursday.

While Sindhu and Srikanth had contrasting wins, Ajay Jayaram and last edition's runners-up B Sai Praneeth too dished out superlative performances to make it to the last-eight in the Super 300 event, the first tournament in the extended Olympic qualification period.

It was double delight for young Satwiksairaj Rankireddy also as he progressed to the quarterfinals in both the mixed doubles and men's doubles competitions with respective partners Ashwini Ponnappa and

Chirag Shetty.

World champion Sindhu hardly broke any sweat, beating USA's Iris Wang 21-13, 21-14 in women's singles, while former world number one Srikanth notched up a 21-10, 14-21, 21-14 victory over world number 50 Thomas Rouxel.

Jayaram eked out a hard-fought 21-18, 17-21, 21-13 against third seed Dane Rasmus Gemke.

Praneeth, an Olympic hopeful, later saw off Spain's Pablo Abian 21-12, 21-17 to join others in last eight.

Satwik and Ashwini, who had reached the semifinals at Toyota Thailand Open Super 1000 in January, defeated the Indonesian combination of Rinov Rivaldy and Pittha Haningtyas Mentari 21-18, 21-16 in a mixed doubles second-round match.

Satwik and Chirag, ranked 10th in the world, then dashed the challenge of Indonesia's Pramudya Kusumawardana and Yerima Erich Yoche Yacob Rambitan 21-17, 20-22, 21-17 to also make it to the last eight.

However, Sourabh Verma had a rough day as he lost 17-21, 14-21 to Vitildarn to crash out of the men's singles event.

Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy too were ousted after losing 11-21, 15-21 to Denmark's Amalie Magelund and Freja Ravn in the women's doubles second-round.

SA appoint new Captains

Bavuma gets limited-overs charge, Elgar to lead in Tests

Johannesburg: Cricket South Africa on Thursday appointed Temba Bavuma, who is rather inexperienced for the role, and Dean Elgar as the national team captains for limited overs and Tests respectively.

In a statement, CSA Director of Cricket Graeme Smith thanked Quinton de Kock for leading the side in what are tumultuous times for South African cricket. Both Bavuma and Elgar take over from de Kock, who led the team temporarily.

"We are grateful to Quinton for the work he has put in as captain of the team in the limited overs formats and are indebted to him for stepping up while the National Selection Panel continued its search for the Test captain," said the former South Africa captain.

Bavuma has played 44 Tests, six ODIs and 8 T20s for South Africa while opening batsman Elgar has played 67 Tests and eight ODIs. Bavuma will lead the Proteas in the 2021 and 2022 T20 World Cups as well as the World Cup in 2023. Elgar will take the reins into the next cycle of the World Test Championship. PTI



PTI ■ BUENOS AIRES

Nagal stuns world No 22 Garin

India's Sumit Nagal registered the biggest win of his career when he stunned second seed Cristian Garin of Chile in straight sets to enter the quarterfinals of the Argentina Open ATP 250 tournament here.

Nagal, ranked 150, produced high-class

tennis on Wednesday night to register an impressive 6-4, 6-3 second round win over his Chilean rival, who is ranked way above at the 22nd spot in the ATP chart.

Nagal will play Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas, in what will be the Indian's maiden quarterfinal appearance at the ATP Tour level.

Ramos-Vinolas had defeated Domnik Koepfer of Germany 7-5, 6-4.

SANIA OUSTED

Sania Mirza's first tournament in more than a year ended with a semifinal defeat

as she was ousted from the Qatar Total Open along with her partner Andreja Klepac, here on Thursday.

Sania and her Slovenian partner lost 5-7, 6-2, 5-10 to America's Nicole Melichar and Dutch player Demi Schuurs in one hour and 28 minutes.

Sania and Klepac split \$1000 and earned 185 ranking points each. Since Sania was not defending much points, it will help her improve her ranking.

Sania will break back into top-200 and is expected to climb to the 177th spot from the current 254.

Dhoni in Chennai; CSK camp from Mar 9

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has landed here to take part in the team's training camp likely to begin on March 9 in the lead-up to the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League. The former India captain arrived here late on Wednesday and will serve a five-day quarantine.

CSK tweeted a picture of Dhoni at the airport and wrote: "Thalai-Vaa! Smile with the Mass(k) on! Super Night! #DenComing #WhistlePodu #Yellow."

Former India batsman Ambati Rayudu also reached Chennai on Wednesday while the Tamil Nadu players in the squad will be joining a little later.



"First #Dencoming of the summer from across the border is Manavaadu Bahubali!!! #Yellow #WhistlePodu," CSK posted with a photo of Rayudu.

The camp is likely to get underway from March 9, CSK CEO K S Viswanathan said, adding the players who are available would take part in it.

"Yeah...The camp is likely to start from March 9. Whoever is available would take part in the training sessions," he said.

"The players will undergo five-day quarantine before they start training. Also, they will have to return three negative tests..." he added.

The Indian players in the CSK will be a part of the camp, he said, adding they would be arriving in batches.

Barca return to Copa del Rey final



AFP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona needed extra-time to reach the Copa del Rey final on Wednesday, with a 3-2 aggregate win over Sevilla com-

cial goal in the fifth minute of extra-time with a diving header off a Jordi Alba cross.

Gerard Pique had equalised in the fourth minute of stoppage time with virtually the last play of the game to save Barca.

The veteran international headed in at the near post after a fine cross from Antoine Griezmann.

That was after Ousmane Dembele, who scored in the 2-0 win at Sevilla in La Liga at the weekend, had given the 30-time Spanish Cup winners a 12th-minute lead in the second leg with a right-foot drive from outside the area.

Sevilla could have killed the game off in the 73rd minute

to deny Barca their place in the final for a 42nd time.

They were awarded a penalty when Lucas Ocampos was brought down by Oscar Mingueza. However, Ocampos saw his tame right-foot effort from the spot saved by Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

Flagging Sevilla were then reduced to 10 men in injury time when Brazilian Fernando was red-carded for a foul on Francisco Trincao.

"The team deserved to qualify," said Barca coach Ronald Koeman. "This is a very important result for the club, for the players, and for me of course as well. This is an important step in earning a title."

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Man Utd, Leicester drop more points

AFP ■ LONDON

Manchester United were left a huge 14 points behind Premier League leaders Manchester City as Crystal Palace held them to yet another goalless draw on Wednesday.

The stalemate at a foggy Selhurst Park was United's third successive goalless draw in all competitions ahead of Sunday's Manchester derby against City, who are on a record-breaking 21-game winning streak.

Elsewhere, third-placed Leicester had captain Kasper Schmeichel to thank for a point in a 1-1 draw at Burnley. Aston Villa missed the chance to move to within two points of the top four as they suffered a shock 1-0 loss to bottom-of-the-table Sheffield United, who held on for the final half an hour with 10 men.

A point in south London left second-placed Man United just one ahead of Leicester, with the main aim now for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side to cling on to a top-four place that will secure Champions League football next season.

"We have to do much better, we have to risk more in attack to create more chances," United midfielder Nemanja Matic, who almost broke the deadlock with a deflected shot, told Sky Sports.

"We are Manchester United, we have to win this kind of game. On Sunday we have a big game against Manchester City. We have to refocus for that."

Leicester's challenge for a return to the Champions League next season has been badly hit by injuries to key players, with Chelsea, Liverpool and Everton all able to close in on the Foxes — who

have not won in their last three games — when they are in action on Thursday.

MILAN SALVAGE POINT

Franck Kessie scored a 97th-minute penalty to rescue a 1-1 draw for AC Milan at home to Udinese on Wednesday, giving Serie A leaders Inter Milan the chance to pull six points clear at the top.

Rodrigo Becao's second-half header at the San Siro completely deceived Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma and Stefano Pioli's faltering side looked destined for a third defeat in four games.

But a needless handball from Udinese substitute Jens Struger Larsen offered Milan a lifeline, with Ivorian international Kessie converting the penalty with the final kick of the match.

Elsewhere, Robin Gosens, Jose Luis Palomino, Luis Muriel, Josip Ilicic and Aleksei Miranchuk all scored for Atalanta in a 5-1 rout of bottom club Crotone.

Archer out due to elbow injury

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England pacer Jofra Archer was not considered for the fourth Test due to a persisting elbow injury and some of the squad members including Ben Stokes also have an upset stomach, the ECB said on Thursday.

Archer had missed the second Test in Chennai due to the same issue.

"Jofra Archer is not playing in this Test match due to his ongoing right elbow issue. The ECB medical team will provide an update in due course," read an update from the England cricket board.

"Ben Stokes has had an upset stomach, the same issue that has affected other members the touring party. It is not expected to keep him off the field," it said.

Archer returned to play the third Test in which he picked up a wicket.

Siraj enjoyed Root's dismissal

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Perfect execution brings with it an inherent satisfaction which India speedster Mohammed Siraj felt after dismissing England captain Joe Root on the opening day of the fourth Test on Thursday.

Root was trapped before the wicket by Siraj, who bowled a beautiful inswinger which would have hit the middle and leg stump.

"I wanted to set Root up bowling away going deliveries. And then I thought during the start of a new over, I should bring one back in. I could execute it as I had planned and it gave me great satisfaction. Mazaa aa gaya (It was fun)," Siraj said about dismissal.



Similarly, he had done his homework on Jonny Bairstow's apparent weakness against in-coming deliveries. The in-cutter that got Bairstow was bowled at more than 146 kmph.

"Bairstow, I wasn't bowling him at a lot of pace at the start. ...But whatever footages

I have seen of him, he gets out to in-swinging deliveries. So I wanted to bowl in one area and bring it back consistently and it worked," he said.

His skipper Virat Kohli on the day mostly used him in short bursts and the plan was to hit one area consistently in order to create pressure.

"Since the time of Ranji Trophy, we learnt one thing that we have to bowl good areas and especially one area without trying too many things. It's all about being patient."

"Virat bhai just told me to bowl one area and try build the pressure. Ishant bhai also said that don't try too many things because when you build pressure, then automatically you get wickets."

LOCAL SPORT

UP OPEN ITF MEN'S TOURNNEY

Vishwakarma upsets 7th seed to enter quarterfinals

Lucknow: Local lad and wildcard entrant Siddharth Vishwakarma upset seventh seeded Manish Sureshkumar to enter the men's singles quarterfinals alongside top seeded Saketh Myneni and Siddharth Rawat at the UP open World Tennis Tour ITF Men's \$15000 event at the Vijayantkhand Mini Stadium here on Thursday.

Later in the day, Myneni paired with Saketh defeated Great Britain pair of Jonathan Binding and Henry Patten 6-4, 6-3 to make it to the last four of doubles event.

In a keenly-contested match, wildcard Vishwakarma justified the decision of the organisers, ousting seventh seeded Manish Sureshkumar, 7-6(4), 3-6, 6-0 in a 2 hour 18 minutes match to book the quarter-final berth.

Two other Indians Top seeded Saketh Myneni outplayed SD Prajwal Dev 6-2, 6-4 while second seed Siddharth Rawat struggled to edged past Dalwinder Singh 7-6 (3), 7-5 in a close match.

Five foreign players made it to the quarterfinal stage American unseeded Zane Khan upset eighth seeded Luca Castellnuovo 6-3, 7-6(1) to cause the second upset of the day.

Fifth seeded Eric Vanshelboim of Ukraine came back from the loss of first set to stop the winning run of qualifier Lakshit Sood winning 6-7(4), 6-1, 6-2 while sixth seeded Oliver Crawford of USA also struggled losing the first set and then coming back to register a 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 win over qualifier Suraj Prabodh.

Third seeded Aidan Mchugh of Great Britain scored a easy 6-4, 6-1 win over Swedish Filip Bergevi, while fourth seeded Swedish Jonathan Mridha rallied past Indian wild card Digvijay Pratap Singh 6-1, 6-3.

RESULTS: (Singles 2nd Round) Saketh Myneni bt SD Prajwal Dev 6-2, 6-4, Siddharth Rawat bt Dalwinder Singh 7-6 (3), 7-5, Aidan Mchugh bt Filip Bergevi 6-4, 6-1, Jonathan Mridha bt Digvijay Pratap Singh 6-1, 6-3, Eric Vanshelboim, bt Sood, Lakshit 6-7(4), 6-1, 6-2, Oliver Crawford bt Suraj Prabodh 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, Siddharth Vishwakarma bt Manish Sureshkumar 7-6(4), 3-6, 6-0 upset Zane Khan (USA) bt Luca Castellnuovo 6-3, 7-6(1) Doubles (Quarterfinals) Filip Bergevi/Mridha Jonathan bt Marco Brugnerotto/Davide Pozzi 6-4, 6-4, Kaza Vinayak Sharma/ N Vijay Sundar Prashanth bt Sidharth Rawat/Manish Sureshkumar 7-6(5), 6-2, Yuki Bhambri/Saketh Myneni bt Jonathan Binding/Henry Patten 6-4, 6-3, SD Prajwal Dev/Nitin Sinha bt Anirudh 6-3, 6-4 Anirudh Chandrasekar/Niki Kaliyanda.