

OPINION 6
STOP ROMANTICISING
INTERFAITH MARRIAGES**WORLD 8**
STOP MURDERING PROTESTERS:
UN TELLS MYANMAR MILITARY**SPORT 12**
POLLARD HITS 6
SIXES IN AN OVER

RAIPUR, FRIDAY MARCH 5, 2021; PAGES 12 & 3

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Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

*Late City Vol. 10 Issue 62
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

Covid resurgence: Cases soar to 8 weeks high

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

According to State



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

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

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

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

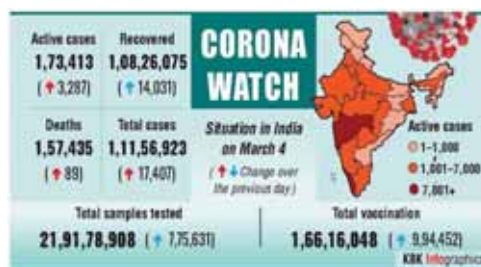
So far, 1,66,16,048 doses of vaccine have been administered in the country since the drive began on January 16.

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

exploited.

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

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

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

UK strains more contagious: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

The study should come as a warning to India where number of infections with the mutant UK, South Africa, and Brazil variants of SARS-CoV-2 jumped to 242 on Thursday. The new Covid-19 UK strain is more contagious and spread faster, and vaccines could be less effective on these patients, according to a new modelling study published in the journal Science.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Raipur, Bilaspur excel in Municipal Performance Index

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh's two biggest cities—Raipur and Bilaspur — have made it among the top 10 cities in the country for excellent showing in the Municipal Performance Index.

Raipur city has secured the 7th rank in the category of cities with a population more than 10 lakhs while Bilaspur also came 7th among cities with a population less than 10 lakhs.

Urban administration bodies of both the cities hold the 7th rank in the country in providing basic civic amenities to the people.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs announced the results of the Municipal Performance Index competition on Thursday in Delhi.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel congratulated the people, public representatives and urban administration departments of Raipur and Bilaspur for the achievement.

CHHATTISGARH CHIEF MINISTER BHUPESH BAGHEL CONGRATULATED THE PEOPLE, PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES AND URBAN ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENTS OF RAIPUR AND BILASPUR FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT

He said it was a matter of pride that Chhattisgarh was constantly being rewarded for outstanding works done in the urban areas.

Last year, the Central government ruled Chhattisgarh as the cleanest state in the country.

India pushes for Chabahar port in international transport route

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Located in the Sistan-Balochistan province on the energy-rich Iran's southern coast, the port can be easily accessed from India's western coast, bypassing Pakistan.

Elaborating upon the importance of the Chabahar port, Jaishankar said the shift in the fulcrum of global economic growth towards Asia is creating unprecedented opportunities for connectivity in the region.

Highlighting these points

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

Jaishankar said India has also proposed the inclusion of Chabahar in the INSTC route. It is an important trade corridor project, wherein India is partnering with 12 countries to establish an economic corridor, he said.

The International North-South Transport Corridor is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode transport project for moving freight among India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

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

"I am hopeful that during the INSTC Coordination Council meeting, member states would agree to the expansion of the INSTC route to include the Chabahar Port and also agree

on expanding the membership of this project," Jaishankar said.

He also said as the world goes through a fundamental re-balancing, correcting many distortions of the past, it is only natural that connectivity should be central to that exercise. The shift in the fulcrum of global economic growth towards Asia is creating unprecedented opportunities for connectivity in the region, the Minister said.

Noting that in the modern age, the correlation between connectivity and economic growth has got even more pronounced, Jaishankar said growth in trade, commerce, industrial development and technological advancement has gone hand in hand with ease of connecting.

Maritime connectivity, in particular, has played a significant role in creating regional corridors for trade and economic linkages, as indeed for cultural and intellectual exchanges over the centuries, he pointed out and added that they too assume a new prominence in contemporary times, for being more competitive and seamless.

Some OTT platforms show pornographic content: SC

Apex court wants ways to screen programmes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Bengaluru, Shimla most liveable cities in India



Pune, Bhubaneswar 2nd in Ease of Living Index 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

The city ranking based on the Ease of Living Index 2020, was released by Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday. Chennai, Surat, Navi Mumbai, Coimbatore, Vadodra, Indore and Greater Mumbai are the other seven cities that

have found place in the top 10 among the million-plus cities. Of the 49 cities ranked on livability index in the "million-plus population" category, Delhi ranked at the 13th position, Meerut at 36 and Faridabad 40 position and Bareilly, Dhanbad, Srinagar are at the bottom at 47, 48 and 49 position respectively.

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

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

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

Interestingly, no city from West Bengal figures in the ranking list. The assessment exercise was carried out last year just before the lockdown. Performance of the cities have been measured on four broad parameters — governance and social, physical and economic infrastructure.

Hurriyat chief Mirwaiz set free, all curbs lifted by admin

PNS ■ JAMMU

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

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

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

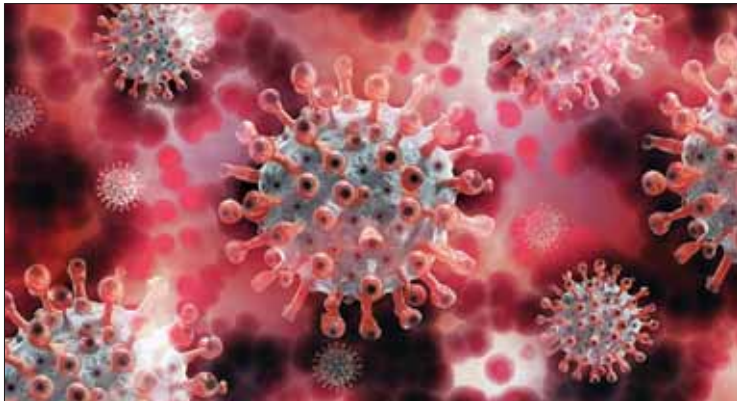
Higher rate of corona recovery if detected within 24 hours

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The best way to stop the spread of coronavirus is to quickly undergo a Covid test once symptoms like cough, cold, fever or other signs surface, the Chhattisgarh Health Department said on Thursday. "People should not take cough and cold medicine without consulting a doctor. Many a time people out of negligence or fear do not go for Covid test and that proves fatal," said Dr R.K. Panda, a pulmonary medicine expert at the Pt Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College here.

In several cases found during the state-level Covid death audit review, it was found that self-medication or taking medicine from non-trained doctors led to serious consequences.

A 54-year-old woman from Tatiband locality in Raipur had cough and fever



since January 31. She took medicine from a local doctor and visited a hospital when she had breathing trouble. She was detected Covid positive on February 7. Due to delay in detection her condition

became serious and she died on February 19.

In a similar case, a 63-year-old man from Janjgir district who had high blood pressure and Covid like symptoms since February 9 and was

hospitalized on February 13 with breathing issues died on February 22.

If Covid is detected within 24 hours, there are 94 percent chances of recovery, said Dr Panda.

International Women Day to raise awareness about legal rights

RAIPUR: A number of events will be organized in Chhattisgarh on International Women's Day on March 8 to create awareness about legal rights of women, battle social evils and honour women excelling in various fields.

The Directorate of Women and Child Development has issued instructions in this context to all District Programme Officers and other officials.

On the occasion, participation of men should also be ensured to eradicate gender discrimination and to create awareness about importance of women in society, an official said on Wednesday.

Budgetary demands of Sahu's Departments passed

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The budgetary demands for 2021-22 for Public Works, Home, Jail, Religious Trust and Endowment and Tourism Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu totalling ₹10,708.91 crores were passed by voice vote in the Chhattisgarh Assembly on Thursday.

The budgetary demands include for PWD ₹5,062.75 crores, Home ₹5,314.52 crores, Jail ₹1,095.85 crores, Religious Trust and Endowment ₹19.73 crores and for Tourism ₹116.05 crores.

Replying to a discussion, Sahu said for better control of religious trusts, state level directorate and division level offices were being constituted for better monitoring and regulation.

He said Chhattisgarh has



potential for wildlife, water and adventure tourism. A total of 139 tourist spots have been identified and their development is underway.

The nine water reservoirs are also being developed as tourist centres.

Sahu said the state has

five central, 12 district and 16 sub jails having a capacity of 13,704 prisoners against which, as of February 2021, there are 19,519 prisoners. Construction of new prisons have been taken up including open jails at Bilaspur, Bemetara, and Raipur districts.

He said unemployed engineers will be taken on job on contract in all PWD works. Diploma holder will get ₹15,000, degree holders ₹25,000 and project managers ₹50,000 a month.

So far, two project managers as well as 64 degree and 34 diploma holders have been deputed, he said. Similarly, at block level, e-category registered youths will be provided works worth ₹50 lakh every year in all departments.

To end Naxalism, a policy of faith, development and security is being adopted, the Minister said.

Asked to cut short speech, BJP walks out of Assembly

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

BJP members on Thursday trooped out of the Chhattisgarh Assembly after the Speaker cut short a party leader who exceeded the time allocated to his party while speaking on the crime situation and the PWD Department's working.

The House discussed the budgetary demands of the Home and Jail, Public Works, Tourism and Religious Endowment Departments.

Speaker Dr Charan Das Mahant ruled at the very start that members should strictly adhere to the time given to them to speak supporting or opposing the budgetary demands.

He said the BJP has been given 30 minutes out of the total three hours allocated to the

members.

BJP's Shivratna Sharma commenced the discussion highlighting what he said were the failures of the Home Department in controlling crime across the state as well as on the shortcomings in the PWD Department.

When he kept speaking for 35 minutes, the Speaker asked him to wind up to allow others to take the floor. He said Sharma had exceeded the time given to him.

BJP members including Leader of Opposition Dharamlal Kaushik said there is a tradition in the House allowing members to speak for a longer period.

When the Speaker refused to relent, furious BJP members said they will not participate in the discussion and walked out.

Will face BJP's fate, Dharamjeet tells Cong

RAIPUR: Coming down heavily on the Congress over its two-year rule, Dharamjeet Singh (JCC-I) warned on Thursday that the ruling party will lose power like the BJP if the budgetary proposals do not get translated into real work.

Singh was taking part in a discussion on budgetary allocation for the Tourism and Religious Endowment Department.

He said every Congress leader speaks of what the BJP did in its 15-year rule but tries to throw a carpet over the two years of Congress administration.

He said people have put the BJP in the opposition and the ruling party

will face a similar fate if work is not done based on budgetary allocation. He pointed out that not a single road has been built as per the allocation made in last year's budget. He urged the Minister to bring the budgetary announcements on to the ground so that the poor benefit.

He urged the repair of Kota-Keonchi road which connects Amarkantak and passes through the Achanakmar sanctuary.

He urged the Minister to develop the Khudiyi reservoir area as a tourist spot like Satrenga, which the British developed in 1930. All the structures there are still intact, he said.



Manendragarh MLA Dr Vinay Jaiswal on Thursday checks Chhattisgarh Assembly Speaker Dr Charan Das Mahant's eyes at a health camp held for MLAs in the House premises. *Pioneer Photo*



With rising temperature, a family enjoys 'kulfis' at Marine Drive (Telibandha Pond) in Raipur.

Pioneer Photo

CAF trooper killed in IED blast in Dantewada

STAFF REPORTER ■ DANTEWADA

A Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) trooper was killed on Thursday when a pressure improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Naxalites went off in Dantewada district, police said.

The incident occurred around 1 pm near Pahurnar village in the Geedam police station area when security forces were giving security to a bridge construction work, Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P said.

Personnel belonging to the

District Reserve Guard (DRG) and CAF launched an area domination drive from the Chhindar police camp for the project on the Indravati river, he said.

"When the patrol team was on the other side of the river, Head Constable Laxmikant Dwivedi (CAF 22nd Battalion) inadvertently stepped over the IED, triggering a blast that left him critically injured," Sundarraj said.

The incident occurred near Pahurnar, some 400 km from Raipur. Dwivedi, from Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, succumbed to his injuries.

Man held for stealing ornaments worth ₹12L



STAFF REPORTER ■ BILASPUR

Chhattisgarh Police on Thursday arrested a man and recovered gold and silver ornaments worth ₹12 lakh stolen from a house in Bilaspur city.

Bilaspur Superintendent of Police Prashant Agrawal told The Pioneer that Sanjay Khare alias Kantha was taken into custody for committing the crime when Abdul Rashid Khan and his family had gone out of town.

When their servant found the main door and almirahs

open and the valuables burgled, he alerted Khan.

Initially, Kantha denied committing the crime but eventually admitted his involvement.

Police said the accused is a habitual offender and he hid in Akaltara, Janjgir, Lormi and Mungeli towns after the theft.

He had earlier committed a similar theft at a policeman's house in Sakri in Bilaspur.

Police recovered gold ornaments including mangalsutra, bangles and a pair of earrings besides silver ornaments from Kantha.

Ruling MLA puts Govt in dock over paddy

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Keshkal Congress MLA Santram Netam on Thursday raised the issue of non-custom milling of last year's paddy while this kharif season's paddy is being lifted for milling.

Backing him, opposition members in the Assembly called it a national loss and said they had also warned that last year's stored paddy is unfit for milling.

Raising the issue during Question Hour, Netam sought block wise details of paddy procurement in 2019-20 and 2020-21 in Kondagaon district, total quantity of custom milled paddy and total balance rice pending with rice millers to be returned to the government.

Food and Civil Supplies Minister Amarjeet Bhagat said that 1.14 tonnes and 1.43 tonnes of paddy were procured in the two fiscal years respectively.

In 2019-20, millers were

given 93,939 tonnes of paddy and they deposited 63,808 tonnes of rice. In the current season till January 18, against 20,256 tonnes of paddy, the millers deposited 10,595 tonnes of rice. The process is underway for lifting the remaining paddy, he said.

Netam said responsibility should be fixed on officials responsible for not milling last year's remaining paddy. The Minister said it is being milled and rice will be taken in the state rice pool.

Leader of Opposition Dharamlal Kaushik said the Minister is misleading the House, saying across the state around 4 lakh tonnes of paddy procured last year is stocked in primary procurement as well as storage centres.

Most of it has been damaged and is unfit for milling. It is a national loss to the tune of ₹635 crores. Will the government hold a verifica-

tion of existing stock, he asked.

There is a delay of nine and a half months for milling after the Central government granted permission. As the Minister could not give a satisfactory reply, the Speaker intervened.

BJP walks out over payment issue

RAIPUR: BJP members walked out of the Chhattisgarh Assembly

on Thursday after Food and Civil Supplies Minister Amarjeet Bhagat did not reply to a specific question on the issue of payment to committees and millers.

During Question Hour, Shivratna Sharma (BJP) sought details of payments made to cooperative committees on expenses and commission by the government for paddy procurement on minimum support price and payment to millers for milling in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

The Minister said payment for 2019-20 has been made to committees

and rice millers while the incidental expenses will be paid after final tallying of the accounts.

Similarly, payment to millers is under process based on the bills submitted. He said based on the guidelines of the Centre, the cabinet sub-committee decides the rate of payment for committees and millers.

Sharma sought details of last year's balance paddy of 4.4 lakh tonnes and called it a loss. This led to a commotion between the ruling and opposition members and BJP members then staged a walkout.



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rahul: Centre carries out raids on pro-farmers people

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Cong blames Modi Govt sans concrete proof, hits back BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

cism against key institutions "weakens democracy".

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

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

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



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

Bhatia asked Rahul to answer questions which BJP president J P Nadda had asked him like the one as "why he doesn't attend Parliamentary Defence Committee meetings?".

"Rahul asks many questions but runs away when he is posed with some basic queries" Bhatia said.

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

hoping Rahul would heed the advice of his party leaders.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Flagging the fast-changing war fighting doctrines all over the world, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat on Thursday said India faces bigger threats than other military in the world and it should prepare to face the twin challenge to its security from China and Pakistan. The country should also undertake reforms in the defence sector, especially to conduct joint battles in digitized battle space, he stressed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

UP Govt has no right to shift don Mukhtar Ansari to Banda jail, Punjab Govt tells SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday was told by Punjab Government and gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari that Yogi Adityanath-led Government has got no fundamental right to seek his transfer from Rupnagar jail to a district jail in Banda in Uttar Pradesh.

The Uttar Pradesh government has moved the top court seeking a direction to the Punjab government and Rupnagar jail authority to immediately hand over the custody of Ansari, an MLA from Mau constituency, to the district jail Banda.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and R S Reddy said that it will pronounce its verdict on the plea of Uttar Pradesh government and petition of Ansari seeking transfer of the cases against him outside the State.

During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for

Uttar Pradesh Government referred to the prison rules and said that though the State does not have fundamental rights, but it can espouse the cause and the fundamental rights of the victims and it may assume the position of the victim.

He said that the submission that the State does not have any fundamental right is wrong as the State can always assume the role of the victim and the society at large. Mehta said that Ansari had flouted the jail manual rules and right of the victim and the State at large cannot be overlooked and the accused cannot be allowed to jettison the fair trial.

He said that this court under Article 142 can order transfer of Ansari from Punjab jail to a jail in Uttar Pradesh as around 14 and 15 cases are at final stages.

HP farmer takes aromatic way to boost income

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



Bioresource Technology (IHBT).

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

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

community in technical collaboration with the Palampur-based CSIR lab in Parwai village, Bhatiyat Block in Chamba.

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

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

ing oil from it.

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

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

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

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

Plea seeks Supreme Court order to Govt to appoint CBI Director



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

The top court granted three weeks' time to all the

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

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

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

Didi may fight from Suvendu stronghold

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

Assembly segment in the 2019 general elections.

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

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

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

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

and NCP, Shiv Sena too has backed Banerjee in the upcoming Bengal Assembly elections.

Calling her the “real Bengal tigress,” senior Sena leader and Rajya Sabha Member, Sanjay Raut, on Thursday said his party would not be contesting what appears to be a “Didi vs All” fight this time. Mr Raut further tweeted, “We wish Mamata Didi a ‘roaring’ success...”

Sena, SP and RJD support notwithstanding, the “BJP will win more than 200 seats” in Bengal, saffron leader Tejaswi Surya on Thursday said adding “Mamata Banerjee’s days as a Chief Minister are numbered... On the 3rd of May, Bengal will have a BJP Chief Minister.”

Referring to the misuse and violence he said, “This is the legacy of the communists which Mamata Banerjee has carried forward but there will be no more bloodshed and political murder” in Bengal “because BJP will have its Chief Minister.”

Remove ‘biased’ Dy EC Sudip Jain, TMC writes to EC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has written to the Election Commission of India seeking the removal of Deputy Election Commissioner Sudip Jain as in-charge of Bengal Assembly elections.

The letter has been written by TMC Rajya Sabha Leader Derek O’Brien who has accused Jain of “bias” towards a particular political party. In the letter, the TMC leader has referred to certain actions taken by the Dy EC ahead of the 2019 general elections.

O’Brien has referred to the steps taken by Jain after the violence during the road show of Home Minister Amit Shah in Kolkata when a half-bust statue of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was vandalised by alleged BJP men. The saffron workers from Shah’s rally had allegedly raided the Vida Sagar College and destroyed the statue fol-

lowing a skirmish with TMC workers.

The TMC leader has written that Jain’s action post violence was “completely biased, partisan, reeked of partiality and tainted.”

In the aftermath of the violence “Sudip Jain furnished an erroneous and biased report based on which, the Election Commission of India in an unprecedented manner, barred election campaigning two days prior to the polling date.

“Only one political party, Bharatiya Janata Party, was allowed to complete its election campaigning for that day before such a bar was announced. No explanation was sought, no show-cause was issued, no action was taken by the Election Commission of India against the perpetrators, ie, Amit Shah or his entourage. Jain’s actions were completely biased, partisan, reeked of partiality and tainted,” O’Brien reportedly wrote.

Jawan’s body found hanging inside sentry post in Srinagar

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

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

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

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

On Wednesday, a 24-year-old Army jawan shot himself dead in Rajouri district and an Army officer of the rank of a lieutenant colonel committed suicide at an Army depot in the Khonmoh area here.



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

PTI ■ AIZAWL

At least 12 people from Myanmar have crossed the Indian border and took refuge in Mizoram around a month after the neighbouring country’s military ousted the elected Government of Aung San Suu Kyi, officials said on Thursday.

Eight people have entered Serchhip district while four others reached Champhai district.

A senior police officer said that the identity of the refugees is yet to be ascertained.

Serchhip Deputy Commissioner Kumar Abhisek told PTI that five people, who include members of a family, crossed the international border and entered the district on Thursday, while three others did so on March 3.

The eight people are currently lodged at a community hall in Lungkawh village, around 8 kilometres from the Indo-Myanmar border, and they were provided with food by the district administration, he said.

He said that details of the refugees are not yet available.

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

The entry of people from the neighbouring country has been communicated to the state Home Department and Home Minister Lalchamliana will issue a statement on the matter in the assembly on Monday, an official said.

More than 100 people from Myanmar also attempted to cross the international border to seek refuge in Mizoram recently, the Champhai deputy commissioner told PTI.



However, they were stopped by Assam Rifles personnel guarding the border, she said.

Assam Rifles Deputy Inspector General Digvijay Singh said that the force was directed not to allow any illegal entry from the neighbouring country.

Zuali said that the state government has recently issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in view of the possible influx of refugees from Myanmar following the coup.

“Although civil society organisations are willing to harbour refugees from Myanmar, the Mizoram government can’t act on its own without the direction of the Centre as it is an international affair,” she said.

Besides, the state government will not have sufficient resources to feed the refugees unless assistance is received from the Centre, she added.

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

EC starts Covid vaccination drive for officers, staff



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Thursday started a Covid-19 vaccination drive for its officers and staff working at the Nirvachan Sadan with former Chief Election Commissioner MS Gill taking the first shot.

Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Election Commissioners Sushil Chandra and Rajiv Kumar will get vaccinated after all officials and staff of the commission are inoculated, an official statement said.

Arora had recently announced that all staff on poll duty for the upcoming assembly elections have been declared as ‘frontline workers’ and will be vaccinated before assuming their election duties.

The vaccination would encourage the poll duty officers to perform their duty without fear of Covid-19, Arora had said. The commission had on February 26 announced polls in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry.

Under the special vaccination drive, lakhs of polling officials in the five states and the union territory will be inoculated before proceeding on election duty, the statement said.

Celebs join TMC ahead of WB polls

Kolkata: A number of celebs — a popular singer, an actor and a actor-director joined Trinamool Congress in poll-bound West Bengal on Thursday.

Popular singer Aditi Munshi, actor Subhadra Mukherjee and actor-director Dheera Pandit joined TMC during the day at Trinamool Bhavan.

Aditi said only TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee thinks or works so much for people in the performing arts

and allied fields. The singer said that she will be at the party’s service in whichever way it deems fit.

Subhadra, a popular small screen actor, said only Banerjee can save the state from the “fast-cast BJP turning it into another Uttar Pradesh.

“If BJP comes to power (in West Bengal) it will decide what you will eat,” she said.

The actor said that she had joined the saffron party in 2019 after hearing Modi’s call of ‘Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas.’ **PTI**

BJP meets EC officials demanding action against TMC MLA Hamidul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A BJP delegation led by Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Bhupendra Yadav on Thursday met Election Commission (EC) officers and lodged a complaint against TMC MLA Hamidul Rehman over his remark at a public meeting made on March 2. The BJP leaders also appealed the EC to remove administrators of local bodies appointed by the state government.

The BJP leaders alleged that TMC MLA Hamidul

Rehman has threatened voters. While addressing a public meeting in Murshidabad, Rehman asked people to vote for TMC and reminded them that those who choose to betray Mamata Banerjee even after enjoying her government’s benefits will be dealt with post-elections. He said that BJP is a party of liars and the left-Congress alliance is of no use. Voting for them would be helping BJP because they are nothing but their stooges. He urged people to not waste their precious votes and go for Trinamool Congress.

“Those who betray Mamata now. Post elections, we will meet them and the game will be played by us,” added Rahman.

In another complaint, the BJP leader stated that that term of 125 municipal corporations in West Bengal including Kolkata Municipal Corporation ended a year ago but the TMC government had appointed party leaders as administrators of these local bodies. The BJP leaders have demanded removal of these administrators to ensure free and fair polls.

Manipur militant outfit kills cadre of another extremist group for murdering minor girl

Imphal: A terrorist of outlawed Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), who escaped from jail in Manipur earlier while undergoing trial in the sensational 2003 kidnapping and murder of an 8-year old girl, was reportedly shot dead by the United Nation Liberation Front (UNLF), media report said on Thursday quoting a UNLF statement.

The 3-page UNLF statement in Manipuri language said that Thokchom Nando Singh was shot dead on Tuesday in an undisclosed location by the underground outfit, who also released photo of his body. The UNLF, one of the oldest militant groups in Manipur, in its statement said that it had “tried” Nando Singh and “eliminated” him for his barbaric crime against the minor girl. **IANS**

TN parties ready to roll out freebies despite State’s huge revenue deficit

IANS ■ CHENNAI

Colour television sets, mixers, grinders, mobile telephones, clothes are some of the freebies rolled out by political parties in Tamil Nadu and has always included these freebies in their election manifestos.

The state of Tamil Nadu is facing a huge deficit with the revenue deficit at 65,994 crores despite being a revenue surplus state a few years ago. The state’s total debt by March 2022 will be around 5.70 lakh crore, a whopping sum by any measures.

Despite all these hiccups and states fortunes nose diving the political parties are on a freebie culture with one party overtaking the other in promising the people with gifts and other freebies.

DMK commenced the

freebie culture in 1967 with the then Chief minister and the towering leader of Dravidian politics, CN Annadurai promising 3 measures of rice for Rupees 1. This had a huge impact and DMK romped home for the first time in Tamil Nadu unseating the Congress government led by Bhakthavalsalam. In 2006 DMK supreme, Muthuvel Karunanidhi announced a highly populist scheme of free colour televisions, 1 kg of rice at 2 rupees, free gas connection and free gas stoves for all women in Tamil Nadu. The DMK won the election easily.

Spokesman of the DMK, Saravanan Annadurai while speaking to IANS said: “These are not freebies but populist schemes and in 2006 when we provided free gas stoves and subsidised gas cylinders it was

a revolutionary decision to provide women solace from spending long hours in kitchen and now the Prime minister Narendra Modi has replicated the same move after so many years.”

There are divided opinions on the Governments dolling out such schemes to the people.

Senior Journalist PK Sreenivasan while speaking to IANS said: “These are populist schemes and not freebies as made out. Studies had revealed that in remote areas of Tamil Nadu after the Colour TV sets were provided by the DMK government, the crime rates had come down. In a similar vein the fixed deposit schemes for the girl child by the TN governments had increased the social indicators for the State.”

Army launches community radio stn in north Kashmir



MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After winning the hearts and minds of the Kashmiri people on ground zero, the Indian Army has now set its eyes on ruling the ‘AirWaves’ too.

To begin with, the Indian Army had initially launched a community radio service in the South Kashmir district of Anantnag more than four months ago. After receiving a huge response from the common masses in the region, senior Army officers then decided to replicate the model and expand its reach among the local masses in the North Kashmir districts as well.

On Thursday, Lt-Gen BS Raju, Corps commander of the Srinagar based Chinara Corps formally inaugurated Radio

Chinar — a Community Radio station dedicated to the peace and development of Kashmir. He said, two more community radio stations are in the pipeline and would be inaugurated soon.

The tagline of the community radio service has been scripted carefully ‘Har Dil ki Dhadkan’.

“The idea is to connect with the masses through this platform and provide an opportunity to the younger generation to find a foothold by showcasing their rich talent, Lt-Gen BS Raju said, explaining the idea behind launching the radio services.

He said through the radio service people across Sopore, Bandipore and Baramulla districts can listen and contribute on a daily basis.

Man strangles 19-year-old daughter living with lover: Cops

PTI ■ JAIPUR

A 19-year-old girl living with her lover after eloping with him within days after her marriage with another person was allegedly strangled to death by her father in Dausa district, police said on Thursday.

Accused Shankar Lal Saini, 50, surrendered to the police soon after killing his daughter Pinki and confessed to his crime, said Assistant Police Commissioner Deepak Kumar.

He said Saini was taken into custody and a case of murder was registered against him at Kotwali police station.

He said Pinki was married to a man against her wishes on February 16 but she returned to her parental home three days later and eloped with her lover Roshan on February 21.

Following her elopement, her father had also lodged a police complaint, alleging abduction of his daughter, the ACP said.

Agriculture census to be conducted in Gujarat this year

PTI ■ GANDHINAGAR

An agriculture census will be conducted in Gujarat this year as part of a pan-India exercise to collect various data related to the key sector, Agriculture Minister RC Faldu informed the legislative assembly here on Thursday.

Faldu said data regarding farmers’ land holdings, collected from the periodic exercise, is crucial for formulating policies for the agriculture sector. “An agriculture census is conducted (across the country) every five years. It was first conducted in Gujarat and in the country in 1970-71 and the last one was conducted in 2015-16, which was the tenth edition of the census.

“Results of the last census were released in 2020,” Faldu informed the House during Question Hour.

He said results are usually published four to five years after the census is conducted.

“The next agriculture census would take place this year (in India and Gujarat). The main aim of the exercise is to fetch data regarding operational land holding, which means the land which is actu-

ally used for cultivation by a farmer.

“The data helps us in formulating agri policies and strategies to boost the sector,” Faldu said.

Citing the past data, some opposition Congress MLAs claimed that the number of small and marginal farmers, who own less than 2 hectares of land, has decreased in Gujarat because of the “wrong policies” of the BJP government.

Countering them, the minister said the number of such farmers has in fact increased.

“The number of (small and marginal) farmers has actually increased as land gets divided between each family member and each one of them becomes a farmer.

“Similarly, land under cultivation has also increased as farmers are allowed to buy wasteland adjacent to their farms and make it cultivable with their efforts,” said Faldu.

Periodic agriculture censuses are the main source of information on basic characteristics of operational holdings such as land-use, cropping pattern, irrigation status, tenancy and dispersal of holdings, among others. **PTI**

AP Govt orders return of 2,180 acres of land to farmers

Amaravati (AP): The Andhra Pradesh Government on Thursday issued an order for returning 2,180 acres of land, which was originally sought to be acquired for the Kakinada Special Economic Zone (KSEZ) way back in 2007, to the farmers following a protracted struggle.

The farmers who owned the land refused to part with their property nor receive compensation and carried out an agitation for many years.

Based on the recommendations made by a six-member committee headed by Agriculture Minister K Kanna Babu, the government ordered that the 2,180 acres of land be returned to the farmers so that the KSEZ could go ahead and industries established.

The Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry notified the KSEZ in the year 2007 for establishing a port-based Multiproduct SEZ spread over several villages under U Kothapalli and Thondangi mandals in East Godavari district.

The KSEZ could not take off as intended because of many unresolved issues, mainly that related to land. **PTI**

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

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

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

This incident took place when the Congress party was in front of the speaker to Oppose the ruling party’s decision to take-up debate on - one nation one election - for two days starting from Thursday.

However, Sangamesh had his own reasons to oppose in this manner alleging that ruling party BJP leaders were harassing his family members and him by filing false complaints against them.

Sangamesh protesting by removing his shirt was similar to a 2010 protest in which Goolihatti Shekhar a minister in Yediyurappa’s cabinet ripped off his shirt in the Assembly and was disqualified.

Furious over the Sangamesh’s way to protest, the speaker Kaageri adjourned the

house soon after and suspended the MLA from Bhadravathi, for a week.

Karnataka leader of the opposition, Siddaramaiah, described the ‘One Nation, One Election’ push as being part of the agenda of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological mentor of the ruling BJP, as his party MLAs raised slogans against the issue.

The idea mooted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after taking office in 2014, many BJP leaders have backed the proposal to hold all elections together, from Lok Sabha to state assemblies and local bodies, arguing that this will orient various elected bodies fully towards development as the current cycle of frequent polls across the country hampers work.

But Congress members decided to protest against the ruling party decision to hold two-day special session on - one nation one elections and trooped into the well in front of the speaker.

The moment, Sangamesh removed his shirt, KPCC president and Congress MLA JN Ganesh who rushed towards him made him wear his shirt besides covering him. **IANS**

Burmese Spring

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

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



passing day as the demonstrations showed no signs of abating.

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

PICTALK



People build barricades to block police in Mandalay, Myanmar

AP

Political gambit?

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

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



the beleaguered party — already facing anti-incumbency and with the odds stacked against it as the State alternates between the AIADMK and DMK Governments — and a major setback to AMMK leader TTV Dhinakaran.

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

Stop romanticising interfaith marriages

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



PRAFULL GORADIA

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

understandably use the word 'jihad' in this context.

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BE SENSITIVE TOWARDS HEARING LOSS

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

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

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

M Pradyu | Kamur

RAHUL IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PAST

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

Congress must correct its course



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

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

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

Bal Govind | Noida

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

Moreover, he put in his papers as the party chief, taking moral responsibility for the Congress' drubbing in the last general elections. On the other hand, it was his personal charisma appealing to the masses that helped the 'Grand Old Party' make a comeback by wresting the States of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh from the formidable BJP.

The realisation of the past mistakes of the Congress comes across as a welcome gesture from this young and charismatic political leader. As the saying goes, "The sins of the parents are visited on the children!"

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

MERGE CHANNELS TO INCREASE VIEWERSHIP

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

SOUND BITE

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

Union Minister

— Dharmendra Pradhan

China is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological

power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system.

US President

— Joe Biden

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

Actor

— Ravi Kishan

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

West Indies captain

— Kieron Pollard

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

Interim Congress President

— Sonia Gandhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

MYANMAR COUP

Protesters, undaunted by killings, march again

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

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

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

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

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



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

AP

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

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

their own sanctions.

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

"And the answer was, We

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

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

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

AP

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

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

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

"It's just the tip of the iceberg," said MIDO executive director Htaik Htaik Aung, who noted that there's "hundreds" of videos of uniformed soldiers and police on the app. A spokesman for the army and junta did not respond to a request for comment.

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

AFP

Stop murdering protesters: UN tells Myanmar military

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

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

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

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

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

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

The UN rights office said it

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

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

The killings have escalated sharply in recent days.

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

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

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

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

AFP

New Zealand man charged over threats to Christchurch mosques

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

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

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

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

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

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

memoration of the March 15, 2019, attacks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP

House passes sweeping voting rights bill over GOP Opposition

AP ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

voting rights champion John Lewis held for years.

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

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

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

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

Sheikh Hasina's political adviser HT Imam passes away

Dhaka: HT Imam, the political adviser to Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, died on Thursday at a military hospital here.

Imam, 81, breathed his last at 1.15 am. He was undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka, Awami League Office Secretary Biplab Barua said in a social media post.

Imam, who was the cabinet secretary to the 1971 wartime government, was hospitalised with various age-related problems, Dhaka Tribune reported.

PTI

Buckingham Palace to probe if Markle bullied staff during her time as frontline royal

London: Buckingham Palace has launched an investigation into allegations that Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, bullied staff during her time as a frontline royal with Prince Harry in Britain.

Markle, 39, lived at Kensington Palace for nearly a year after her marriage to Prince Harry, 36, the Duke of Sussex, in May 2018.

The probe comes as The Times published a leaked email on Wednesday from a staff member alleging that the former American actress drove two personal assistants out of the household and undermined

the confidence of a third member of staff.

"We are clearly very concerned about allegations in the 'Times' following claims made by former staff of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex," Buckingham Palace, which is responsible for all Royal Household staff, said in a statement.

"Accordingly, our HR team will look into the circumstances outlined in the article. Members of staff involved at the time, including those who have left the Household, will be invited to participate to see if lessons can be learned," it said.

Chaos as freed Nigerian girls reunited with families

Jangebe (Nigeria): Hundreds of Nigerian girls abducted last week from a boarding school in the country's northwest have been returned to their families amid chaos as security forces opened fire on a gathering outside the school where the reunions were held Wednesday.

One person died and two were injured in the mayhem, according to local media reports. The forces opened fire after stones were thrown at Government officials, apparently in frustration at the drawn-out procedure, said the reports.

Anxious and angry parents who were reunited with the girls after six days of waiting


grabbed their daughters and left after shots rang out. Many were worried about traveling on the area's dangerous roads at night.

The girls, aged 10 and up, had been abducted from the Government Girls Secondary School in Jangebe in Nigeria's northwest Zamfara state and were released Tuesday after negotiations. Zamfara Gov. Bello Matawalle said that 279 girls had been freed.

Upon their release, the girls were brought to the government's provincial offices, Government House, in Gusau for presentation, before being medically examined and reunited with their families.

AP

		GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA		TENDER NOTICE		
Sr. No.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	PWD B&R, FATEHABAD	CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL ALTERATION OF ICU/HDU IN EXISTING CIVIL HOSPITAL AT FATEHABAD	03.03.2021 24.03.2021	24.71 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01667220120 dalipkambaj1986@gmail.com
2	PWD B&R, PANCHKULA	TENDER FOR THE WORK OF CONSTRUCTION OF PROPOSED MATERIAL AND CHILD HOSPITAL AND SERVICE BLOCK IN THE CAMPUS OF CIVIL HOSPITAL IN SECTOR-6, PANCHKULA.	04.03.2021 24.03.2021	3986.49 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	0172-2920477 pwd-eeep-panchkula@hry.nic.in
3	PWD B&R, REWARI	1. DNIT FOR ICU/HDU OF ADDITIONAL BLOK IN CIVIL HOSPITAL AT REWARI IN REWARI DISTT.+1 OTHER WORK	04.03.2021 25.03.2021	56.09 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01274253703 pwd-eeep-rewari@hry.nic.in
4	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, CHARKHI DADRI	SUPPLY ERECTION & COMMISSIONING OF 3 NO. 10 CS. & 4 NO. 5 CS. FLOOD V.T. PUMPS WITH 15 FEET LIFT ALONG WITH THE 50HP & 30HP MOTORS & 50HP & 30HP ATS STARTERS.	CLOSING DATE 24.03.2021	69.74 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	8199920494 xenlwsmech@gmail.com
5	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA,CHARKHI DADRI	PROVIDING HELPER CHOWKIDAR SWEEPER CUM CXD ELECT. TURNER WELDER DATA ENTRY OPT. CUM CLERK.	CLOSING DATE 18.03.2021	EMD 5 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	8199920494 xenlwsmech@gmail.com
6	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA,ROHTAK	CONSTRUCTION OF PUMP HOUSE ALONGWITH GEO SYNTHETIC MAT AT RD 10574 OF MEHAM DRAIN X-ING KAHNAUR DISTY. AT RD 141025+ 2 OTHER WORKS	CLOSING DATE 17.03.2021	12.36 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01262252658 xenlwsdnrtk@gmail.com
7	DIRECTOR GENERAL, SUPPLIES & DISPOSALS, HARYANA	HIRING OF SUITABLE OFFICE ACCOMODATION MEASURING AROUND (COMMERCIAL) 6000SQ. FT.+20% CARPET AREA REQUIRED BY THIS OFFICE	04.03.2021 19.03.2021	---	https://etenders.hry.nic.in , dsndharyana.gov.in	0172-2570121- 124,2584125,2585125 supplies@hry.nic.in
8	DISTRICT FOOD & SUPPLIES CONTROLLER SONEPAT	TRANSPORTATION AND LABOUR & CARTAGE WORK	05.03.2021 14.03.2021		https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9416687064 dfscsnp@gmail.com
9	CEO,ZILA PARISHAD KURUKSHETRA	WALL PAINTINGS IN 419 VILLAGES (5 NO. WALL PAINTING IN EACH VILLAGE) OF DISTRICT KURUKSHETRA HAVING SIZE OF EACH 10' X 10' MAXIMUM	04.03.2021 10.03.2021	84 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	8572870300 kkrhssbm@gmail.com
10	FOOD CIVIL SUPPLIES AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS CONTROLLER ROHTAK	LABOUR AND CARTAGE TRANSPORTATION	05.03.2021 14.03.2021	15 CRORE	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	dfscroth@hry.nic.in
11	PRINCIPAL GOVT. I.T.I.MEHAULI, GURUGRAM	SUPPLY OF TOOLS, EQUIPMENTS & MACHINERY AT GOVT.ITI, GURUGRAM	03.03.2021 15.03.2021	15.97 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in TENDER NO 2021_HRY_158452_2	gurgson.giti@gmail.com
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in						RO NO. 2048



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Letter No 1167/41M-2/2021 Date: 04/03/2021

INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)
FOR FEASIBILITY STUDY AND CONCEPT PLANNING OF PROPOSED FLY OVER BRIDGE FOR PLANNED TRAFFIC IN HALDWANI CITY

On behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand, Superintending Engineer, 2nd Circle, P.W.D., Nainital (Uttarakhand) invites Expression on Interest (EOI) for the preparation of Feasibility study and concept planning of proposed fly over in traffic congested area of Haldwani City by the eligible, qualified and experienced consultants/ firm(s).

Scope of works:- The scope of work shall include Traffic Survey, Topographical Survey, Concept Plan, Utility Shifting proposal including acquisition of Land and building and Preliminary Project report including estimated cost and general arrangement drawing of traffic congested area of Haldwani City as Teenpani Mandi — Mangal Padao — Kallu Sidh Mandir — Tikoniya (NH-87) and Piliikhothi — Mukhani Chauraha — Kallu Sidh Mandir (SH-41).

The EOI shall include adequate information including their organization details, Relevant Experience of consultancy work executed under M.D.B like A.D.B/World Bank funded project etc. Professional Staff and Annual Turnover and other relevant document in Letter of interest to demonstrate their qualification in the best manner. The short listed consultants/firm(s) will be invited to submit their Technical and Financial Proposal as per Request for Proposal (RFP) for the mentioned works at a later stage.

The EOI shall be submitted in the sealed envelope and must reach the mentioned address not later than 3.30 P.M. on dated 25-03-2021. In case the last day of submission of EOI falls on a public holiday, it shall be submitted on the following working day. The department reserves the right to shortlist or not to shortlist any or all of the consultants/firm(s) without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL
HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR
Telefax :- 0194-2496089, Email Id:- xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

Gist of e-tender
NIT No: MHCHD/TS /2020-21/309/e-tendering Dated: -02-03-2021.
For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of UT of Jammu & Kashmir, e-tenders are invited on item rate basis from Original Equipment Manufacturers or their Authorized dealers/ Registered/ Reputed firms having requisite experience for the below mentioned work:-
Name of Work:- Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 50 KVA of D.G set along with, Cement Concrete Foundation at Govt. Sub District Hospital, Hazratbal, Srinagar.
Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs) :- 5.65
Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees) :- 500
Time of completion (In Days) :- 10
Position of AAA/funds :- AAA Vide No: 118-MCS of 2021, Dated : 01-03-2021
TS. NO :- 110 of 03/2021
1. Downloading of Bids:- The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from **03.03.2021(15.00 hrs)** and can be downloaded from **03.03.2021 (15.00 hrs)**.
2. Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from **03.03.2021(15.00 hrs) to 12.03.2021 (14:00 hrs)** in two (02) covers.
3. Opening of Bids:- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on **12.03.2021 at 16.00 hrs or any date convenient to the Department.**

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
MHCHD, Srinagar

No. DIPK-14404/20 Dated:- 04.03.2021

FDI rises 40% to USD 51.47 bn: Govt data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



industry ministry said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WhatsApp expands voice, video calling to desktop PCs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

"Last New Year's Eve, we broke the record for the most calls ever made in a single day with 1.4 billion voice and video calls. With so many people still apart from their loved ones, and adjusting to new ways of working, we want conversations on WhatsApp to feel as

close to in-person as possible, regardless of where you are in the world or the tech you're using," WhatsApp said.

Minister releases APEN vision document 2021

PTI ■ KOHIMA

Despite being endowed with Promising hydropower and topography, Nagaland's power potentials are yet to be sufficiently exploited and harnessed due to lack of resources leading to an acute shortage between demand and availability of electricity in the state, according to a vision document by APEN.

The 'Vision Document 2021' was presented by the Association of Power Engineers Nagaland (APEN) on the occasion of World Engineering Day organized by the Federation of Nagaland State Engineering Service Association (FONSESA) here on Thursday.

The Vision Document

2021 (VD-2021) was officially released by Minister for PWD (Housing and Mechanical) Tongpang Ozukum during the WED celebration held on the theme "Engineering for a Healthy Planet-Celebrating the UNESCO Engineering Project Resilience".

On infrastructure development, the vision document said that the number of consumers in the state as of 2020 is 2,99,825 with the peak and off-peak demand being 179 MW and 120 MW respectively while the energy consumption is 854 MU.

It said the state's energy demand is predominantly met from the central sector allocations (90%), and own generation contributing approximately 10 per cent only.

Sensex, Nifty drop over 1 pc amid global equity retreat

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

Asian and European markets tumbled as another rise in US bond yields fanned fears of higher inflation that may prompt central banks to raise interest rates.

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

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

with 38 of its constituents ending in the red zone.

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

"Farmers as far as from Meghalaya are now able to export their crops to countries like South Africa because they listed products on our platform," Ruchit Garg, Founder and CEO, Harvesting, said:

Prices are decided by the farmers and orders are fulfilled by farmers themselves

Prices are decided by the farmers and orders are fulfilled by farmers themselves.

"For buyers, it provides not only access to the largest selection of crops under a single roof at attractive prices, but also provides a seamless experience of purchasing agri-produce in wholesale including the booking of transportation, quality check on the ground, legal contract, escrow of funds etc," the company said.

Harvesting India Pvt Ltd was founded in 2018 to drive financial inclusion for small-holder farmers.

India wearables market grows 144.3% in 2020: IDC

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Driven by record shipments of wearables and watches, the India wearables market posted 144.3 per cent year-over-year (YoY) growth in 2020, exiting the year with 36.4 million unit shipments, industry tracker International Data Corporation (IDC) said on Thursday.

India was the only country in the top 20 to see triple-digit growth in wearables in 2020 and continues to be the third-largest wearables market globally, showed IDC Worldwide Quarterly Wearable Device Tracker. 2020 was a year of transition in the audio segment from wired to wireless devices," said Jaipal Singh, Associate Research Manager, Client Devices, IDC India.

"In 2021, this category will further migrate to more sophisticated devices with enhanced audio experience being the central theme for all vendors," he added. Earwear device shipments grew more than three-fold in 2020 compared to the previous year, mainly driven by the affordable launches, and expanding use cases beyond entertainment like virtual meetings and e-learning requirements.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



HIMANSHI

General public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo), **Name:** Himanshi D/o Mr. Mukesh Meena R/o 128/1, DCM Railway Colony, Kishan Ganj, Karol Bagh, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 27.02.2021 from the area of P.S. Desh Bandu Gupta Road, Delhi. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 52/21 u/s 363 IPC dated 27.02.2021 has been registered at Police Station Desh Bandu Gupta Road, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

Age: 13 Years, **Height:** 4', **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** White colour jacket and dark brown colour top & black colour half pant.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing/kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, Desh Bandu Gupta Road, Delhi at E-mail Id - cic@cbl.gov.in or Website: <http://cbl.nic.in>

Phone: SHO 011-24368638, 24368641 P.S. Desh Bandu Gupta Road, Delhi Central Distt., Delhi Fax No. 011-24368639 Ph. No. 011-23613252, 23537374 DP/681/CD/2021

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



SHO

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a unknown male **Age:** 40 years, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Height:** 5'7", **Built:** Thin, **Face:** Round, was wearing Grey colour Shirt and Dark colour Lower, was found at Hari Nagar Clock Tower, Hari Nagar, Delhi dated 22.02.2021 and admitted in DDU Hospital vide MLC

No. 1868/2021. During the treatment he was declared dead by doctor on 24.02.2021. In this regard a DD No. 76A, dated 24.02.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Hari Nagar, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO P.S. Hari Nagar, Delhi **Ph.:** 011-28125719, 8750871128 DP/355/WD/2021

OPEC cartel, allies face decision on increasing oil output

AP ■ FRANKFURT

Members of oil producer cartel OPEC and allied countries are weighing an increase in production now that prices have recovered to near their pre-pandemic levels.

Their online meeting on Thursday takes place against the background of more confidence that prices have steadied, offset by concern that the spread of new variants of the coronavirus could easily hurt demand.

The so-called OPEC Plus - which includes countries like Russia that are not part of the cartel but have been coordinating production in recent years - made deep cuts in output in 2020 to stave off a complete collapse in prices.

It decided to add back 500,000 barrels per day in December, and analysts say it's possible the gathered ministers could raise production by another 500,000 barrels per day.

A big question ahead of the meeting is whether Saudi Arabia, the kingdom among member countries, will withdraw any of the voluntary 1 million barrels per day in cuts that it announced at the January meeting, a move that startled oil markets and sent prices higher.

"The group still has a self-

imposed cap of not raising the target production by more than 500,000 barrels per day on a monthly basis, which does not include the return of the extra 1 million barrels per day of Saudi Arabian cuts, which would come on top," said Bjornar Tonhaugen, head of oil markets at Rystad Energy.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to all that our client Mr. Kamal Kumar Son of Late Sh. Damodar Dass R/o E-52 Jhilmil Colony Delhi-110085 aged about 68 years, have severed all his relations with his son Mr. Varun Dutta aged about 32 years and his daughter-in-law Mrs. Vidya Dutta aged 29 years as they do not take care of our client Mr. Varun Dutta and Mrs. Vidya Dutta have the habit of showing bad attitude and behaving badly with our client and are also not ready to look after him. By their bad and selfish attitudes they have made the life of our client miserable and pitiable. Therefore our client has declared and disowned Mr. Varun Dutta and Mrs. Vidya Dutta from all of his movable and immovable properties.

HARISH CHAND ADVOCATE
CHAMBER NO. 92, PATIALA HOUSE COURT
NEW DELHI-110001

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that Share Certificate(s) No. 21757 for 1480 Equity Shares of Rs. 2/- (Rupees Two only) each bearing Distinctive Number 2610381 - 2611120 and 85462041-85462780 of DCM Shriram Ltd., New Delhi, registered in the name of Ajay Arora has / have been lost. Has / have applied to the company to issue duplicate share certificate(s). Any person who has / have any claim in respect of the said shares certificate(s) should lodge such claim with the company at its Registered Office at 2nd Floor (west wing) Worlmark 1, Aerocity New Delhi-110037 within the 15 days of the publication of this notice, after which no claim will be entertained and the company will proceed to issue duplicate Share Certificate(s).

Name: AJAY ARORA **Date:** 4/3/2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform all that we are going to close the company Naya Bazar Chit Fund Pvt. Ltd. having registered office at 26/36, East Patel Nagar, New Delhi. If anybody have any objection please inform within 15 days.

WESTERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM

Tender Notice no.: (1) Tender Notice no VP-2021-01-01-02955 dated 18.02.2021 (2) Tender Notice no VP-2021-01-02951 dated 18.02.2021 Wrong Date published earlier for closing of tender online: Closing of Tender online at www.irops.gov.in on 06-03-2021 at 15.00 hrs. Correct Date to be read for closing of tender online (Corrigendum): Closing of Tender online at www.irops.gov.in on 16-03-2021 at 15.00 hrs.

Like us on [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly)

Wipro to buy UK firm Capco for \$1.45 billion

FIANS ■ BENGALURU

Global software major Wipro said on Thursday that it has signed an agreement to acquire the UK-based management and technology firm Capco for \$1.45 billion (Rs 10,551 crore) to provide digital, cloud and IT services to financial institutions in the US, Europe and Asia-Pacific.

"The acquisition will make us one of the largest consulting, technology and service providers to the banking and

financial services industry," said the city-based IT behemoth in a statement here. The acquisition is expected to close in the quarter ending June 30, 2021.

London-headquartered Capco's clients include the mar-ques in the global financial services industry.

"Capco has 5,000 consultants based in 30 global locations to support clients with their expert insights, entrepreneurial approach and focus on delivery excellence," said the statement.

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

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

1. Name of the work:- CONSTRUCTION OF BOUNDARY WALL WITH GATE & TILES WORKS AT KABRISTAN VILLAGE - PANDARI, BLOCK - SITARGANJ (UDHAM SINGH NAGAR)

2. Estimated Cost:- Rs. 53.85 lakh 3. Period of Completion:- 04 Month

4. Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:- 04.03.2021 (17.00 hrs) 5. Last date/Time of receipt of bids in the portal:- 30.03.2021 (17.00 hrs)

6. Date & Time of Technical bid Opening:- 01.04.2021 (12.00hrs)

7. Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid:- Er. Om Prakash, Collectorate Compound, Rudrapur (Udhham Singh Nagar). 8. Pre-bid meeting details (if required) Date & Place:- 10.03.2021 (13.00 hrs) Rudrapur. For further details, details of subsequent Amendment/correction documentation etc. may obtained from the e-Procurement portal www.uktenders.gov.in - **PROJECT MANAGER**

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



Simran

General public is here by informed that this girl (depicted in the photo) namely: **Simran D/o Titu R/o H.No. E-1287, JJ Colony, Bawana, Delhi** has been missing/ kidnapped from her house since 05.02.2021 at 4:00 PM. In this regard FIR No. 49/2021 Dated 05.02.2021 U/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Outer North District, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue

has come to light so far. Her physical description is as under:-

Sex: Female, **Age:** 17 years, **Height:** 4'6" ft., **Complexion:** Fair, **Built:** Normal, **Wearing:** Blue Color Suit Salwar and Yellow Dupatta and White Shoes in feet, Any person is having information or clue about this missing/ kidnapped girl may kindly inform to the following:- **SHO**

Website: <http://cbl.nic.in> **P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi**

E-mail: cic@cbl.gov.in **Ph. No:** 011-27787592

Tel. No.: 011-24368638/24368641 **Mob. No.:** 7065036324

Fax No.: 011-24368639 **DP/802/ON/2021**

Appeal for Identification



SHO

General public is hereby informed that one person **Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** 60 Yrs., **Height:** 5'6", **Sex:** Male, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Hair:** Small Grey, **Face:** Oval, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Red line and White Colour T-Shirt and Blue Colour Lower, **Place of Recovery:** Found dead on

28.02.2021 in front of Mohan Singh Place footpath near Baba Kharak Singh Marg in the jurisdiction of P.S. Connaught Place, New Delhi.

In this regard DD No. 18A, Dated 28.02.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Connaught Place, New Delhi. Any clue come to notice please inform undersigned. **SHO**

P.S. Connaught Place, New Delhi **Ph.:** 011-23364139 & 8750870525

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client HDFC Ltd. who had disbursed a Loan to Mr. Taj Mohammad, against the mortgage of Property being Unit No. Plot No. 362, Khana number 1942/2, Khanna Nagar, Loni, Ghazipur, U.P. has come to the notice that the original property documents viz Sale deed dated 18.01.86 registered at Doc. No. 1487, executed by M/s Khanna & Sons Pvt. Ltd. through its authorised representative Shri Amichand Khanna in favour of M/s Durga Builders Pvt. Ltd. through its authorised representative Shri Ravindra Kumar Nanda, Sale deed dated 06.10.86 registered at Doc. No. 31802, executed by M/s Durga Builders Pvt. Ltd. through its authorised representative Shri Ravindra Kumar Nanda in favour of Mr. Kuldeep Rai Kapoor. Sale deed dated 12.11.97 registered at Doc. No. 2339, executed by Mr. Kuldeep Rai Kapoor in favour of Mr. Ravindra Saini and Sale deed dated 11.06.01 registered at Doc. No. 8214, executed by Mr. Ravindra Saini in favour of Mr. Taj Mohammad are not traceable. It is hereby appealed to the general public that whosoever finds any of the documents mentioned here in above may kindly return the same to the HDFC Ltd., The Capital Court, Murlika, Outer Ring Road, Old Palme Marg, New Delhi - 110067.

Karnail Singh, Advocate
Ch. No.153, Saket Court Complex, New Delhi-110014

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

The general public is hereby informed that an unidentified person about 30 years of age whose name, residence, and family is unknown had been found dead below Ghazipur pool, Delhi. In this regard, a vide has been registered with DD No: 46A, dated 02.03.2021 at PS Ghazipur, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to identify the deceased person, but no clue has come to light so far.

The description of the UIDB is as under:
Sex: Male, **Age:** about 30 years, **Height:** 5'5", **Complexion:** Dark, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Strong, **Wearing:** Blue colour Jacket, black colour jeans and barefooted. If anyone has any information about his relatives, kindly inform the SHO/ Ghazipur, Delhi.

E-mail: cic@cbl.gov.in **SHO** **Ph.:** 011-24368638, 24368641 **P.S. Ghazipur, Delhi.** **Fax:** 011-24368639 **Ph. No. 011-22610068, 22610094** **DP/409/ED/2021**



BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

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

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

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

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

According to 'The Unlock

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

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

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

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



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

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

■ Individuals and NGOs must come together to take the initiative of raising funds for relief distribution to promote craft businesses and keep the tradition of handicrafts alive.

■ Since the crafts sector is slowly losing its grip, steps should be

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



LFW, FDCI to present joint fashion week

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Don't put a tag

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

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

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

Addressing fellow team captains like Aakriti, Neha,



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

about time that we start addressing everyone equally and give deserved accolades regardless of their gender."

(The show airs every Saturday and Sunday at 8 pm on Zee TV.)

TREND TOOL

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

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

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

◆ **The mystical land of Kumandra**

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

◆ **Southeast Asian influence**

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

◆ **Work from home**

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

(The film releases today.)

TREND BLAZER



SHREYA GHOSHAL ANNOUNCES PREGNANCY

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

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

fairtalk RAVI KISHAN



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

dailytalk VAANI KAPOOR



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

CHEYENNE NO LONGER CRAVES ALCOHOL

Actor **CHEYENNE JACKSON** has revealed that staying off alcohol during lockdown required effort but his life is better off without it.

"The craving for alcohol has been lifted. Our lives are better (without alcohol) and we find something else to do. And it usually involves being with the kids, doing something to get your mind out of that," says he,



FOR THE LOVE OF OATS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

and Vitamin B1 and B5.

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

benefits of including oats in the diet.

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

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

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

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

(The writer is the founder of *Oatoo Oats*.)



Mix it up

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

R E C I P E S

DUCK UPPU KARI

WHAT YOU NEED

For marination:

- Duck meat cut into small cubes: 1000 gm
- Ginger and garlic paste: 1.1/2 tsp
- Turmeric powder: 1/2tsp
- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Salt to taste
- Gingelly oil: 100 ml
- Dry red chilli: 2
- Garlic chopped: 20 gm
- Green chilli slit: 4
- Shallots onion slice: 250 gm

- Coriander powder: 3 tsp
- Fennel powder: 1 ½ tsp
- *Garam masala*: 1/2 tsp
- Black pepper powder: 1 tsp
- Curry leaves: 10

METHOD

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



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

- Heat oil in a heavy bottomed pan, add mustard seeds and red chillies. When mustard starts spluttering, add chopped garlic and sauté until golden colour.
- Add green chilli slit and onions and sauté until onions get translucent.

- Now add marinated duck till the meat is seared and moisture evaporates.
- Stir in the dry spice powders including coriander, fennel, *garam masala* and red chilli.

- Add enough water and simmer covered with a lid on moderate to low heat occasionally stirring.
- When the duck is cooked

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

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

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

VANILLA BEAN BUNDT CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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



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

- Make sure to scrape down the sides in between. Using a metal spoon, fold in the flour mixture carefully, so as to not knock out the air that's been whisked in.
- Spoon the mixture into the greased bundt tin and then smooth the top.

Then bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until

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

- Leave the cake to cool in the tin for 15 minutes, then turn out on to a wire rack to cool completely.

- Add on edible flowers to decorate, if you'd like. Cut into slices and serve with whipped cream and fresh strawberries or any other berries you'd like.

Courtesy: Chef Tanaya Sharma.

YAM FISH CURRY IN GOA ORGANIC MASALA

WHAT YOU NEED

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

tbsp

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

METHOD

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Serve hot with rice or millets.

Courtesy: ORCO



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

@ICC/Twitter

Pollard hits 6 sixes in an over

AFP ■ COOLIDGE

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

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

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

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

Pollard was eventually out for 38 off 11 balls as the West Indies chased 132 to win at the Coolidge Cricket Ground, reaching their target in the 14th over when Jason Holder clobbered his side's 13th six.

"I felt I could hit six sixes after the third one," said 33-year-old Pollard.

"Once I had five sixes I knew I had the bowler on the back foot. He was going around the wicket and it was difficult for him. I just told

myself: 'Go for it'."

Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews hailed his opposite number. "Pollard as we know is very destructive," Mathews told the post-match presentation.

"What I told Akila was to go for his wicket even if he gets hit for six sixes. If he miscued one we could have got him out. Unfortunately it didn't happen."

Only eight men have hit six sixes in an over in all forms of cricket with fellow West Indian Garfield Sobers the first to do so in an English county game in 1968.

Axar, Ashwin undo Poms batting graft

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England's batsmen lost the battle of both mind and skills in yet another shoddy performance to surrender the momentum to India with Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin calling the shots on the opening day of the fourth and final Test here on Thursday.

After five innings, England crossed the 200-run mark but a total of 205 in 75.5 overs was certainly not what Joe Root had expected when he called it right at the toss on a day which would have ideally been best for batting.

There was turn and bounce but the pitch was far from being a minefield that some of the England batsmen save Ben Stokes (55, 121 balls) made it out to be.

For India, spinners Axar Patel (26-7-68-4), Ravichandran Ashwin (19.5-4-47-3) and Washington Sundar (7-1-14-1) toyed with the already messed up minds, clueless on how to deal with the conditions.

Mohammed Siraj (14-2-45-2) also played his part to perfection with the semi-new and old ball, hurrying the batsmen with sheer pace as he did with Jonny Bairstow.

India ended the day at 24 for 1 with wily old James Anderson (5-5-0-1) accounting for an out-of-form Shubman Gill (0). Rohit Sharma (8 batting, 34 balls) and Cheteshwar Pujara (15 batting, 36 balls) were holding fort for the home side.

A cursory look at the England line-up, loaded with an extra batsman, will reveal that four — Stokes, Bairstow (28, 67 balls), Dan Lawrence (46 off 74 balls) and Ollie Pope (29 off 87 balls) got starts but failed miserably on the conversion part.

The others came in and went without breaking a bead of sweat. It was as if already in their minds, they were playing on a track they thought would turn square.

Stokes was a cut above the rest both in defence and offence before a moment's indecision cost him his wicket.

Washington angled one in



Axar Patel celebrates with his Indian teammates after he takes wicket of England batsman on Day 1 of 4th Test

PTI

4th Test. Day 2
Live from 9:30am IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

eries have scarred the English batsmen, was again menacing in the first session with Siraj giving him good support.

Stokes and Bairstow, during their 48-run stand, showed that if one can trust their defences, batting wasn't impos-

sible. Both played the spinners close to their body on most occasions and especially on the front-foot.

But on a track like this, no batsman would feel completely set and that's what happened with both Bairstow and Stokes.

Siraj enjoyed Root's dismissal

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Perfect execution brings with it an inherent satisfaction which India speedster Mohammed Siraj felt after dismissing England captain Joe Root on the opening day of the fourth Test on Thursday.

Root was trapped before the wicket by Siraj, who bowled a beautiful inswinger which would have hit the middle and leg stump.

"I wanted to set Root up bowling away going deliveries. And then I thought during the start of a new over, I should bring one back in. I could execute it as I had planned and it gave me great satisfaction. *Mazaa aa gaya* (It was fun)," Siraj said about dismissal.



Similarly, he had done his homework on Jonny Bairstow's apparent weakness against in-coming deliveries. The in-cutter that got Bairstow was bowled at more than 146 kmph.

"Bairstow, I wasn't bowling him at a lot of pace at the start. ...But whatever footages

I have seen of him, he gets out to in-swinging deliveries. So I wanted to bowl in one area and bring it back consistently and it worked," he said.

His skipper Virat Kohli on the day mostly used him in short bursts and the plan was to hit one area consistently in order to create pressure.

"Since the time of Ranji Trophy, we learnt one thing that we have to bowl good areas and especially one area without trying too many things. It's all about being patient."

"Virat *bhai* just told me to bowl one area and try build the pressure. Ishant *bhai* also said that don't try too many things because when you build pressure, then automatically you get wickets."

Sindhu, Srikanth & 2 others in Swiss quarters



PTI ■ BASEL

Olympic Silver medallist P V Sindhu and former champion Kidambi Srikanth advanced to the quarterfinals of the singles competition along with two other Indians at the Swiss Open badminton tournament here on Thursday.

While Sindhu and Srikanth had contrasting wins, Ajay Jayaram and last edition's runners-up B Sai Praneeth too dished out superlative performances to make it to the last-eight in the Super 300 event, the first tournament in the extended Olympic qualification period.

It was double delight for young Satwiksairaj Rankireddy also as he progressed to the quarterfinals in both the mixed doubles and men's doubles competitions with respective partners Ashwini Ponnappa and

Chirag Shetty.

World champion Sindhu hardly broke any sweat, beating USA's Iris Wang 21-13, 21-14 in women's singles, while former world number one Srikanth notched up a 21-10, 14-21, 21-14 victory over world number 50 Thomas Rouxel.

Jayaram eked out a hard-fought 21-18, 17-21, 21-13 against third seed Dane Rasmus Gemke.

Praneeth, an Olympic hopeful, later saw off Spain's Pablo Abian 21-12, 21-17 to join others in last eight.

Satwik and Ashwini, who had reached the semifinals at Toyota Thailand Open Super 1000 in January, defeated the Indonesian combination of Rinov Rivaldy and Pitha Haningtyas Mentari 21-18, 21-16 in a mixed doubles second-round match.

Satwik and Chirag, ranked 10th in the world, then dashed the challenge of Indonesia's Pramudya Kusumawardana and Yermadya Erich Yoch Jacob Rambitan 21-17, 20-22, 21-17 to also make it to the last eight.

However, Sourabh Verma had a rough day as he lost 17-21, 14-21 to Vitidsarn to crash out of the men's singles event.

Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy too were ousted after losing 11-21, 15-21 to Denmark's Amalie Magelund and Freja Ravn in the women's doubles second-round.

SA appoint new Captains

Bavuma gets limited-overs charge, Elgar to lead in Tests

Johannesburg: Cricket South Africa on Thursday appointed Temba Bavuma, who is rather inexperienced for the role, and Dean Elgar as the national team captains for limited overs and Tests respectively.

In a statement, CSA Director of Cricket Graeme Smith thanked Quinton de Kock for leading the side in what are tumultuous times for South African cricket. Both Bavuma and Elgar take over from de Kock, who led the team temporarily.

"We are grateful to Quinton for the work he has put in as captain of the team in the limited overs formats and are indebted to him for stepping up while the National Selection Panel continued its search for the Test captain," said the former South Africa captain.

Bavuma has played 44 Tests, six ODIs and 8 T20s for South Africa while opening batsman Elgar has played 67 Tests and eight ODIs. Bavuma will lead the Proteas in the 2021 and 2022 T20 World Cups as well as the World Cup in 2023. Elgar will take the reins into the next cycle of the World Test Championship. PTI



PTI ■ BUENOS AIRES

Nagal stuns world No 22 Garin

India's Sumit Nagal registered the biggest win of his career when he stunned second seed Cristian Garin of Chile in straight sets to enter the quarterfinals of the Argentina Open ATP 250 tournament here.

Nagal, ranked 150, produced high-class

tennis on Wednesday night to register an impressive 6-4, 6-3 second round win over his Chilean rival, who is ranked way above at the 22nd spot in the ATP chart.

Nagal will play Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas, in what will be the Indian's maiden quarterfinal appearance at the ATP Tour level.

Ramos-Vinolas had defeated Dominik Koepfer of Germany 7-5, 6-4.

SANIA OUSTED

Sania Mirza's first tournament in more than a year ended with a semifinal defeat

as she was ousted from the Qatar Total Open along with her partner Andreja Klepac, here on Thursday.

Sania and her Slovenian partner lost 5-7, 6-2, 5-10 to America's Nicole Melichar and Dutch player Demi Schuurs in one hour and 28 minutes.

Sania and Klepac split \$10,000 and earned 185 ranking points each. Since Sania was not defending much points, it will help her improve her ranking.

Sania will break back into top-200 and is expected to climb to the 177th spot from the current 254.

Dhoni in Chennai; CSK camp from Mar 9

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has landed here to take part in the team's training camp likely to begin on March 9 in the lead-up to the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League. The former India captain arrived here late on Wednesday and will serve a five-day quarantine.

CSK tweeted a picture of Dhoni at the airport and wrote: "Thalai-Vaa! Smile with the Mass(k) on! Super Night! #DenComing #WhistlePodu #Yellow."

Former India batsman Ambati Rayudu also reached Chennai on Wednesday while the Tamil Nadu players in the squad will be joining a little later.



"First #Dencoming of the summer from across the border is Manavaadu Babubali!!! #Yellove #WhistlePodu," CSK posted with a photo of Rayudu.

The camp is likely to get underway from March 9, CSK CEO K S Viswanathan said, adding the players who are available would take part in it.

"Yeah...The camp is likely to start from March 9. Whoever is available would take part in the training sessions," he said.

"The players will undergo five-day quarantine before they start training. Also, they will have to return three negative tests..." he added.

The Indian players in the CSK will be a part of the camp, he said, adding they would be arriving in batches.

Barca return to Copa del Rey final



AFP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona needed extra-time to reach the Copa del Rey final on Wednesday, with a 3-2 aggregate win over Sevilla com-

ing just two days after a police raid on the club and the arrest of their former president.

Having trailed 2-0 from the first leg, Danish international Martin Braithwaite hit the cru-

cial goal in the fifth minute of extra-time with a diving header off a Jordi Alba cross.

Gerard Pique had equalised in the fourth minute of stoppage time with virtually the last play of the game to save Barca.

The veteran international headed in at the near post after a fine cross from Antoine Griezmann.

That was after Ousmane Dembele, who scored in the 2-0 win at Sevilla in La Liga at the weekend, had given the 30-time Spanish Cup winners a 12th-minute lead in the second leg with a right-foot drive from outside the area.

Sevilla could have killed the game off in the 73rd minute

to deny Barca their place in the final for a 42nd time.

They were awarded a penalty when Lucas Ocampos was brought down by Oscar Mingueza. However, Ocampos saw his tame right-foot effort from the spot saved by Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

Flagger Sevilla were then reduced to 10 men in injury time when Brazilian Fernando was red-carded for a foul on Francisco Trincao.

"The team deserved to qualify," said Barca coach Ronald Koeman. "This is a very important result for the club, for the players, and for me of course as well. This is an important step in earning a title."

Man Utd, Leicester drop more points

AFP ■ LONDON

Manchester United were left a huge 14 points behind Premier League leaders Manchester City as Crystal Palace held them to yet another goalless draw on Wednesday.

The stalemate at a foggy Selhurst Park was United's third successive goalless draw in all competitions ahead of Sunday's Manchester derby against City, who are on a record-breaking 21-game winning streak.

Elsewhere, third-placed Leicester had captain Kasper Schmeichel to thank for a point in a 1-1 draw at Burnley. Aston Villa missed the chance to move to within two points of the top four as they suffered a shock 1-0 loss to bottom-of-the-table Sheffield United, who held on for the final half an hour with 10 men.

A point in south London left second-placed Man United just one ahead of Leicester, with the main aim now for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side to cling on to a top-four place that will secure Champions League football next season.

"We have to do much better, we have to risk more in attack to create more chances," United midfielder Nemanja Matic, who almost broke the deadlock with a deflected shot, told Sky Sports.

"We are Manchester United, we have to win this kind of game. On Sunday we have a big game against Manchester City. We have to refocus for that."

Leicester's challenge for a return to the Champions League next season has been badly hit by injuries to key players, with Chelsea, Liverpool and Everton all able to close in on the Foxes — who

have not won in their last three games — when they are in action on Thursday.

MILAN SALVAGE POINT

Franck Kessie scored a 97th-minute penalty to rescue a 1-1 draw for AC Milan at home to Udinese on Wednesday, giving Serie A leaders Inter Milan the chance to pull six points clear at the top.

Rodrigo Becao's second-half header at the San Siro completely deceived Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma and Stefano Pioli's faltering side looked destined for a third defeat in four games.

But a needless handball from Udinese substitute Jens Stryger Larsen offered Milan a lifeline, with Ivorian international Kessie converting the penalty with the final kick of the match.

Elsewhere, Robin Gosens, Jose Luis Palomino, Luis Muriel, Josip Ilicic and Aleksei Miranchuk all scored for Atalanta in a 5-1 rout of bottom club Crotone.

SINGLES

PSL POSTPONED AFTER 3 MORE TEST +VE

KARACHI: The Pakistan Super League was on Thursday postponed with immediate effect after three more cricketers tested positive for Covid-19, taking the total number of cases in the T20 event to seven and prompting the cricket board to announce an inquiry into the fiasco. Out of the seven cases, six are players while one is a support staff member. PCB CEO Wasim Khan said an inquiry will be conducted to understand what went wrong.

PANGHAL LOSES IN BOXAM QUARTERS

NEW DELHI: World championship Silver-medallist Amit Panghal (52kg) on Thursday bowed out of the 35th Boxam International Boxing Tournament after being upstaged by European Games champion Gabriel Escobar in the quarterfinals. The Olympic-bound Panghal, went down in a split verdict to make a surprisingly early exit from the tournament.

SHARATH KAMAL LOSES IN PRE-QUARTERS

DOHA: Indian challenge at the World Table Tennis Contender series ended after veteran Sharath Kamal suffered a loss to world No 7 Lin Yun-Ju of Chinese Taipei in the men's singles pre-quarterfinals here on Thursday. The 38-year-old Indian suffered a 6-11, 4-11, 8-11 defeat against Lin. Earlier, Manika Batra and Sreeja Akula also lost their respective final qualifying round matches in the women's singles category.

LIVERPOOL TO PLAY LEIPZIG IN BUDAPEST

NYON: Liverpool and Leipzig are going to Budapest for a second time in the Champions League round of 16 next week. UEFA confirmed on Thursday that Liverpool's home second-leg game will also be at Puskas Arena next Wednesday.

NEERAJ IN LINE FOR BRONZE

ROME: India's Greco Roman wrestler Neeraj kept himself in contention of a Bronze medal in the 63kg but four of his compatriots faded on the opening day of the UWW Ranking Series event on Thursday. Neeraj began by losing his quarterfinal 1-4 to Sultan Asetuly but since the Kazakhstan's wrestler reached the final, he got a repechage round. Making the most of the chance, Neeraj defeated Russia's Aleksei Tadykin 7-3 to book himself a slot in the Bronze play-off.

LEIPZIG REACH GERMAN CUP SEMIS

LEIPZIG: Yussuf Poulsen and Hwang Hee-chan netted second-half goals as RB Leipzig beat Wolfsburg 2-0 in Wednesday's German Cup quarter-final in a tense battle between the in-form Bundesliga sides. After Poulsen opened the scoring, South Korea striker Hwang came off the bench to hit a late second goal and seal a semi-final berth alongside Borussia Dortmund and second-tier Holstein Kiel.

LILLE WIN TO STAY AHEAD OF PSG

PARIS: Canada forward Jonathan David scored two late goals as Lille beat Marseille 2-0 to stay top of the French league. David netted in the 90th minute and again two minutes into injury time on Wednesday. The northern side remains two points ahead of defending champion Paris Saint-Germain, which won 1-0 away to Bordeaux.

24 HOURS OF LE MANS POSTPONED

PARIS: The 24 Hours of Le Mans has been postponed from its original dates in June until August in the hope fans will be able to attend, organisers announced on Thursday. The race, which was held behind closed doors due to the coronavirus pandemic last year, was scheduled for June 12-13, but has been pushed back until August 21-22.

Agencies