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BJP goes full throttle in Bengal

Modi to address 20 rallies, first on Mar 7; BJP plans over 800 rallies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP is set to roll out a mega campaign blitzkrieg in poll-bound West Bengal with Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting the State on March 7 to address his first public rally after announcement of poll dates by the Election Commission.

Apart from Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadra are likely to share about 120 public rallies among 120 in the poll-bound Bengal, BJP sources said.

Out of at least 800 rallies to be addressed by the national BJP leaders in the State, the Prime Minister will address 20, party sources said.

Chief Ministers of the BJP-ruled States, all key Central Ministers and a number of BJP MPs are to descend down on Bengal to give power to the party's campaign.

The party is also trying to draw some of the Bollywood stars to match TMC's glamour, colour and the punch.

Besides 20-odd rallies in West Bengal, beginning March



7, the Prime Minister will hold at least six public rallies in Assam where the BJP is confident of victory for the second time.

Modi would focus in north and middle Bengal where party had fared well as also in southern part which is a TMC stronghold.

There could always be more rallies by the Prime Minister "if the situation

demands", sources said while pointing out that he is in demand in other States too.

The Left-Congress-Indian Secular Front has already had their electoral "Brigade-show" of strength on February 28.

In the run-up to the Sunday rally, party workers are holding corner meetings to invite people to the rally. BJP workers from other BJP-ruled States too are extending their

CAMPAIGN BLITZKRIEG

- Out of at least 800 rallies to be addressed by the national BJP leaders in the State, the Prime Minister will address 20, party sources said.
- The Prime Minister will hold at least six public rallies in Assam where the BJP is confident of victory for the second time.
- The Home Minister and the BJP president are likely to address 50 rallies each in Bengal which goes to eight-phase polls for its 294 seats.
- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday attacked the Mamata Banerjee Government for allowing love jihad and cow smuggling in the State.
- Chief Ministers of the BJP-ruled States, all key Central Ministers and a number of BJP MPs are to descend down on Bengal to give power to the party's campaign.
- The party is also trying to draw some of the Bollywood stars to match TMC's glamour, colour and the punch.

helping hand to make the Sunday Parade Ground show at Kolkata a grand success.

The elections for the 294 Assembly seats in West Bengal will begin on March 27. The State is going to witness eight-phase Assembly polls this year.

In Assam, the Assembly elections shall be held in three phases beginning from March 27 with the final round of voting taking place on April 6.

Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday attacked the Mamata Banerjee Government for allowing love jihad and cow smuggling in the State.

Yogi, who was speaking at a rally near Bulbulchandi in Malda district said how rampant cases of "love jihad" is happening in Bengal with the State Government allowing that to

happen."

The UP Chief Minister who promised to stop all the anomalies if the BJP came to power in Bengal said, "In UP we have made a law against love jihad and have brought the menace under control... but in Bengal the Trinamool Congress is allowing this to happen."

TMC MLA Jitendra Tiwari joins BJP

Hoohy: Amid an ongoing exodus from the ruling Trinamool Congress ahead of the West Bengal Assembly elections, two-time party MLA from Pandabeswar in Paschim Bardhaman district and former Asansol mayor, Jitendra Tiwari, joined the BJP on Tuesday.

Stop pleasing future boss: Adhir to Anand

Sonia forms panel led by JP Aggarwal to screen Assembly candidates in WB

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Issues widened further in the Congress a day after senior Congress leader Anand Sharma slammed the party leadership for its tie-up with the Indian Secular Front (ISF) in the poll-bound West Bengal. On Tuesday, Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury hinted at a possible split in the party when he questioned the intention of his colleague "who is trying to please his future boss" in a reference to speculation that Sharma may join the BJP.

"If his intention was honest, he could have simply called me. I would have explained the decision of alliance partners to him...but he thought it was better to tarnish the image of the Congress to please somebody who could be his future political boss", Chowdhury said.

While Sharma is Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha. The West Bengal Congress chief went ahead to accuse Anand Sharma of criticising



the Congress without any reason. "Anand Sharma is more vocal against Congress without any reason. He is simply blowing the issue out of proportion", Chowdhury stated.

In response to the criticism over alliance with Furfur Sharif, cleric Abbas Siddiqui ISF, Chowdhury took to twitter to respond to Sharma. "Know Your Facts, Anand Sharma ji. Would urge a select group of distinguished Congressmen to rise above always seeking personal comfort spots & stop wasting time singing praises of PM (Narendra Modi)", Chowdhury mentioned.

Amid the continued war of words between two party veterans over the alliance partners for Assembly elections in West Bengal, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday constituted a screening committee under the chairmanship of veteran Delhi Congress leader JP Aggarwal. The screening committee constituted for the eight-

phase Bengal Assembly polls starting March 27 also have Mahesh Joshi and Naseem Khan as members besides some ex-officio members, including the State Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president and the AICC in-charge for West Bengal. The panel would screen the probable party candidates and put forward its recommendations to the Central Election Committee of the Congress chaired by party chief Sonia Gandhi.

The grand old party also formed a screening committee for poll bound States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. While party veteran HK Patil will chair the Kerala Screening Committee with former CM Oomen Chandy and former Union Minister Tariq Anwar as its members, Digvijay Singh will head TN and Puducherry with senior leaders KS Alagiri, K. Suresh and former Puducherry CM V Naraswamy as its members.

Haryana Bill reserves 75% pvt sector jobs for locals

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Tuesday said Governor Satyadeo Narain Arya has given assent to the Bill providing 75 per cent reservation in the private sector to job seekers from the State.

The Haryana Assembly had late last year passed the Bill, a key poll promise made by the ruling alliance party Jannayak Janta Party.

Addressing a press conference here, Khattar said, "The Haryana Governor today gave his assent to the Bill entailing 75 per cent reservation in the private sector to job seekers from the State. The Government will notify it soon."

The Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Bill, 2020 provides quota for local people in private sector jobs that offer a salary of less than ₹50,000 a month. The quota will initially apply for 10 years, according to the Bill.

Apart from tackling unemployment among local people, the State Government said the



law will discourage the influx of migrants seeking low-paid jobs, which has a "significant impact" on local infrastructure and leads to the "proliferation of slums". The Bill covers private companies, societies, trusts and partnership firms in the State. Chautala described the eligible local candidates when qualified people are not available.

It defines local candidates as those domiciled in the State. For domicile status, a person

should be born in Haryana or have lived there for at least 15 years.

Giving 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs was a key poll promise by Dushyant Chautala's JJP, which is the BJP's coalition partner in the State. Chautala described the assent given by the Governor as "happiest moment for the youth of Haryana."

"The rules on this new law will be framed soon and published," he said at Faridabad.

54 students in Karnal Covid +ve, classes suspended

PTI ■ KARNAL

Fifty-four students of a school near here have tested Covid-19 positive leading to suspension of classes and other academic activities.

Karnal Chief Medical Officer Yogesh Sharma said three students of Sainik School Kunjpur had tested positive for the virus on Monday following which the health department took samples of 390 students and staff members of the school for testing.

"The reports revealed that 54 students are COVID-19 positive," Sharma said.

Deputy Commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav said the school building and its hostels have been declared as a containment zone. The Sainik Schools are run by the Sainik Schools Society under the Ministry of Defence and the students stay in hostels.

The Haryana education department had reopened schools for classes 9-12 in December last year and classes 3-5 from February 24.

PM, Shah hail BJP's stellar show in Guj local body polls

Party grabs 2,085 of 2,771 seats whose results were declared on Tue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ruling BJP on Tuesday scored a big win in Gujarat local polls by winning all 31 district panchayats and leading in 2,085 of 8,474 seats across various municipalities that voted on Sunday in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home State and establishing a wide gap with the closest rival Congress.

The PM and Home Minister Amit Shah hailed the BJP's impressive show in Gujarat.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) bagged 16 seats on its debut in Gujarat.

The BJP gained a lead by winning 2,085 seats, while the Congress won 602 seats so far across various municipalities, district and taluka panchayats in Gujarat where results for 2,771 seats out of the total 8,474 were declared on Tuesday.



"Results of the Nagar Palika, Taluka Panchayat and District Panchayat polls across Gujarat give a crystal clear message — Gujarat is firmly with the BJP's agenda of development and good governance. I bow to the people of Gujarat for the unwavering faith and affection towards BJP," tweeted Modi.

Shah hailed the results of the municipal corporation elections in Gujarat, saying the BJP won around 85 per cent of the seats it contested and that the party continues on its "development journey" under the leadership of Modi.

The Home Minister too

targeted the Congress, which saw a dismal performance. He said the Opposition party won only 44 seats, the number which the BJP won in Bhavnagar corporation alone.

"The municipal corporation poll results have again established Gujarat as BJP's stronghold. The BJP continues on 'Vikas yatra' under the leadership of PM Modi. Today's results are one of the best results in Gujarat," the Home Minister said.

"The BJP has won around 85 per cent of the seats it contested, and the Congress has suffered badly in this election. The Congress won only 44 seats across the whole State, while the BJP bagged 44 seats in Bhavnagar corporation alone," he added.

The Home Minister congratulated Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel and the newly-elected State BJP Chief CR Patil for the party's performance.

BJP president JP Nadra said, "I thank the people of Gujarat for reposing their faith in BJP, a symbol of development and trust, in local body elections."

CAPSULE

GOVT NETS ₹77.815 CR IN SPECTRUM AUCTION

New Delhi: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Jio cornered more than half of the telecom spectrum auctioned by the Government over the past two days, offering about ₹7,123 crore to consolidate its holding of the scarce resource that are used to carry mobile call and data signals.

ACCEPTANCE OF COVID-19 JAB HIGH AMONG WOMEN

New Delhi: Covid-19 vaccine acceptance among pregnant women and mothers is the highest in India, the Philippines and some Latin American countries, according to a survey of 16 countries that asked questions premised on a safe and free preventive with 90 per cent efficacy.

CHAZIPUR BORDER CLOSED AGAIN

New Delhi: The Delhi Police on Tuesday afternoon closed the Ghazipur border again, hours after it reopened a portion of NH-9 for traffic movement, officials said.

AIR 'MODERATE' IN NOIDA, GURUGRAM, FARIDABAD

Noida: The air quality was in the "moderate" category in Noida, Gurugram and Faridabad, while it was "poor" in Ghaziabad.

Kisan stir halts ₹35K-cr Delhi-Katra e-way in its tracks

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

After Covid-19 pandemic, now the ongoing farmers' agitation has cast a shadow on the proposed Delhi-Katra Expressway corridor. This includes the Punjab stretch which has been converted into a Greenfield project by providing a direct link from Nakodar onward to the five historic towns of Sultanpur Lodhi, Goidwal Sahib, Khador Sahib, and Tarn Taran, leading up to Amritsar.

However, in the absence of a mandatory public hearing of the affected villagers due to ongoing agitation, the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Union Environment Ministry has deferred the ₹35,000-crore project to be executed by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) under the Union Road Transport and Highways Ministry.

The total length of the



proposed project is 361.656 km — 262.656 km for Punjab Section of Delhi-Katra Expressway plus 99 km for Greenfield Amritsar Connectivity. About 24,700 trees will make way for the much-hyped project. The

Delhi-Katra Expressway proposes to cover journey from Katra to Delhi in about seven hours and from Jammu to Delhi in just over six hours.

Going through the project details submitted by the project proponent (NHAI) and the Gurugram-based EIA consultant Feedback Infra Pvt Ltd, the EAC members noted that the proposed alignment will also cross 55 canals, 20 drains, four rivers, five nallahs and three ponds in the Punjab Section of Delhi-Katra Expressway,

whereas, 20 canals, 14 drains, 3 river and 1 pond will be crossed by the proposed alignment of Amritsar connectivity.

The public hearing was conducted in December 2020 at all eight districts of Punjab, namely Sangrur, Patiala, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Gurdaspur, Tarn Taran and Amritsar by the Punjab Government. Sources said the Government had proposed to complete the landmark Katra-Delhi expressway corridor by 2023.

The Government hopes that it will promote religious tourism as the road will connect the holy cities of Katra in Jammu and Amritsar in Punjab.

The project involved the diversion of forest land. About 76 hectares of Protected Forest (roadside and canal-side plantations declared as forest) will be affected by the proposed expressway.

Bamleshwari temple set to woo religious tourists

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Maa Bamleshwari Devi Temple in Dongargarh is set to become a key centre of religious tourism following the completion of the development project for Rs 43.33 crores, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said on Tuesday.

It will also open new avenues in tourism development and employment to local residents, Baghel said.

Under the Central government's Pilgrimage Revivification and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD), the blooming puja event was done by Baghel in the pres-

ence of Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism Pralhad Singh Patel virtually.

Tourism Minister Tamradhwa Sahu conducted the rituals at the temple premises. Culture Minister Amarjeet Bhagat was present. In October, Dongargarh was selected under PRASAD, a Central scheme that focuses on identifying and developing pilgrim sites to enrich religious tourism.

The Chief Minister urged the Union Minister to include the development of Kabir Chattras, Rainagarh and Shiv Temples in Chhattisgarh with the Amarakant development project under the PRASAD scheme.

Patel said Chandragiri Temple will be included in the Dongargarh project. He laid emphasis on completion of the project within the time-frame.



Md Salim Left Front face in Bengal polls?

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In apparent bid to stump Mamata Banerjee in her own alleged game the Left Front is planning to field party politburo member and former MP Md Salim as its leading face in the coming Assembly elections, inside sources said ruling out however that the move had anything to do with the effort to reach out to the Muslim community.

The Muslims who had largely supported the Left Front in Bengal till 2011, have been the electoral mainstay for the Chief Minister --- more so, post the rise of BJP as the main opposition force.

The Bengal Chief Minister have often been criticized for

importing communal politics in the State by appeasing the Muslims and igniting a saffron upsurge in turn.

The play to field Salim who had not contested the Assembly elections in 2011 or 2016 comes in tandem with the Marxist to tie up with the Indian Secular Front as newly erected outfit led by Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui a prominent cleric of Furfura Sharief the largest congregation of the Bengali speaking Muslims in the State.

Apart from Salim the Left is also likely to field JNU students' leader Aishi Ghosh from Durgapur and Bengali artist Bandha Moitra sources said urging CPI(M) State secretary Suryakanto Mishra will not contest elections this time round.

Manmohan: Unemployment high in India due to Govt's 'ill considered demonetisation decision'

Thiruvananthapuram: Attacking the Centre, former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on Tuesday said unemployment is high in the country and its informal sector is in shambles following the 'ill considered demonetisation decision' taken by the BJP-led government in 2016.

He also criticised the central government for not holding regular consultations with the states. Inaugurating a development summit virtually organised by the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Development Studies, an economic think tank aligned to the Congress ideology in poll-bound Kerala, Singh said temporary measures by the central government and the RBI to paper over the credit problem cannot blind us to the looming credit crisis ahead that could affect the small and medium sector.

"Unemployment is high and the informal sector is in shambles, a crisis precipitated by the ill considered demonetisation decision taken in 2016", he said at "Pratheeksha

2030". The summit was organised to launch a Vision Document, a framework of ideas for development of Kerala well in advance of the state elections. He observed that in Kerala and many other states, public finances were in disarray with states having to resort to excessive borrowing, which creates an intolerable burden on future budgets.

"Federalism and regular consultation with states, which was the cornerstone of India's economic and political philosophy as enshrined in the Constitution, no longer finds favour with the present Central government", he said.

Singh said while Kerala's social standards are high, there are other sectors that need strong attention in the future.

There are many roadblocks ahead that the state has to overcome. The global downturn of the last two or three years, aggravated by the pandemic, has made the global interface of Kerala more fragile. **PTI**

Delhi man held for credit card fraud

New Delhi: Delhi Police has arrested a 21-year-old man for allegedly cheating people on the pretext of redeeming their credit card points from east Delhi's Preet Vihar area. The accused has been identified as Tushar Tiagi, a resident of Mandawali. He came in contact with the main accused through PUBG game.

According to Atul Kumar Thakur, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district, an advocate Sadab Khan lodged a complaint at Malviya Nagar police station that he received a text message on his mobile phone to redeem his credit card points.

"As soon as he clicked on the given web link and entered his card details, he lost Rs 1 lakh from his credit cards. During investigation, it was revealed that the accused had used spoofed SMS services to send phishing messages of points redemption. Police found that the cheated amount had been credited first in an e-wallet account and then, it was used for purchasing the gift vouchers of a multi-brand electronic store", said the DCP.

"The e-wallet account was opened on the basis of fake ID. Thereafter, police informed the store in Kota, Rajasthan from where the gift vouchers were obtained in different names. Police had the numbers of vouchers and alerted the manager of the store in Kota about the

them", said the DCP.

"The store has many branches across India. The accused redeemed the voucher and when Tiagi came to take delivery on Sunday at Preet Vihar branch, the store staff apprehended him and handed over to police", said the DCP.

"Interrogation revealed that during lockdown, Tiagi came in contact with one Vishal alias Shubham while playing PUBG game and they became friends. Initially, Shubham provided game accessories to Tiagi and was talking to him through voice over internet protocol (VOIP) calls", the DCP said.

"When they became friends, Shubham informed him that he works in credit or debit cards fishing and has good knowledge to earn easily in cyber space. He offered Tiagi 20 per cent commission on sale of his purchased items. In January 2021, Shubham asked Tiagi to collect his smart phones from the stores and to sell it in the open market", said the DCP.

"After keeping his commission of 20 per cent, he had to deposit the remaining amount to Shubham's wallet and bank account. He has deposited around Rs 2 lakh in Shubham's account till now, the DCP said. Efforts are being made to apprehend Shubham. Police recovered 15 smart phones, including 9 iPhones, from his possession, said police. **SR**

Govt will take action against officials involved in illegal appointment: Arunachal CM

Itanagar: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday said the government will take appropriate action against officials involved in the alleged illegal appointment in the Education department.

Responding to a question by senior Congress member Ninong Ering on appointment of teachers and other posts in the department without conducting any interview, Khandu asserted that all such appointment would be cancelled if proved. He said the Arunachal Pradesh Staff Selection Board (APSSB), was created to check corrupt practices in recruitment process.

Raising the question Ering asked the government as to why the APSSB was not informed about such appointments and want to know the total number of teachers and multi-tasking staff (MTS) appointed without interview by the department.

Education Minister Taba Tedir while denying such appointments informed the House that the department on complaint from Ering had initiated a departmental enquiry, report of which would be available soon. **PTI**



An artist makes a painting of the world-famous monument Taj Mahal, as a part of the beautification of road, in Bhopal on Tuesday **PTI**

Seers ask U'khand Govt to organise Kumbh Mela on grand scale

Haridwar: The Akhli Bharatiya Akhara Parishad, a body of various sects of ascetics, on Tuesday asked the Uttarakhand government to organise the forthcoming Kumbh Mela in Haridwar on a grand scale.

"If the Magh Mela in Uttar Pradesh can be held on a grand scale, why not Haridwar Kumbh?" ABAP president Mahant Narendra Giri said.

Thanking Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for successfully organising the Magh Mela, Giri said the Uttarakhand government too should organise the Kumbh Mela on similar lines.

"Haridwar Kumbh should be held on a grand scale, religious discourses and kirtans should be held on the banks of the Ganga besides pitching tents for the seers", he said.

He asked the Uttarakhand government to remove all restrictions imposed on devotees coming for the Kumbh Mela in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Crores of people converged at Allahabad for Magh Mela but no one contracted coronavirus nor did any one die due to it, Giri said. **PTI**

Ruling and Opposition benches trade charges in UP Assembly over withdrawal of criminal cases

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Tuesday witnessed a slanging match between the ruling and opposition benches over withdrawal of criminal cases by the BJP government in the state.

Ruling party members alleged that cases against terrorists were withdrawn during the previous regime, while the opposition benches trashed the claim and said cases against 'rioters' were withdrawn by the BJP government.

Replying to a question by BSP member Shyam Sundar Sharma, Law Minister Brijesh Pathak said that from April, 2017 to July, 2020, as many as 670 cases were withdrawn by the government in 'jan'hi' (public interest) and the cases pertain to political leaders

and workers". He said that after the government formation, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced the decision to withdraw 'political cases' to lessen the burden on judiciary.

In his supplementary query during the Question Hour, the member asked about the political cases and sought a list of all people with their party affiliation whose cases were withdrawn.

To this, the minister said that political cases are not defined but those with less serious charges were withdrawn.

"After an application is made for withdrawal of cases, a 13-point report is sought from the District Magistrate concerned and then Principal Secretaries of Home and Law departments go through

it before final decision," he said, adding that as law doesn't permit discrimination on basis of parties, it would not be appropriate to take names.

"If Speaker permits, I can make the list of the persons whose cases were withdrawn public," the minister said.

In his reply without taking name of the Samajwadi Party, the minister said that the previous government withdrew cases against terrorists who had charges under the Explosives Act and even POTA.

His reaction led to a sharp attack from Leader of the Opposition Ram Govind Choudhary who alleged that the government had taken back cases of their own men. **PTI**

Magisterial probe ordered into clash between villagers, police in U'khand

Bhararaisain (U'khand): A magisterial probe has been ordered into a clash that broke out between protesting villagers and police at Diwalikhal near Gairsain, Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said on Tuesday.

Rawat told reporters here that those responsible for the clash will be brought to book but there should be no action against the innocent.

A clash erupted between protesting villagers and the

police on Monday at Diwalikhal when locals broke barricades to march to the Vidhan Sabha in Gairsain, demanding widening of the Nandprayag-Ghat motor road.

Villagers of Ghat area have been agitating over the issue for the last two months demanding widening the stretch by 1.5 metres. Police had to burst water canons and lathicharge protesters to control them. **PTI**

Platform ticket price raised to ₹50 at key stations in MMR

Mumbai: The Central Railway has increased the price of platform tickets at some key stations in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) to avoid over-crowding during the upcoming summer season in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, an official said on Tuesday.

A platform ticket now costs Rs 50 instead of the previous rate of Rs 10 at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Dadar and Lokmanya Tilak Terminus in Mumbai, and neighbouring Thane, Kalyan, Parel and Bhandra Road stations. CR's chief public relations officer Shivaji Sutar said.

The new rate came into force from March 1 and will remain effective till June 15 this year, the official said.

"The decision was taken to prevent over-crowding at these stations during the summer travel rush", he said.

Since the second week of February, there has been a surge in daily COVID-19 cases in Mumbai. **PTI**

Paper leak case: 2 Army personnel among 4 more held in Pune

Pune: Pune Police probing the Army paper Leak case has arrested four more persons, including two Army personnel, a senior officer said on Tuesday, adding the scope of the case looked like the 'tip of the iceberg'.

With this, the number of persons arrested in connection with the paper leak case so far has reached seven, including an ex-serviceman.

On February 18, the Army cancelled Army Relation Recruitment exam, which was scheduled to be held on February 28 at BEG centre in Pune, after the paper was found to be leaked.

Police are now investigating the source of the leaked paper and the exact number of candidates who had received its copies before the date of the exam.

The said exam was scheduled on February 28. We had received intelligence that some people were approaching candidates and promising them to hand over the question paper in return of money." Joint Commissioner of Police (JC) Ravindra Shisave told reporters

Police are now investigating the source of the leaked paper and the exact number of candidates who had received its copies before the date of the exam on Tuesday.

He said the police had formed two teams and apprehended some people who were found to be in the possession of a question paper and were planning to sell it to aspirants.

"We then approached Army officials and cross-checked the question paper. We came to know that the question paper found in the mobile phones of those detained by us was the same that was set for the February 28 exam," he said, adding that the exam was subsequently cancelled by the Army.

Shisave said the scope of the probe looks very wide and "the police investigation so far could be just the tip of the iceberg". The first case was registered against three people at Vishrantwadi police station in

Pune, following which police arrested Ali Akhtar Khan (47), Azad Khan (37) and Mahendra Sonawane (37). The three accused had promised an aspirant to give him the question paper in exchange of Rs 1 lakh.

In another case registered at Wanwadi police station in the city, police have arrested four persons, identified as Kishor Giri (40), Madhav Gite (38), an ex-serviceman, Gopal Koli (31) and Uday Awati (23).

Koli and Awati work in the Army, another officer said. Koli is a drill instructor at Batalion-2 at BEG Centre, while Awati is a regimental police personnel.

The officer said that Giri and Gite had called 14 candidates to a hotel in Vishrantwadi area to give them the copy of the question paper.

Giri used to run military training classes but became tout as his business failed. Gite retired on January 21 from Battalion-2, where the exam was supposed to be held," said Vitthal Patil, senior police inspector, Anti-Extortion Cell. **PTI**

Telangana's first Covid patient, doctors felicitated

Hyderabad: The Telangana government on Tuesday felicitated the first Covid patient, doctors and other staff at the state-run Gandhi Hospital where he along with thousands of other coronavirus patients have been treated during the last one year.

Ravi Teja, who was the first man in Wanwadi police station in the city, police have arrested four persons, identified as Kishor Giri (40), Madhav Gite (38), an ex-serviceman, Gopal Koli (31) and Uday Awati (23).

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brought good name to the state-run health facilities.

The Health Minister recalled that when the pandemic broke out there were fears that this may lead to heaps of bodies but the way healthcare workers responded helped the country and the state to handle the situation with minimum loss of lives.

"We have come a long way and learnt many a lessons in the last one year. I must congratulate the recovered Covid patients and health care workers who have worked non-stop over the entire year and saved lives", said Rajender.

He noted that during the last one year, the healthcare workers at Gandhi Hospital treated 35,000 Covid positive patients. They also successfully oversaw over 900 deliveries of pregnant Covid positive women and saved the lives of nearly 7,000 Covid patients who needed the ICU care. He recalled that when the first few cases of Covid-19 were reported in the country in March last year, there was little information available on treatment protocols and life-saving drugs to treat Covid infection. **IAWS**

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WHEREAS the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of M/s. Cholamandalam Investment And Finance Company Limited under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 hereinafter called the Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rules 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notices calling upon the borrowers, whose names have been indicated in Column (B) below on dates specified in Column (C) to repay the outstanding amount indicated in Column (D) below with interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers in particular and the Public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties mortgaged with the Company described in Column (E) herein below on the respective dates mentioned in Column (F) in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(14) of the Act read with Rule 9 of the Rules made thereunder.

The borrowers in particular and the Public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties mentioned in Column (E) below and any such dealings will be subject to the charge of M/s. Cholamandalam Investment And Finance Company Limited for an amount mentioned in Column (D) along with interest and other charges.

Under section 13 (8) of the Securitisation Act, the borrowers can redeem the secured asset by payment of the entire outstanding including all costs, charges and expenses before notification of sale.

Sl No.	NAME AND ADDRESS OF BORROWER & LOAN ACCOUNT NUMBER	DATE OF DEMAND NOTICE	OUTSTANDING AMOUNT	DETAILS OF PROPERTY POSSESSED	DATE OF PHYSICAL POSSESSION
A	B	C	D	E	F
1.	Loan No. X0HERRH00001997123 1. BHACHTRI SINGH SETHI, House No. 21, Phase-1, Capital City Sadou, Raipur-492001 2. SCOTT INTERNATIONAL PVT LTD, Office No. 5, Hotel Anil, Mori Bagh Chowk, Raipur-492001 3. AMARJEET SINGH SETHI, 4. KARAMBIR SINGH SETHI, 5. JASBIR KAUR SETHI, 6. JATTADEEP SINGH SETHI, (S.No. 3-6 residing at: House No-21, Phase-1, Capital City Sadou, Raipur-492001)	15.07.2020	Rs. 1,08,25,153.04 as on 14.07.2020	All that piece and parcel of land bearing Plot No. 21, part of Survey No. 200/13, Land area measuring 2-150 Sq Ft, situated at Village Bhau Thakane Ward No. 26, Village Sadou, P.H. No-109, City, Tehsil and District Raipur.	02.03.2021

Place: Raipur
Date: 02.03.2021

AUTHORISED OFFICER
M/s. Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited

Goa has scope for exploiting maritime trade: CM

Panaji: Goa has scope for exploiting maritime-linked trade, especially in the areas of import and export of commodities and tourism, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Tuesday, a day before he is scheduled to address the two-day Maritime India Summit 2021 that was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters here, Sawant thanked Narendra Modi for mentioning Goa as being one of the key areas for development of marine clusters at the summit on Tuesday, in which Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Dharmendra Pradhan, and Union Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Mansukh Mandaviya, were also present.

"They have invited all these investors to India. They have specially mentioned Goa and invited people to invest in shipbuilding repairs, imports and exports. I thank the Prime Minister for it," Sawant said.

"There is scope in Goa for handling commodities and tourism," Sawant said, adding that he will spell out the existing maritime infrastructure in Goa and create a blueprint of new infrastructure which are needed to be raised for expanding the scope of maritime trade in Goa. **IAWS**



Baul and Kirtan artists perform during their mass meeting at Shahid Minar, in Kolkata on Tuesday **PTI**

In a first, IAF to join 'Desert Flag' in UAE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The IAF, for the first time, will take part in exercise 'Desert Flag' in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), starting Wednesday. The Indian pilots will test their skills with their counterparts of air forces of USA, France, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Bahrain and host UAE in the more than 20 day long multi-national exercise.

Giving details of the prestigious annual exercise, IAF officials said here on Tuesday the exercise is scheduled from March 3 to 27 at the Al-Dhafa airbase, UAE. The drill will take place in the strategically important Persian Gulf region.

The IAF is participating with six SU-30 MKI, two C-17 and one IL-78 tanker aircraft. The C-17 Globemaster will provide support for induction and de-induction of the IAF contingent.

The Su-30 MKI aircraft will undertake long range ferry, routing direct from India to the exercise area with aerial refuelling support from IL-78 tanker aircraft. The aim of the exercise is to provide operational exposure to the participating forces



while training them to undertake simulated air combat operations in a controlled environment. The participating forces will get an opportunity to enhance their operational capabilities along with mutual exchange of best practices.

The large-scale exercise involving diverse fighter aircraft from across the globe will provide the participating forces, including IAF, a unique opportunity to exchange knowledge, experience, enhance operational capabilities and interoperability. Exercising and interaction with the participating nations in a dynamic and realistic warfare environment will also contribute to strengthen international relations, the IAF said. The Indian jets will fly along with F-15 and F-16s of

the US besides Rafales and Mirage-2000s of the French Air Force.

Over the last decade, IAF has regularly hosted and participated in multi-national operational exercises, wherein collaborative engagements are undertaken amongst the best air forces of the world.

Incidentally, the IAF participation comes at a time when India has forged strong ties with countries in the Gulf region. Army Chief General M. Naravane was the first chief to visit Saudi Arabia and UAE in December last year. Moreover, the UAE provided mid-air refuelling facilities to the IAF for bringing their aircraft from France over a 7,000 km journey to Ambala in September last year.

Politicians, VIPs come forward for jab on Day 2

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the nation's vaccination drive by taking the Covid-19 vaccine, a battery of politicians cutting across party lines and VIPs from various walks of life came forward to inoculate themselves on the second day of the second phase of the vaccination programme aimed to cover persons over 60 years of age and those between 45-59 years with co-morbidities.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and his wife took the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine at the Delhi Heart and Lung Institute on Tuesday. Soon after getting vaccinated, the Minister said, "I request everyone to get vaccinated. After 28 days of the first dose, everyone should get their second dose. Do not worry if you experience minor side-effects, but do tell your doctors know."

Speaking about the CoWin platform, he also said, "There have been some glitches in the CoWin platform due to the high number of registrations all of a sudden. On Monday around 34 lakhs people had registered on this platform till last night. The number of people registering for the vaccination is increasing rapidly."

He added, "I would like to request all hospitals to update the schedule for 28 days so that people don't face any issue. The Government is ensuring the availability of the vaccine for the whole country so that everyone can get vaccinated."

The others who got inoculated on Tuesday included Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh who received the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine at RR Hospital in the national capital while Union Minister of Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi received the first shot of Covid-19 vaccine at Rampur, Uttar Pradesh.

Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad also took anti Covid-19 shot in Patna for which he paid ₹250. As many as 2,08,791 people above 60 years of age and those aged 45-60 years with comorbidities have taken the vaccine so far, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan told the weekly press conference here.

Those with specified comorbidities will have to produce a medical certificate attested by a registered medical practitioner at the time of vaccination at the Covid-19 vac-



Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and his wife being administered the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine at the Delhi Heart and Lung Institute on Tuesday in the national Capital. Ranjan Dinni / Pioneer

Don't take Covid-19 lightly, cautions Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

While maintaining that India's current positivity rate suggests Covid pandemic is under control, the Union Health Minister cautioned people about not taking the virus lightly after the vaccination programme has started and avoid large gatherings, parties, weddings etc. "These could be super spreading events," warned Dr VK Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog.

As Gujarat, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Delhi, apart from Kerala and Maharashtra reports uptick in cases each passing day, Paul who is also the chairperson of the National Task Force on Covid-19, V K Paul, blamed on the wedding season coinciding with elections in some of them as a few of the reasons for the resurgence of infections.

Paul said he got the information after taking inputs from various State Governments, which engaged with the Centre deputed teams there to find out the probable causes behind the steady rise in the number of cases.

"People have gone lax on the Covid protocols. The reasons which the States have cited behind this laxity include crowding at wedding functions and elections. Many states

admitted this during the interaction with the teams deputed there," Paul said.

Notably, municipal elections and other local body polls have been conducted in Gujarat and few other states recently, while West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry are scheduled to go to the polls in March-April.

Wedding ceremonies also act as superspreaders of the disease since they attract a substantial crowd, often throwing social distancing norms to the wind.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said though certain states including Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are seeing a surge in number of Covid-19 active cases, "the fact remains that recovered cases are still more than 97 per cent and active cases are less than 2 per cent (1.51 per cent)".

He pointed out that, "According to the World Health Organisation, if 140 tests per million are being conducted per day and the case positivity rate is at 5% or below, it means the Covid-19 pandemic is under control. We are very close to that mark at 5.11% overall case positivity."

K'taka Minister gets vaccinated at home, Centre seeks report on vaccination protocol violation



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking exception to a Karnataka Minister's act of getting vaccinated at his residence, the Union Health Ministry called it a violation of protocol and has sought a report in the matter. However, the Minister BC Patil brazened it out saying that his decision to take the vaccine at home cannot be considered wrong.

The video and pictures of health officials administering the vaccine at Patil's home were widely shared on social media where people talked about the misuse of processes by the minister at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah among

other Cabinet Ministers had gone to the hospital to receive the shot.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said at a press briefing on Tuesday that "This is not allowed in the protocol. We have asked for a report from the State Government."

However, the minister in question justified his action, arguing that, "There were many people in the house and I would have to wait for around half an hour at the hospital is why I took it at home."

He added that there were certain privileges and his decision to take the vaccine at home cannot be considered wrong. Patil said that he had only called health officials home for the vaccine.

Cong targeting its stalwarts who are backing rightful agenda of Modi: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's full-time praise of 'disillusion' Congress leader Gulam Nahi Azad, a comment which the latter richly repelled this week, the BJP on Tuesday expressed its 'sadness' over 'Congress targeting its stalwarts who are backing the 'rightful agenda' of Modi.

BJP took a dig at the Congress amid a vocal dissent within the opposition party, saying its ideology is all about fulfilling the Congress leader's "ambition", and anyone speaking against it or standing with the rightful agenda of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is castigated.

BJP's national spokesperson Sambit Patra told a press conference here that the Congress will "castigate" anyone who wants democracy in the party, wants its president to be elected, speaks in favour of politics of development or stands with Modi's rightful agenda.

While stating that the G23, a caste to the group of 23 senior Congressmen pushing for an organisational overhaul in the party, is an internal matter of the opposition party, Patra said it is "saddening to see senior leaders like Gulam Nahi Azad and others being targeted."

The Congress is now all about four leaders, he alleged, referring to its president Sonia Gandhi, her son Rahul and daughter Priyanka Vadra —

both party general secretaries — and Priyanka's husband Robert Vadra.

"Their only agenda is 'hate Modi'. It has grown to such an extent that Congress workers are protesting on the streets against their own leaders who have praised good works of Modi," he said answering a question.

Azad had praised Modi in an event - G-23 met in Jammu on Saturday, saying he speaks frankly about his past as a tea-seller and does not try to hide his background from the world. Azad and others have been speaking, last month, while speaking in the Rajya Sabha in the last session of the Parliament as he went on praising the retiring Azad.

EC slashes public notice time for registration of new parties to 7 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping in view the prevalent restrictions on account of Covid-19, the Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday reduced the public notice period for registering new political parties from 30 days to seven days in all the five poll-bound States. This relaxation will remain in force till March 19, the last date for filing nominations in Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, and till April 7 for West Bengal (the last date for filing nominations for the last phase in the State).

The order said a party seeking registration with the Commission has to submit an application within a period of 30 days following the date of its formation. According to officials, 60 to 70 political parties have approached the poll body in the past two-three months seeking registration.

As per the existing guidelines, the applicant association should publish the proposed name of the party in two national daily newspapers and two

local daily newspapers, on two days for submitting objections, if any, with regard to the proposed registration of the party, within 30 days from its publication. The EC has announced general elections for the legislative Assemblies of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry on February 26. It has been brought to the notice of the EC that in view of the Covid pandemic situation, there was dislocation and delay in moving applications for registration, which in turn led to delay in registration as a political party. After considering all aspects of the matter, the Commission has given a relaxation by reducing the notice period from 30 days to 7 days for the parties who have published their public notice on or before February 26. For all parties, including those which have published the public notice in less than 7 days prior to February 26, objection, if any, can be submitted later by 5.30 p.m., on March 2 or by the end of the originally provided 30-day period, whichever is earlier.

NIA takes up WB railway station bomb blast case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has taken up investigation of bomb blast at Nimta Railway Station, Murshidabad, West Bengal after dropping the case originally registered by the State police.

The bomb explosion at Nimta Railway Station in Murshidabad had caused serious injuries to 22 people including Jakir Hossain, Minister of State for Labour, West Bengal Government.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 05/21 dated February 17, 2021 under various Indian Penal Code Sections and the Explosive Substance Act against unknown miscreants at Azimganj GRP PS, Murshidabad on the statement of Md. Allarakh.

"The NIA re-registered the case as RC-04/2021/NIA/DLI and has taken over the investigation today. Investigation in the case continues," the NIA said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the NIA registered a case related to conspiracy by terrorist organisation,



Lashker-e-Mustafa, a frontal outfit of JeM. The case relates to conspiracy by frontal terror organisation Lashkar-e-Mustafa working at the behest of proscribed terrorist organisation Jaish-e-Mohammed to carry out terrorist activities in Jammu area with the aim of threatening the sovereignty, integrity and security of India.

The case was initially registered as FIR number 16/2021 of Ganguly Police station, Jammu on February 6, 2021 under section 18, 20 of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The NIA has re-registered this case as RC-

duce a medical certificate attested by a registered medical practitioner at the time of vaccination at the Covid-19 vac-

Beneficiaries will have to

cination centre. This phase is likely to cover close to 270 million beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries will have to

including a complaint case filed by veteran lyricist Javed Akhtar against Ranaut alleging defamation, from Mumbai to a competent court in Shimla in Himachal Pradesh.

It said that Akhtar had filed a complaint case against Ranaut alleging criminal defamation after the actress had given an interview to a news channel last year in which she had talked about a meeting with the lyricist in 2016.

It has further sought transfer of an FIR lodged in Mumbai by one Ali Kashif Khan Deshmukh which relates to Chandel's tweet in which she had expressed her anguish over attack on doctors

during COVID-19 pandemic. It said subsequently, Twitter account of Chandel was suspended after which Ranaut had spoken on a social media video against it.

The plea said Khan had lodged an FIR against Ranaut and Chandel for the alleged offences under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), including 295A which deals with deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class.

It said that the same complainant had also filed a complaint case before the Metropolitan Magistrate, Andheri, against the petitioners.

"Multiple proceedings on the same cause of action clearly demonstrates how the said complainant is just trying to harass the petitioners herein," the plea has alleged.

The plea has also sought transfer of an FIR lodged by one Munawar Ali for the alleged offences of sedition against them.

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CCTVs in offices of probe agencies: SC expresses displeasure over delay

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Tuesday expressed displeasure over the Centre for 'dragging its feet' by seeking more time on the issue pertaining to installation of CCTV cameras in the offices of investigating agencies including CBI, ED and NIA.

A Bench headed by Justice RF Nariman, which observed that this issue concerns the rights of citizens, said it is not accepting the excuses given in the letter filed by the Centre seeking adjournment in the

matter. "We are getting a distinct impression that you are dragging your feet," the bench, also

"We are getting a distinct impression that you are dragging your feet" comprising Justices B R Gavai and Hrishikesh Roy, told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta who was representing the Centre.

The apex court had on

December 2 last year directed the Centre to install CCTV cameras and recording equipment at the offices of investigating agencies — the Central Bureau of Investigation, National Investigation Agency, Enforcement Directorate, Narcotics Control Bureau, Department of Revenue Intelligence, Serious Fraud Investigation Office and any other agency which carries out interrogations and has the power of arrest.

During the hearing conducted through video-confer-



encing on Tuesday, Mehta told the bench that adjournment has been sought as the matter may have ramifications.

"This concerns the rights of citizens," the bench said, adding, "We are not accepting the excuses."

JAMMU & KASHMIR
Office of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE (QC&PD) Division, HMT, Srinagar
Phone:- 0194- 2496307, e-Mail:- xenmandp@gmail.com
Cancellation of e-NIT-24 of 2020-21
Subject : - Supply of liquid chlorine to be refilled in Deptt. Chlorine tonners as per IS 646-2020 with latest amendments (in chlorine tonners of capacity 900 Kgs) for Water Treatment Plants of Kashmir PHE Jal Shakti Department Srinagar.
Ref : 1. This office NIT No: PHE/QC&PD/24/2020-21/e-Tender Dated: 27-11-2020.
2. DPC decision held on 22-01-2021 and minutes circulated vide No: JSD/Misc/22997-98 Dated: -23-01-2021.
As per decision of the DPC as referred in reference in its meeting held on 22-01-2021, due to poor response the e-NIT No. PHE/QC&PD/24/2020-21 Dated: 27-11-2020, is hereby cancelled.
Sd/- Executive Engineer, QC&PD Jal Shakti HMT Srinagar
No. DIFK-14257/20 Dated: 02-03-2021

ADMK in dilemma as BJP wants to rope in Sasikala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy and his deputy O Panneerselvam are facing the biggest test in their political careers as the BJP national leadership wants the duo to accommodate VK Sasikala, former aide to J Jayalitha, in the AIADMK led alliance to fight the April 6 Assembly election.

Palaniswamy, who ruled out any possibilities of Sasikala getting accommodated in the AIADMK would be doing a vault face if he agrees to the dictate of the BJP. The Hindu party's directive to the AIADMK leadership is to follow up to a report by various intelligence agencies that Sasikala and her nephew TTV Dinakaran are capable of spoiling the chances of the AIADMK's winnability in 40 to 45 constituencies in southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

"The BJP wants the AIADMK to win the election because then it could remote control Tamil Nadu from New Delhi. But both Palaniswamy and Panneerselvam know well that if they yield to the command of the BJP, it would be the end of their political careers," said Sam Rajappa, long time observer of Tamil Nadu politics.

Panneerselvam, who was sworn in as Chief Minister following the demise of Jayalitha on Dec 5, 2016 was ousted by Sasikala and her close relations to pave the way for her to become chief minister.

Though she was unanimously elected as chief minister by the AIADMK legislature, the Supreme Court order upholding the Bangalore Special Court's verdict sentencing Sasikala to four years rigorous imprisonment came the next day. That spoiled her political career as she had to surrender in Parappana Agrahara Central Prison to serve her term.

Palaniswamy was hand-picked by Sasikala to stand in as chief minister in her absence. But when Dinakaran, her nephew decided to take over the administration by ousting Palaniswamy, the BJP intervened and made EPS and OPS to patch up. The duo eased out Sasikala and Dinakaran from the AIADMK leadership and took over the AIADMK and the government. Now that Sasikala has come back to Chennai after serving her term in the jail, she has staked her claims. This has upset the Palaniswamy-Panneerselvam duo. Dinakaran, who had launched Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK), claiming that the AIADMK has become history made a volte face and declared that the outfit had been launched to retrieve the AIADMK.

Palaniswamy had successfully completed four years in power and has been looking at a second shot at the chief minister's chair when the BJP has asked him to take the AMMK into the alliance fold. Amit Shah, union home minister, who was in Chennai on Sunday is believed to have told EPS and OPS to patch up with Chinnaamma (as Sasikala is addressed by her cadre).

Sasikala belongs to the Thevar community, which is quite powerful in southern districts. In Dravidian Tamil Nadu, it is the caste factors that determine the fate of elections. Thevar community dominated PMK walked away with 23 seats from the AIADMK in Saturday's seat sharing talks. The BJP has been offered 20 seats by the AIADMK but the former expressed unhappiness over what has been offered to it. Seat sharing talks between the AIADMK and the BJP have been held up because of the uncompromising stance of both the parties.

AS Gurumurthy, editor, Thuglak and advisor to Tamil Nadu BJP had said that while he was not adverse to the AIADMK's alliance with the AMMK, he would strongly oppose any kind of merger between the two parties. "Though both the DMK and AIADMK are corrupt, the DMK is a dynastic party while the AIADMK is democratic. If Sasikala and her family members return to the AIADMK, that will be the end of the AIADMK founded by MGR and nurtured by Jayalitha," Gurumurthy had said on January 15 during the Thuglak Founder's Day.

While the DMK is expected to ink the deal with Congress in a day or two, the AIADMK is faced with issues like the anger of Vijayalakshmi-led DMK which wants an equal number of seats as was given to PMK. A clear picture of the political landscape before the assembly polls would emerge in three days, according to sources in AIADMK.

President of Karnataka unit of BJP, said discussions were underway with the All India NR Congress (AINRC) and AIADMK on seat-sharing for the elections and it would be finalised as soon as possible. Asked if the NDA plans to declare its Chief Ministerial candidate, he said: "All the matters are getting discussed".

Sarana said Puducherry Assembly Speaker V P Sivakolundhu, who quit on Sunday citing health reasons, is in touch with the BJP and would decide on joining the party in a day or two.

Sivakolundhu won from the Lawpet constituency in the 2016 assembly elections on a Congress ticket.

His brother V P Ramalingam joined the BJP in Karaikal in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah during his campaign visit on Sunday.

"He (Sivakolundhu) wants his brother (Ramalingam) to contest from his constituency (Lawpet)," Sarana said.

On how many seats the NDA hoped to win in Puducherry, he claimed that according to his assessment the Congress would not be able to win even a single seat.

Puducherry is now under President's rule after the Congress government headed by V Narayanasamy fell on February 22 on being reduced to a minority following a spate of resignation of Congress MLAs and a DMK legislator.

PTI

BJP to unleash high-voltage campaign to wrest power in Puducherry

Bengaluru: The BJP plans to unleash a high-voltage campaign in Puducherry with a battery of central leaders as it seeks to wrest power in the union territory in the coming assembly elections.

The party in-charge for Puducherry Nirmal Kumar Surana said the BJP would field about ten star campaigners in the UT, where elections to the 30-member assembly would be held on April six.

They include Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP president J P Nadda, and Union Ministers Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman and Smriti Irani, he told PTI here.

Modi and Shah have already launched the party's campaign in the tiny union territory. Surana, who is Vice-

President of Karnataka unit of BJP, said discussions were underway with the All India NR Congress (AINRC) and AIADMK on seat-sharing for the elections and it would be finalised as soon as possible.

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PTI



An elephant takes a dust bath on a hot summer day, at Alipore Zoological Garden in Kolkata on Tuesday

DADRA NAGAR HAVELI MP SUICIDE Mumbai cops should register FIR against those named in Delkar's suicide note: Cong

PTI RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Two days after Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said that his Government would investigate the circumstances leading to alleged suicide by seven-time Dadra Nagar Haveli MP Mohan S Delkar, the Maharashtra Congress on Tuesday clamoured for the registration of an FIR against the persons whose names figured in the 15-page suicide note left by the deceased MP.

Participating in a debate on the Governor's address to a joint sitting of both the Houses in the State Legislature, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said: "He wanted justice. That why came to Mumbai and committed suicide. In his suicide note, he has named several persons. But still an FIR has not been registered. The Government should register an FIR without any further delay and initiate stern action in the case".

Alluding to the role of Administrator of the Union Territory (UT) of Dadra, Nagar Haveli and Diu and former BJP MLA Pratul Patel in the death, Patole said: "The name of former minister of home Pratul Patel's figures in Delkar's dying declaration. He is the Administrator of the Union Territory (UT). However big and influential a person may be, but the person is not above law. Action should be taken against the person concerned".

In Parliament, Delkar had raised the issue of harassment meted out to him by the UT administration. "He tried to draw the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to the harassment faced by him from Pratul Patel and others. Coming from Tribal community, he was harassed, humiliated and committed suicide. He expected that justice would be done to him in Mumbai after his death".

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray had said on Sunday last that he would register a Ministerial case against Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to direct the authorities in the Union Territory to cooperate with the Mumbai in the investigations.

"The probe hasn't begun yet. But I will request the Prime Minister and Home Minister to instruct the authorities in the Union Territory to cooperate with the Mumbai police when they reach there for investigation," Uddhav said, while interacting with media persons on the eve of the budget session of the Maharashtra Legislature.

"An independent MP ends his life by suicide...he wrote 14 to 16 pages...He committed because of harassment," said Uddhav. This is serious," Uddhav said.

In his weekly column "Rokhthok" in the Sena mouthpiece "Saamra", Raut had a dig at BJP and a section of the media over Sushant's death and demolition of a portion of actress Kangana Ranaut's bungalow.

"Last year, there was such a hullabaloo and sensation in the media. Now everyone is silent. Delkar's purported suicide note blamed the administrator of Dadra and Nagar Haveli for police harassment and pressure brought to bear on him to join the BJP," Raut had written on Sunday.

On his part, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh had said last that the Mumbai police would investigate the circumstances leading to Delkar's suicide.

It may be recalled that 58-year-old Delkar was found hanging in a hotel in the Marine Drive in south Mumbai on Thursday night. He was 24 years old. Delkar is suspected to have committed suicide by hanging himself. The police had recovered a 16-page suicide note from the hotel room where Delkar's body was found.

The 2020 and the 2019 Lok Sabha election, Delkar was a member of three constituents in the MVA government in Maharashtra had turned the needle of suspicion towards Administrator of the Union Territory (UT) of Dadra, Nagar Haveli and Diu and former BJP MLA Pratul Patel who, it alleged, was among the UT officials that harassed Delkar leading the latter ending his life.

In a video-conference held with Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, Congress general secretary Sachin Sawant and party's spokesperson Dr Raju Waghmare alluded to a video clip released by late Delkar in mid-2020 and the suicide note left by the latter and rooted for thorough investigations into the circumstances leading to the suicide by the sitting MP. The tragic end of Mr Delkar needs to be investigated. He has left a 16-page suicide note in which he mentioned the names of all the officials who harassed him. It is being discussed among people that he has mentioned the name of Pratul Patel, who is currently working as the Administrator of Dadra, Nagar Haveli and Diu since 2016," Sawant and Dr Waghmare said in their representation to the State Home Minister.

"Mr Patel is a former BJP MLA from Himatnagar constituency in Gujarat for his 12th legislative assembly. He also served as an Minister of State for Home of Gujarat and is very close to the RSS and BJP's national leadership," the two Congress leaders had said.

It is pertinent to note that Delkar travelled to Mumbai late on Sunday, checked into a hotel and committed 'suicide' by hanging himself in the room. He may have chosen to come to Mumbai committing suicide because of he was not sure to get justice in the Union Territory," Sawant and Dr Waghmare said.

"He must have come to Mumbai with an expectation from the MVA government that the culprits who compelled him to take the extreme step would be punished by law," the two Congress leaders stated in their letter.

Dalit girl in Aligarh was strangled, no clear evidence of rape: Police

Aligarh (UP): The postmortem report of the teenage Dalit girl whose body was found here on Sunday, has not indicated any clear evidence of rape and found that she was strangled to death, a senior official said here.

Five persons have been picked up by the police for questioning in the case, SSP Superintendent of Police (SSP) Muniraj G told mediapersons on Monday night.

The body of the 16-year-old girl was found in a field in Akbarabad area, a large area, for which villagers clashed with police and indulged in stone pelting. Inspector Pranendra Kumar was injured in the attack.

The postmortem report has not indicated any clear evidence of rape, the SSP said.

He said that in view of the inconclusive evidence, he has decided to conduct further microbiological tests using vaginal swabs. "The proceedings of the postmortem were video-graphed. There were multiple injury marks on the body of the girl who had died due to strangulation," the SSP said.

An FIR has been registered under IPC 302 (murder), 376 (rape) and POCSO Act. Earlier, on Monday when the body was handed over to the family for last rites, a large number of protesters collected at the house of the victim and blocked traffic on the main Agra road.

The SSP said efforts are on for giving adequate financial compensation to the victim's family.

Three minor girls go missing in UP's Shahjahanpur after leaving home for school

Shahjahanpur (UP): Three minor girls went missing here after they left home for school, with one of them carrying cash and clothes supposed to be an equal number of seats as was given to PMK. A clear picture of the political landscape before the assembly polls would emerge in three days, according to sources in AIADMK.

The three girls are aged 15 and one is 10, Superintendent of Police S Anand said, adding that three teams have been formed to look into the matter. The girls were from separate localities in the district and study in the same school. They left home on Monday to go to the school, Assistant Superintendent of Police (City) Praveen Kumar told PTI.

He said one of them was carrying Rs 2,500 and another had taken Rs 2,700 and clothes with her.

One of the girls told her family members that she had packed the clothes as there was a programme at the school, the police said.

Police were informed about the matter on Monday night when the girls did not return home, Kumar said.

Last month in the district, a BA second-year student of a college run by the Mumukshu Bhawan of former Union minister Swami Chinmayanand was found with clothes and severely burnt along a national highway.

She said in a statement before a magistrate that three people tried to rape her in a field near Rai Kheda village and when they did not succeed, they poured kerosene and set her on fire. Four people, including a female friend who had allegedly sent her to the field, were arrested from different places in the district.

Molestation victim's father killed by accused on bail

Lucknow: A 50-year-old man was allegedly shot dead in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district by an accused out on bail in a case of molestation lodged in 2018 against the victim's daughter, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place in Nozpur village of Sausani area in Hathras on Monday afternoon when the daughters of Ambirish Sharma (50) had gone to a temple, where the wife and aunt of accused Gaurav Sharma were present. The women had heated arguments with each other after which both Gaurav and Ambirish also reached there. Hathras Superintendent of Police Vineet Jaiswal said. Both Gaurav and Ambirish also had an argument after which the accused called some members of his family and shot Ambirish in a fit of rage, the SP said.

Ambirish was rushed to the hospital where he was declared brought dead, the SP added.

According to an FIR lodged by the victim's daughter, however, the incident took place in their family potato field. The Hathras SP said the FIR had been registered against Gaurav Sharma, Lalit Sharma, Rohitash Sharma, Nikhil Sharma and two others. On that, Lalit has been arrested while the main accused Gaurav is absconding.

In the FIR, it was alleged that the girl was there in her family potato field with her father Ambirish when Gaurav came in a white car with his accomplice and asked Ambirish to take back the case lodged against him.

"Before my father could say anything, he opened fire on him. We rushed him to the hospital, where he died," the girl said in the FIR. The victim had lodged a case of molestation of his daughter two and a half years ago against Gaurav, who was jailed. Gaurav, then, came out on bail after a month and he had animosity with Ambirish since then, the SP added.

Taking note of the incident, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered strict action to be taken against the accused and directed officials to review provisions of the stringent National Security Act (NSA) against them.

Meanwhile, the Samajwadi Party reacted to the incident with its president Akhilesh Yadav alleging that women in UP have lost hope of justice from the state government.

"After Hathras ki beti, murder of a father who had complained of molestation of his daughter has taken place. UP's women has not lost hope from the government has stopped seeking justice from it," Akhilesh said in a tweet in Hindi.

"Enough of the atrocities on women, this time BJP is out," he added. Akhilesh also tagged a video of a girl, said to be the victim's daughter along with his tweet. In the video, the girl is heard saying, "Please give me justice... Please give me justice. First, he molested me and now he has shot my father. He had come to our village. There were six-seven people. My father had no enemy against anyone. My name is Gaurav Sharma, he is a dog..."

Man arrested for attempt to rape teenage girl in Banda

Banda: A man has been arrested for allegedly trying to rape a 14-year-old girl in Banda district in Uttar Pradesh, police said on Tuesday.

The 22-year-old man dragged the girl and tried to rape her on Monday when she was grazing goat in a forest area, Dehat police station SHO Pradeep Kumar Yadav said.

He said that the accused had been arrested and booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and other relevant sections of IPC. The girl has been sent for medical examination.

Firms should support startup tyros : Raj Guv

Jaipur: Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra said on Tuesday that industrial organisations should encourage and support the youth who want to start new startups. Such efforts are necessary to speed up the economy and generate employment, he said.

Mishra was addressing the

'Rajasthan Business Conclave' organised by the Confederation of Rajasthan Industry in Jaipur. He said there was a need of changing the thinking of youths that they can get employment by getting a degree.

The governor said industrial organisations should also play their role in developing the

skills of the youth studying in technical, management and higher education to the best of their ability. He said with the availability of trained young professionals at the local level, investment in industries would increase in the state and the problem of youth employment will also be solved.

Good news for RAS Club members as five star category restaurant starts at club house

Jaipur: Commissioner of Rajasthan Housing Board and patron of RAS Club Pawan Arora informed that giving a big gift to the members of RAS club, operation of high level five star category restaurant has been started here from Monday. There are 203 types of items in this restaurant of 399 menu. Usually, this type of option is not available in the restaurants in clubs. This restaurant offers seating for up to 100 people simultaneously.

The club's 399s patron, Pawan Arora, said that the coffee shop, bar, banquet hall, air-conditioned rooms, conference room and gym facilities are already operational in this club. Recently the art gallery has also been inaugurated here. Arora said that members of the club can enjoy family delicacies in this restaurant.

BSF seizes 20,000 kg of smuggled dry peas in Meghalaya

Shillong: The BSF has seized 20,000 kg of smuggled dry peas worth over Rs 20 lakh from Meghalaya's West Jaintia Hills district, an official said on Tuesday.

The dry peas were smuggled from Bangladesh, the official said.

Acting on a tip-off, the BSF launched a special operation and intercepted 10 mini-trucks loaded with 20,000 kg of dry peas at an area under Muktaidpur police station in the district on Monday night, a BSF spokesperson said in a statement.

The seizure, however, did not go without protest as smugglers outnumbered the BSF personnel and the police, he said.

"Aggressive villagers confronted BSF personnel and the pick-up vehicles managed to escape. On pursuit with the escaped vehicles, the villagers started pelting stones and empty bottles on BSF personnel," the spokesperson said.

To prevent the situation from going out of control, the BSF fired one round of non-lethal weapon in the air, he said.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE					
Sl. No.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT
1	PWD BAR, PANCHKULA	TENDER FOR THE WORK OF CONSTRUCTION OF GUEST HOUSE IN GOVT. POLYTECHNIC & MULTISPECIAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE/MISSION HEAD QUARTERS AT SECTOR-26, PANCHKULA.	02.03.2021 22.03.2021	210.55 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
2	PWD BAR, JHAJARA	ANNUAL REPAIR FOR CONSTRUCTION OF BATH IN JHAJARA DISTRICT (NOT IN THE LISTED).	01.03.2021 06.03.2021	10.73 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
3	TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT HARYANA, ROADWAYS, JHARSANA	REGARDING INVITING TENDER FOR PURCHASING RUBBERS, UNIPOLIES ETC. FOR ADVERTISEMENT AT BUS STAND AND WORKSHOP AT JHARSANA.	05.03.2021 05.04.2021	60000/-	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
4	WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT, BHAWANI	PURCHASE OF GUNDO GUNDO BOARD OF SIZE 7X2 DRAM + 2 OTHERS.	01.03.2021 15.03.2021	1.50 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
5	REGISTRATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, KATHAL	WORK FOR CONSTRUCTION OF BRIDGE AT RD 1430 OF PAFARSA LINK.	CLOSING DATE: 09.03.2021	19.40 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
6	POLICE DEPARTMENT HATHRAS	SELECTION OF CONTRACTOR TO PROVIDE CATERING SERVICES IN SERIC BUILDING AT HATHRAS 112 BPS.	CLOSING DATE: 09.03.2021	END TENDER NO 2020 HRY 151935.1	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
7	DISTRICT FOOD CIVIL SUPPLIES CONSUMER AFFAIRS CONTROLLER, REWARI	TENDERS ARE INVITED FOR TRANSPORTATION AND LABOUR & CARTAGE FOR KOSHI MANDI REWARI MANDI BAWAL MANDI AND RAIL HEAD KHORI FOR THE YEAR 2021-22 IN RESPECT OF STATE SUPPLIES DEPT.	05.03.2021 13.03.2021	946673086 drcwre@hry.nic.in	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
8	PANCHAYATI RAJ, PANDPATA	RETENDER REPAIR & CONSTRUCTION OF ROOM IN G.V.H + 7 OTHERS.	01.03.2021 15.03.2021	106.53 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
9	GENERAL MANAGER, HARYANA ROADWAYS, GURGAON	TENDER FOR PUTTING UP ADVERTISEMENT BOARD/HOARDINGS IN THE PREMISES OF BUS STANDS: GURGAON, WORKSHOP AND OLD OFFICE, BUS STAND SECTOR-29, RAJIV CHOWK, SONHA, PATAUDI.	02.03.2021 18.03.2021	12 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Scorcher ahead!

Climate change is real; not acknowledging it is not going to protect us from the inevitable

If the rising temperatures in the last few days of February and an unusually hot March are bothering you, it is because most of the northern, western and eastern parts of India breached the 30°C mark nearly two to three weeks before they usually do. In fact, the country needs to brace for a hotter-than-usual summer this year as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast that day temperatures are likely to be 0.86°C higher than normal in the north, northeast, parts of east and west India between March and May. The worst impact is likely in Odisha and Chhattisgarh, where the maximum temperatures will deviate 0.86°C from their usual averages. Last week, Bhubaneswar was the first region to record 40°C anywhere in the country this year and Delhi, Himachal Pradesh,



Haryana and Uttar Pradesh should brace for summer temperatures anywhere from 0.46°C to 0.71°C above normal. The IMD last month had said the minimum temperature recorded in the country in January was the warmest for the month in 62 years, with South India being particularly warm. It is not surprising that we experienced a shorter winter and are getting warnings of a sizzling summer ahead as, according to a Government report on current climate change impacts and future scenarios till the end of the century, India needs to control greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on a war footing. The failure to do so will mean major heatwaves, droughts, cloudbursts, floods and a more degraded coastline, says a report by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).

Worryingly, India's average temperature rose by around 0.7°C during 1901-2018 and, unless urgent steps are taken to control GHG emissions between 2070 and 2099 average, the temperature will rise by approximately 4.4°C relative to the recent past (1976-2005 average). The high GHG emissions would increase the heat on Earth's surface by 8.5 watts per square metre. Called RCP8.5, this is the worst-case scenario used by climate modellers worldwide. In a medium GHG emissions scenario, called RCP4.5, the average temperature in India would rise by 2.7°C in the last 30 years of this century. Before that, during 2040-2069, India's average temperature would rise by 2°C in a medium emissions scenario, and by 2.4°C in a high emissions scenario. Despite all nations making pledges under the 2015 Paris climate agreement, current emissions are taking the world to the worst-case scenario, though other development pathways are not only available but economically more attractive in the medium and long term. So, the only option before us is to go green, else we will perish because we are already feeling the effects of a planet that has been pushed to breaking point. The most recent examples of this are the Chamoli tragedy in Uttarakhand and the "Big freeze" in Texas. It is the collective responsibility of the peoples, every business and every industry on the planet to fight climate change so that we leave a greener, cleaner world for our children and not a dying planet.

PICTALK



Mount Sinabung spews volcanic material during an eruption in Karo, North Sumatra, Indonesia, on Tuesday

AP

The right path

Modi's plans and policies speak volumes about his intention to empower the 'real' farmers at the grassroots

Thousands of farmers in India die by suicide every year as they see no option to get out of the debt trap. The poor and marginal farmers depend upon loans for purchasing seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation and even harvesting. Most of these growers find it more convenient to borrow at heavy interest rates from moneylenders or big cultivators rather than from banks, thanks to the cumbersome paperwork and the broker-bank officials' nexus. However, these deaths, as recorded by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), fail to shake the collective conscience of society and are just another figure for most of us. Ironically, there is no outcry, no borders are sealed, no tractor rallies organised, no national monuments sieged, no violence. This is because these deaths don't affect the interests of the politically connected and powerful "arhatiya" community that drives the Agricultural Produce Marketing Community (APMC) in Punjab, Haryana and parts of Western Uttar Pradesh. This strong community is at loggerheads with the Government over three new agril laws for shielding its own interests. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently endorsed the provisions made for the agriculture sector in Budget 2021-22 and reiterated that the Government is working for small and medium-level farmers.

One might argue that Modi is not concerned about the farmers camping at Delhi's borders and project him as "anti-farmer" and "pro-corporate", but his plans and policies speak volumes about his intention to empower the "real" farmers at the grassroots. The Prime Minister has said that India needs to expand its agriculture sector to the global market for processed food. He also emphasised that the number of agro-industry clusters near villages should be increased so that the rural populace gets farm-related employment in the vicinity. It is indeed a plan that will likely empower the marginal and small farmers. If the Government succeeds in providing market access to these farmers (small and marginal) beyond *mandis*, it would prove to be a milestone. Further, the Government has increased the agriculture credit target to ₹16.50 lakh crore and infrastructure fund to ₹40,000 crore, besides doubling the micro-irrigation fund. All this proves that the Government is striving to bring systemic changes in the agriculture sector with the focus on empowering the "have-nots" among the farmers. We also would like to see the real farmers get empowered and not the ones with enough resources and money to camp at Delhi's borders for months and hold the Government to ransom.

The Internationale: Kumbh of protests

The agrarian issue is being politicised by media magicians but, for the farmers, it's a question of livelihood and existence

Green mango flowers are now bursting and kites dance in the sky while bright yellow, purple flowers bloom one last time and farmers in Tihar Jail, New Delhi, welcome a silent spring. The warm air rustles the yellow plastic tents at the Ghazipur Border, moving from AH2 to the Tikri Border, announcing a new season and the next phase of the Farmers' Revolution begins.

It's been over a month since farmer leader Rakesh Tikait's tears galvanised the farmers from Uttar Pradesh (UP) to Rajasthan and much has happened over the spring — *Basant Ritu* — since then. Lakhs of devotees have cleansed themselves taking dips in the holy Ganga from Haridwar to Prayagraj, Prime Minister Narendra Modi may have shed expiatory tears as he reassured his followers that the three farm laws are good for farmers and for business. But the farmers of the world are not convinced.

Recently, major US-based farmer groups like Agrarian Trust, National Farmers Union and 87 other organisations have started an international movement expressing solidarity with the farmers' revolution. Over 50 Canadian organisations have also extended support. They have been exerting pressure on their public representatives too to end this "injustice". Their criticism comes from having suffered due to the market-led agricultural policies since the 1960s in the US. This is no longer an "international conspiracy" or "attack on India's sovereignty" or "sedition" perpetrated by "international media celebrities like Rihanna or Greta" but a moment of true global solidarity beyond race and religion.

Foreclosures and debt have destroyed millions of US farm families. Suicides and despondency plague rural America while Big Ag grows. It's not only the older generation but young farmer leaders like Severine Fleming who have supported the farmers' revolution. All, save for the corporate media, see the invisible hand behind these



reforms — Big Ag. Modi has led the Big Ag to India's doors and sacrificed Indian farmers for agri-dollars.

India farmers are jubilant about the US support but, as the harvest season nears, some of them are now returning with the stories of their struggles and indignation to their villages to work the fields, while others farmers are on the road to Delhi's borders. In Haryana, media reports indicate, hundreds of villages have pledged to send one person from each house to join the revolution. The farmers' revolution is getting ready for the hot summer. Although the Modi Government's version occupies the media discourse, the farmers may have outwitted the Government once again.

How? With the help of the returning farmers, their unions and leaders have now expanded their base far beyond Delhi's borders. YouTube videos and independent vernacular citizen journalists have spread each update across the country. The tune of Farmer Revolution's Haryanvi anthem — "Modi ji hum Dilli aaye" — now sways young and old farmers from Bengal to Rajasthan.

From Ganganagar to Kerala, the farmer unions have

THE FARMERS' REVOLUTION IS GETTING READY FOR THE HOT SUMMER. ALTHOUGH THE MODI GOVERNMENT'S VERSION OCCUPIES THE MEDIA DISCOURSE, THE FARMERS MAY HAVE OUTWITTED THE GOVERNMENT ONCE AGAIN

addressed millions of people in a short span of 30 days. Now that the movement has reached a mature stage, it will spread even faster. Even the Government is finding it hard to call them "a handful of farmers" as it did in early January. Now the discourse has become "crowds don't get the work done". The movement today represents not just farmers but all those who work the land — migrant workers, labourers, urban *mandi* workers and the traders. This is a united rural India resisting a corporate auction. Meanwhile, the Government has unleashed the biggest round of privatisation of public assets since Yeltsin's Russia.

No one knows why fuel prices have skyrocketed. Why taxes and cess keep increasing, squeezing the middle class, and yet arterial roads of Delhi have potholes? The fuel prices directly impact farmers' input costs and offset the MSP calculations. India is being rigged for food inflation. Indian agri produce vastly outperforms against the highly subsidised imports from countries like the US.

The agricultural bubble is soon going to burst; the collateral will be rural India and millions of lives. History

will repeat itself as from its ashes shall emerge a new class of *neo-zamindars* that shall profit from each morsel. The US is a fine example of this, where four corporations control over 80 per cent of the food and about 50 per cent of all produce is wasted! The Modi Government needs to correct course by abandoning the laws and making a fresh start with farmers, for their movement is no longer an Indian affair or internal matter as the External Affairs Ministry is already involved in this diplomatic issue.

We as a nation should remember that India loses face in the world only because democracy dies at home. This is an agrarian issue that is being politicised by media magicians, swaying public opinion inciting more hate in society. But for the farmers, at home and abroad, it's a question of livelihood and existence. We need to stand in solidarity because it's a fight for the survival of our soul and *roti*, together.

(The author writes on agriculture and environment, and is a former Director — Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONGRESS MUST BOUNCE BACK FAST

Sir — It is said that the BJP is afraid of losing a State and the Congress is shy of winning one. It does not matter for the BJP how big or small the State is, it just wants to form a Government there.

Though it had a minuscule presence in Puducherry, the astute power game of the BJP ensured its indirect control over the Union Territory (UT). Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Puducherry are going to polls shortly, and the party has a stake in each State. But what about the Congress? The Congress' grip over the States is loosening each passing day.

For the Congress, the intention to go all the way and the determination to win appears to be missing. That the Congress is enjoying power in only three States is an unmistakable sign of decay and degeneration in the party. Of the three, the wind may change direction in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh anytime. So, what's the party left with? When a party is reluctant to learn even after repeated drubbings, nothing can infuse hope among the people in the party's future.

Despite top leaders saying "enough is enough", nothing has been done to revive the party. The flip-flops over Rahul Gandhi assuming the party presidency should end. Either he should assume party presidency or leave politics. Even at the cost of some leaders leaving the party, the Congress must resolve its issues soon.

Ganapati Bhat | Aklota

FULL SPEED AHEAD WITH INOCULATION

Sir — This refers to the editorial "Taming the virus" (March 2). By taking the job, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a promising impetus to the pace of vaccination in the second phase. This phase of vaccination for senior citizens and those above 45 with comorbidities is expected to witness a good foothold or inoculation rate.

So far, the drive hasn't matched up to India's immense population challenge but the opening of centres at private hospitals and flexible options for registration can give it a big boost. All Chief Ministers,

Make the cyber system robust



The Maharashtra cyber department has submitted a provisional report to the State Government on the recent massive grid failure. If the massive power outage in Mumbai in October last year is the result of a Chinese cyber campaign against India, it should be a cause of concern for the Indian Government. If it is true, it means none of our establishments, including the Defence Research and Development Organisation and other institutions

related to national security, are safe from malware attacks by foreign forces.

A cyber threat is looming large on India's security and the Government needs to counter it effectively. According to unverified sources, the 100-page report confirms that a malware attack was behind the blackout and about 14 Trojan Horses and eight GB of unaccounted data was found in the system installed at the Maharashtra State Electricity Board.

An American firm has said that the Chinese could have introduced the malware. The State Government, however, did not want to confirm which country was behind the possible malware in the system as it felt there could be far-reaching international ramifications. However, it's time for the Centre and State Governments to think about and act upon it. Our Government must devise a robust system which is not to be breached by the hostile foreign nations. India must be prepared for cyber war.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Union and State Ministers and Opposition leaders must follow suit so as to encourage others for inoculation. Not only politicians but also bureaucrats and celebrities must take the job.

Since February 13, India's seven-day rolling average of daily COVID infections has shown a steady surge, signalling a fresh need to ramp up the campaign. India's vaccination strategy is closely intertwined to its economic fortunes. A GDP contraction of eight per cent in 2020-21 requires a big bounce-back in the new year. But the restrictions on interstate movement in response to February's COVID surge are symptomatic of persisting jitters.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

STOP HARASSING WOMEN FOR DOWRY

Sir — India has an alarming trend of dowry deaths, harassment and domestic violence, and yet society is indifferent towards it. It was heart-wrenching to watch a video on the social media in which a girl in Gujarat

committed suicide. She recorded a video message and then jumped into a river. She was allegedly facing harassment from her husband since their marriage in 2018.

A case of abetment to suicide has been lodged against the husband. Her story is similar to the plight of lakhs of women who face harassment on a daily basis either in office spaces or inside their homes. Despite several NGOs championing the cause of women rights, strict laws for crime against women, special courts and women-only branches in police, nothing seems to have changed on the ground. Women are still vulnerable and are subjected to various sorts of atrocities by their relatives. Even the religious organisations, which keep crying foul over one or the other issue, keep silent over women's issues until it is related to religious tenets.

Asim Sohail | Bihar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

The Budget that the Madhya Pradesh Government presented today is a pack of lies. It is directionless, hope-less and just a maze of data.

Congress leader — Kamal Nath

I think it's time to make efforts to adopt a new Constitution in October of this year by a national referendum, and transition to a semi-presidential system should be one of the possible options.

Armenian Prime Minister — Nikol Pashinyan

Another day another FIR, yesterday Javed Chacha with help of Maharashtra Government got a warrant issued for me and now another FIR for supporting farmers' Act.

Activist — Kangana Ranaut

I want to play for West Indies. That's where my heart is, I'm never going to turn down anything pertaining to West Indies cricket at this particular time.

Cricketer — Chris Gayle

Close to 40 lakh people have registered themselves to receive the COVID vaccines on the CoWIN portal till Tuesday morning.

Union Health Minister — Harsh Vardhan



FIRST COLUMN

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

We still have a narrow window for vaccinating most people amid the falling number of new infections



RAJINDER DHAMIYA

A year ago the Coronavirus made its entry into the country. Since then, we have come a long way from the hard lockdown beginning in March-end to the second phase of the vaccine rollout which started from Monday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking a shot. By opting for the ICMR vaccine, he sent a clear signal that our indigenous vaccines are safe. Right now we are at a crucial stage of the pandemic's trajectory as we still have a narrow window for vaccinating the maximum number of people amid the falling number of new infections in most parts of India. This is the time to focus on mitigation with no scope for complacency. The pandemic is not over until it is actually over in all States and the virus does not have an adequate number of susceptible individuals to infect and survive. We need to chase the virus aggressively rather than the contagion chasing us.



It has been a sort of partial success so far as we have managed to keep infections as well as mortality rates low as compared to many countries in the West with a better infrastructure and capacity to contain and mitigate the virus. However, still more needs to be done as we enter into the next stage of the trajectory with an upsurge in cases in Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Gujarat and looming signs of increasing numbers in Delhi. Vaccine hesitancy remains an issue, with half of the eligible people coming forward for the inoculation. This is a universal phenomenon seen across the globe. Much of this is due to misinformation on social media and the tendency of many individuals to wait and watch. This needs to be aggressively countered and the State has made all efforts to quell this phenomenon. This all-out effort by the Government needs to continue in order to accelerate the vaccination drive which can gain momentum if more vaccines are made available to the public and in the open market so that everyone can get the job on demand both through the public as well as private healthcare system.

The second strategy should be to continue mass-scale RT-PCR testing. There is no reason to scale down testing as we have seen lately in many States because that can be disastrous, especially with new mutant variants of the virus making entry into our cities. These variants will be seen in India as it is difficult to stop the transmission in view of relaxation of movement in an era of necessary international travel. More genomic sequencing would perhaps help us in early detection of these new variants arriving in the country and within India. We need to prepare for the inevitable and the focus should remain on both COVID-appropriate behaviour as well as vaccinating the masses.

Third, we need to create resilient district health systems. A weak link in most States is the poor status of district hospitals. In contrast to the prevailing political and bureaucratic response with focus on hardware (beds, ventilators, oxygen, and so on) in healthcare facilities, we should also focus on software development (capacity building and better-quality health workers) which is more important. The current pandemic provides us opportunity and finances to influence politicians and bureaucrats to build resilient and responsive health systems at both primary and secondary healthcare centres in States. Since health is a State subject, a collaborative and collective effort both by States and the Centre should be made to augment these district hospitals. Excellence in secondary healthcare is crucial and well-placed, well-funded, well-staffed and well-equipped district hospitals should be developed as the most important component of the healthcare chain to respond to future outbreaks. We have the opportunity to create a resilient secondary district healthcare system that is responsive to the needs of the public with focus on preventive, promotive, curative and restorative patient care.

(The writer is Head of Neurology Department, Lady Harding Medical College and SSK Hospital, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)



KUMAR CHELAPPAN

Expressio unius est exclusio alterius (expression of one subject, object or idea is the exclusion of other subjects, objects or ideas), is a maxim in Latin, which is heard quite frequently in law cases as well as in courtrooms. It finds application in the construction of Constitutions, statutes and similar instruments. This phrase came to mind after watching the proceedings in Puducherry that led to the fall of the V Narayanasamy-led Congress Government last week.

The resignation of Narayanasamy as the Chief Minister (CM) has not surprised any of the political observers. The only question being asked by them is why did it take four years for Narayanasamy to quit his post.

Though the BJP is accused of political manipulation, encouraging defections from

The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.

A less talked about crime against women

Witch-hunting is used as a tool to subjugate women and there will always be a new reason to brand a woman a witch in the hinterlands of India



ARCHANA DATTA

I can never forget the night when the entire village, including women, armed with weapons came to attack a helpless woman on the suspicion of being a witch. I would also have been killed with her had I not called the police," recalls 72-year-old Birubala Rabha, a victim-turned-crucifier from Assam's Goalpara district, referring to a ghastly incident that took place in a small village on the Assam-Meghalaya border in 2007. This year the primary school-educated Rabha was the recipient of the Padma Shri, India's highest civilian award for her crusade against witch-hunting. The award was a much-deserved pan-India recognition of her work. Rabha, ostracised and branded as a witch, devoted her life for the cause of other women like her, and, through her organisation Mission Birubala, has been the force behind the State's law to check the practice of witch-hunting in Assam.

There is no dearth of women like Rabha in Assam, who came close to death or got killed, as more than two-thirds of its districts reported incidents of witch-hunting. As per the State Government's records, 107 people, mostly women, got killed between 2011-2019. Locally, even a village on the Assam-Meghalaya border, is called 'daingaon (village of the witches)', where many ostracised women live in isolation.

"In rural hinterlands, a *Doodhni*, *Bez* or an *Ojha* (people who allegedly specialise in healing, casting out unclean spirits and telling fortunes) wields tremendous influence. They often target a widow, a single or a guardian-less woman,....with little or no formal education.... and label her a witch, when they are clueless about a malaise. Many poor people fall into their clutches, not solely out of superstitious belief, but also because of their inability to pay for a qualified doctor," says a 2014 field report from the districts of Goalpara and Sonitpur, conducted by the Partners for Law in Development (PLD), a Delhi-based legal resource group.

Rightly, Rabha in her '*Manuhle Manuhle Babe*' campaign, cautions gullible villagers against falling prey to such quacks who are nothing but "money-making racketeers exploiting people's ignorance."

The PLD's field study in Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, also reveals that "women are more often targeted for material motives." Dibyajyoti Saikia, a human rights activist, who leads a Guwahati-based organisation, Brothers, feels that "individual factors like personal rivalry, jealousy, conspiracy come into play in such targeting in semi-urban and rural areas." Mamani Saikia, district co-ordinator, Goalpara, further explains that "in calculated attacks, gender relationship determines the selection of targets, often driven by ulterior interests like grabbing a property or for sexual exploitation, whereas, in surprise attacks, which are more violent in nature, the goal is supposedly to eliminate an evil."

Dalit and marginalised women are doubly prone to such attacks because of systemic patriarchy and also because of their social identity. However, Nityabir Das, a medical practitioner and a co-ordinator of Mission Birubala, says: "Though women as victims are more in number but in recent times, men are also facing such accusations."

Now, as per the National Crime Records



AS INCIDENTS OF WOMEN BEARING THE BRUNT OF PERSONAL VENDETTA AND UNFOUNDED SMEAR CAMPAIGNS CONTINUE TO POUR IN FROM MANY PARTS OF INDIA, THE ISSUE OF WITCH-HUNTING DESERVES GREATER ATTENTION NOT ONLY FROM THE LEGAL POINT OF VIEW BUT FROM A WIDER SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE



Bureau, more than 2,500 people, mostly women, got killed in such incidents between 2000-2016, while many believe that the number is much higher, as most States don't list witchcraft as a motive for murder.

Nevertheless, some States like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, Assam, Maharashtra and Karnataka have framed anti-witchcraft Acts. Commenting on the existing Tonah Pratadna Nivaran Act, 2005, Chhattisgarh, Dinesh Sharma, a doctor-turned-activist and founder of Andhrashradha Nirmoolan Samitee, rues that "hundreds of cases are pending under the Act. Many victims have died and without fast-track courts, the purpose of the Act is somewhat defeated."

Moreover, in such incidents of organised community violence, the law cannot overlook the complicity and accountability of a village sarpanch or a kotsal.

Ajay Agarwal, Secretary, Association for Social and Human Awareness, Ranchi, Jharkhand, echoes similar sentiments. He says: "Though more than 1,300 women were killed since 2000 in the State, there's no official data available under the Prevention of Witch (DAWN) Practices Act, 2001. Some cases get registered under the IPC and only one or two get convicted, while almost the entire village is responsible for such killings."

Assam's new Act, notified in 2018, has been feted as India's

toughest anti-witch-hunting law, which makes any offence under it non-bailable, cognisable and non-compoundable.

However, the State's ADGP, LR Bishnoi, highlighted that the wider scope of legal protection included in the Act with the setting up of special courts and addition of new offences related to targeting, humiliation and ostracism, and so on are hitherto not part of the IPC.

Dibyajyoti Saikia opines that "the Act is yet to make any visible impact.... and the police still have a tendency to settle cases through a compromise." Nityabir Das says that agencies like the ASTEC (Assam Science Technology and Environment Council) have been chipping in through awareness drives, but admits that "a thorough training of police officials is required." Executive Director, PLD, Madhu Mehra, states that the Assam Act is definitely an improvement, more like the Rajasthan Act. But, unlike Rajasthan, the State is yet to frame rules regarding compensation and rehabilitation.

Manisha Behal, Executive Director, North East Network, a Guwahati-based women's rights organisation, also laments that the menace could have been better tackled on the ground by the front-line workers had the rules been in place.

Many activists point out that the existing legal regime, be it the IPC or special Acts, vests enormous

power with the police, who are often found to be wanting in their preventive and protective role, particularly when the victim is poor or a woman.

Thus such Acts remain merely as pieces of paper failing to make any dent in the impunity attached to the practice. The legal vacuum for compensation of losses due to social ostracisation, forced displacement, or deprivation in livelihood opportunities is another drawback. Mehra, however, is sceptical about the actual realisation of compensation even if such a provision gets legal backing as the process of conviction is a long-drawn affair, with the accused mostly being as poor as the victim.

Many activists vouch for socio-legal measures like dialogue and awareness creation to help people distinguish between what is a socially permissible act and a crime. Some also voice the need for a central legislation reviving the Prevention of Witch-Hunting Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2016.

Witch-hunting is used as a tool to subjugate women and there will always be a new reason to brand a woman as a witch. As incidents of women bearing the brunt of personal vendetta and unfounded smear campaigns continue to pour in from many parts of India, the issue of witch-hunting deserves greater attention not only from the legal point of view but from a wider socio-economic perspective.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

TIE-UP WITH THE ISF MILITATES AGAINST THE CORE IDEOLOGY AND GANDHIAN SECULARISM, WHICH FORMS THE SOUL OF THE CONGRESS.

—CONGRESS LEADER

ANAND SHARMA



WE ARE IN CHARGE OF A STATE AND DON'T TAKE ANY DECISION ON OUR OWN WITHOUT ANY PERMISSION.

—BENGAL CONGRESS CHIEF

ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY



Don't treat Puducherry differently from the rest of India

Do nominated members in other State legislatures, Union Territories and in Parliament, too, enjoy voting rights during a trust vote?

Expressio unius est exclusio alterius (expression of one subject, object or idea is the exclusion of other subjects, objects or ideas), is a maxim in Latin, which is heard quite frequently in law cases as well as in courtrooms. It finds application in the construction of Constitutions, statutes and similar instruments. This phrase came to mind after watching the proceedings in Puducherry that led to the fall of the V Narayanasamy-led Congress Government last week.

The resignation of Narayanasamy as the Chief Minister (CM) has not surprised any of the political observers. The only question being asked by them is why did it take four years for Narayanasamy to quit his post.

Though the BJP is accused of political manipulation, encouraging defections from



KUMAR CHELAPPAN

the ruling party to topple the Government and MK Stalin, the president of the DMK, is accused of murdering democracy, the fact is that the fall of the Congress Government was bound to happen from the day Narayanasamy was sworn in in 2016.

"Why did the Congress high command appoint Narayanasamy, who had not contested the 2016 Assembly election as CM, superseding many party heavyweights in the Union Territory?" wonders Kolahala Srinivasan, political chronicler of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. "There were seasoned leaders like former CM Vaithilingam and A Nammasivayam who were in the running for the top post," says Srinivasan.

Narayanasamy, the all-powerful Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) during the United

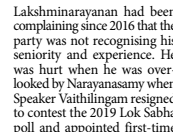
Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime under Manmohan Singh, had been defeated in the Lok Sabha election held in 2014. Sources say that the interests of other Congress leaders were overlooked by the party high command while appointing him. Apparently, there was strong discontentment among the Congress MLAs when he was hand-picked by the party president. The appointment of Kiran Bedi, the former super cop of Delhi as the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of the Union Territory (UT), was like opening another war front by the BJP. Consequently, the running battle between the CM and the L-G shrouded the limelight in the last four years. This style of functioning of the L-G was a new experience for the population of the UT and naturally, Narayanasamy got annoyed!

The nomination of three



BJP leaders as MLAs by the Union Home Ministry was also on expected lines. But the nominated legislators getting a chance to cast their votes in the trust vote held on Monday was to be explained by the BJP's national leadership.

What sealed Narayanasamy's fate was the resignation of K Lakshminarayanan, MLA and former Minister who was also the Parliamentary Secretary to the CM and that of D Venkatesan, an MLA belonging to the DMK. These resignations happened 24 hours before the trust vote.



Lakshminarayanan had been complaining since 2016 that the party was not recognising his seniority and experience. He was hurt when he was overlooked by Narayanasamy when Speaker Vaithilingam resigned to contest the 2019 Lok Sabha poll and appointed first-time MLA Sivakozhundu as the presiding officer of the House. The resignation of John Kumar from the House, too, speaks about the discontentment that had set in. John Kumar was elected as an MLA in 2016 but resigned his seat to facilitate the election of Narayanasamy to the House. Though John Kumar was elected subsequently to the House in 2019, he too fell out with Narayanasamy eventually.

Though Venkatesan, the DMK MLA, announced his resignation from the House well in advance, the party leadership in Tamil Nadu kept silent over the issue. Despite the declaration by Venkatesan that he quit from the House with the concurrence of his party leader (MK Stalin), the DMK did not do anything till Tuesday to pay peace with him. It was on Tuesday that the party's general secretary Durai Murugan announced the removal of Venkatesan from all official posts in the party.

Last month saw Stalin deputing party MP and moneybags Jagathrakshakan to rejuvenate the DMK in the UT. "This gave rise to many doubts in the minds of the Congress and DMK leaders in Puducherry. What we saw during the last two days was the impact of this decision," said Srinivasan.

The question why Jagathrakshakan was sent to Puducherry at this juncture remains unanswered. Narayanasamy did not include

his alliance partner, the DMK, in the Government and this resulted in a lot of heartburn.

Though the Congress and the DMK challenged the L-G's nomination of three BJP leaders to the Assembly, the apex court upheld her act. But how the nominated members were allowed to cast their votes in the Assembly reminds one of the Latin maxim '*expressio unius...*'

Do nominated members in State legislatures, other UTs and in Parliament, too, enjoy voting rights. There cannot be one rule for Puducherry and another for the rest of the country. Let's have the same rules for the whole country. This was what Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared when Parliament abrogated Article 370: "Now people in Jammu and Kashmir enjoy the same status as that of the rest of the Indians." People of Puducherry, too, should get the same status. Shouldn't they?



An MBA degree from a premier Indian B School can give several lucrative opportunities to earn. Many might have this question in their mind. 'What exactly do MBA graduates do at work after business school?' This largely depends on the area of specialisation that they choose and the organisation that they join. Some organisations ensure that the MBA graduates have an experience in all functional areas.

They make them have a short stint in marketing, finance, operations human resources and even in International Business. There are others who make them take executive assistant roles, and make them get the experience of working with the top leadership of the organisation. There are others who make them work in core functional areas of business. The initial period of six months goes in understanding the culture of the company along with the organisational politics.

During the initial years an MBA in sales and marketing generally spend time in research and generate lists of potential customers, provide input on customer briefs, prepare presentations and sales literature. They also help to develop client relationships and retain existing accounts. They assist in evaluating new clients and maintain records. They also work with experienced sales and marketing professionals, attend meetings, and participate in other networking activities.

KNOW YOUR JOB

During the initial years, an MBA in sales and marketing generally spends time in research and generates lists of potential customers, provides input on customer briefs, prepares presentations and sales literature, says DR RAMAKRISHNAN RAMAN

An MBA in operations is expected to have the ability to thrive in a fast-paced environment as well as work under pressure, especially when there are clients facing operation roles

ities. An MBA Finance helps in assisting the process of developing and reviewing budgets.

They also provide accurate cash flow projections to the finance division. They work on the monthly budget and work closely with experienced finance executives in decision making. They help in general ledger management, reconciliation of balance sheets, follow up with various internal stakeholders; prepare monthly schedules for specific accounts and support in the monthly book closing process for expense accrual and accounting adjustments, and also manage prepaid expenses. Some organisations make the MBA finance graduates prepare statutory financials, make notes to accounts and schedules; coordinate external and internal audits; answer audit queries. They also make them support the accounting

manager/finance director on expenses and balance sheet analysis, compliance with internal controls and complying with internal controls for accounting functions.

An MBA Operations person is expected to have a customer — focused, 'service first' mentality. He/she is expected to assimilate data rapidly and create timely resolutions and solutions to all levels of stakeholders. He/she is expected to be proactive in assessing the processes & procedures and evaluate room for enhancement.

An MBA in operations is expected to have the ability to thrive in a fast-paced environment as well as working under pressure, especially when they are in a client facing operation roles. An MBA specialised in human resources (HR) works alongside the HR Business Partner and HR

Operations teams as well as the local Management team to provide generalist HR support to the business. An HR Generalist works alongside the HR Centres of Excellence and is responsible for the management and administration of employees through the entire employee life cycle including onboarding, HR Programme support, offboarding among others.

Irrespective of the specialisation MBA graduates are expected to create and present impressive presentations to the internal and external customers of the organisation. They are also expected to be good in using software and data management tools, which can help their reporting managers in better decision making.

The writer is Director — Symbiosis Institute of Business Management (SIBM) — Pune & Dean — Faculty of Management — Symbiosis International (Deemed University)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Children should be taught how to think and not what to think by equipping them with the weapons of discernment and knowledge.

— VD.

Make way for online school

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The first online school of India has been launched in the Millennium city of Gurugram in Delhi-NCR. Known as Cyboard School, the salient feature of the virtual school is a hybrid model of delivery encompassing a mix of online classes which will be followed by physical camps spread over 30 days in a year and city-level interactions. The school targets enrolment of about 5000 students in Classes I to III by the end of March 2021.

A brainchild of two serial entrepreneurs and visionaries — Rajat Singhal, Co-Founder & CEO, and Kunal Singhal, Co-Founder & CTO, the model aims to overcome the drawbacks in conventional K-12 education, including lack of personalised learning, lack of requisite infrastructure and good teachers, limited student-teacher interaction and increased dependence on tuitions and impart futuristic education to students through expert faculty members, irrespective of any geographical barriers.

"The online K-12 segment is projected to be nearly 3.7 times its existing size of 1.16 billion by 2025. The pandemic has accelerated the significance of digitisation across sectors and education is no exception," said Singhal.

Masters programme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ILAMED is going to start its Masters Course in Micropigmentation & Microblading for doctors with live sessions followed by hands-on training. This is the flagship programme which is the most sought after in the field of Aesthetic Medicine. This course is designed by experienced practitioners, which helps them in adding a new dimension to their practice and answers most of the clients' needs. This programme covers the latest techniques and procedures which are followed around the world by the eminent aesthetic medicine expert including the best practices as per the global standards.

This Masters Course is backed by the best Institutes and Associations around the world along with the renowned faculty who are having more than two decades of experience in the field of teaching and training.

This course is certified by The Plastic Surgery Center of Western New York.

The duration of this course is seven days. The curriculum is very detailed and covers most of the important topics and procedures which are delivered in the form of lectures, and the candidates are given hands on training on Live Patients which helps them to enhance their skills in their clinical practice.

This Masters programme covers most of the key topics related to Micropigmentation and Microblading such as Introduction to PMU & Microblading (Basic & advanced), full blown reconstruction (Alopecia), faux skin, eyebrows micropigmentation, Lip micropigmentation, Lip Blush, Lip Liner, Lip correction, Eyeliner micropigmentation, BB glow, BB glow Blush, BB Glow contouring, Scalp micropigmentation (SMP), Scalp Microblading (SMB), PMU correction and many more. To get enrolled one can call/whatsapp on +917838606869/9599224093. For more information you can email info@ilamed.org and log on to www.ilamed.org.

With the union budget of 2021 focusing like never before on Healthcare through the three-pronged, holistic approach - including preventive care, curative care, and well-being, there will be a bigger push toward a healthier country. To meet the demand for healthcare solutions that was generated last year, there has been many frugal state-of-the-art innovations associated with touchless diagnostic tools, ventilators, medical and surgical devices that support better patient outcomes and faster healthcare administration in hospitals.

At a national scale, there has been an unprecedented push towards digitisation through upskilling across sectors. The main reason why it is considered as an unprecedented push towards digitisation, is because this was not limited to just the key employees who were used to the IT infrastructure that was provided, but also all the support staff that included the Admin, HR, Finance, Training and development, etc. to get aligned with the new protocols of communication and also be effectively able to perform the organisations functions without any lacuna. This sea of change was not any different for the health care professionals of the country.

Without any differentiation of urban or rural, all doctors were expected to get used to online consultations, ordering online diagnostics and prescriptions, resulting in the patients getting the said medicines at home, based on the diagnosis. While there was initial reluctance by some of the doctors

Upskilling surgeons must

To fill the gap of technical superiority, industry-academia partnerships should initiate programmes that allow the surgical residents to get acquainted with the future of surgical care, says Dr SVS DEO



and staff, everyone was quick to overcome their limitations and technology for the larger benefit of the patients and the country at large. The demand for healthcare solutions also prompted fast-tracking digitisation initiatives by the Government and providers. One such game changer was the Government approval for telemedicine usage in India. This changed the landscape of how doctor-patient visits were being managed in India, resulting in making healthcare more accessible to both urban and rural areas across the country.

Another outcome of the pandemic has been the acceptance of

the larger public to become more willing to undergo regular health check-ups to ensure that they remain healthy. This has resulted in identifying more people with different adverse health conditions. This situation has put additional stress on the current healthcare ecosystem resulting in the need for better and faster treatment protocols to support patient care and outcomes. This is an area that can be upgraded by upskilling the medical fraternity. While there is ample such continuing medical education for Masters in Medicine (MD), there are only limited options for Masters in Surgery (MS) special-

sations, related to new age technology.

To fill this gap of technical superiority, industry-academia partnerships should initiate programmes that allow the surgical residents to get acquainted with the future of surgical care. Such programmes should engage with resident surgeon/fellows early on in their career, equipping them with knowledge on robotic/tech-enabled surgery and its clinical application. Facilitating such programmes with Robotic-Assisted Surgery (RAS) will allow the residents to understand the functionality, and scope for such tech-enabled surgical procedures.

The kind of programmes can give the budding surgeons theoretical knowledge about how the robot works, and the clinical applications of the technology that will be imparted by trained and successful RAS practitioner. Early RAS sensitisation programmes may lead to better adoption of technology which could result in not just reducing the learning curve, but also enable the country's surgical healthcare landscape to function more effectively.

The writer is Professor & Head, Department of Surgical Oncology, BRA-IRCH, AIIMS, Delhi

Tips to stay relevant

Skills such as basic calculation of construction cost, estimation of appreciation and basic knowledge of building codes come in handy for a real estate manager, says ANNUJ GOEL

If you have remained mesmerised with buildings and skyscrapers during your childhood, a career in the real estate sector can be a rewarding choice. From relationship manager to direct sales executive, there are several roles to make a head start in the property market. However, like every other job, you must be equipped with a gamut of skills to succeed and stay relevant in the real estate industry.

Skills such as basic calculation of construction cost, estimation of appreciation, knowledge of rules related to stamp duty and registration charges, and basic knowledge of building codes etc., come in handy for a real estate manager. Here is a list of five critical skills needed for landing a job in a real estate firm.

Communication skills: If you are foraging into a career in the real estate sector, be prepared for a one-on-one with the potential home-buyers. Excellent communication skills are an essential part of the job. The executives must be able to lay bare the features of the project in simple words.

As real estate investment is a cost-intensive proposition, one must be able to spell out the pros and cons as well as the approximate 'Return-on-Investment' (ROI) clearly. You can develop these skills gradually by



practising in front of a mirror and taking feedback from friends about your body language.

Active listening: Along with effective speaking skills, active listening is equally important. Attentively listening to the exact requirements of the customer is essential. Only then you will be able to suggest him the options in the given budget and configuration.

Being enthusiastic, empathetic and honest with the customer will automatically incite your interest in him. You can also develop active listening skills by listening to online podcasts and making notes out of them.

Negotiation skills: It is business

at the end of the day. You must be able to convince the customers that they are making the right choice. However, as real estate investment is heavy on pocket decision, be prepared for a lot of questions.

Be thorough with the details and communicate effectively. Satisfying the customers with all their queries and being honest will put you in the right stride. Learn to negotiate effectively. Following up is a part of the process, and you must be persistent in keeping track of a beneficial lead.

Tech-savvy: Being tech-savvy is not about being a cybersecurity expert. It is about essential computer skills such as making a presentation, excel sheet and use of social media. Being tech-savvy is a must to keep up with the technology, saves a lot of time and lets you better manage your clientele.

Social cues and local dialect: Be prepared to face people from every income strata and background. While meeting an international client, you must be presentable with adequate mannerisms. While dealing with a native client, you might have to incorporate some local sayings and serve them accordingly. Knowledge about the local dialects, societal trends and using it to seal the deal win the confidence of the client.

The writer is Managing Director, Goel Ganga Developments

Higher education summit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Education Network recently hosted the 9th edition of the Higher Education Summit in association with Shobhit University at Le-Meridian Hotel. The objective of the summit was to discuss the new education policy, its implementation on the ground and the challenges and solutions to it.

Over the years, the Indian Education Network hosted successful editions of the summit. Last year, the education sector around the world and more so in India has seen a big shift due to pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has put a lot of restrictions on traditional classroom-based teaching and learning in educational

institutions and has transformed it into digital-based education. This year, the summit witnessed many delegates from higher education institutions, including industry veterans and representatives from the Ministry of HRD, AICTE and other Government authorities who shared their thoughts and insights on higher education in India.

Kunwar Shekhar Vijendra-Chancellor, Shobhit University, said: "Disruption due to COVID-19 has given us a reason to innovate new things, to create new things, to do new things. I take this opportunity to congratulate our Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the dynamic Ministry of Education for taking this step when the world was not able to do anything."

Int'l recognition for IP varsity teacher

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An assistant professor of nano-science & technology at University School of Basic & Applied Sciences (USBAS) Dr Satyabrata Mohapatra has been assigned as the editor of coveted international nano-science research journal — NANO.

This Singapore-based research journal has tendered this responsible assignment seeing his outstanding contributions in the field of nano-science & technology. Around 110 peer-reviewed



Dr Satyabrata Mohapatra

research papers in the related field in the international journals are already to his credit. He leads a multi-functional nano-materials laboratory at the university.

It definitely makes a special mention that Stanford University, USA had adjudged Dr Mohapatra as among the World's top 2 per cent scientists in the field of applied physics some times back.

While the university is busy promoting a culture of research at present, this news will definitely boost the endeavour.

Young researchers conference

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Dwarka, New Delhi, in collaboration with, JNU Jean Monnet Module, Centre for European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, is organising an online Young Researchers Conference 2021.

The theme is "Global Dynamics and Emerging Trends: India and Europe" on March 4 and March 5, 2021. This conference

intends to deliberate upon the emerging trends, global changes and current socio-economic and political crises in changing landscapes and how these crises pose challenges to India, and Europe.

His excellency Ugo Astuto, Ambassador of the European Union to India has kindly consented to address the inaugural session of the conference on March 4, 2020. The guest of honour of the inaugural session is Dinesh K Patnaik, Director General, ICCR.

Add value to future

Skill advancement is a continuous process. If one envisions to form an organisation that is constantly learning, growing and achieving targets, he needs to have learning employees who are keen to adopt new skills. PIONEER AVENUES lists programmes to pursue



In today's era of digital technology, survival of many organisations is contingent on how they leverage cutting-edge technologies to transform their workplaces into augmented environments. However, for this transformation to happen, organisations must make prudent decisions and avoid the costly buy, not build talent strategy — opting for expensive new hires instead of re-skilling or up-skilling the existing employees.

Skill advancement is not a static process, rather it is crucially important to continue it at all levels. If one envisions to form an organisation that is constantly learning, growing, and achieving its targets, they need to have learning employees who are keen to adopt new skills and move in pace with ever-evolving business landscape.

Up-skilling is a term well-known. With technology causing a tectonic shift in the workplace and creating new possibilities that can be fully realised only by a modernised workforce, there is an ever-increasing need for students and employees to learn new skills and competencies that are required for the emerging job market.

Here we have rounded up a list of courses that can help you upskill and boost your job prospects.

Cloud Architect Certification Programme: This specialised course offered by one of India's leading ed-tech company, Intellipaat, equips you with proficiency in Cloud and DevOps. As part of the program, you get to work on real-world projects in AWS, Azure, DevOps, Python, Java, Splunk, Linux, and much more. In this program, it will cover 11 courses, 26 industry-based projects, and the CAPSTONE Project. As part of this masters in Cloud Computing, you will also receive official course material issued by Microsoft for integrating on-premises identity Infrastructure with Microsoft Azure and implementing security in Azure Development Solutions.

Data scientist master's programme: This course offered in joint collaboration introduces students to integrated blended learning, equipping them with expertise in both AI and data science. This advanced course will make students industry-ready for skills in AI and data science and consequently render them job-ready.

With technology causing a tectonic shift in the workplace and creating new possibilities that can be fully realised only by a modernised workforce, there is an ever-increasing need to learn new skills and competencies that are required for the emerging job market

Content Writing Course: This course teaches you to become a content creator & skills to translate thoughts into words that can attract everyone. It upgrades your resume with certifications and industry experience, differentiating your profile from masses and accelerates your career to a better job profile. The course enables participants to translate their thoughts into structured words and explore new ways to express themselves in the best possible way at the workplace. It enables the participants to investigate deeper into any topic and become a deemed expert by developing skills pertaining to creating, evaluating, reorganising, repackaging, strategising and presenting content. Taking the course helps in improving one's persuasive skills which comes in handy especially for professionals in sales, marketing, advertising and communications. This course shapes you into a dynamic writer who can write on any subject at any forum which drives conversations and actions on social media, search engines, e-commerce, blog and landing pages.

PGD in software development (Big Data): This comprehensive diploma program offered by UpGrad is designed for those who

wish to deep dive into the world of Big Data, its key processes and industrial applications. This course teaches in-depth about concepts related to Big Data such as data warehousing, real-time processing, data processing and Big Data analytics. Students also get to work with tools like Java, Python, Spark, Kafka, and Hive etc. The program includes seven-plus case studies and projects which will assist you in sharpening your real-world skills.

Professional teaching: Sarasa is a leading teacher-growth-focused EdTech and JobTech platform, offers internationally-recognized UK Level 6 Teaching Qualifications in India. Designed by a team of veteran educators, cognitive scientists, and data scientists in consultation with thousands of teachers and industry specialists, the two qualifications — Professional Graduate Certificate in Teaching & Learning (PGCTL) and Diploma in Teaching aim to help teachers accelerate their professional growth and be successful in creating a high impact learning environment in their classrooms.

They empower teachers with 21st Century teaching skills, crucial to engage the new generation of Gen Z and Gen Alpha students.

'Demand for cyber security professionals on rise'

Advancement of digitisation has spurred an increase in cybersecurity solutions leading to lucrative options, says DR SANJEEV KUMAR SHARMA

In COVID-19 era world economy and society are now interconnected by supply chains, communications technology and travel. The rapid growth of the number of appliances, devices, vehicles and infrastructure are linked which is foremost to the only interconnected world. Rise in demand of digitalisation services creates a network of Internet of Things devices to enable better consumer experience but also raises the high incidence of cyber attacks.

Cyber security jobs have been one of the hottest jobs for students today. The demand is unmatched in any other technology domain. Companies across the world have been continuously targeted for cyber-attacks. This scenario has given massive opportunities for professionals willing to enter the security domain. Cyber security today serves as a major source of employment and a lucrative career option. First step is to acquire basic cybersecurity skills, followed by choosing a specific domain based on personal interest and market demand. For a successful career, students need to get in-depth training, develop skills, and acquire specific certifications in security.

India faced around seven lakh cyber-attacks in August 2020 report by (MeITV). As per the report India was ranked third and one of the biggest victims of cyber-attacks in recent years, makes it even more exigent.

In recent years Government and private players have introduced a flurry of specialised and standalone courses on cyber security. From part-time to distance learning to online mode with varied provisions for certification, diploma and degree programmes, these courses have found much popularity among students as well as career professionals.

The professionals are focused on delivering technologies that help move business operations forward while preserving sensitive information. Despite the recent increase in popularity of cyber security as a course in our universities, colleges and institutes, are not much enough. The demand of cyber security experts in India has even less than a paltry 10,000 professionals. For a second largest economy of world



Dr Sanjeev Kumar Sharma
Dean Academics, Sanskriti University

India and sustained by the second largest population of the world with expanding digital footprints, such a minuscule number is grossly insufficient. Therefore, it is time that cyber security as a specialised discipline with all its attendant sub-disciplines becomes an integral component of any IT syllabus being taught within our university systems as well as outside.

Innovations and trends in technology have a direct impact on digital security. Recent advancement of digitisation and the Internet over things has spurred a significant increase in cybersecurity solutions. We are moving forward and creating a digital and smart world that gives no place for vulnerable cybersecurity and mediocrity.

Apart from a relevant degree in technology, students need to have a basic knowledge about advanced cybersecurity concepts, extensive cybersecurity work experience, industry certifications, knowledge of regulatory policies is usually required to make a career in cybersecurity. The rise in cyber attacks is increasing the opportunities for professionals from all backgrounds who want to make a career in cybersecurity. Even people from Humanities can make a career in cybersecurity.

A recent parliamentary report states that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, the Indian automotive industry suffered ₹2,300 crore loss per day and an estimated job loss in the sector was about 45 lakh. This report clearly indicates that there is still a mismatch in the education we impart to the youth and the demand they have to meet at the job.

This gap will widen further if we don't initiate structured reforms and initiative in the next Union Budget, which will be tabled in less than a week's time. The dream of achieving a self-reliant \$5 trillion economy completely depends upon the education and the skill level of its citizens.

Training the workforce to get adapt to the digital setup

With the advent of COVID-19 vaccines and India's emergence as the soft-power in the medical industry, companies are re-evaluating the year 2021 with full of hopes. They are slowly and steadily adapting to the new normal by upskilling, relearning and learning the importance of advanced technologies in order to retain their relevance and competitiveness in this digital era. At this juncture, the public and private partnership can help in driving the major shift in skilling/relearning programmes in tandem with the government skilling programs.

Apart from this, the academic curriculum in schools and colleges must be

MINDIT

rebooted to remain in sync with the current realities of the post-pandemic era. It is alarming to see how India despite being renowned for its large talent pool, most graduates are unemployable due to mismatch of their skill sets with industry requirements. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship should work together to come up with a new curriculum and skilling programs as per the industry standards.

New job opportunities demands new skills

In order to cope with the company's new transformation, the existing and new workforce also needs to have constant skilling, reskilling and upskilling. The new job requirements will also demand the knowledge of a new set of areas including IoT, mechatronics, robotics, 3D printing, AI, machine and deep learning, analytics, virtual collaboration, automotive design, and computational thinking.

A lot of training programmes is the need of the hour to build the capacity of

these workforces.

Even the current time demands a complete change in the mindset of youth and their parents. An engineering student's goal should be getting a job, becoming financially independent and merely holding a degree. Once this mindset sets in, there is no way India can be taking the lead in becoming a hub for manufacturing, and supplier of skilled talent.

Continuous reskilling programmes in organisations

Surveys have found out that those companies who launched successful reskilling programmes are also the ones who were able to better address the skill

gaps caused by technological disruptions or to implement new business models or strategies in order to stay relevant and competitive.

The lesson here is that simply getting started on reskilling programs is making organisations better prepared for potential future role disruption and is preferable to waiting. There is a need for continuous skilling programmes and they should not be short term. Companies need to understand that whatever talent reskilling or redeployment they should also be used to expand their reskilling capabilities going forward.

The writer is Ankit Shyamshaha, CEO, ICA Edu Skills



The University of Hamburg invites applications for merit awards. These opportunities are available for international students to concentrate fully on their studies and gives them the opportunity to develop their skills.

Eligibility: You are entitled to funding if you are pursuing an academic degree at the university and enrolled in degree programme for at least two semesters (master's students can apply after one semester). Not hold German citizenship and are not eligible for the federal student loan scheme.

Upload: CV, letter of motivation: use this form (PDF), proof of social and/or intercultural activities (if applicable), a record of achievements: STINE printout or list of course certificates.

Admission requirements: The applicants need to enrol at the University of Hamburg at the time of application. **Language:** English

How to apply: Students <https://login.uni-hamburg.de/idp/profile/SAML2/Redirect/SSO?execution=e2s1>
Application deadline: April 15, 2021 & October 15, 2021.

The Swinburne University of Technology, Australia invites applications for its Australia Awards for brilliant candidates.

Eligibility: The bursary is available for undergraduate, postgraduate, or TAFE study at the university. Candidates must meet the criteria as per their country guidelines.

Supporting documents: Aspirants must send the completed application with the required documents as per their respective nationalities.

Admission requirements: Applicants must need to have good grades in their previous academic study, equivalent to the minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) for their desired degree at the university.

Language requirement: If English is not your first language, you will need to show that your English language skills are high enough to succeed in your studies.

How to apply: To apply for this bursary, applicants must have to complete the application procedure via an online portal.

Application deadline: The last date to apply for this award is April 30, 2021.

HR ADMIN & RECRUITMENT AT K21 ACADEMY

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹8,000-₹12,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/j/7308350
Deadline: March 9, 2021

CUSTOMER SERVICE AT CLERK-TECH

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹20,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/j/7308351
Deadline: March 9, 2021

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MGT AT REACH 2 FITNESS

Location: Delhi, Faridabad, Gurugram
Stipend: ₹15,000-₹20,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/j/7308353
Deadline: March 9, 2021

CONTENT WRITING AT PROMOTEDIGITALLY

Location: Lucknow
Stipend: ₹6,000-₹8,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/j/7308355
Deadline: March 8, 2021

MARKETING AT BYJU'S APP

Location: Ranchi
Stipend: ₹15,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/j/7308357
Deadline: March 7, 2021

FRESHER JOBS

PRODUCT MANAGER AT INTERNSHALA
Location: Gurugram
Stipend: ₹6.6-₹8.28 lakh per annum
Link: internshala.com/j/7308360
Deadline: March 18, 2021
Skill(s): MS-Excel, English Proficiency (Written)

RESEARCH EVANGELIST AT DEEPTHUGHT EDUTECH VENTURES

Location: Remote
Stipend: ₹3-₹5 lakh per annum
Link: internshala.com/j/7308361
Deadline: March 25, 2021

INBRIEF

AUV LAUNCHED TO SANITISE SPACES

The Mahindra University has launched an Autonomous Unmanned Vehicle (AUV) Disinfecting Robot, Mahindra University UV Disinfectant Robot (MUDRA). This robot is designed to disinfect rooms, labs, offices, shop floors, and various other spaces using Ultraviolet C (UVC) rays.

Dr Yajulu Medury, VC, Mahindra University said, "We are constantly focused on enabling solutions that impact our day to day lives in a positive sense. In this pandemic time, safety is of paramount importance. I am proud that we have created an indigenously designed, developed in-house and

funded disinfecting robot, that helps in the sanitisation of surfaces thereby, ensuring that spaces remain infection free."

The robot has been designed to navigate autonomously on the floor without needing any extra infrastructure. It maps and plans its path to move around, and avoids obstacles and re-charts its path intelligently. It moves from room to room on a floor automatically without any human intervention. In addition, it has the capability to operate elevators and move from one floor to another using Wi-Fi or wireless connectivity.

The robot is is completely safe and non-hazardous to humans as it automatically switches off its UVC function whenever it detects human presence.

ONLINE TALENT SEARCH EXAM FOR CAT

The Triumphant Institute of Management Education (TIME) is a test-prep institute with a pan-India presence and is headquartered in Hyderabad.

From its entrepreneurial roots in 1992, the institute today has 251 centers and has trained over 22 Lakh students for various courses since inception.

The institute is conducting the T.I.M.E. Talent Search Examination (TTSE) for CAT21/22 aspirants on March 7, 2021.

The test will be conducted in two slots viz., 10 AM and 6 PM. Students can choose to write the test any day.

Attractive performance-based fee waivers (up to 100 per cent on CAT 21/22 classroom/online courses) will be available for the students. A minimum assured discount of 10 per cent of the total course fee will be given to those who write the free mock and enroll in the mentioned courses before March 7, 2021. Interested students can register using the link given below:

<https://www.time4ed.com/online/local/articles/page.php?d=4430> To know more: <https://www.time4ed.com/online/index.php>

SRM all set to welcome students



Admissions are now open to various programmes at the Faculty of Science and Humanities (FSH) at SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur and for Medicine and Health Sciences programmes at SRM Medical College Hospital & Research Centre (SRM MCHRC), Kattankulathur.

Under the Faculty of Science & Humanities, SRMIST offers various Undergraduate and Post Graduate programmes from the College of Science and Humanities, School of Management, and School of Law. Several UG and PG programmes are also available for students in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences that has the College of Pharmacy, College of Physiotherapy, College of Occupational

Therapy, College of Nursing, School of Public Health, among others. The soft launch of application forms for Dr CA Gurudath, Dean Health Sciences, and Faculty of Science and Humanities was held at the Institute's premises in the presence of SRMIST's Pro VC (Medical) Lt Col Dr A Ravi Kumar, Director (Admissions) Dr KS Lakshmi, Director of Communications R Nandakumar, Assistant Director (M&H) Venkata Ramakrishnan, Assistant Director (S&H) Dr Vivek Shivhare, Dean (FSH) Dr Jothikumar, Dean (Law) Dr CA Gurudath, Dean (Dental) Dr N Vivek, Dean (SHP) Dr Padma Venkat, Dean (Pharmacy) Dr V Chitra, Dean

(Physiotherapy) Veera Goutham and Dean (Occupational Therapy) Dr U Ganapathy Sankar. FSH and SRM MCHRC has several disciplines that prepare students to fill that growing need and take advantage of that growth opportunity. Admissions to any of these programmes will be based on the eligibility, Board examination marks, department level examination conducted by the respective schools in SRM and one-to-one interaction. Candidates applying should have secured a minimum aggregate of 50 per cent in the Boards. Indians and non-resident Indians can apply. Interested students can visit the site: www.srmist.edu.in for more information.

Pitch will be similar to last 2 Tests: Rahane

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India's Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on Tuesday said there is no need to take criticism of the spin-friendly pitches in the country "seriously" as not a word is spoken about the "damp" tracks elsewhere and England can expect another turn in the fourth Test.

There has been a lot of talk about the spinning tracks in the second Test at Chepauk and the pink ball game at Motera which ended inside two days. The fourth and final Test starts on March 4.

"I think the wicket will be similar to the second Test match in Chennai, spinning track. Yes, pink ball made the difference and it came much quicker off the wicket compared to red ball and we had to make adjustments," Rahane said during a virtual media conference.

"Wicket will be a lot similar to last two Test matches," he added.

Rahane, for the first time in many years, shed his reticence when asked to respond to the criticism from former England players that the pitches have not been ideal. Some have even urged the ICC to act against India for preparing a turner.

"See, let people speak what they want to. The wickets, when we tour abroad, no one speaks about how seaming they are. They always speak about the technique of the Indian batsmen, I don't feel we need to take seriously what people say," Rahane was sharp in his response.

"...You see, when we tour abroad, the first day wicket is damp. When wicket becomes grassy and behaves up and down, then the pitch becomes dangerous but we haven't complained about it or we have never spoken about it."



'VERY SIMILAR PITCH'

Young England opener Zak Crawley too echoed Ajinkya Rahane's sentiments on the Motera strip which he believes will be "similar" in nature but red ball will make it "slightly easier" for the batsmen.

"Yeah, I think it will be a very similar pitch this week. It wasn't easy to score for sure, but it was the same for both sides, and they played very well compared to us. So, we had our chance to bat first and did well and unfortunately, we didn't play well as we needed to," Crawley said at a virtual conference.

Quizzed whether batting will be easier in the final Test as it will be a red ball game again,

he answered in affirmative.

"It depends on the pitch obviously, but I do think that it will be slightly easier. I felt that the pink ball was a bit harder to play and that ball skidded on quite quickly, which is why Axar got so many wickets through leg before and bowled."

Axar's arm ball will be a massive threat, conceded Crawley.

"I think he still has that ball in his armoury for sure and he'll still be a massive threat with that one (red ball). But I think it might not skid on with the same pace as the pink ball but it won't be completely different," explained Crawley.

Crawley was the only half-century for England in the last

game.

"Yeah, it's nice to score some runs. I probably had the best (chance) to face seamers early, but still nice to score some runs, nonetheless," he said, adding that hopefully he will have the game-plan in the final match.

The 23-year-old, lavished praise on left-arm spinner Axar Patel, who has grabbed 18 wickets from two Tests.

"You know, he (Axar) is a very good bowler, especially in these conditions, he has been very accurate, he doesn't give you much to score, and he has got one that goes straight on, in these conditions, one (to) turn, so he is very good bowler," said Crawley.



Indian cricket team head coach Ravi Shastri on Tuesday received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at a city hospital in Ahmedabad. Besides Shastri, no other member of the team's support staff was inoculated.

'Ashwin constantly reinventing himself'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Ravichandran Ashwin is a rethinking cricketer, who is constantly reinventing himself, said former India batsman VVS Laxman, insisting that preparation is key to the veteran off-spinner's success.

Ashwin recently became the fourth Indian bowler to take 400 Test wickets, when he achieved the feat by dismissing Jofra Archer in the pink ball Test at Ahmedabad. He also became the second Indian bowler to reach the landmark after Sri Lanka spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan.

"I think he's (Ashwin) a very intelligent person. When you're playing at the highest level, then it's not only about your skill, it's about your preparation, your planning and execution is so critical."

"So, he works out what are the weaknesses of the batsman. He plans those dismissals and that's why I think he is reinventing himself," Laxman, a veteran of 134 Tests, said on Star Sports show Cricket Connected.

To prove his point, Laxman cited the example of Steve Smith, who was against Ashwin during India's recent tour Down Under.

"We saw recently in the Australia series how he (Ashwin) troubled someone as great as Steve Smith and that's another thing that makes Ashwin or any champion player special, that he wants to be the best and compete against the best," he said.

Former India opener Akash Chopra too lavished praise on Ashwin, saying he is one of the biggest match winners the country has ever produced.

"78 Test matches for 400 Test wickets. Let the naysayers be! He's been absolute phenomenal with the craft that he has displayed over a period of time and as he's growing as a bowler, he's picking a lot of wickets. So, that question mark is also getting answered quite nicely," said Chopra.

"I feel that he's an absolute rockstar. He's one of the biggest match winners that India has ever produced, of course Anil Kumble will still remain at No 1, added 43-year-old, who has played 10 Tests for the country."



Ash, Root in contention for ICC Player of Month

PTI ■ DUBAI

Seasoned India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin along with England captain Joe Root and West Indies' new batting sensation Kyle Mayers were on Tuesday nominated for the ICC Player of the Month for their exceptional performances in February.

Ashwin played three Tests against England and scored 106 in the second innings of India's second Test victory at Chennai. He took his 400th Test wicket in the third Test victory at Ahmedabad.

"Scoring a total of 176 runs across these games with taking a total of 24 wickets, Ashwin is the deserving candidate to be nominated in the men's category for

February," the ICC release stated.

"England Test captain Joe Root makes it to the list of nominations again this month for his outstanding performance with the bat and the ball. He scored a total of 333 runs and took 6 wickets overall in the 3 Tests that he played against India," it further stated.

From the West Indies, Test debutant Mayers played two matches against Bangladesh and had a match-winning knock of 210 to help his team successfully chase a target of 395 at Chittagong.

In the women's section, Tammy Beaumont and Nat Sciver of England along with Brooke Halliday of New Zealand have been nominated.

Gayle focused to win third T20 World Cup

AFP ■ ANTIGUA

Chris Gayle said on Monday he is focused on the "bigger picture" of winning a third T20 world title with the West Indies later this year, ahead of the veteran batsman's return to International cricket this week.

The 41-year-old was named in the Windies' 14-man squad for the three-game T20I series against Sri Lanka, which starts in Antigua on Wednesday.

Gayle, who was part of the World T20-winning sides in both 2012 and 2016, played the last of his 58 T20Is against England in March 2019.

The Windies will attempt to defend their title in India in October and November.

"I want to accomplish, starting off by winning the series, but the bigger picture is actually to get three T20 titles under my belt," Gayle told a press conference.

"That's actually the goal I'm setting in my head — winning the T20 World Cup. The World Cup is still a long way off but by the time you quit (blink), it's World Cup time."

Gayle has made 1,627 T20I runs with a highest score of 117 at an average of over 32.

"I want to win the series," Gayle added. "I want to get off to a good start. It's really good to be back. Hopefully I can perform, help the team, and put the



team in a winning position."

He is one of four openers in the West Indies squad, but said that he could be used lower down the order again.

"It seems like I'm the number three specialist now," he said. "It's not a problem. I'm good at playing spin, I'm as good at playing fast bowlers as anyone — I'm an opener."

"But with West Indies cricket, whatever role they want me to play, I'm willing to play that particular role. If it's opening, I'm ready, number three, number five — I'm pretty much flexible. I will still be the best number five in the world, best number three in the world."

Leach eager to learn from Ashwin, Axar

PTI ■ LONDON

By his own admission, England's Jack Leach is in awe of the exploits of Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel during the pink ball Test and he is eager to learn the nuances of spin bowling from the Indian duo in the fourth and final match, starting here on Thursday.

Ashwin and Axar used the spin-friendly Motera pitch to great effect and picked up 18 of the 20 English wickets in the match to demolish the visitors.

"When you see players having so much success, like Ravichandran Ashwin, who has just got to 400 Test wickets and has a lot of experience in India, and Axar Patel, who has had a great start to Test cricket, of course, you try to learn from them," Leach wrote in a column for Sky Sports.

"It's important not to look at it too emotionally though and think 'I just want to bowl exactly like them!'"

The 29-year-old left-arm spinner felt the experienced



Ashwin was very clever in the way he changed his seam position.

"He (Ashwin) will bowl to the same spot but the way it gets there and whether it hits the seam or hits the lacquer varies and the ball reacts very differently," Leach observed.

"Then Axar is someone who seems to present every ball the same, a squarish seam, then a few skid on and the odd one grips — that has been so effective on the wickets we've played on."

Leach is up for the challenge that awaits him in the final Test and sounded confident after picking up the wickets of top four Indian batsmen in the third Test.

"...We're all keen to learn and are excited by the challenge; you have to be because if it was all easy then it wouldn't be Test cricket and it wouldn't be as much fun when you have those good moments. It's something that I'm relishing," he said.

Crowds can be avoided at least initially in IPL: Wadia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Punjab Kings co-owner Niss Wadia feels the IPL can avoid crowds initially in the tournament and also wants to know from the BCCI that why his team's base in Mohali has not been picked among the potential venues for the 2021 edition despite a low Covid-19 caseload.

Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai have been short-listed as potential venues but the BCCI is yet to take a final call on the matter.

"We have written to the BCCI to find out under what criteria they have selected the venues and why they have not selected us. We were hoping to have games in Punjab," Wadia said.

"Some of the teams will not have a home advantage, those are the concerns. The cases in Chandigarh and Mohali are not that much. I don't know on what basis they have shortlisted the venues," he added, referring to Chandigarh's 69 new cases on Monday.

The 2020 edition of the IPL was held in the UAE in empty stadiums but there is a possibility that the upcoming edition at home will allow spectators as the Covid situation improving drastically since the last IPL.



Expressing surprise over the exclusion of Mohali from the list of venues short-listed for the upcoming IPL, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday appealed to the BCCI to reconsider the decision.

However, Wadia feels IPL is a much tougher challenge logistically compared to a bilateral series and crowds can be avoided at least initially due to safety concerns.

"I think it would better to have no crowd initially and then evaluate the Covid-19 situation as the event progresses. There is no question that the IPL is tougher to organise than a bilateral series. We want whatever is best and safe for the players and the bio-bubble."

Money gets more importance than cricket in IPL: Steyn

PTI ■ KARACHI

South Africa pace great Dale Steyn has claimed that cricket takes a back seat at the Indian Premier League, insisting that money is given more importance than the game in the lucrative T20 tournament.

Justifying his on-and-off IPL career, Steyn said this was one of the reasons he had not featured regularly in the world's biggest franchise-based T20 tournament.

"I think when you go to the IPL, there are such big squads and so many big names and so much emphasis on maybe the amount of money players earn and everything like that, so sometimes, somewhere down the line, cricket gets forgotten," said Steyn, who was part of the Royal Challengers Bangalore squad in the last IPL.

In January this year, Steyn announced that he is opting out of the IPL 2021 but will play other leagues around the world.

Steyn's decision influenced RCB to release him ahead of the IPL 2021 auction.

Steyn has played 95 IPL matches, picking up 97 wickets with a best of 3 for 8.

But the South African's repeated injury breakdowns didn't help his cause as he just featured in 12 IPL matches in the last three seasons.

Quetta Gladiators in the Pakistan Super League 6, said he took the break as he needed time off from the game and also because he found playing in other leagues around the world more rewarding as a player.

"When you come to like the PSL or the Sri Lankan Premier League, for that matter, there is an importance on cricket. I have only been here a couple of days and I have had people in and out of my room, just wanting to know about where I have played and how I went about it," Steyn said.

"Whereas, when I go to something like the IPL that gets forgotten and the main topic is how much money did you go for in this IPL? That's just me being brutally honest. I wanted to stay away from that and really put more emphasis on playing and bringing good vibes to good cricket teams and tournaments I feel are worth it," he added.

Vinicius rescues point for Real

AFP ■ MADRID



knock their opponents out of the title race.

Madrid had 20 shots to Real Sociedad's six but lacked edge in the final third, with the injured Karim Benzema watching on from the stands.

"We've had games where we won and maybe we didn't deserve to win as well, we can't change anything," said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane. "We're keeping going. There is a long way to go."

Richarlison boosts Everton's top-4 bid



Liverpool: Everton boosted their bid to earn a top-four finish in the Premier League as Richarlison scored a 1-0 victory against struggling Southampton on Monday.

Carlo Ancelotti's side won for the first time in six home league games thanks to Richarlison's early goal.

Everton's last success at Goodison Park came against Arsenal just before Christmas, but ending a run of three consecutive home league defeats lifted them to within two points of fourth-placed West Ham.

The seventh-placed Toffees have a game in hand on West Ham, as well as Liverpool and Chelsea, who occupy the places directly above them.

SINGLES

'INDO-PAK EXPRESS' TO BE BACK ON TOUR
New Delhi: The much-popular Indo-Pak pairing of Rohan Bopanna and Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi will be back after six years when it competes at the Acapulco ATP 500 event but as of now it's an one-off arrangement since their combined ranking won't let them enter bigger tournaments together. It will be first time that Bopanna and Aisam, known as 'Indo-Pak Express' will play together since they last competed at the ATP 250 event in Shenzhen in 2014.

MANIKA, SREJA ADVANCE INTO FINAL ROUND
Doha: Star paddler Manika Batra and young Sreja Akula moved into the final round of the women's singles qualifiers at the WTT Contender after winning their respective matches. The world number 150, Sreja prevailed over world number 74 Vega Paulina before she sent packing 87th-ranked Orsava Paranjana 11-5, 11-5, 11-6 in the third round. While Manika got the better of Irina Ciobanu 11-7, 15-13, 11-8 comfortably in the third round of women's singles qualifiers and will face Ganna Gaponova in the last round.

HAT-TRICK OF DEFEATS FOR INDIA WOMEN
Dusseldorf: The Indian women's hockey team's defence resisted well but formidable Germany walked away with a 2-0 win in the third game, taking an unassailable 3-0 lead in the four-match series, here. Sonja Zimmermann (26) and Franziska Hauke (42) scored the goals for Germany, who won their third consecutive match on Monday. The fourth match of the series will be played on Thursday.

SHRUTI SLIPS 2 PLACES IN ODI RANKINGS
Dubai: Indian opener Shruti Mandhana slipped two places to sixth among batters but Jhulan Goswami retained her fifth spot among bowlers in the latest ICC women's ODI Player rankings issued on Tuesday. England opener Tammy Beaumont has rocketed five places to grab the top position after an excellent display in the three-match series against New Zealand. She has overtaken the likes of Stafanie Taylor and Amy Satterthwaite to top the list and now leads Australia captain Meg Lanning by 16 points.

STIHAK NAMES 35 PROBABLES FOR FRIENDLIES
New Delhi: National football coach Igor Stimac on Tuesday named 10 new players in his 35-member list of probabilities for India's back-to-back international friendlies against Oman and the UAE to be played in Dubai on March 25 and 29 respectively. The final list of 28 players will be announced after the ISL final on March 13. The players will then assemble for a preparatory camp in Dubai from March 15.

MARY, PANGKAL AMONG 13 IN QUARTERS
New Delhi: Six-time world champion M P Ganguly and Asian Games Gold-medallist Amit Pangkhal were among 13 Indian boxers who made the quarterfinals of Boxing International Tournament on Tuesday, leaving them just win away from securing medals at the event. While 12 of them either got byes or benefitted from the small size of their respective draws, Commonwealth Games Bronze-medallist Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg) defeated local hope Jua Manuel Torres in his opening bout on Tuesday.

SANIA RETURNS WITH WIN IN DOHA
Doha: Sania Mirza made a winning return to the WTA circuit as she and her Slovenian partner Andreja Klepac beat Ukrainians Nadia Kichenok and Lyudmyla Kichenok to reach the doubles quarterfinals of the Qatar Total Open here. The Indo-Slovenian pair won 6-4, 6-7(5), 10-5 against the duo of Kichenok and Kichenok in the opening round of the WTA 500 tournament Monday night.

FEDERER OUT OF MIAMI OPEN
Miami: Roger Federer is withdrawing from this month's Miami Open so he can spend extra time preparing to "work his way back out on tour," his agent told AP. The 20-time Grand Slam champion has not competed in more than a year. He is scheduled to make his return to the tour next week in a hard-court tournament at Doha, Qatar.