

**MONEY 6****PETROL, DIESEL PRICES STEADY  
EVEN AS CRUDE BOILS****WORLD 7****POPE FRANCIS, IRAQ'S TOP SHIA  
CLERIC HOLD HISTORIC MEETING****SPORT 8****OUR BENCH STRENGTH  
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# sunday pioneer

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## BJP pits Suwendu against Didi

**Bharati Ghosh, pacer  
Ashok Dinda in BJP  
list of 57 candidates****SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**

The high-profile Nandigram Assembly seat will see a titanic clash in the West Bengal polls with the BJP fielding Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's former close aide Suwendu Adhikari against her. The BJP on Saturday released the first list of its 57 candidates for the first two phases of Bengal Assembly elections starting from March 27.

The list released a day ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Brigade rally in Kolkata carries the names of the party's star campaigner Suwendu Adhikari who will contest from the high-profile seat of Nandigram against

**Mamata Banerjee.**

The other two notable names on the list are former India pacer Ashok Dinda, who will contest from Moyna in East Midnapore, and former IPS officer Bharati Ghosh, who will take on another retired IPS officer Humayun Kabir from Debra Assembly seat in West Midnapore.

The saffron outfit announced candidates for all but three of the 60 seats which will go to polls in the first two of the eight-phase elections that will start from March 27 and end on April 27. One seat of Bagmundi in Purulia district has been left for alliance partner AJSU.

Adhikari who reached

Nandigram from Delhi — to a rousing welcome by party supporters shouting Jai Shri Ram slogans — hours before the list was published by the party top brass in the national Capital, attacked the Chief Minister for remembering Nandigram during the elections time only.

"She is a rank outsider here and I am the Bhumiputra (son of the soil)... she remembers Nandigram that catapulted her to power in 2011 only when the polls are round the corner... the people of Nandigram have decided to teach her a lesson," said Adhikari, who has already vowed to defeat the Chief Minister by half-a-lakh votes.

Reacting to his statements, senior TMC leader Saugato Roy said, "The Trinamool does not want to talk about traitors who have stabbed in the back of Mamata Banerjee. The people will give him a befitting reply."

Adhikari, a former MP and State Minister left the TMC in December last year. He had been the Man Friday of the Bengal Chief Minister handling the party organisational affairs in about a dozen districts before he left the party.

Mamata had released the list of Trinamool Congress candidates on Friday. The TMC released the list for all the 291 seats and left three seats for alliance partner Gorkha Janmukti Morcha. The Left too had released its list of candidates for the first two phases on Friday.

## Trivedi joins BJP; right man in right party now: Nadda

**Former Union Minister Dinesh Trivedi joins BJP in the presence of the party president JP Nadda in New Delhi on Saturday**

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**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Ahead of the West Bengal Apolls, former Railway Minister and Trinamool Congress Member of Parliament Dinesh Trivedi on Saturday joined the BJP.

BJP president JP Nadda welcomed him into the party's fold claiming that Trivedi crossed over not on account of "opportunism" but for the "ideological reasons".

The 70-year-old Trivedi maintained that he has switched sides to "serve the country better".

"This was the golden moment I had been waiting for," Trivedi said after joining the BJP at party headquarters here in the presence of Nadda and Union Minister Piyush Goyal.

Trivedi resigned his Rajya Sabha and Trinamool membership on February 12, saying he felt "suffocated" because of the violence in West Bengal and his inability to do anything about it. Alluding to 'parivar' in West Bengal, he said after joining the BJP he felt being with the "janta parivar".

## Adopt world-class systems, PM exhorts defence forces

**Modi addresses  
Combined  
Commanders'  
meet in Guj****PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Urging the defence forces to keep pace with rapid advancements in war fighting capabilities all over world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday asked them to "rid themselves of legacy systems and practices that have outlived their utility and relevance."

Making this observation while addressing the Combined Commanders' Conference in Kevadia, Gujarat, Modi also conveyed his appreciation for the "resolute dedication" shown by the armed forces over the past year in the context of the corona pandemic and the challenging situation on the northern border with China.

He stressed the importance of enhancing indigenisation in the national security system, not just in sourcing equipment and weapons but

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits an exhibition of innovations by our armed forces during Combined Commanders' Conference at Kevadia, in Narmada district**

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also in the doctrines, procedures and customs practised in the armed forces, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Modi was briefed by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) about the discussions during this year's conference, the statement said. He particularly appreciated the inclusion of Junior Commissioned Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers this year.

Incidentally, this was the first time that personnel below

officer rank were part of the high-level meeting held annually. The jawans shared their views on operational matters with the top military leadership besides the Prime Minister.

Emphasising the need for planning in both military and civilian parts of the National security architecture, Modi also called for a "holistic approach, focused on breaking down civil-military silos and on expediting the speed of decision making."

## CM announces Delhi Board of Education for holistic learning

**All-year round  
assessment to  
end rote learning****STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday announced the setting up of the Delhi Board of School Education (DBSE). It was approved in a meeting held by the Delhi Cabinet on Saturday.

Kejriwal said the DBSE will conduct assessments throughout the year to develop holistic learning outcomes instead of the once-a-year assessment that focuses on rote learning.

"The DBSE will empower students to stand on their own feet and prepare students to take responsibility for their country beyond all religion, caste, and class differences. Around 20-25 schools will become a part of the Delhi Education Board in the 2021-22 academic session, after which the other schools will be looped in eventually in the next 4-5 years. The Delhi Education Board will not only conduct continuous assessments but

**Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal announces for the establishment of Delhi Board of School Education on Saturday**

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will become a torchbearer for change in education, he added.

The Chief Minister further said, "Our students will progress towards global education. The Delhi Education Board will function in close alignment with national and international boards. The Board will develop world-class education practices that will enable the shift in teaching-learning practices across Delhi. Through the DEB, an age-old practice of rote learning will be replaced with application-based learning and assessment. The Board will ensure that each student's talent is harnessed, and they apply what they learn."

"In the present education

system, we assess a student at the end of a year for 3 hours but in the new education board, we will assess students throughout the year to develop holistic learning outcomes. Today, the entire system of education focuses on rote learning — this has to change and an emphasis has to be placed on 'understanding' and 'personality development'. The students would not be assessed once, at the end of the year. On the contrary, the assessment process would go on throughout the year," he added.

Kejriwal said, "This international level board is being created for which aid would be sought from various international organisations as well. International practices and teaching methods have been analysed, based on which we would adopt similar practices and methodology in the Delhi schools under DBSE. High-end techniques would be used to impart education, and for the assessment process as well. The interest, need and specialisation of each student would be taken into account by the education system to provide insights on what courses they should opt for concerning their career.

## Remove Modi's photo from jab certificates in poll-bound States: EC

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

In the run-up to Assembly Elections in four States and a Union Territory, the Election Commission (EC) has asked the Centre to remove Prime Minister Narendra Modi's picture from coronavirus vaccination certificates being offered to beneficiaries in these States.

The EC directive came after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress registered a complaint saying that it violates the Model Code of Conduct.

In its letter to the Health Ministry, the EC referred to certain provisions of the Model Code related to the use of advertisement at the cost of the public exchequer. The direction to the Ministry does not mention Prime Minister Narendra Modi's name but says the Ministry has to follow the Model Code of Conduct in letter and spirit.

The Government may have used filters to hide the PM's picture from the certificate, which could take some time for the Ministry to fully implement

these directions on the certificates given to those who take the Covid-19 vaccine in poll-bound West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry.

The poll body had first asked the Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal for a report on why Modi's photo was being used on vaccination certificates generated through the Co-WIN platform. The CEO responded by informing the poll panel that the vaccination drive was a Central scheme. The panel then took up the matter with the Health Ministry and sought its response on the "factual position" on the use of the photographs. In its reply, the Ministry said the vaccination drive was an ongoing Government initiative that had started much before the Model Code of Conduct came into force.

The Mamata Banerjee-led party had approached the poll panel this week, citing violation of the model code as PM Modi's image reflected on vaccination certificates generated through the Co-Win platform.

## CAPSULE

**PAK PM IMRAN KHAN WINS TRUST VOTE**

**Islamabad:** Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday comfortably won a trust vote in the National Assembly amid Opposition boycott, bolstering his Government's position after an embarrassing defeat in this week's Senate elections.

**NOTED KANNADA POET NSL BHATTA NO MORE**

**Bengaluru:** Noted Kannada poet, critic and translator NS Lakshminarayana Bhatta died here early on Saturday. He was 84 and was suffering from age related ailments.

**RAPE VICTIM SET ABLAZE DIES OF BURNS IN JAIPUR**

**Jaipur:** A 30-year-old rape victim who was allegedly set on fire at her home in Rajasthan's Hanumangar succumbed to her burn injuries at Jaipur's SMS Hospital.

## Farmers block KMP to mark 100th protest day

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

Farmers protesting the Centre's three farm laws on Saturday blocked the six-lane Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway at some places in Haryana to mark the completion of 100 days of their agitation at the Delhi borders.

The road blockade began at 11 am and continued till 4 pm. Farmers holding black flags and wearing black armbands and some women protesters with black "dupattas" shouted slogans against the BJP-led Government for not acceding to their demands.

Protesters in Sonipat and Hajar districts and some other places brought their tractor-trolleys and other vehicles and parked them in the middle of the KMP Expressway in some stretches.

**Farmers during Kisan Ektta Morcha protest at KMP Expressway near Kundli in Haryana on Saturday**

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The Haryana Police had made arrangements for traffic diversions and deployed adequate personnel.

The call for blocking the expressway was given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of protesting farmer unions which is spearheading the agitation against the legislations.

## 150 Rohingyas detained in J&K for illegal stay

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU**

In a major crackdown on Illegal immigrants staying in Jammu & Kashmir more than 150 Rohingyas have been detained at a holding centre in Sub Jail Hiranagar at the end of the verification process of their travel documents.

According to official sources during the special drive conducted at the Maulana Azad stadium in Jammu on Saturday police authorities verified travel documents and collected biometrics of large numbers of illegal immigrants including Rohingyas from Myanmar.

During the verification process the stadium was kept out of bounds for local media persons and none were permitted to enter the premises.

## Spinners demolish England

**PTI ■ AHMEDABAD**

Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin once again made a mockery of an eternally confused English batting line-up as India cantered into the inaugural World Test Championship final with a resounding innings and 25 run victory on the third afternoon of the fourth and final Test here on Saturday.

All India needed was a draw to book a Lord's date in June with Kane Williamson's New Zealand but Patel (24-6-48-5), in company of Ashwin (22.5-4-47-5), literally blew England away in a session and half for a paltry 135 in 54.5 overs to complete a 3-1 rout, ensuring that the Anthony De Mello Trophy will stay at the Cricket Centre in Mumbai.

**Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli holds the trophy after defeating England during the third day's play of the 4th and last test match of the series between India and England, at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday**

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HOME THEATRE

Big disappointment



**COMING TO AMERICA 2**  
**Amazon**  
**\*ing: Eddie Murphy, Arsenio Hall, Jermaine Fowler, Wesley Snipes, James Earl Jones**  
**Rated: 3/10**

It is not only strange but bizarre that a movie's sequel would be released 33 years after the prequel. However, what is even worse is that while *Coming To America* (the original) directed by John Landis and based on a story originally created by Eddie Murphy was a rom-com that managed to keep one engrossed in the film — at the end it was a love story, part two is anything but funny or even remotely romantic in

nature. Unless one considers a few scenes spent on two young people talking alone with one of them aspiring to open a salon of her own.

Here she befriends a prince no less and supposedly in love and her dream is to open a salon of her own!

One does manage to get over this rather strange dream but what one can't get over is the unfunny dialogues. Not only are the risque, the hand gestures are even worse. And what the hell was Wesley Snipes thinking when he agreed to this boggles the mind. It does oblivate his better work — *Blade* series comes to mind.

Directed by Craig Brewer and produced by Kevin Misher

and Eddie Murphy, this sequel may have started off on a good note but unfortunately all it manages to do in the 110 minutes is make you cringe.

May be Murphy thought that revisiting the original that had a cult following would be a great idea but all he manages to do is makes one wonder why he needed to do this in this horrible manner that take away from its prequel.

*Coming To America*, the must awaited film ends up disappointing and is a huge bore.

Watch only if you have nothing else to do and want to catch up on the stars of the original movie.

— Shalini Saksena

Riveting true story told well

**MURDER AMONG THE MORMONS**

**Netflix**  
**\*ing: A true-Crime**  
**Rated: 5/10**

Off late Netflix has been releasing true-crime sagas. Take for example *The Night Stalker* or *The Cecil Hotel* that recently found their way on the OTT platform. However bizarre or strange such docu-movies may be, one can't shy away from the truth that they are absolutely riveting and unfold rather brilliantly. It could stem from the fact that if there is a murder and then another coupled with a Church in the middle of it all, facts and and how the investigation proceeds are bound to be filled with intrigue and throw up a few suspects.

*Murder Among The Mormons* relate to a true investigation into twin blasts that killed two people in Salt Lake City, Utah, US. These murders were unlike anything that came to light in the October of 1985. May be because it relates to religion, murder and deception — a lethal combination.

The three-part mini-series — each of approximately 46 minutes — is paced out well with part one giving the history of the town where the blasts occurred, the people who live here and the Mormon Church and the history of the Mormons — a religious group that embrace concepts of Christianity and revelations made by their founder, Joseph

Smith. They primarily belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Of course, the intrigue is already there and the next two part are all about the build up up to the murders and who and why they were killed in the first place.

Though the entire mini-series manages to keep one's interest — anything related to the Church is more so if it involves debunking the faith of the people and making them question the very basis on which the Church stands. It is the second half of part three that makes one sit up straight and watch as the master criminal emerges — a criminal who has perfected his craft since he was a only a teenager.

How he not only managed to dupe the Church but his friends and wife without remorse or guilt for his own gain; a power hungry Mark Hofmann — regarded as one of the most accomplished forger in history. He is infamous for forging documents related to the history of the Latter Day Saint movement. What is more interesting to know is that one doesn't know how many of his forged yet authenticated documents are still in circulation.

Hofmann was given life sentence with no parole since it was found that he felt no guilt or remorse for what he had done. He is now in Central Utah Correctional Facility in Gunnison, Colorado, US.

— Shalini Saksena



Plan Your Day

**Treat for all women**

**Venue:** All MOD Outlets

**When:** March 8, 2021

**Time:** 1 pm onwards

Age is just a number! Well, the greater the number, the sweeter your treat at Mad Over Donuts. Mad Over Donuts has consistently managed to delight its customers with its new launches and festive offers. They are at it again and this time, the surprise is bigger and better!

Mad Over Donuts is celebrating women's day in order to thank the contribution of women to the society by running a “celebrate your age” campaign. Simply walk into any Mad Over Donuts store on Women's Day to get a treat of their fresh, handmade donuts and get a discount that is equal to your age. That's a sweet treat that's hard to beat, is it not?

Mark your calendar right away and set up a date with your girl gang. After a rollicking day out and about, end it on a delectable note with some of the scrumptious donuts offered by Mad Over Donuts.



**Celebrate womanhood**

**Venue:** Horizon Plaza- Artisanal Market, Sec-43, Golf Course road, DLF Phase-5

**When:** March 7, 2021

**Time:** 3:30 PM-8:30 pm

This Women's Day, let's celebrate the #Womanhood by appreciating the efforts of our all inspiring women, who empower the Artisanal Market. Join us on Sunday browsing especially curated Artisanal products and produce by our Women Founders, Chefs, Bakers at one of its kind Artisanal Market, handpicked by PC.

Well! your weekend mornings just got healthy with a dose of refreshing handpicked homegrown products at Artisanal Market Handpicked by PC.

Shop and mingle with passionate home bakers, food curators and urban farmers who grow, produce and hand-craft breads, jams, honeys, turmeric, cakes and other eclectic cuisines from different parts of the world with natural ingredients and a whole lot of love.

Get a freshly brewed coffee

or a smoothie, select your fruits and veggies to cook your favorite dish. Stock up natural honey, masala and pickles from different regions of India. Bring your friends and family and to enjoy artisanals flavours.

Flower lovers take home some fresh flowers from our special lady “Phuloon Ki Rani” by Rani Chadha, the 80 year-old entrepreneur. Home chefs get ready to shop your favorite food stuff from our different stalls.

Look no forward, spend this weekend with your family and friends at Artisanal Market and make your day.



TELLY TALE

**MANISH DONS EUNUCH LOOK**

Zee TV's second season of its immensely successful weekend thriller *Brahmarakshas* has been keeping the audience hooked with the gripping account of the *rakshas* who has returned with twice as much power and is on a mission for immortality. Having enthralled the viewers with unpredictable twists and turns in Kalindi's life, the show recently took a two-year leap, bringing in a package of surprises for its viewers. While a grieving Angad (Pearl V Puri) is seen mourning the loss of his beloved Kalindi (Nikki Sharma) who he believes has died as a result of his own actions, Kalindi's look alike — Chandni enters as the modern *cherni* and is set to bring much chaos in his life. Amidst all of this, actor Manish Khanna who earlier played a pivotal role in the show is all set to return, this time in the character of a eunuch.

Having previously portrayed the character of Jwala, the *tantric*, Khanna will now be seen playing the role of his transgender brother, Irawat who bears a connection with the Brahmarakshas and enters as the new villain in Angad's life and unknowingly in Chandni's life too. The actor couldn't be more thrilled to have returned with yet another interesting character and in fact will be seen donning a look similar to Bollywood actor Ashutosh Rana's character in Sangharsh.

Sharing his thoughts, Khanna said: “From the numerous roles that I have essayed on television, this character is one of the most unique and challenging ones I have had to play until now. I was required to bring a considerable change in my body language and even practise a bit of voice modulation to bring out the perfect essence of this role. Ashutosh Rana, who has been a dear friend became my immediate source of reference when it came to styling this character. He played the role of a eunuch in the film Sangharsh and I absolutely loved his performance including the way his character was showcased. We have tried to bring out a similar look in my character while bringing in a few unique and creative elements to the appearance as well. I just hope the viewers love this comeback of mine.”

**YASH TURNS RUDE TO PRANALI**

An actor has to look 100 per cent natural on screen, even if he has to act angry, drunk, insane or even a *yogi*. Yash Tonk has been a method actor and has been known to give his takes naturally for every scene in just two takes maximum! While he is known to play comic characters in the past, it was easy for him to deliver in comedy scenes, but what happened when he had to deliver his part in a serious role like Brij Kishore in Sony TV's *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye*.

To look natural and to not scare off Pranali with his harsh tone and loud pitch, Yash Tonk rehearses his harsh fighting

scenes with Pranali prior to the final take. Those are the scenes where he has to act in a negative zone or even raise his voice on his on screen wife, Tonk could not do that in just the final take without rehearsing it because he considers Pranali as his dear friend. While rehearsing their quarrel scenes, Pranali eases out Tonk saying it's okay to raise his voice on her or even take a rude tone with her for a particular scene to look flawless.

Talking about these quarrel sequences, Tonk says: “I might be a method actor, but I'm a soft hearted person too when it comes to my friends and family. Pranali has become a dear friend ever since we started shooting for *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye*. I don't feel like raising my voice at her even for a scene. So for the final take to be flawless, I rehearse my harsh fighting scenes prior to the final take. She eases me out and asks me to yell at her even if that's what the scene demands.”

**SHAAN'S VIRTUAL ANTAKSHARI**

In a clutter-breaking format innovation, Zee TV launched the world's first-ever music league championship Indian Pro Music League (IPML) on February 26, 2021. 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, AkritiKakar, Payal Dev, Neha Bhasin, Shilpa Rao are captains of these six zonal teams.

After the epic opening ceremony, the six teams are ready to battle it out and the first set of league matches have kicked off. The upcoming episode has a Kishore Kumar theme and during the shoot, Bengal Tigers captains Shaan and Akriti Kakkar gave a spectacular performance to the song *Mere Saamne Wali Khidki Mein*. Right after the act, Shaan shared an emotional memory of his father while speaking to host Karan Wahi about Kishore Kumar. The Bengal Tigers captain mentioned how he lost his father — music composer Manas Mukherjee, in October 1986, but just before that, the legendary composer had written his last song *Ei Jiboner path soja noy jeno* that was sung by Kishore Kumar. The song came out later, but it was a big deal for the whole family, as Shaan revealed: “I felt that if Kishore Kumar is singing a song written by my father, I am sure my father was a well-known man. I have this one last image of them together, where I am walking behind my father and Kishore da. It was raining and they were discussing this song. It's a sweet memory I have of both of them.”

After this sweet revelation, Shaan also kicked off a virtual *antakshari* with ace musicians like Lisa Mishra, Amit Trivedi, Babul Supriyo and others joining in to sing a few Kishore Kumar classics. But wait till you see the mega battle between UP Dabgangs and Bengal Tigers. Shaan, Akriti's and their team will come out all guns blazing as they face off Ankit Tiwari, Payal Dev and their team.

**MEHER & SIDDHI'S MAHASANGAM**

Colors' latest show *Bawara Dil* has won the audience's heart with its captivating drama and powerful storytelling. The show is about two strong personalities Siddhi (played by Kinjal Dhamecha) and Shiva (played by Aditya Redij) who hate each other yet are brought together by destiny. While fate brings them together, the two vow to destroy each other.

In the current track of the show, Shiva and Siddhi are at loggerheads as Siddhi throws a stone inside Shiva's house and breaks his TV after being upset with his behaviour. She seeks help from Meher from *Choti Sarraaarni* (played by Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia), who help her with some useful advice and motivates her. Meher gives her the much-needed courage to do the right thing.

Commenting on the Mahasangam episode, Dhamecha said, “As a viewer, I have enjoyed watching *Choti Sarraaarni* and I truly admire Nimrit. When I heard that we are going to shoot the *Mahasangam* episode together, I was excited as I knew it will be a great learning experience for me. We are very excited for the episode and I hope that our viewers are too.”

**SPOTIFY PRESENTS SUPERHEROES**

When it comes to Indian epics such as the Mahabharat or Ramayan, the familiar faces of Krishna, Ram or Hanuman hold dear to many of us. The fascinating characters of these books have come to excite, captivate and inspire generations of readers. However, these mythological tales record thousands of heroes and heroines, with many either overlooked or whose feats simply remain unheard. Spotify's newest podcast *Superheroes of Indian Mythology* spotlights the gamut of these larger-than-life characters — both big and small.

What popular culture refers to as “supporting roles”, often turn out to have the most interesting stories to tell. Let's look at unique names who played a pivotal role in history.

Bheeshma, revered as the eighth son of Goddess Ganga, was a learned scholar and one of the greatest examples of an honorable, loyal, duty-bound commander.

Karna, famously referred to as Suryaputra or Sun's son, is one of the more complex characters of the Mahabharat. There's much more in the list.



‘Crime stories don’t bother but astonish me’

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with MANOJ TIWARI about why he chose to come on board &TV’s latest offering Mauka-E-Vardaat, a lesson that he learnt while hosting these shows and how such stories leave him astonished

■ **What made you come on board &TV’s Mauka-E-Vardaat?**

I was on look out for a show that creates awareness among people and this show fits best in the criteria. Also, I was missing my screen appearances and with this show I got to do both. Hence, I decided to take it up.

■ **How is this show different from all the other crime-based shows?**

I don't know what other shows are doing, but with this show our aim is to show the audience real stories and bring out the truth. However, our bigger aim is to teach people to stay alert and create awareness. This is what I think is the USP of this show.

■ **What kinds of stories will be shown?**

We will be showcasing shocking stories wherein the culprit has taken to such impossible ways of committing crimes that it becomes hard to understand it. Once the audience will see the show, they will get to know how strangely crimes have been committed.

■ **You haven’t been a part of many crime-based shows. Is there a particular reason?**

Yes, I don't want to take up a show for the sake of it. I want to resonate with it. It should have something interesting to offer. For this particular show, I have two other people with me — Ravi Kishan and Sapna Choudhary — I believe all three of us can make this show a huge success and do good to people by creating awareness.

■ **Is there a lesson that you learnt while being a part of such shows?**

Definitely. When I was doing my previous shows, I realised that I would have not been able to understand the different facets of life and gather so many different thoughts by reading a 100 books that I have learnt during these shows. There is one line that I always remember: *Abhi samaaj mein log apni twarit safaltaon ke liye vyakti aur vastu mein farq karna bhulte jaa rahe hain* (people have forgotten to differentiate between people and things for their own benefits). This holds true and I hope people start

One such story left me shocked. It is about a group which would take fingerprints of dead bodies at the crematorium and used them for getting fake IDs. When they were caught committing a crime, it was revealed that the identities they were using were of people who died years ago

realising what is more important and learn to differentiate between good and bad.

■ **Did getting to know so many crimes so closely bother you in any way?**

We are narrating the stories that have already happened with the aim of informing people about ways to safeguard themselves and their families. I don't get bothered by it. But yes, I do get astonished with such stories.

■ **What makes crime-based shows so popular?**

People love to see a story that can shock them up. This is not imaginary, hence the interest level goes even up. The interest factor also depends on how a show has been shot and who is narrating these stories. If the person telling these stories holds a value in the minds of the people, the audience automatically wants to see more such stories.

■ **Was there a case that left you shattered?**

There is one such story that left me shocked. It is about a group which would take fingerprints of dead bodies at the crematorium and used them for getting fake IDs. When they were caught committing a crime, it was revealed that the identities they were using were of people who died years ago I told my team that it is important to put across such stories. The team too agreed and told me it has to be done in a way where people take lessons from it and stay alert. This story will be shown in *Mauka-E-Vardaat*.



# No vials of vaccine stolen, says Official

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
BEMETARA

Bemetara district Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr Satish Sharma said on Saturday denied that nine vials (90 doses) of Covishield Vaccine against Covid-19 have been stolen at the Community Health Centre (CHC) at Navagarh in Chhattisgarh.

He described as "misleading" and "baseless" reports about the theft circulating in the social media.

In an official statement, Dr Sharma said that he along with the District Immunization Officer conducted an inspection and stock verification at the Cold Chain Point at



**Nine vials were found extra at the Bemetara store and that by mistake, on Feb 26, they were not given to the CHC at Navagarh**

Navagarh and the District Vaccine Store at Bemetara. It was found that nine vials were found extra at the Bemetara store and that by mistake, on February 26, they were not given to the Community Health Centre at Navagarh, leading to the confusion.

Dr Sharma said there is no possibility of theft of vaccine.

## Women to get free pass on March 8 to watch cricket



**RAIPUR:** Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday announced that to mark the International Women's Day on March 8, women will get free pass that day to watch the Road Safety Cricket World Series match here.

He has directed the district administration to make the necessary arrangement at the Shahid Veer Narayan Singh International Cricket Stadium.

To create awareness on road safety, the tournament will be played from March 5 to 21. India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, England, South Africa and West Indies Legend teams are participating.

The semi-finals will be played on March 17 and March 19 and the final on March 21.

# Vaccination aims to break Covid-19 chain: Specialist

**STAFF REPORTER ■** RAIPUR

Amid the global pandemic, the priority is to bring down the mortality rate and break the chain of Covid-19's spread. Vaccination is a step towards it, said Dr Sridhar Ryavanki, Health Specialist, UNICEF, on Saturday.

Interacting with the media personnel on the rollout of the vaccine in Chhattisgarh, he said Covishield vaccine has been administered in the state as its government had rejected Covaxin on grounds of non-completion of the third phase of trials.

Asked about the difference between Covishield and Covaxin vaccines, Dr Sridhar said both have been made after following all due processes.

The corona virus disease 2019 (Covid-19) is actually caused by SARS-CoV-2, a type of coronavirus. The vaccine is prepared using different parts



of the virus, he pointed out. He said both vaccines are safe but it is being used for an emergency situation. The virus

will remain and so safety measures like hand washing, sanitizing and social distancing must be made a habit.

## Woods valued at ₹1L seized



**STAFF REPORTER ■** RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Forest Department on Saturday seized precious woods valued at Rs 1 lakh during a raid in the Dhamtari Forest Range.

Officials seized precious teak and Bija woods from the house of

Romlal in Chargaon village, said Dhamtari Division Forest Officer Satovisha Samajdar.

On Friday night, Romlal had managed to escape by taking advantage of the darkness when the Forest department seized five planks of teak wood from his accomplice Kavilal.

## Five of family found dead in Chhattisgarh

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
DURG

A father and his son were on Saturday found hanging in the same rope from an iron rod in their house while three burnt bodies of women family members were found nearby in a village in Chhattisgarh's Durg district.

After being alerted by locals, police found the bodies of Ram Brij Gayakwad (52), his wife Janki Bai (47), son Sanju Gayakwad (24) and daughters Durga (28) and Jyoti (21) in Bathena village, Durg Additional Superintendent of Police

Pragya Meshram told The Pioneer.

The father and son were found hanging on the same rope while the three ladies were found dead on a heap of hay outside their house.

A cyber cell, a dog squad and a forensic team went to the spot and more details would be available after the post-mortem, the officer said.

Prima facie, it seems to be suicide but police are investigating the case from all possible angles, she added.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu ordered IG Intelligence and Durg SP to probe the incident.



A pair of rose-ringed parakeet tearing the bark of a tree to prepare a nest at Amleshwar area in Raipur.

Pioneer Photo

# 'Arthritis drug cuts death risk in severe Covid patients'

**■ IANS**

Arthritis drug tocilizumab has been found to reduce the risk of death among patients with severe Covid-19 in a phase 3 trial conducted in India.

However, the findings, published in the journal The Lancet Respiratory Medicine, does not support the routine use of tocilizumab in adults with Covid-19.

the other 90 received only standard care.

Steroids and remdesivir once allowed by the MoHFW, were administered to patients in both groups.

While there was no difference in mortality and need for ventilation among the two groups of patients when moderate and severe categories of patients were considered together, a subgroup analysis of the severe

important gap in knowledge on Covid treatment and gives a clear direction on the timing of tocilizumab in Covid treatment.

"This research is instrumental in giving the medical fraternity clarity on when to use TCZ in Covid," said Naresh Trehan, Managing Trustee of the Medanta Institute of Education and Research, and Chairman & Managing Director, Medanta.



Explaining the results, the National Lead investigator and Chairman of the Medanta Liver Institute, Arvinder Soin said that this was the first phase 3 study to demonstrate that while routine use of tocilizumab on all hospitalised Covid patients was not warranted, the drug improved survival among patients with severe Covid-19.

Several well known public and private tertiary care hospitals from 10 Indian cities participated in the study.

A total of 180 patients were recruited, 90 of whom received tocilizumab (TCZ) and standard care, whereas

patients in the two groups showed a lower mortality (8/50; 16 per cent) among those who received Tocilizumab compared to those who did not (14/41; 34 per cent) at 28 days.

Tocilizumab was shown to be safe as the reported adverse events did not differ between the tocilizumab and standard care arms, said Soin.

Elaborating on the use of tocilizumab, Soin said given the conflicting results of the previous studies, millions were wasted last year on indiscriminate use of tocilizumab, since the exact stage of the disease in which to use the drug was not clear. So, this study plugs an

"We have demonstrated that, even during a pandemic, it is possible to conduct a randomised controlled trial despite the multiple challenges and constraints encountered".

In their paper, the investigators brought out the difficulties encountered in conducting trials during the pandemic.

They were impeded by challenges such as changing standard care, administration of off-label treatments, rapidly evolving understanding of pathogenesis and treatment, multiple trials competing for participants, media hype, and the publication of non-peer reviewed reports.

## AIIMS 'Prosthesis and Orthosis Workshop' on Mar 9

**RAIPUR:** The 'Prosthesis and Orthosis Workshop' will be held at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on March 9, starting at 4.00 pm.

Prof. Dr Nitin M. Nagarkar, Chief Executive Officer and Director, AIIMS Raipur, will be the Chief Guest. The Special Invitee is Shahla Nigar, the Chhattisgarh State Disability Commissioner and Secretary, Department of Social welfare, an official communication said on Saturday.

The Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, AIIMS, now caters to all persons with disabilities as well as patients having rheumatological, neurological or chronic painful conditions.

The Prosthesis and Orthosis Workshop will help usher in newer research in the field.

On the inaugural day, the first few patients will receive appliances (artificial limb or caliper) free. After inauguration, the workshop will charge minimally to recover only the cost of raw materials.

## Two held for killing woman, mom over property row



**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
RAIPUR

Police on Saturday arrested a 40-year-old man for killing his sister-in-law (brother's wife) and her mother over a property dispute in a village near Urla Industrial area on the outskirts of Raipur. His father was also arrested.

Raipur Senior Superintendent of Police Ajay Kumar Yadav told The Pioneer that both Bhagat Ram Tandon (40) and his father Ramsahay Tandon (80) have been charged with murder. They had a running

dispute over an ancestral property.

On Saturday morning, Bhagat Ram entered into an argument with his sister-in-law Sunita over constructing a septic tank outside her house.

During the row, he attacked Sunita with a spade. When Sunita's mother Kamla Bai Gendre tried to stop him, Bhagat Ram attacked her too in a fit of rage. Both women were killed.

The villagers informed the police, who arrested Bhagat Ram. His father was also taken into custody for instigating his son.

## Two child marriages axed in Surajpur

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
SURAJPUR

The administration on Saturday foiled two child marriages in Surajpur district of Chhattisgarh.

A team led by Child Protection Officer Manoj Jaiswal got information that a child marriage was taking place in Karuti village in Odgi block.

The team reached Karuti and found the bride to be 16 years old. The officers tried

to persuade the girl's family not to marry her. Her parents first did not agree but bowed down after being threatened with jail, a press release said.

The groom was 20 years old. Both sides were advised not to proceed with the wedding.

In another case in the village, the family of a child bride fled after dismantling the marriage 'mandap' after being tipped off about the arrival of the team.

**कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता, लोक निर्माण विभाग वि/यां संभाग रायपुर ( छ.ग. )**

**ज्ञाप क्रमांक 1366 /व.ले.वि.** रायपुर, दिनांक 04/03/2021

**शुद्धि पत्र**

निविदा सूचना क्रमांक 1064/NIT-49/2020-21/व.ले.वि. दिनांक : 22/02/2021 में निम्नानुसार संशोधन किया जाता है:-

1) निविदा क्र. T0468 (कुल 01 नग निविदा) को अपिहार्य कारणों से निरस्त किया जाता है।

(जीक्रमांक 87309)

**G- 87624/4 Ryp/Dtd 6.3.21**

कार्यपालन अभियंता  
लो.नि.वि. वि./यां. संभाग रायपुर ( छ.ग. )

**लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड जांजगीर-चांपा ( छ.ग. )**

**ऑन लाईन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना**

जिला जल एवं स्वच्छता मिशन जांजगीर-चांपा की ओर से कार्यपालन अभियंता एवं सदस्य सचिव, जिला जल एवं स्वच्छता मिशन द्वारा एकल ग्राम एवं रेट्रोफिटिंग योजना के अन्तर्गत सर्वेक्षण एवं डीपीआर निर्माण कार्य हेतु निम्नानुसार रुचि की अभिव्यक्ति आमंत्रित की जाती है।

निविदा क्र.	सिस्टम निविदा क्रं.	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)
EOI 01/01.03.2021	72394	विभिन्न ग्रामों में एकल ग्राम नलजल प्रदाय योजना एवं रेट्रोफिटिंग योजना के अन्तर्गत सर्वेक्षण एवं डीपीआर तथा उनसे संबंधित समस्त कार्य।	30473.025

उपरोक्त कार्यों की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, धरोहर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञापन, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी वेबसाईट <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> पर देखी एवं दिनांक 10.03.2021 से दिनांक 24.03.2021 के मध्य भरी जा सकती है।

**कार्यपालन अभियंता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड जांजगीर-चांपा ( छ.ग. )**

**G- 87631/5 Ryp/Dtd 6.3.21**

**कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड बालोद, जिला - बालोद ( छ.ग. )**

ई.ओ.आई. क्र. 65 एवं 66/ले.शा./ का.अ. /लो.स्वा.या.खण्ड/ 2021 बालोद, दिनांक 04-03-2021

ई-प्रक्रियारहित प्रथम निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

ऑनलाईन निविदाएं प्रारंभ-ए में प्रस्तुत दर पर नीचे उल्लेखित कार्य के लिये कार्यपालन अभियंता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड बालोद द्वारा श्रेणी में पंजीकृत एंजिनीयरों/अभियंताओं से ऑनलाईन "रुचि की अभिव्यक्ति" (EOI) आमंत्रित की जाती है।

कार्य का विवरण - Rate Contract for Item of Survey and preparation of Details Project Report

स. क्र.	नि.सू. क्रं.	सिस्टम नं.	कार्य का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)
1	65 / Dt. 04-03-2021	72716	Carrying out topographical survey Total station survey and review of the data available for survey work and planning of the schemes for water supply schemes, Preparation of detailed designs of all the components of the SVS and preparation of cost estimates based on CG PHE USOR-2020 Calculation of annual maintenance cost and other standard features of the SVS and formulation of salient features and report for the complete water supply scheme, Preparation of drawings such as Index plan, key plan, flow diagram, plotting. Preparing the BOQ of all the components as per the instructions of Engineer in Charge. Submission of the scheme in soft copy & 5 hard copies, Preparation of power point presentation, compliance of the remarks till the final approval under and as per the guidelines of Jal Jeevan Mission and CG PHE	रु. 164.07 लाख
2	66 / Dt. 04-03-2021	72718	Carrying out topographical survey Total station survey UAV and review of the data available for survey work and planning of the Multi Village scheme (MVS) for water supply schemes, Preparation of detailed designs of all the components of the MVS and preparation of cost estimates based on CG PHE USOR-2020. Calculation of annual maintenance cost and other standard features of the MVS and formulation of salient features and report for the complete water supply scheme, Preparation of drawings such as Index plan, key plan, flow diagram. Preparing the BOQ of all the components as per the instructions of Engineer in Charge. Submission of the scheme in soft copy & 5 hard copies, Preparation of power point presentation, compliance of the remarks till the final approval under and as per the guidelines of Jal Jeevan Mission and CG PHE	रु. 68.62 लाख

1. बिड स्वगोष्ठिण प्रारंभ की तिथि - 11/03/2021  
2. बिड स्वगोष्ठिण की अंतिम तिथि - 25/03/2021  
उपरोक्त कार्यों की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, धरोहर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञापन, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रक्रियारहित वेब पोर्टल <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> में दिनांक 11-03-2021 से देखे जा सकते हैं।

**G- 87669/5 Ryp/Dtd 6.3.21**

कार्यपालन अभियंता  
लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड बालोद जिला-बालोद ( छ.ग. )



# Heavy rain, rise in overall temp in 4 decades could have led to rock collapse

**New Delhi:** Heavy precipitation in the Chamoli region from February 4-6 and an overall rise in temperature in Uttarakhand in last four decades could have led to the rock collapse which triggered the deadly flash floods in the state last month, according to a study by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development.

The report by Kathmandu-based ICIMOD, which was released on Friday, found that a crack had formed prior to the incident at the site where the rock detachment led to a rock-

slide from the Raunti peak.

The rockslide brought along with it mounds of earth and snow which could have triggered the flash floods. With a straight slide line of 1.6 km (5500 to 3900 masl), the kinetic energy during the fall generated enough heat to melt the ice. As the debris moved downstream in the Rishiganga river, it pushed running river water ahead of it, including water from small ponding structures along the river path.

So far 72 bodies and 30 human body parts have been recovered from different places

in the avalanche-hit areas, out of which 41 bodies have been identified. As many as 132 persons are still missing.

The ICIMOD is a regional organisation that works on different aspects in the Himalayan-Hindukush region. It has eight members --- India, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. At the same head-wall of the Raunthi peak, a large ice avalanche was previously released somewhere between 19 September and 9 October 2016, which deposited ice and more bedrock in the valley below, the

## UTTARAKHAND TRAGEDY

report states.

“The resulting destabilisation of the rock due to the lack of ice cover (glacial debuttressing, stress-release fracturing), and increased exposure to solar radiation and hence an increased freeze thaw cycle, in combination with a large snow-fall event preceding the event of February 7, 2021 and rapid melt water production, may have favoured the fracturing of rock,” the report states.

“This can, however, not

explain the depth of the fracture (150 metres), which must have evolved over a longer period of time,” the report states. The ICIMOD report further states that a strong western disturbance passed across Kashmir and northwest India from February 4-6. It was fully charged with convective instability that may have contributed to the heavy precipitation. The Uttarakhand tragedy occurred on February 7. “Numerical simulation of some of the attributes have

been carried out which depict strong evidence of heavy precipitation contributing to high flows downstream,” it said.

The numerical simulation on February 4 shows heavy precipitation over the region. The western disturbance travelled with relatively slower speed and its stagnancy produced concentrated precipitation, the report states. “Precipitation data derived from Global Precipitation Measurement (GPM) Mission suggests that there were continuous precipitation events from February 3-5 which resulted in approxi-

mately 58 mm of cumulative precipitation. Most of the precipitation in the high altitude areas of Chamoli would have occurred as snowfall,” it states.

The temperatures are also rising in Uttarakhand, the report states, saying maximum temperature in the Chamoli area has increased at the rate of 0.032 degrees C per year between 1980 and 2018.

Furthermore, January 2021 was the warmest January on record in Uttarakhand for six decades, the report states.

“While a hazard event like the flood at Chamoli cannot be

directly attributed to climatic changes, the increased thaw-freeze cycle of permafrost could have partially contributed to the event,” it states.

A report by the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG) also stated that the collapse of a massive rock, which brought down a large amount of earth and snow, may have triggered the flash floods. The debris also blocked the mouth of a stream in the upper reaches of the Rishiganga river. This led to formation of a glacial lake which is being monitored continuously. **PTI**

## BSF kills Pak intruder along IB in Rajasthan

**Jaipur/New Delhi:** A Pakistani intruder was killed by the Border Security Force (BSF) along the Indo-Pak international border in Rajasthan, officials said on Saturday.

The man was moving in a suspicious manner and he was challenged by the troops. Later, he was shot dead near the border fence by a vigilant BSF trooper, officials said.

The incident took place around 8 pm on Friday in the Anupgarh area of Sri Ganganagar-Bikaner belt, they added.

The officials said the body of the Pakistani man was handed over to the local police and a search of the incident area is being carried out. **PTI**

## Noted Kannada poet N S Lakshminarayana Bhatta dies

**Bengaluru:** Noted Kannada poet, critic and translator N S Lakshminarayana Bhatta died here early on Saturday. He was 84 and was suffering from age related ailments, family sources said. Popularly known as "NSL" in the Kannada literary world, he was born in 1936 in Shivamogga district. Bhatta has been a household name through his bhavageetes (lyrical poems), and is known for his contribution of modern Kannada poetry, critical works and translations.

He had translated about 50 of William Shakespeare's sonnets, the poetry of T S Elliot and works of poet Yeats into Kannada. A recipient of Karnataka Sahitya Akademi award and Kannada Rajyotsava Award among others, his popular works include "Thaye ninna madilali".

He served as Professor at Bengaluru university, and is revered for popularizing the works of saint-poet Shishunala Sharif. Bhatta is survived by wife and two children, sources said adding that his last rites will be performed later in the day. Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa condoled the passing away of Bhatta and said Kannada literary world has lost one of its stars. JD(S) leader and former Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy condoling Bhatta's death, remembered his works on songs or poetry for children. **PTI**

## Entire Guj will be covered under Nal Se Jal scheme by 2022: CM

**Ahmedabad:** All households in Gujarat will get tap water connections under the Centre's 'Nal Se Jal Yojana' by the year 2022, ahead of the year 2024 target set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani told the Legislative Assembly on Saturday.

Rupani said 17 lakh households in the state are yet to be covered under the ambitious scheme aimed at providing drinking water through taps.

"People of north Gujarat suffered for years due to contaminated ground water. We want to eliminate our dependence on hand pumps and provide drinking water through tap connections. Though Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target of the year 2024, Gujarat will meet this target in the next 17 months," Rupani told the House.

He was responding to queries

raised by Congress MLAs on the status of water supply in the state.

The CM said the state government had allocated Rs 4,000 crore for the 'Nal Se Jal' project. He said 82 per cent of the total work on the project has already been completed.

"We are planning to provide 1 lakh tap connections every month to cover the remaining 17 lakh houses in the next 17 months. Out of the total 95 lakh beneficiaries identified under the project, 17 lakh are yet to be covered," the CM said.

"We are using the lift irrigation technology to bring water to the doorstep of each and every household. Not a single village will be left out by 2022," he said.

Listing challenges, the chief minister said providing water tap connections in remote tribal and mountainous regions is proving difficult. **PTI**



Polluted embankment of the Yamuna behind the Taj Mahal in Agra on Saturday

PTI

## Surat court acquits 122 persons accused of being SIMI members

PTI ■ SURAT

A court in Gujarat's Surat on Saturday acquitted 122 persons arrested under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for participating in a meeting organised here in December 2001 as members of the banned outfit Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI).

The court of Chief Judicial Magistrate A N Dave acquitted 122 persons arrested for being members of the banned outfit SIMI, giving them the benefit of doubt. Five other accused had died during the pendency of trial. In its order, the court said that the prosecution failed to produce "cogent, reliable and satisfactory" evidence to establish that the accused persons belonged to the SIMI and had gathered to promote the activities of the banned outfit.

The court said the accused persons cannot be held guilty under the UAPA. As many as 127 persons were arrested by Surat's Athwalines police on December 28, 2001 under various sections of the UAPA for allegedly being members of the banned outfit SIMI and organising a meeting at a hall in city's Sagrapura to promote and expand the organisation's activities.

The central government had through its notification dated September 27, 2001 banned SIMI.

The accused belonged to different parts of Gujarat as well as from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

In their defence, they said they did not belong to the SIMI and had gathered there to participate in a seminar organised under the banner of All India Minority Education Board.

They said they were in the city for religious and educational purposes to take part in a seminar in a peaceful manner.

## Rape victim set ablaze dies of burns at Jaipur hospital

**Jaipur:** A 30-year-old rape victim who was allegedly set on fire at her home in Rajasthan's Hanumangarh succumbed to her burn injuries at a hospital here on Saturday, police said.

Meanwhile, police have detained two people for questioning in the case. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has announced a relief of Rs 5 lakh to the dead woman's family members, an official statement said.

The woman was set on fire in the early hours on Thursday. A man entered her house, sprinkled kerosene on the floor, knocked on the door and called the woman by her name.

As she opened the door, the man dropped a burning stick on the floor, resulting in

serious injuries to her, police had said. The victim's maternal grandmother has alleged that her rapist committed the crime.

DGP M L Lathar said the people detained are being thoroughly interrogated.

He said investigation is being done by a DSP-level officer under the supervision of Hanumangarh SP Priti Jain.

Policemen trained in cyber technology have been included in the investigation team. Forensic experts are inspecting the crime spot, he added. The incident had taken place in the Goluwala police station area of Hanumangarh district. The victim was referred to Jaipur's SMS Hospital, where she died on Saturday. **PTI**

## UP: Kidnapped 3-yr-old girl rescued from Punjab

**Fatehpur (UP):** A three-year-old girl who was kidnapped from a locality here was rescued from Jalandhar in Punjab, police said on Saturday.

The girl's aunt and her boyfriend were arrested in this connection, they added.

Girl's aunt Nishu Dwivedi (20) had kidnapped the child on Tuesday and went to her boyfriend who was living in Jalandhar, Punjab, Superintendent of Police, Fatehpur, Satpal Antil said.

A police surveillance team reached Jalandhar on Friday and safely rescued the kidnapped girl, he said.

Nishu and her boyfriend Navdeep Singh alias Ginni (25) were arrested, Antil added.

During interrogation, Nishu told police that she had run away from the house to marry her boyfriend and had taken the child along with her so that both she and her boyfriend could stay in a hotel as husband and wife without inviting any attention, the SP said.

She said she had no intention to harm the child, he added. The girl was handed over to her family members, he said.

Nishu and Navdeep Singh will be produced in the court on Saturday, Antil said.

The girl's father works as an assistant teacher, police said. **PTI**

## 150 fall ill after consuming 'prasad' in Odisha village

**Balasore (Odissa):** More than 150 people took ill after consuming 'prasad' at a mass religious congregation here, a senior official said.

Of them, 111 people had to be rushed to nearby community health centre and clinics as their condition turned serious, he said.

According to official sources, devotees complained of nausea and loose motion after eating 'prasad' on Friday evening at a religious ceremony at Guilajudi village in Basta block of the district. Most of them recovered after preliminary treatment, the official said.

A medical team from Balasore district headquarters hospital visited the affected area earlier in the day to attend to the patients. **PTI**

## 2,791 new corona cases in Kerala, 16 deaths

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Kerala reported 2,791 new Covid-19 cases, including 15 health workers, and 16 related deaths on Saturday, taking the caseload to 10,75,576 and the toll to 4,287.

As many as 3,517 people were cured of the virus, taking the total number of recoveries to 10,27,826, health minister K K Shailaja said. A total of 61,764 samples were examined on Saturday, taking the overall number to 1,18,40,927, she said in a release.

The test positivity rate stood at 4.52 per cent. Kozhikode continued to log the highest number of cases at 376, followed by Kollam with 299, Malappuram with 286 and Ernakulam with 237.

The Minister said 72 of those affected on Saturday reached the state from outside, while 2,535 contracted the disease through their contacts. The source of infection of 169 people are yet to be traced, she said.

Currently there are 42,819 persons under treatment.

There are 1,77,062 person under observation in the state, out of which 6,108 persons are in isolation wards of various hospitals.

One region was removed from the list of hot spots, taking the total number in the state to 356. **PTI**

## One coronavirus death, 79 new cases in J&K

**Srinagar:** Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday recorded 79 new positive Covid-19 cases, taking the tally to 1,26,932, even as one fresh death due to the virus was reported in the past 24 hours, officials said.

The death toll in the Union territory due to the pandemic is 1,961 after one fresh death was reported from Jammu division, they added. Out of the fresh cases, 18 were from Jammu division and 61 from Kashmir division of the Union territory, they said. The officials said Srinagar district recorded the highest with 35 cases followed by 16 in Jammu district.

While nine districts did not report any fresh cases, nine other districts had cases in single digits. The number of active cases was 882 in the UT, while 1,24,089 patients have recovered so far from the infection, the officials said. **PTI**

## UP moving towards self-reliance in power sector: Adityanath

**Lucknow:** Sustained efforts by the Uttar Pradesh government in the four years have pushed the power sector in the state towards self-reliance with a quantum jump in the transmission capacity, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said here on Saturday.

Underlining that the self-reliance in the power sector is necessary for an "atmanirbhar UP", Adityanath said his government had inherited a power infrastructure that was in a shambles.

"But during the past four years, the transmission capacity alone has seen an augmentation of 53 per cent. The state has moved towards self-reliance in the power sector even as the load capacity in transmission reached to 25000 MW," the CM said.

According to a government spokesman, the CM also said at present several power transmission projects are being executed through the public-private partnership (PPP) mechanism at a cost of Rs 6,100 crore.

The UP CM said this while speaking after inaugurating two sub-stations of 220 kV and nine sub-stations of 132 kV constructed at a cost of Rs 571.57 crore and laying the foundation stone of 10 sub-stations of 220 kV and six sub-stations of 132 kV to be constructed at Rs 1,347.91 crore.

He said the state was getting a gift of 27 sub-stations as part of a continuous progress made by his government in the field of power transmission.

"It will reduce the load on other sub-stations and will improve power supply," he said. The new sub-stations were set up in Bulandshahr, Muzaffarnagar, Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Sitapur and Mirzapur districts. The chief minister also claimed that farmers had faced a power crisis before 2017. "Now, the situation has changed. The availability of power has contributed to an increase in agriculture production," he said. **PTI**

## Raped 27 years ago, woman files complaint against 2 after her son asked his father's name

**Shahjahanpur (UP):** Raped on several occasions by two men at the age of 12 about 27 years ago, the victim, who had become a mother, has now lodged a case against the accused on court orders after her son enquired about his father's name.

About 27 years ago, the victim was living in the city with her sister and brother-in-law. One Naki Hasan of her locality had entered the house when she was alone and allegedly raped her, Superintendent of Police

(City) Sanjay Kumar told PTI on Saturday.

Referring to the police report lodged on the basis of the woman's complaint, Kumar said after the accused, his younger brother Guddu also raped her. The victim has alleged that she was raped by both the accused on multiple occasions. She was 12 years of age at the time of the incident, the SP said.

According to the complainant, she became pregnant at the age of 13 and gave birth

to a boy in 1994. The infant was given to a person belonging to the victim's native village Udhampur, located within the Shahabad police station limits, while she moved to Rampur as his brother-in-law got transferred there.

The SP said the victim's brother-in-law got her married to a man in Ghazipur district, but after 10 years, when her husband came to know that she was raped, he divorced her and she returned to Udhampur. **PTI**

## Class 9 girl raped by senior in school in Fatehpur: Police

**Fatehpur (UP):** A 15-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 16-year-old boy while she was returning home from school in the Hathgam police station area of this Uttar Pradesh district, police said on Saturday.

Inspector-in-charge (SSI) of the Hathgam police station Ashish Singh said the incident occurred on Wednesday and an FIR was lodged on Friday.

He said the victim, a Class 9 student, was returning home from school when a Class 10 student of the same school, who is also her neighbour, allegedly caught hold of her, forcibly took her to a forest area nearby and raped her.

The SSI said the accused minor student has been held and will be produced before a juvenile court during the day. The girl has been sent to a government hospital for medical examination, he said, adding that further action is being taken. **PTI**

# 150 Rohingyas detained in J&K verification drive

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a major crackdown on illegal immigrants staying in Jammu and Kashmir more than 150 Rohingyas have been detained at a holding centre in Sub Jail Hiranagar at the end of the verification process of their travel documents.

According to official sources, during the special drive conducted at the Maulana Azad stadium in Jammu on Saturday police authorities verified travel documents and collected biometrics of large numbers of illegal immigrants including Rohingyas from Myanmar.

During the verification process the sports stadium was kept out of bounds from the local media persons as none of them were permitted to enter the premises.

Their entry was restricted at the entry gate of the stadium where this verification drive was going on.

After completing the day-long exercise Inspector General



Illegal immigrant Rohingyas being shifted to Sub Jail Hiranagar after a verification process late Saturday evening

of Police, Jammu range, Mukesh Singh in a press statement said, "155 illegal immigrant Rohingyas staying in the Union Territory of J&K were sent to the holding centre established vide Home department notification dated 5th March 2021 on Saturday".

According to police, "sub jail Hiranagar in Kathua district has been converted into a holding centre to accommodate these illegal immigrants".

IG Jammu said, "This was done under section 3(2) of the Foreigners Act. Due process of law was followed in this exer-

cise. These immigrants were not holding valid travel documents required in terms of section (3) of the Passports Act".

The exercise of identifying more such immigrants is still in progress, Mukesh Singh added.

"After sending them to the

holding center, the process of nationality verification will be done as per the prescribed process. After completion of the Nationality verification, the process of deportation of these illegal immigrants will be initiated", IG Jammu Mukesh Singh said.

According to J&K Home department report tabled in the state assembly on February 2, 2018, "a total number of 6523 Rohingyas were found camping across 39 different locations spread across five districts of Jammu and Kashmir". According to the Home department report, "6461 Rohingyas were staying in Jammu division and 62 in Kashmir division".

However, local activists and politicians, spearheading a campaign in support of their deportation, often contest these figures claiming large numbers of these illegal immigrants are scattered and even their bio metrics have not been collected by the security personnel.



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# Lookout notice against TMC leader’s brother

## CATTLE SMUGGLING CASE



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The CBI has issued a lookout notice against Bijay Mishra, brother of Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Binay Mishra who is a close confidant of party MP Abhishek Banerjee, in a cattle-smuggling case.

The agency is mulling over approaching Interpol to get a Red Corner Notice (RCN) issued against Binay Mishra, who has not joined the probe till now, officials said.

“A lookout notice has been issued against Bijay Mishra, the brother of TMC leader Binay Mishra,” the official said, without divulging any other details.

The agency has also summoned two senior officers of the West Bengal police -- an Inspector General and a Superintendent of Police -- on Monday for questioning in connection with the case, they said.

The agency had named Binay Mishra as a co-accused in its supplementary

chargesheet filed in the cattle-smuggling case last month.

Binay Mishra is suspected to be close to West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee’s nephew Abhishek Banerjee, they further said.

In its chargesheet filed before a designated CBI court in Asansol (West Bengal), the agency has already mentioned Binay Mishra as absconding.

The CBI had filed a chargesheet on February 18 in the case against Border Security Force (BSF) Commandant Satish Kumar and six others for their alleged involvement in a cattle-smuggling racket operating at the India-Bangladesh border.

Recently, the CBI had also questioned Abhishek Banerjee’s wife Rujira and sister-in-law Menaka Gambhir in a separate case pertaining to illegal coal mining and pilferage from the mines of the Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL).

# ED arrests 2 directors of TN-based firm over ₹325 cr laundering

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said it has arrested two directors of a Tamil Nadu-based firm in a money laundering case worth ₹325 crore, linked to a bank fraud case.

Hittesh Patel and Suresh N Patel, directors of Shinago Plantations Pvt Ltd, were sent to 10 days’ ED custody by a special court on Saturday after they were placed under arrest under sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the agency said in a statement.

The two allegedly laundered funds to the tune of ₹325 crore by using a network of nearly 20 group entities located across Tamil Nadu.

The PMLA investigation revealed that “the accused in collusion with the valuers



availed loans from erstwhile Corporation Bank (now Union Bank of India) on the basis of inflated value of the properties offered as collateral and indulged in wilful diversion of funds through various group accounts.”

It said investigation further revealed that “the funds so availed by various individuals/group concerns in the form of Letter of Credit (LC) and Cash Credit (CC) limits/Agriculture term loans, were transferred within the group entities through circular rotation of money to avail more funds from the Bank without any actual business.”

# Donations for Ram Mandir cross more than ₹2,500 cr

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Donations for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya are estimated to have crossed ₹2,500 crore and construction is likely to be completed in three years.

Addressing the media, Ramjanmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust chairman Champat Rai on Saturday said that the construction will commence from April and as per banks’ estimations till February 4, the donations have crossed ₹2,500 crore and house-to-house visits for donations have been stopped.

Now only online donations will be received, Rai said adding that 10 crore households in 4 lakh villages had been approached by 9 lakh volunteers in the past 45 days during the fund collection drive.

“Four lakh cubic stones will be used to complete construction within 3 years. While construction has not



begun, the improvement of land for the foundation will start in April.

Around ₹2,500 cr have been received till 4th of March, but can’t confirm the figures. We have reached 10 crore households with 9 lakh workers. The campaign is over doesn’t mean that dedication towards God is over. Visit our website which has all the details of bank accounts and one can contribute accordingly.”

He also said that a lot of

responses were received from North East States and Southern States.

To a query, Rai said that donations from Rajasthan are expected to be bigger than Uttar Pradesh.

From Arunachal Pradesh donations are estimated to have crossed ₹4.5 crore, followed by ₹2 crore from Manipur. As per the press release issued by VHP, Rs.85 crore has been received from Tamil Nadu and ₹13 crore from Kerala.

# Hybrid physical hearings in SC from March 15

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court, which is hearing cases through video-conferencing since March last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will commence hybrid physical hearings from March 15.

The apex court has issued the standard operating procedure (SOP) for the hybrid physical hearings.

The top court has been hearing cases through video-conferencing since March last year due to the pandemic and several bar bodies and lawyers have been demanding that physical hearings should resume immediately.

“On an experimental basis, and as a pilot scheme, the final hearings/regular matters listed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays may be heard in the hybrid mode, as may be



decided by the bench, considering the number of parties in a matter as well as the limited capacity of the courtrooms; all other matters, including those listed on Mondays and Fridays, shall continue to be heard through video/tele-conferencing mode,” said the SOP issued by the apex court.

“The hybrid physical

hearings are to commence with effect from March 15, 2021,” it added.

It said unless otherwise directed by a bench, the final hearings or regular matters where the number of lawyers for the parties is higher than the average working capacity of the courtrooms according to COVID-19 norms, that is

20 per courtroom at any given time, shall invariably be listed for hearing through the video or tele-conferencing mode.

“...However, in case the bench directs hearing of such matters to be held through the hybrid mode, the appearance of the parties, whether by physical presence or through video/tele-conferencing, will be facilitated as per the directions of the bench,” the SOP said.

It said if the number of parties is higher than the specified number in a matter listed for hybrid hearing, then one advocate-on-record (AOR) and one arguing counsel per party would be allowed entry.

It said one registered clerk per party, as may be chosen by the AOR, shall be allowed entry to carry paper-books or journals of lawyers up to the courtrooms.

# Cong: Kisan stir period black chapter in India’s democracy

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

As the farmers’ protest against the Centre’s new farm laws completed 100 days, the Congress on Saturday said the period was a “black chapter” in India’s democracy for the treatment meted out to the protesters and also marked 100 days of the ruling BJP’s “arrogance”.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi hit out at the Centre over the farmers’ protest and said nails were laid at Delhi’s borders for those, whose sons risk their lives at the country’s borders.

His attack came after the farmers’ agitation completed 100 days with the protesting union leaders asserting that



their movement is far from over and they are “going strong”. “Whose sons risk their lives at the country’s borders, for them nails have been laid at the borders of Delhi. ‘Annadaatas’ demand their rights, government commits atrocities,”

Rahul said in his tweet, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also hit out at the Centre saying, “100 days of farmers’ struggle, of fight for rights, of respect for ‘annadaatas’, of the path shown by Gandhiji, Sardar

(Vallabhbhai) Patel, Nehruji, (Lal Bahadur) Shastriji, Shaheed Bhagat Singh.” With the hashtag ‘100Days OFBJParrogance’, she said, “100 days of BJP Government’s arrogance, of assault on farmers, of lies and scorn for farmers.”

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said the protesting farmers have been braving all odds — of nature and the might of the State — for the last 100 days.

“Each one of us, whichever category we may belong to, have our own struggles and that is the awareness on which the Government depends,” Khera said.

There is one section of the society that has found time to come out and protest — farmers — against these “black laws” and they are “our voice”, he added.

The Congress demands that the three new farm laws should immediately be repealed, Khera said.

## Kerala gold smuggling case

# CPM accuses Centre of misusing Central agencies against CM, Mins

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOCHI**

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau on Saturday accused the BJP-led Government at the Centre of playing dirty tricks by misusing Central agencies like Customs Department to target Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Ministers during the poll season with tutored affidavits of accused persons in the gold smuggling case.

For his part, Vijayan said: “After declaration of Assembly polls, central investigation agencies’ attacks have intensified. The Customs Commissioner, who isn’t party to gold smuggling case, included portions of confidential statement by accused (Swapna Suresh) in his statement in High Court. He has also leveled allegations against Kerala Speaker and Ministers to defame the LDF government.”

The Customs Department in Kochi earlier alleged that a political party was trying to intimidate the investigation agency but made it clear that it will not work. “A political party trying intimidation, will not work,” Customs (Preventive) Commissioner Sumit Kumar wrote on his Facebook page.

“She has stated with clarity about smuggling of foreign currency at the instance of the



Hon’ble chief minister and the Hon’ble Speaker with the help of the Consulate,” the Customs has said in a statement filed in the Kerala high court.

The CPI (M) Polit Bureau alleged that the tutored statements of the jailed accused was recorded months ago and leaked to malign the party during the election time.

“The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the Customs Authority’s attempt to falsely implicate Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, three other ministers and the Speaker of the Assembly of Kerala in an alleged dollar smuggling case. The customs have cited an affidavit by one of the accused, who is in judicial custody in the gold smuggling case, for this purpose. The fact that this tutored statement was recorded some months ago and pre-

sented after the elections were announced shows the political game behind this move.

“The BJP Central government is systematically misusing the Central agencies for maligning the Chief Minister and the LDF government. The people of Kerala will see through this political chicanery and give a fitting rebuff to the dirty tactics adopted by the BJP and the UDF,” said CPI(M).

In Kerala, the CPI(M) has staged protest marches at Customs offices. Recently, the Customs Department has filed an affidavit before the Court stating that the main accused Swapna Suresh has given statement before the investigators on the knowledge of the Chief Minister and three Ministers and Speaker of the Kerala Assembly about the illegal dollar trade and gold smuggling involving UAE consulate.

# Frontier Gandhi’s autobiography released in English

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

First published in Pashto in 1983, the autobiography of freedom fighter Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, fondly known as Bacha Khan or Badshah Khan, is now out in English, announced publishing house Roli Books.

The book, titled “The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle”, is translated by former Pakistani civil servant and author Imitiaz Ahmad Sahibzada. This is the “first time” that Khan’s autobiography is available in English. An earlier account of his life, published in English in 1969, and with the same title, was based on the interviews conducted with him and was not “his written autobiography”.

“... Bacha Khan felt that the 1969 account of his life and struggle was not complete and began to write his own autobiography thereafter, with the help of numerous associates. Bacha Khan’s autobiography was thus first published in Pukhto in 1983, in Kabul.. This book is a translation of Bacha Khan’s only written, Pukhto autobiography,” writes Sahibzada in the book.

Khan (1890–1988), popularly called the ‘Frontier Gandhi’, was born in Uthmanzai in the North-West Frontier Province of British India. His life was dedicated to

the social reform of the Pukhtuns and he continues to be revered across the world by them. In India, he is known for his close association with Mahatma Gandhi and his leadership of the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) movement from 1930 – 47 – one of the most successful and sustained Gandhian non-violent campaigns anywhere in the world.

The book, whose foreword is written by historian and Mahatma Gandhi’s grandson Rajmohan Gandhi, brings to life events and personalities of the independence movement as Khan records the untiring energy and sacrifices that went into winning freedom.

“If our world wants to picture non-violent defiance, or inter-faith partnership, .. Or a commitment to the rights of the vulnerable, it cannot do much better than study these two men together: Ghaffar Khan and, older by 21 years, Mohandas Gandhi, brothers in spirit, each armed with the swords of conscience and courage,” writes Rajmohan, who is also the author of Khan’s biography, “Ghaffar Khan: Nonviolent Badshah of the Pakhtuns”.

“The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle”, priced at ₹695, is available for sale in offline and online stores.

## Scientists develop platform to detect effect of alcohol exposure on red blood cells

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Scientists have developed a platform to detect the effect of prolonged exposure to alcohol on red blood cells (RBC) through high-resolution measurements of their size, according to a statement on Saturday.

The high-resolution platform that shows the reduction in size of RBCs due to alcohol exposure can be tuned for a point-of-care screening of multiple conditions that alter the size and count of red cells in blood.

Although it is known that alcohol affects RBCs, the exact physiological changes are very subtle and difficult to measure.

In order to overcome this challenge, scientists led by Professor Gautam Soni from Raman Research Institute (RRI), an institution funded by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), have developed a custom-made electro-fluidic platform that can detect the change by measuring the cell size in enhanced resolution.

The device made in RRI relies on the resistive pulse sensing principle.

The team first developed techniques for making tiny micron (1/1000th of a millimetre) sized holes or micro-pores at the tip of a glass capillary with careful fabrication, flame polishing, and image verification.

# Pon Radhakrishnan BJP candidate for bypoll to Kanyakumari LS seat

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The BJP on Saturday nominated senior party leader and former Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan as its candidate for the April 6 bypoll to the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency in Tamil Nadu.

As the campaign for the Assembly polls heats up, union Home Minister and former BJP president Amit Shah will be on a one-day visit to Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Sunday to attend various important programmes.

According to a party statement here, Shah will first visit Suchindram Temple in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, and offer prayers. He will then launch “Vetri Kodi Eandhi” (Vijay Sankalp Mahasamaprkr Abhiyaan - a door to door campaign) in Suchindram Town, Kanyakumari.

The BJP said Shah will hold a massive roadshow “Vetri Kodi Eandhi” from Hindu college to Veppamoodu Kamaraj statue in Kanyakumari. After the roadshow, the Union Home Minister will address a Karyakarta Sabha of the party at Uduppi Hotel in Kanyakumari .

Shah will then proceed to Kerala where he will visit Shri Belur Math at Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala and offer prayers. After that, he will address the Valedictory function of BJP’s Kerala Vijay Yatra at Shanghumukham in Thiruvananthapuram.

parliamentary and inducted in then Modi-led NDA dispensation as Minister of State.

He lost the subsequent 2019 Lok Sabha elections to Kumar from the same constituency. He was then MoS Finance and Shipping.

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# Medha Patkar defamation: Delhi court asks HC clerk to bring original case file

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Delhi Court has ordered to summon the court clerk of the record room of Delhi High Court to bring original case file of the petition filed by Medha Patkar for quashing of the defamation case filed by VK Saxena, presently the chairman of Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The original case file will help settle the dispute about the existence of the so called “defamatory” press

release issued by Patkar, something she has persistently denied in the court.

Saxena has filed two defamation cases against Patkar which are pending in the court of Metropolitan Magistrate, Saket, New Delhi. The one defamation case was related to a press note issued by Patkar on 24.11.2000, in which she claimed that Saxena visited Malegaon, praised Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), and donated a cheque of ₹40,000 to

Lok Samiti, a support group of NBA. The news was published by a news portal rediff.com.

Saxena denied that he ever visited Malegaon or made any such donation to the NBA and said that the press note was full of false allegations and was defamatory. He subsequently issued a legal notice to Patkar. After receiving no response from the NBA leader, Saxena filed a defamation case in January 2001.

During the last 20 years on

various occasions, Patkar denied that she ever issued any such press note and even claimed that it was fabricated by Saxena himself.

Interestingly, Patkar filed a criminal miscellaneous application No 6026 on 26.11.2018, U/S 482 of CrPC in the High Court of Delhi for quashing the proceedings in another defamation case filed by Saxena against her. An advance copy of the petition was also sent to Saxena by her advocate. In the said

criminal petition, Patkar in the list of “dates and events”, mentioned that on 24.11.2000, a press note was released by her which was subsequently published in the news portal rediff.com.

Incidentally, this was precisely the case made out by Saxena. Patkar later withdrew the petition.

Saxena on February 17, 2020 filed an application in the MM Court along with certified copies of the criminal miscel-

laneous application no. 6026 of 2018 filed by Patkar in the Delhi High Court with the request for calling upon additional witness in the case, i.e. the concerned court clerk of the Delhi High Court with original case file of the above case where she has admitted to have issued the press note in question. Counsel for Saxena pleaded that judicial admission cannot be withdrawn.

Metropolitan Magistrate Animesh Kumar after hearing

both the sides said, “it is a case of the complainant (VK Saxena) that on 26.11.2018, accused (Medha Patkar) filed a petition bearing number CrI MC 6026 of 2018 before the Hon’ble Delhi High Court U/S 482 CrPC for quashing the proceedings of CC No. 2866/1/03 pending before this court. Ld Counsel for the complainant submits that the accused has made certain judicial admissions under oath in the said petition filed before the DHC

where she has categorically admitted that she made averments against the complainant.”

The Magistrate further said that relevant record related to CrI MC No. 6026 of 2018 titled “Medha Patkar Vs State of Delhi & Others” should be summoned in the present case.

“Hence, let summon be issued to the concerned clerk of the record room of Hon’ble Delhi High Court to bring the original case file on 19.03.2021,” he ordered.



## SHARE OF TAX DEVOLUTION TO STATES

# 15th Fin Comm opted for continuity: Singh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The 15th Finance Commission opted for continuity and predictability and hence retained the share of tax devolution to States at 41 per cent of the total pool, its chairman NK Singh said on Saturday.

Speaking at a webinar organised by the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Singh said each Finance Commission in the past has somewhat increased the total amount of devolution to states, but the 15th Finance Commission weighed all the options considering that the fiscal space of both states and the Centre has shrunk on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rajya Sabha member Sushil Kumar Modi highlighted that the share of divisible pool is slowly shrinking as the “cess and surcharge” component in Gross Tax revenue is

increasing.

The 15th Finance Commission has recommended that states be given 41 per cent of the divisible tax pool of the Centre during the period 2021-22 to 2025-26, which is at the same level as was recommended by the 14th Finance Commission.

Finance Commission is a constitutional body that gives suggestions on Centre-state financial relations.

As per the Commission, the gross tax revenue (GTR) for the 5-year period is expected to be Rs 135.2 lakh crore. Out of that, divisible pool (after deducting cesses and surcharges and cost of collection) is estimated to be Rs 103 lakh crore. States' share at 41 per cent of divisible pool comes to Rs 42.2 lakh crore for 2021-26 period.

The report of the 15th Finance Commission was tabled in Parliament on

February 2.

Singh said each Finance Commission has somewhat increased the total amount of devolution as percentage of divisible pool.

“We had an option of continuing this trajectory, we had an option of enhancing this devolution to somewhat higher figure. We had the option of somewhat recalibrating downwards looking at the constraints on the fiscal space of the Central Government. Finance Commission is not an encounter with shock and awe, Finance Commission has a legacy which believes in stability, continuity and predictability. We opted for continuity and predictability,” he said.

Modi, in his speech, said cess and surcharge which was 10.4 per cent of GTR in 2011-12, has increased to 20.2 per cent. Even after deducting GST compensation cess, it is 15 per cent.

## Govt open to evaluate, explore cryptocurrencies, says Thakur

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Anurag Thakur on Saturday said the government is open to evaluate and explore new technologies, including cryptocurrencies, for improving governance.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself is a strong advocate of embracing technology in various aspects of governance, the Minister of State for Finance said while addressing an event organised by Entrepreneurs' Organisation - EO Punjab.

“Let me say that we welcome innovation and new technology...Blockchain is a new emerging technology. Cryptocurrency is a form of virtual currency. I firmly believe that we must always evaluate, explore and encourage new ideas with an open mind,” he said.

A High-Level Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) was constituted under the Chairmanship of Economic Affairs Secretary on digital currencies and it has submitted its report.

The government would



**The Govt would take a decision on the recommendations of the IMC and the legislative proposal, if any, would be introduced in Parliament following the due process**

take a decision on the recommendations of the IMC and the legislative proposal, if any, would be introduced in Parliament following the due process, he said while inviting suggestions and views on this issue.

Cryptocurrencies are digital or virtual currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of their units and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the government is still formulating its opinion on cryptocurrencies and will take a calibrated position.

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das had last week said the apex bank has certain “major concerns”

over the impact cryptocurrencies may have on the financial stability in the economy and has conveyed the same to the government.

The RBI had virtually banned cryptocurrency trading in 2018

and had directed all entities regulated by the central bank to cease dealing in virtual currencies. The Supreme Court had also asked the Centre in 2019 to frame policies for crypto, and in 2020, struck down the curbs imposed by the RBI.

The Reserve Bank had through various public notices on December 24, 2013, February 1, 2017 and December 5, 2017, cautioned users, holders and traders of virtual currencies, including bitcoins, regarding various risks associated in dealing with such virtual currencies.

## Goyal stresses on manufacturing high quality containers in India

**New Delhi:**Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday emphasised on the manufacturing of the indigenous high quality containers in India saying that India has excellent steel making capabilities.

Addressing a webinar here at the Container Corporation of India Ltd (CONCOR) on ‘Indigenous Manufacturing of Containers’, Goyal said, “We should be aspiring for a much bigger play in container manufacturing. We have absolutely excellent steel making capabilities, we have an MSME sector with good skills and the frame making capabilities are also good.”

The minister stressed that India's exports are going to increase significantly, as against the imports. “Government has made a conscious decision to support our shipping sector so more and more of the Indian companies start owning Indian flag vessels,” he said.

Goyal said, there is a lot of buzz and excitement in our manufacturing sector, to meet domestic and international requirements. “We are part of the resilient global supply

chain, which are looking at alternate supplies,” he said.

“If India starts manufacturing at scale, we will become cost-competitive to sell to all parts of the world. Scale presents huge cost-benefit opportunities,” he said. Goyal emphasised that if you produce a high-quality product, our neighbours will never be able to match it. And that can be sold in Europe and US.

“If India manufacturers a million containers in a year, we will become cost-competitive,” he said. Goyal said container manufacturing business needed a LIFT, which CONCOR has been able to provide. Elaborating the meaning of LIFT, he said L - efficient logistics, I - depending on indigenous sources, F - futuristic and T - becoming a trendsetter. “We should all collectively take a concrete decision to buy only Indian and support Indian industry, to meet not only India's needs but the world's needs. Container shortage and imported container should be dumped into the flames of history,” the minister said.

IANIS

## Tech bids open for Mum-Ahm Bullet train bridge project

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

The National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) on Saturday said that it has opened two technical bids for construction or building of bridges for the 508 km Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) corridor in the state of Gujarat and Dadra and Nagar Haveli in which nine companies have participated.

NHSRCL spokesperson Sushma Gaur said that the technical bids for contract packages of P-1(B) and P-1(C) for construction or building of

bridges for the MAHSR corridor in the state of Gujarat as well union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

She said that of now, 5 bidders for P-1 (C) whereas four bidders for P-1 (B) have submitted their bids for the package. She said that the P-1 (C) package includes construction of bridges for double line High Speed railway for four PSC Bridges and seven steel truss bridges between Zaroli Village at Maharashtra - Gujarat Border and Vadodara, in Gujarat and the union territory of Dadar and Nagar Haveli for the project.

## Tesla, Ford only carmakers not gone bankrupt: Elon Musk

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

As several carmakers bleed in the US and beyond, Tesla is profitable and according to Elon Musk, his electric car company and Ford are the only two carmakers in the US which have not gone bankrupt.

Tesla reported another profitable quarter as revenue hit \$10.74 billion in the fourth quarter of 2020. In last year, Tesla achieved free cash flow of nearly \$2.8 billion after spending more than \$3 billion on building new factories and other expenditures.

US automaker Ford last month announced to more than double its investment in electric and autonomous vehicles to \$29 billion. The

automaker had previously committed to spend \$11.5 billion on electrifying its vehicle lineup through 2022.

“Tesla & Ford are the only American carmakers not to have gone bankrupt out of 1000's of car startups. Prototypes are easy, production is hard & being cash flow positive is excruciating,” Musk said in a tweet on Friday.

Ford CEO Jim Farley responded to his tweet, saying: “Respect”.

In 2020, Tesla produced and delivered half a million vehicles. In addition, Model Y production in Shanghai has begun.

Tesla this year also registered its Indian subsidiary with the Registrar of Companies

(RoC) in Bengaluru, on January 8.

“2020 was a defining year for us on many levels. Despite a challenging environment, we've reached an important milestone of producing and delivering 0.5 million cars,” Musk had said.

On the other hand, Ford's increased investment is aimed at catching up with the EV market leader Tesla and keep pace with other automakers like GM and Volkswagen.

“We are accelerating our plans right now, breaking constraints, increasing battery capacity, improving our costs and getting more battery electrics into our cycle plan,” Ford CEO Farley said last month.

## ‘Privatisation will lead to increase in service charges’

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

All India Nationalised Banks Officers Federation (AIN-BOF) has opposed privatisation of public sector banks as it will lead to increase in service charges and will take banking beyond the reach of common man.

In a statement, the AIN-BOF said privatisation will primarily impact the general public only as the social objectives will be lost in the name of profitability.

“Service Charges will be increased and customers who are able to bear those charges only will be serviced. This will take banking beyond the reach of the common man which was the primary objective of

nationalization,” it said.

It said though the Government's agenda of privatization started way back in 1991 immediately after the liberalization the trade unions were successful in thwarting the ill-conceived moves of the successive governments over the past three decades and maintaining the public sector status.

“Of the many private sector banks that came into existence, today only a handful which were promoted by the financial houses like ICICI, UTI, IDBI, HDFC are surviving and many of the private sector entities that commenced their banking operations after 1990 were either closed or merged”, it added.

## Petrol, diesel prices steady even as crude boils

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies have spared consumers of yet another petrol and diesel price hike even though the global oil market is on the boil with crude reaching within touching distance of year-high level of \$70 a barrel.

Petrol continues to be priced at ₹91.17 a litre and diesel ₹81.47 a litre in the capital on Saturday. Across the country too, the petrol and diesel price remained unchanged.

This is seventh consecutive day when pump prices of auto fuels have remained unchanged.

After a spike in global oil prices seen over last two weeks with crude price jumping close to \$67 a barrel, prices had fallen to around \$63 a barrel but it rose again to cross \$69 a barrel mark now after the OPEC+ decision to continue with crude production cut in April.

Petrol and diesel prices have been rising continuously since February 9.

### Public Notice

This is to inform general public that Mrs. Sunita Gujral is the owner of Entire First Floor, Entire Second Floor, Entire Third Floor, with roof rights 'said floors', built on Property bearing No. J-13/63, on Plot No. 63, area measuring 200 sq. yds., in Block J-13, Situated at Rajouri Garden, New Delhi vide Sale Deed dated 11.12.2020 and the same was duly registered with the Sub-Registrar-IIB Delhi, as Document No. 19218, Book No. I, Volume No. 5819, Page No. 110-128, on 17.12.2020. Now, Mrs. Sunita Gujral is mortgaging the above property with Shri Ram Housing Finance Ltd. & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 15 days of this publication to Mr. Muneesh Dhawan/ Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas, Unit no 405, 4th Floor, GD-ITL North Tower, (A-09), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/ 9818228636 (M).

### LOST AND FOUND

ORIGINAL SALE DEED OF RESIDENTIAL PLOT NO. G-37, GREEN PARK, NEW DELHI VIDE REGISTRATION NO. 8970 AND 8971, EXECUTED ON 20.11.1992 ARE MISSING IF ANY PERSON, BANK, FINANCIAL INSTITUTION HAVING ANY CLAIM, RIGHT, TITLE OR INTEREST OF ANY NATURE WHATSOEVER IN THE ABOVE PROPERTY, IS HEREBY CALLED UPON TO MAKE THE SAME KNOWN, IN WRITING WITH DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE BY REGISTERED AD POST TO THE UNDERSIGNED AT THE ADDRESS MENTIONED HEREIN BELOW WITHIN 7 (SEVEN) DAYS OF PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE TO THE UNDERSIGNED ON TELEPHONE NO.-8860074071 ADDRESS: PNB HOUSING FINANCE LTD., S-8 GREEN PARK EXTENSION, NEW DELHI - 110016

### SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

#### TENDER NOTICE FOR ENGINEERING WORK

**Srl. No. (1) E-Tender No. DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-176-2021, Date: 03.03.2021.**  
**Work:** Renewal of existing Channel Sleepers with H-Beam Sleepers under the jurisdiction of DEN/ Central-II/BSP.  
**Tender Value:** ₹ 2,88,36,781.56/-.  
**Completion Period:** 09 Months.  
**Start Date of Submission of Tender:** From 11:00 hrs. on 11.03.2021. Last Date of Submission of Tender: Upto 11:00 hrs. on 25.03.2021.  
The Complete information of above e-Tender Notices is available over website <https://www.irops.gov.in>. Bids other than e-bids shall not be accepted against above Tenders.  
Divl. Railway Manager (Engg.)  
CPR/10/468 S.E.C. Railway, Bilsapur  
South East Central Railway @secrail

## Covestro pulls through fiscal 2020

**Mumbai:** Covestro saw a strong end to an exceptional year in 2020 and benefited, especially in the second half, from its consistent crisis prevention measures and a recovery in demand.

However, despite the very successful fourth quarter, the group could not fully compensate the massive, pandemic-related cut-backs that arose in the first six months.

“We were able to successfully navigate through this highly exceptional year and maintained our ability to act at all times,” said CEO Markus Steilemann.

## Base effect subdues pharma market's growth in Feb

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

High base effect along with volume decline subdued the growth of India's pharmaceuticals market, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said.

Accordingly, the volume declined in the anti-infective and respiratory products was pronounced during the month.

“Ind-Ra expects a growth improvement over the coming months as the vaccination drive gains momentum and a lower base leads to better growth momentum.”

“However, IPM grew 1.1 per cent YoY during February 2021, due to a 5.8 per cent volume decline, price growth of 4.8 per cent and products launches at 2.1 per cent.”

According to Ind-Ra, acute therapies such as gastro and vitamins witnessed sales growth of 9.9 per cent YoY and 8.6 per cent YoY, respectively, while anti-infectives declined 11.3 per cent YoY during February 2021.

“A growth outperformance was observed in chronic therapies during the month, with cardiac and anti-diabetic growing 7.3 per cent YoY and 4.3 per cent YoY, respectively.”

## NMDC leaves iron ore rates unchanged

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

Country's largest iron ore miner NMDC has left the price of lump ore unchanged at ₹5,100 per tonne and ₹4,210 per tonne for fines in its latest price revision announced on Saturday.

Iron ore is the key raw material used in steel making. Any change in its prices has a direct impact on the rates of steel. In a filing to the BSE, NMDC said it fixed the price of lumps or high-grade iron ore at ₹5,100 per tonne, and that of iron ore fines or inferior grade ore at ₹4,210 a tonne.

The revised prices are effective from March 6, 2021 and exclude royalty, District Mineral Fund (DMF), National Mineral Exploration Trust

(DMET), cess, forest permit fee, and other taxes, the company said.

Last month, NMDC reduced the price of lumps to ₹5,100 per tonne from ₹5,700 per tonne fixed on January 6, 2021, while the rate of fines was also revised downwards to ₹4,210 a tonne from ₹4,810 per tonne.


NMDC, under the Ministry of Steel, is the country's largest iron ore miner.

The company, which has been in the business of mining iron ore for over six decades, produces about 35 MT iron ore from its three iron ore complexes in the country — one in Donimalai in Karnataka and two in the Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh.

<b>AXIS BANK</b>	<b>SME Centre, Delhi:</b> 4th Floor, Ashoka Estate, 24 Barakhamba Road New Delhi-110001. <b>Also at</b> III Floor, Red Fort Capital Park, New Delhi-110001. Bhai Veer Singh Marg, Near Gole Market, New Delhi-110001
<b>Also at:</b> Axis Bank Ltd., Axis House, Tower T-2, 2nd Floor, I-14, Sector-128, Noida Expressway, Jaypee Greens Wishtown, Noida (U.P.)-201301. <b>Corporate Office:</b> 'Axis House', Block-B, Bombay Dyeing Mills Compound, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli, Mumbai-400025	
<b>Registered Office:</b> 'Trishul', 3rd floor, opposite Samarsheswar Temple, Law garden, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad-380006	
<b>POSSESSION NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002</b>	
Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Axis Bank Ltd. under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued demand notice upon the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.	
The Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates.	
The Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Axis Bank Ltd.	
The Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.	
<b>Name of Borrower / Co-borrower</b>	<b>Description of Property</b>
<b>1.MNG International,</b> Registered Office At 185-186 , 2nd Floor, D-14, Sector 7 Rohini, Delhi - 110085	<b>1. Equitable Mortgage over ground floor of freehold residential property bearing No. 128, in PKT 14, Sector 24, Rohini, Delhi - 110042, situated in the layout plan Rohini, Residential Scheme, Rohini, Delhi, admeasuring 60sq. mts., along with the proportionate free hold rights of the and under the said property owned by Mr. Anshuman Mohanty &amp; Mrs. Pranati Mohanty built on a plot admeasuring 60 sqm.</b>
<b>2.Mr. Anshuman Mohanty,</b> Proprietor of M/S MNG International 185-186 , 2nd Floor, D-14 Sector 7 , Rohini, Delhi -110085 <b>Also At :</b> House No. 63 , Second Floor, With Roof Rights Pocket 21, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110085 <b>Also At - :</b> Property No. 128 in Pkt-14, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110042	<b>2. Equitable Mortgage charge over freehold residential property situated at House No. 63, Second Floor, with roof rights, admeasuring 60 sq. mtrs in PKT 21, Sector 24, Rohini, Delhi - 110042</b>
<b>3.Ms. Pranati Mohanty</b> 185-186, 2nd Floor, D-14, Sector 7, Rohini, Delhi-110085 <b>Also At -</b> Ms. Pranati Mohanty House No. 63, Second Floor Pocket 21, Sector 24 Rohini, Delhi-110085 <b>Also At:</b> Ms. Pranati Mohanty Property No -128.In Pkt-14, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110042	
The above-mentioned Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) are hereby given a 30 days' Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days' from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.	
<b>Date : 07-03-2021</b>	<b>Sd/-</b>
<b>Place : Delhi</b>	<b>Authorized Officer,</b> <b>Axis Bank Ltd.,</b>

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE	
Re-Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)	
1 Name of work with its location	Strengthening of rail and cross girder, providing screen over web of cross girder on Br. No.-176A UP DLI-UMB section under AXEN/Br/Spl/TKJ.
2 Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 26,14,403.75
3 Completion period of Work	(02) Two Months
4 Date & time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Upto 14.00 hrs. on 30.03.2021 Opening of tender after 14.00 hrs. on same day
5 Website particulars where complete details of Tender can be seen & downloaded	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. <a href="http://www.irops.gov.in">www.irops.gov.in</a>
Tender Notice No. 32-W-BR-176A-DLI-2021 Date: 06.03.2021 517/2021	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

	<b>SOUTHERN STAR CO-OPERATIVE (URBAN) THRIFT &amp; CREDIT SOCIETY LTD.</b> Corp. Off.: E-283, DDA Market, MOR Land, New Rajendra Nagar, New Delhi-60 Phone : 011-28741801-02, 28741821-22, E-mail : <a href="mailto:ssstarsociety@yahoo.com">ssstarsociety@yahoo.com</a> , website : <a href="http://southernstar.org">southernstar.org</a>
NOTICE	
Notice is being published for general information of the members of the SOUTHERN STAR CO-OP. (U) THRIFT & CREDIT SOCIETY LTD. (hereafter referred to as the Society') that the 31st Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) of the Society will be held on Friday, 19th March, 2021 at 02.00 P.M. at the MCD Community Center, New Rajendra Nagar, New Delhi-60, to consider the Agenda already circulated and also available at the website of the Society.	
S/d	(VENKIDESWARAN POTTY P.N.) HONY. SECRETARY
NEW DELHI -60 Date : 01.03.2021	

PUBLIC NOTICE				
		Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005		
The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.				
Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Kanchan Kumari, Raghunath Sharma, 276, Sector B2 Pocket C, Narela, Delhi A/c No:- LBDEL00002866980	LIG Flat No-276, Third Floor Block-B2 Pocket-C, Narela, Delhi	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 12,93,262/-	17-02-2020
2.	Pankaj Bakshi, Meena Bakshi, 641 New Ashiana Apartment Plot No-10, Sec 6, Dwarka South West Delhi, Delhi A/c No:- LBDEL00002967064	Flat No-641 4th Floor, Plot No 10, Block Ph-1, New Ashiana CGHS Ltd Cat-B, Sector-6, Delhi	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 24,47,256/-	29-02-2020
3.	Sanjeeta Thakur, Sanjeev Kumar Thakur, Flat No.990 Jay Ambey Apartment, New LIG Dda Flats, Kondli Gharoli, Mayur Vihar-3, Delhi A/c No:-LBGHZ00004865169	DDA LIG Flat No-137F, 2nd Floor Pocket-A-2, Kondli Gharoli, Mayur Vihar, Phase 3, Delhi	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 37,60,624/-	29-02-2020
4.	Rana Singh, Aarti Bhagwan Singh Thakur, 402 AI Ikrema Building, Near Grand Cafe, Al Jurf Ajman, UAE A/c No:-LBNO00002008679	Flat No-g-3/19, Diamond-4, 19th Floor, Ganga Apartment, Sidhharth Vihar, Sector-7, ghaziabad,	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 1,04,25,664/-	31-05-2018
5.	Anil Singh, Sudha Anil Singh, Flat No. 1003, Al Smaif BLDG., Jamal Ab, Sharjah, UAE A/c No:-LBDEL00001462326	Apartment No.ICD011, First Floor, Along With Parking Spaces PBD 103 And PBD 104, Revenue Estate, Wazirabad, Gurgaon	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 46,05,237/-	30-11-2018
6.	Balljeet Garg, Mamta Garg, H No-73, Ft, Sec-12A Dwarka, Delhi A/c No:-LBDEL00001866197	Plot No-73,first Floor Sector-12 A, Dwarka Delhi	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 20,23,764/-	31-07-2018
7.	Utkarsh Jhingran, Niti Jhingran, Block 24 Unit Number 02-13 Simet Street Melville Park, Singapore, Singapore A/c No:-LBDEL00001879850	Flat No- Ptt- 09-0001, Palm Terraces, Sector- 66, Gurgaon, Haryana, Gurgaon	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 2,47,782/-	31/08/2018
8.	Sukhvinder Singh, Gurpreet Singh Arora, A- 4/424, Paschim Vihar, Delhi A/c No:-LBDEL00001977268	Unit No 0047, Ground Floor, Block E, Anthea Floors, Wild Flower Country, Gurgaon	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 38,13,100/-	30/11/2018
The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.				
<b>Date : March 06, 2021</b> <b>Place: Delhi/NCR</b>		<b>Authorized Officer</b> <b>ICICI Bank Limited</b>		



# Pakistan PM Imran wins trust vote



Supporters of the ruling Pakistan Tehree-e-Insaf political party gather near the National Assembly to celebrate Prime Minister Imran Khan winning a vote of confidence in Islamabad, Pakistan on Saturday

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday comfortably won a trust vote in the National Assembly amid opposition boycott, bolstering his Government's position after an embarrassing defeat in this week's hotly-contested Senate elections.

Prime Minister Khan secured 178 votes in the 342-member lower house of Parliament during a special session convened on the directives of President Arif Alvi. He required 172 votes for a simple majority. The floor test took place without the Opposition as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — an

alliance of 11 parties — boycotted the voting, making it easier for Khan to secure the required numbers.

Khan decided to take a vote of confidence in the National Assembly after his finance minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh was defeated in the Senate election by former prime minister Yusuf Raza

Gilani on Wednesday. The Opposition demanded the Prime Minister's resignation after the debacle.

Addressing the House after securing the trust vote, the 68-year-old cricketer-turned politician thanked all lawmakers from his party and allies for supporting him in Parliament.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi earlier tabled a single-point resolution in the House.

"That this House reposes confidence in the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr Imran Khan, as required under clause (7) of Article 91 of the Constitution Islamic Republic of Pakistan," the resolution said. Speaker Asad Qaiser announced the result, saying Prime Minister Khan had been elected to the post with 176 votes following the 2018 general elections. "Today, he has secured 178 votes," he said.

The ruling coalition had 181 members but after the resignation of one of its lawmakers, Faisal Wovda, its strength was reduced to 180. The Opposition coalition has 160 members in the House. One seat was vacant. According to the breakdown, 155 PTI lawmakers out of 156 voted in favour of the prime minister, Dawn newspaper reported.

Seven lawmakers from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), five each from the Pakistan Muslim League-Q and the Balochistan Awami

Party, three from the Grand Democratic Alliance, and one each from the Awami Muslim League and the Jamhoori Watan Party voted in favour of the resolution. Independent candidate Aslam Bhotani also voted in favour of Khan.

Earlier, unruly scenes were witnessed outside Parliament building when supporters of the ruling alliance tried to dis-

rupt a press conference of Opposition leaders belonging to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

PML-N leaders alleged that they had been manhandled by the ruling party members who were holding up banners and chanting slogans in favour of Khan. Security forces managed to separate the political workers of the two sides.

## Pakistan Opp slams PM, terms vote of confidence 'meaningless'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's leading Opposition leaders on Saturday demanded Prime Minister Imran Khan's resignation and fresh elections, soon after he won a vote of confidence in the National Assembly.

Khan secured 178 votes in the 342-member lower house of Parliament during a special session convened on the directives of President Arif Alvi.

The floor test took place without the Opposition as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — an alliance of 11 parties — boycotted the voting.

The first to respond was chief of the PDM Maulana

Fazlur Rehman, who told the media in Sukkur, Sindh that the vote of confidence has no meaning.

"This was not a confidence vote. We know which agencies watched the members of the assembly the entire night. [We know] who knocked on the doors of each member to ensure they were present," he said.

His reference was towards reports stating that the government kept its members inside lodges in Islamabad under strict watch so that all of them are present in Parliament during the floor test.

Rehman alleged that the lawmakers were forced to vote for Prime Minister Khan.

## Imran bats for electoral reforms for fair elections, to introduce EVMs

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Saturday that his government will introduce electoral reforms and electronic voting machines to ensure fair and transparent elections in the country.

Delivering a speech after winning a trust vote in the National Assembly, the cricketer-turned-politician said his government plans to introduce electronic voting, enabling millions of Pakistanis abroad to vote in elections.

"We are bringing modern technology in elections for a transparent election process. We have decided to use Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in the future. It is important to use them to counter the voter fraud claims made by the candidates who lose the polls. We are also working on putting up a system

so that the overseas Pakistanis can cast their votes," Khan said.

"Just like in the US where former president Donald Trump's repeated allegations of electoral malpractice were debunked by a transparent system, Pakistan will also put in place the same system to ensure fair and transparent elections in the country.

"As captain in Cricket, I brought the concept of neutral umpiring, similarly my government will set in motion a fair electoral system," he said.

Khan's remarks came after Pakistan's election commission on Friday expressed shock and disappointment over the prime minister's allegations against it, asserting that the Senate elections were held as per the Constitution and it has "never come under any sort of pressure and God willing, will not in future as well."

## Protests, tear gas in Myanmar after UN envoy urges action

AP ■ YANGON

Security forces in Myanmar again used force Saturday to disperse anti-coup protesters, a day after a UN special envoy urged the Security Council to take action to quell junta violence that this past week left more than 50 peaceful demonstrators dead and scores injured.

Protests were reported Saturday morning in the country's biggest city, Yangon, where stun grenades and tear gas were used against demonstrators. On Wednesday, 18 people were reported killed there.

Protests also took place in several other cities, including Mandalay, the second-biggest city, Myitkyina, the capital of the northern state of Kachin, Myeik in the far south, where police fired tear gas at students, and Dawei in the southeast, where tear gas was also used. Officials are believed to



Anti-coup protesters prepare water and wet cloths to help extinguish tear gas canisters during a demonstration in Yangon, Myanmar on Saturday

have exhumed the body of a young woman who was killed during Wednesday's suppression of protests in Mandalay. The woman, Kyal Sin, had been photographed taking part in the protests before her death, and images of her on the front lines have made her a high-pro-

file martyr.

Security forces on Friday night sealed off the cemetery where she was buried, and when residents visited in the morning, her grave was freshly plastered over and shovels and other evidence of digging were found at the site.

## Pope to visit Iraq church damaged by ISIS terrorists

**Baghdad:** The scenes are seared in the memory of the Rev. Ammar Altony Yako: A church that for decades has been the pride of the town of Qaraqosh, a center for Christian life in Iraq, stood badly scarred.

Yako saw it in 2016 when Qaraqosh was liberated from more than two years of Islamic State group rule. Scrawled on a wall was the proclamation, the "Islamic State will remain." Strewn amid the rubble in a courtyard were bullet-riddled mannequins and other telltale signs of a militants' makeshift firing range for target practice.

On Sunday, a new scene will play out for the world to watch at the Church of the Immaculate Conception and new memories will be created. Where the extremists once damaged, Pope Francis will now pray.

"I never could have imagined that his holiness, the pope, would visit this church, not even in my dreams," said Yako, who has been



Pope Francis stands with religious leaders during an interreligious meeting near the archaeological area of the Sumerian city-state of Ur, 20 kilometers south-west of Nasiriyah, Iraq on Saturday

## Pope Francis, Iraq's top Shia cleric hold historic meeting

AP ■ PLAINS OF UR (IRAQ)

Pope Francis and Iraq's top Shia cleric delivered a powerful message of peaceful coexistence on Saturday, urging Muslims in the war-weary Arab nation to embrace Iraq's long-beleaguered Christian minority during an historic meeting in the holy city of Najaf.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani said religious authorities have a role in protecting Iraq's Christians, and that they should live in peace and enjoy the same rights as other Iraqis.

The Vatican said Francis thanked al-Sistani for having "raised his voice in defense of the weakest and most persecuted" during some of the most violent times in Iraq's recent history.

Al-Sistani, 90, is one of the most senior clerics in Shiite Islam and his rare but powerful political interventions have helped shape present-day Iraq. He is a deeply revered figure in Shia-majority Iraq and his opinions on religious and other matters are sought by Shiites worldwide.

The historic meeting in al-Sistani's humble home was months in the making, with every detail painstakingly discussed and negotiated between the ayatollah's office and the Vatican. Early Saturday, the 84-year-old pontiff's convoy, led by a bullet-proof Mercedes-Benz, pulled up along Najaf's narrow and column-lined Rasool Street, which culminates at the golden-domed Imam Ali Shrine, one of the most revered sites in Shiite Islam. He then walked the few meters (yards) to al-Sistani's modest home, which the cleric has rented for decades.

A group of Iraqis wearing traditional clothes welcomed him outside. As a masked Francis entered the doorway, a few white doves were released in a sign of peace.

He emerged just under an hour later, still limping from an apparent flare-up of sciatica nerve pain that makes walking difficult. The "very positive" meeting lasted a total of 40 minutes, said a religious official in Najaf, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to brief media.

## Senate works through night, virus aid on path to passage

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Beary-eyed lawmakers worked through a mountain of amendments Saturday as the Senate plodded toward passage of a \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill that President Joe Biden and Democrats say is crucial for hoisting the country out of the pandemic.

The Senate commenced a dreaded "vote-a-thon" — a continuous series of votes on amendments — shortly before midnight Friday, and by midmorn-

ing Saturday had dispensed with over two dozen.

Democrats were hoping for final passage by around midday so the Senate could send the modestly revamped bill back to the House, and then to Biden this coming week for his signature.

The Senate had been in session since 9 a.m. EST Friday. Its work on the bill was proving to be a test of both lawmakers' physical stamina and Democrats' ability to pass legislation backed by every senator in the party.

The chamber is divided 50-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote their only edge, and Republicans are arrayed against the legislation. Overnight, the Senate was like an experiment in the best techniques for staying awake. Several lawmakers appeared to rest their eyes or doze at their desks, often burying their faces in their hands. At one point, Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, at 48 one of the younger senators, trotted into the chamber and did a prolonged stretch.

## Biden White House: message discipline, no news conference

**Washington:** No news conference. No Oval Office address. No primetime speech to a joint session of Congress.

President Joe Biden is the first executive in four decades to reach this point in his term without holding a formal question and answer session.

It reflects a White House media strategy meant both to reserve major media set-pieces for the celebration of a legislative victory and to limit unforced errors from a historically gaffe-prone politician. Biden has opted to take questions about as often

as most of his recent predecessors, but he tends to field just one or two informal inquiries at a time, usually in a hurried setting at the end of an event.

In a sharp contrast with the previous administration, the White House is exerting extreme message discipline, empowering staff to speak but doing so with caution.

Recalling both Biden's largely leak-free campaign and the buttoned-up Obama administration, the new White House team has carefully managed the president's appear-

ances, trying to lower the temperature from Donald Trump's Washington and to save a big media moment to mark what could soon be a signature accomplishment: passage of the Covid-19 bill.

The message control may serve the president's purposes but it denies the media opportunities to directly press Biden on major policy issues and to engage in the kind of back-and-forth that can draw out information and thoughts that go beyond the administration's curated talking points. AP

## NASA's Perseverance rover performs first test drive on Mars

PTI ■ LOS ANGELES

NASA's latest Mars rover, Perseverance, performed its first test drive on the Red Planet, covering a distance of about 6.5 metres across the Martian landscape, a "major milestone" before it begins its science operations.

The drive lasted about 33 minutes, propelling the rover forward by four metres, where it then turned to the left by 150 degrees and backed up 2.5 metres into its new temporary parking space, the American space agency noted in a statement.

According to NASA, the drive served as a mobility test to check out and calibrate every system, subsystem, and instrument on the Perseverance rover, which it said is a major milestone before the science operations get underway.



This photo made available by NASA was taken during the first drive of the Perseverance rover on Mars. Perseverance landed on February 18, 2021

ROVING ON RED PLANET

- The drive lasted about 33 minutes, propelling the rover forward by four metres, where it then turned to the left by 150 degrees and backed up 2.5 metres into its new temporary parking space
- The drive served as a mobility test to check out and calibrate every system, subsystem, and instrument on the Perseverance rover
- All the while, the space agency said the rover continues to send down images from Mars using the most advanced suite of cameras ever to travel to the Red Planet

fident our drive system is good to go, capable of taking us wherever the science leads us over the next two years," Zarifian said.

Regular commutes of over 200 metres are expected once the rover begins pursuing its science goals, including the search for signs of ancient microbial life, NASA said.

As part of its mission, the rover would characterise the Red Planet's geology and past climate, and pave the way for human exploration of Mars.

It is also expected to be the first to collect and cache Martian rock and soil.

Since its landing on Mars on February 18, the rover has undergone several routine checks, including a software update, replacing the computer program that helped land Perseverance with one NASA will rely on to analyse the

planet.

On March 2, NASA said its engineers unstowed the rover's 2-metre-long robotic arm for the first time, flexing each of its five joints over the course of two hours.

All the while, the space agency said the rover continues to send down images from Mars using the most advanced suite of cameras ever to travel to the Red Planet.

"Every picture from Perseverance is relayed by either the European Space Agency's Trace Gas Orbiter, or NASA's MAVEN, Mars Odyssey, or Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. They are important partners in our explorations and our discoveries," said Justin Maki, chief engineer for imaging and the imaging scientist for the Mars 2020 Perseverance rover mission at JPL.

<b>Rajasthan Skill &amp; Livelihoods Development Corporation</b> EMI Campus, J-54, Jhalana Institutional Area, Jaipur-302004 (Rajasthan) Ph: +91-0141-2705917, 9103248, Fax: +91-0141-5103246, www.rajasthanvivek.org F ( ) No: RSLDC/SDT/2021-22/30976 Dated: 05-03-2021		
<b>Office Order</b>		
Subject: - Extension of Bid submission last date and opening date for procurement of Services for providing Self-Defence Training to girls/women through training partner for RSLDC.		
Reference: - RFP No. RSLDC/SDT/20/30473 dated 3rd Feb, 2021		
Due to some unavoidable circumstances the last date and Bid opening date of above referred Bid is hereby extended as per the following –		
Activity	Old Date & Time	New Date & Time
Last Date/Time for Submitting / uploading of offer/Bid	8th March, 2021 up to 3:00 PM	18th March, 2021 up to 03:00 PM
Last Date / time for submitting original hard copy of Bid Security Demand Draft	8th March, 2021 up to 3:00 PM	18th March, 2021 up to 03:00 PM
Date & Time for opening of Technical Bid	8th March, 2021 up to 05:00 PM	18th March, 2021 at 05:00 PM
The interested bidders may submit the proposal as per the above amendments and all other terms & conditions will remain unchanged.		
UBN No. SLD2021RFP0003		Managing Director, RSLDC
Raj./Sanwad/C/20/10627		

<b>AXIS BANK</b> SME Centre, Delhi: 4th Floor, Ashoka Estate, 24 Barakhamba Road New Delhi-110001. Also at III Floor, Red Fort Capital Parswanath Tower, 5th Viceroy Singh Marg, Near Cole Market, New Delhi-110001 Also at: Axis Bank Ltd., Axis House, Tower T-2, 2nd Floor, I-14, Sector-128, Noida Expressway, Jaypee Greens Wishtown, Noida (U.P.)-201301. Corporate Office: Axis House, Block-B, Bombay Dyeing Mills Compound, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli, Mumbai-400025 Registered Office: "Trishul", 3rd floor, opposite Samarthesw Temple, Law garden, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad-380006			
<b>POSSESSION NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002</b>			
Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Axis Bank Ltd. under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notice upon the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Axis Bank Ltd. The Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(s) attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.			
Name of Borrower / Co-borrower	Description of Property	1. Date of Demand Notice	2. Date of Possession
1. M/S Lakhmi Chand Om Prakash (Through Its Proprietor) Mr.Ashish Gupta Registered Office At: 2745/9, Sushila Mohan Marg Naya Bazar, Delhi-110006 Also At: - 3963/108, 1st Floor Naya Bazar, Delhi-110006	Equitable Mortgage on Property No.-5, in Block C – 5 Out of Khassara No.- 262/258/217/43 with all roof/terrace rights, Built on land area measuring 105.5 Sq. yards, Situated in the area of village Bharoli, colony known as Adarsh Nagar on Cottage Road Cottage Road Delhi – 110033	1. 25-11-2020 2. 04-03-2021	3. Rs 3,16,99,855/- (Rupees Three Crore Sixteen lakh ninety nine thousand Eight hundred and fifty five only)
2. Mr. Ashish Gupta At: 2745/9, Sushila Mohan Marg Naya Bazar, Delhi-110006 Also At: - 3963/108, 1st Floor Naya Bazar, Delhi-110006			
Also At: - R/O C-5, Cottage Road, Near Azadpur Sabzi Mandi, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi-110033.			
3. Mrs. Shahni Gupta, R/O C-5, Cottage Road, Near Azadpur Sabzi Mandi, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi-110033.			
4. Mr.Om Prakash Gupta, R/O C-5, Cottage Road, Near Azadpur Sabzi Mandi, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi-110033.			
The above-mentioned Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(s) are hereby given a 30 days' Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days' from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.			
Date: 07-03-2021 Place: Delhi		Sd/-, Authorized Officer, Axis Bank Ltd.,	



# INDIA FIX LORD'S DATE

Virat & Co will face Black Caps in WTC final after Axar, Ashwin take five each to thrash England by innings & 25 runs to seal series

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin once again made a mockery of Kane Williamson's New Zealand but Axar (24-6-48-5), in company of Ashwin (22.5-4-47-5), literally blew England away in a session and half for a paltry 135 in 54.5 overs to complete a 3-1 rout, ensuring that the Anthony De Mello Trophy will stay at the Cricket Centre in Mumbai.

It was another two and half days finish but even the most partisan England experts like their former skipper Michael Vaughan have admitted that the 22-yard strip had almost nothing to do with their side's abject surrender.

A case in point could be India's first innings score of 365 and a lead of 160 on the same track where England could cumulatively manage only 340 runs across two innings.

This was one Test match where Indians, even before a ball being bowled, created an illusion of a turning track. It was a play of playing with the minds of a team that was already in a negative zone.

There wasn't much turn but enough to ensure that the visitors wilted under pressure as Patel's series tally stood at high-est for a newcomer (27) while man of the series Ashwin was peerless as ever with 32 scalps in his kitty.

A lot of credit for this vic-



India captain Virat Kohli along with teammates Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Mohammed Siraj and Rishabh Pant pose with winners trophy

PTI

tory should go to the indomitable Rishabh Pant, who played the enforcer on the second day with a magnificent hundred, and Washington Sundar, who notched up a chiselled 96.

These two knocks literally made it impossible for England to make a comeback as a total of 365 seemed like 650.

The coming of age of Pant as a real replacement for the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni and emergence of Washington as a potent batting all-rounder only augurs well for the team.

So formidable is India's bench strength right now that Hanuma Vihari, who saved an epic Test in Sydney only a couple of months back, may not get

to play a Test in near future.

World's best wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha will also find it difficult to add to his 38 Tests unless the Roorkee Rockstar gets injured.

Patel, in his debut Test series, was a powerhouse performer but he also knows that once Ravindra Jadeja is fit and available, he will have to wait for his next Test.

The story of the third day was similar to the one that has played out for most of the series.

With shoulders already drooping after the humiliation inflicted by Pant and Washington, England's openers Zak Crawley (5, 16 balls), Dom Sibley (3, 21 balls) and Jonny

“Every team in International cricket is a quality side and we need to work hard to beat them, even at home. Keeping that intensity going is most important and is the hallmark of our team.”

—VIRAT KOHLI

“We haven't matched India in the last three, and we need to keep learning and keep getting better for this experience and this series, and we need to keep evolving and move forward.”

—JOE ROOT

Bairstow (0, 1 ball) seemed like “walking wickets” at the start of the post-lunch session.

One had expected two of England's best players in Joe Root (30) and Ben Stokes (2 off 9 balls) to put up a fight but the all-rounder failed to gauge the extra bounce as he went for a sweep shot off Patel.

Kohli accepted the dolly at leg slip as England's resistance was blown away at 30 for 4. Ollie Pope (15) hit Ashwin for a six, which was more desperation than finesse, and it was only a matter of time before he yorked himself as Pant fumbled while gathering but managed to effect a stumping to make it 65 for 5.

The England skipper could

## India top WTC table

Dubai: India on Saturday finished on top of the league phase of the ICC World Test Championship standings after crushing England by an innings and 25 runs in the fourth Test.

“That victory against England means India finish the league phase of the inaugural ICC World Test Championship with a fine view from the top of the table,” the ICC tweeted.

India finished the league phase with 520 points, which includes 12 wins, four losses and one draw.

New Zealand finished in the second spot with 420 points, including seven wins and four losses.

Australia finished third with 332 points ahead of England and Pakistan.

only helplessly look how his colleagues made a mess of Test match batting and Ashwin finally had his number trapping him leg before on the back-foot with another straight ball.

The remaining wickets in the post tea session were a mere formality which the spinners completed in due course of time.

The morning session belonged to Washington, whose 96 off 174 balls was as important as Pant's second day hundred in the final context of the match.

Washington and Axar Patel (43 off 97 balls) added an invaluable 106 runs for the eighth wicket, which ended even a miniscule chance for England to stage a recovery.

# Ashwin wants to leave his own legacy

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

To become the best version of himself while learning something new everyday is Ravichandran Ashwin's endeavour as he aims to leave his lasting legacy in the pantheon of Indian cricket greats.

Ashwin has now won eight Man-of-the-Series awards in his 10-year career and is only eight wickets short of equalling Harbhajan Singh's 417 Test wickets.

It could well happen in England this summer but he doesn't want to entertain any such thoughts.

“Honestly, that's not even crossed my mind and if you want me to put my thoughts on it. He is a fantastic bowler. There's a lot that I have learnt from him. I wasn't even an off-spinner when Bhajju paa started playing for the Indian team,” Ashwin's respect for another practitioner of the same craft was there for all to see.

“He (Harbhajan) was also an inspi-



ration because of the 2001 famous series (32 wickets in 3 Tests). I never imagined in 2001 that I will be an off-spinner, and I mean who would have imagined those things.

“I was fortunate to play alongside Bhajju paa when I came into the team and also play under Anil bhai but I would now like to leave my own legacy,” Ashwin said.

Being a student of the game Ashwin wants to evolve as a cricketer and a person everyday.

“My growth as a cricketer is a direct synonym to the person I am. I want to keep evolving, keep learning and that's my second nature, directly proportional to the kind of cricketer I am and whatever I do, the best that I can be.”

Ashwin's apathy for all those pitch critics is well documented and he would love to see how the global media reacts when a green top is given to India when they go for a game outside the sub-continent.

“The series win is a testament to the

fact that this is a really good Indian cricket team. That's all I would like to say. Other day, I was listening to what Sunny bhai (Sunil Gavaskar) was saying, makes sense,” Ashwin said referring to Gavaskar's statement about not giving too much credence to the British pundits, whose favourite day job had been criticising the Indian tracks.

“Only because we are giving attention to people who are making a mockery of it, we are encouraging them to do it non-stop,” he said.

He then sarcastically said that he would keenly watch how foreign media cover the criticism from Indian commentators about the pitches provided when India is on tour abroad.

“I would like to a pitch covered with grass somewhere else in the world and some of our Indian commentators, taking picture and putting an Instagram post and I will like to see how the global media takes notice and then we will know who's at faulty end.”

# ‘Motera track produced fantastic entertainment’



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

There is no reason to cry over the nature of the Motera track, India head coach Ravi Shastri asserted on Saturday, saying the curator prepared pitches that produced “fantastic entertainment” in the last two matches here.

The pitch for the third Test came in for sharp criticism from a few former England players after the visitors were bowled out for 112 and 81 in the Day/Night match.

“Why should I hold back? I attribute it to the groundsman,” Shastri said after India dismissed England for 135 to register an innings and 25 run win.

“Who will complain against a track like this? It is fantastic entertainment, for both teams and the game and the result 3-1 doesn't really suggest how close the series was.”

Shastri lauded the team for making it to the WTC final despite the ICC changing the qualification criteria last year.

“For us to be on the top of the table in World Test championship is two-and-a-half years of work and for those years to be successful, it's been six years prior to that,” he said.

“The boys took one series at a time, they were not really bothered about the World Test Championship because the goal post gets shifted every time.

“We were heading the table and some rule change came of percentage system when we were not even playing but never mind all that, we have got 520 points, we deserve to be on top of the table and playing that final.”

The 58-year-old said it is very satisfying to see the youngsters perform.



# Our bench strength is extremely strong: Kohli

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India's supremely talented bench strength has made skipper Virat Kohli quite confident that the team will have a relatively smooth ride when the transition period dawns upon it in the next few years.

With the rise of several young players like Washington Sundar, Mohammed Siraj and the maverick Rishabh Pant, India have been on a roll both at home and abroad.

“Our bench strength is extremely strong and that's a good sign for Indian cricket. When the transition happens, the standards won't fall and Rishabh and Washy's partnership showed exactly that in a crucial juncture of the match,” Kohli said at the post-match presentation.

After notching up victories in the second and third Tests respectively, India won the fourth match inside three days.

“We had to pick up our body language after the first game in Chennai. Every team in International cricket is a quality side and we need to work hard to beat them, even at home. Keeping that intensity going is most important and is the hallmark of our team,” Kohli said.

Star opener Rohit Sharma scored 161 in the first innings of the second Test and the skipper feels the knock changed the complexion of the series alongside seasoned spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's performance of 32 wickets.

“Rohit's knock was the defining moment in Chennai, and Ashwin has been our most bankable player over the years so they have been our best players this series.”

“Now we can accept that the World Test Championship final, which was a distraction in New Zealand in 2020, but now it's a reality,” Kohli said.

Ashwin, who ended the series with 32 wickets and a century, was named *Man of the series* and the spinner was delighted to qualify for the WTC final, adding that the win was a collective effort.

“The fact that we qualified for the WTC final is very important. The intensity was low after Chennai, despite the high in Australia. Every time there was a challenging time in the series, someone put their hand up, so this series win was right up there,” Ashwin said. England skipper Joe Root conceded that his team was outplayed by the hosts in the series.

“The first game was a positive. We haven't matched India in the last three, and we need to keep learning and keep getting better for this experience and this series,” Root said.

# We failed to grab opportunities: Root

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England captain Joe Root on Saturday mourned the opportunities his team squandered in the lost fourth Test, saying they let slip the advantageous position from where they could have been on top of the game.

India at one stage were 121 for five but ended up taking a 160-run lead in the first innings which proved to be match-winning.

Rishabh Pant, Washington Sundar and Axar Patel took the game away from England with their fearless approach.

“There have been times we had a chance to wrestle the game in our favour, to get on top, just didn't manage to do it,” Root said at the post-match conference.

“India played those important, key moments better than us in these last three games and credit for being able to do that better than we do.

“So, it has been disappointing, it has been frustrating to finish the series on a note that we have but we are going to keep looking forward as a team,” said Root.

The England skipper acknowledged Indian batsman Rishabh Pant's remarkable ability to take the attack by the scruff of its neck. “The way he bats, he



England players react during Day 2 of fourth Test against India

AP

makes it difficult for bowlers to build pressure on him. Sometimes he pulls a reverse sweep to a guy, who has 600 Test wickets.

“So it is quite a skill and a brave move to do and it came off for him and got themselves (India) to a very good position on that wicket,” said Root, referring to the reverse sweep which Pant played off James Anderson.

For India, Ravichandran Ashwin grabbed 32 wickets in the series, while Axar snared 27 wickets to leave England floored. Root lavished praise on the

Gujarat left-arm spinner saying he was relentless in his lengths.

“In this series, Axar in particular, has been very accurate and has asked very good questions. He has been relentless with his length and some balls have skidded, some have spun quite big and we are going to just find a way to manage it well.”

But not all was doom and gloom for Root, who found solace in the fact that his wicket-keeper Ben Foakes and left-arm spinner Jack Leach performed their roles to the best of their abilities.



Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar was on Saturday felicitated by the BCCI on the 50th anniversary of his Test debut. The 71-year-old former skipper received a commemorative Test cap from BCCI Secretary Jay Shah during the lunch break on Day three of the fourth and final Test between India and England at the Narendra Modi Stadium here in Ahmedabad

PTI

# Pant's 101 best counter-attacking knock on Indian soil: Shastri

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India coach Ravi Shastri on Saturday said Rishabh Pant's game-changing hundred against England in the fourth Test here was the best counter-attacking knock that he has seen by a number six Indian batsman on home soil.

Pant, in an innings that was just the right mix of caution and aggression, notched up 101 off just 118 balls, playing a crucial role in India winning the match by an innings and 25 runs.

Speaking highly of Pant, Shastri said the stumper's hard work is now showing results.

“He has worked like hell in the last three or four months and the results are showing. Yesterday's innings is the best counter attacking innings, I have seen in India

by an Indian, especially at number six when the ball was turning,” Shastri said after India's emphatic win in the fourth Test.

“We were hard on him. Nothing comes easy and he was told in no uncertain terms that he has got to respect the game a little more. He has got to lose some weight and work hard on his keeping.”

“We know the talent he has. He is a genuine match winner and he has responded.”

Pant's potential was never in doubt but he struggled to do justice to his talent, often inviting criticism for his shoddy work behind the wickets and average batting show.

However, the Australia tour changed everything for him as he played match-winning knocks in India's historic victory. Since then he has only grown in confidence.







I think that an actor is more likely to be forgiven in the public's eye than an actress  
— Mila Kunis



# MAPPING THE SACRED DWELLINGS OF SHAKTI

Renowned writer and historian DR ALKA PANDE narrates that while the Shakti Peethas represent a single philosophical fold, they are a testament to the diverse legends of Shakti. An edited excerpt:

Originating from Sanskrit, the word 'Peetha' means 'seat, altar, shrine or dwelling'. In the case of the Shakti Peethas, it is very specific. It is the sacred space where the Supreme Goddess takes a strong, well-founded seat on Earth. Each of the Peethas have been turned into shrines for the Goddess by the very people who believe in the absolute power of the feminine. Each site where the 51 body parts of Sati fell, came to be known as a Shakti Peetha.

A teertha is a crossing. As with most Sanskrit words, there are multiple meanings of this too. Teertha is also the passing of the *atman* to the *parmatman* the crossing from the physical world to the metaphysical world. These 51 sacred sites are also linked by theologians and scholars to the 51 alphabets of the Sanskrit language. In each of the Peethas also resides *Kaalbhairava*, which is another name of Shiva. Most of the Shakti Peetha shrines contain a naturally appearing stone which becomes the object of worship around which the temple shrine is built.

Vindhyavasini is an additional Shakti Peetha, which I have deliberately not included in the 51 Peethas. While a powerful dwelling of Shakti, Vindhyavasini is not the abode of Shakti as Sati's body parts. It is, however, the preferred choice and home of Yogamaya, the sister of Krishna, who escaped from Kamsa's prison at Mathura.

*Kalika Purana* indicates that there are four Adi Shakti Peethas, which is further affirmed in the commentary and text of *Brihat Samhita*. It lists the names of the location at various places in India such as Vimla temple, Odisha, where her feet fell, Tara Tarini temple in Behrampur, Odisha, where her breasts fell, Kamakhya temple in Guwahati, Assam, where her *yoni* or vagina fell and lastly, the Kalighat temple in West Bengal, where her right toe fell.

## THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE DEVI

Since antiquity, Goddess worship has been part of the Indic tradition of India. In fact, the Goddess is even more popular than Shiva and Vishnu. All the manifestations, avatars or appearances of the many forms of Devi belong to the pantheon of the Shakti cult. The Supreme Goddess can be a gentle life-giver as in the case of Lakshmi, Saraswati or Parvati, or as the mistress of death in the form of Durga, Kali and Chamunda. She is a fascinating juxtaposition, both life-perpetuating and potentially destructive. In her life-giving form, Shakti can be represented as beautiful, benevolent, maternal, knowledgeable, compassionate and even desirable to the best. She invigorates, cheers and brightens the entire universe. She is represented and described as an idealized woman who is imbued with beauty, virtue and righteousness, and adorned with jewels. In fact, her iconography is drawn from the pre-modern depictions of the *salabanjikas*, *apsaras* and *surasundaris*. In this form, Shakti embraces and enlivens all aspects of reality. As the goddess of destruction and disease, she takes on rather unattractive and repulsive forms. As Sitala Devi Manasa, or Kali, the Devi is shown as haggard, ugly, unkempt and emaciated. However, whatever the form, it is always powerful.

I have dipped into both Puranic and Shakti texts to read the many interpretations and mythologies associated with the iconography, rituals of worship, devotion and representation of the Shakti Peetha as sites of immense power and energy. Each devotee enters the site of the Peetha through their own path of worship, through their respective understanding of the Great Goddess. The *wama panthis* or Shakt worshippers, for whom Shakti/Devi is supreme, enter through the tantric path, which is a sectarian movement.

The 51 Peethas have their own singular iconography and their own specific modes of rituals, worship and even prasada, with some standard common offerings like flowers, sweets and vermilion.

## RITUALS OF PRAYER AND DARSHAN

While the Shakti Peethas were specific to the body parts of Sati, the rituals of adoration, prayer and worship differed from region to



Kottari Devi (Hinglaj Mata) Temple, Pakistan

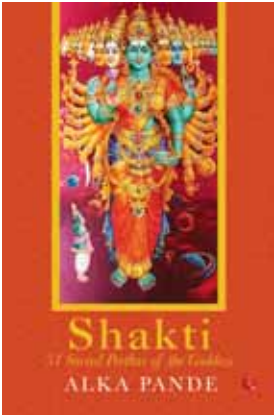
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region, given the culture and history of the place. Over time, the Peethas became linked to their respective regions. The local people took ownership of them and started claiming rights over the teerthas and sites. Naturally, the local food and religious and cultural traditions started getting preference over the stated Puranic or standard Sanatan *dharmashastras*.

In the temples, the daily rituals of worship were similar to the presiding deity, who was normally male, i.e. Vishnu or Shiva, and the feminine was worshipped in the form of their consorts. However, in the Shakti Peethas, the presiding deity was a body part, which while having its own specific service or prayer, was enfolded in the larger narrative of the worship of Shakti in the form of Devi.

The purpose of puja (prayer) is to appease, soothe and mollify the powerful Goddess and embrace the divine energy expressed as life force. The life force itself has many variations, from auspiciousness, health, desire for children, wealth and success, gaining power over intellectual and artistic skill, even victory over enemies. The ritual of puja is heavily invested in darshan. While doing puja, the concept of making eye contact with the deity is the key. Darshan is a two-way concept where the devotee sees the divinity and in turn, the divinity sees the devotee. The concept of darshan crosses all spaces, from intimate puja corners at home in domestic spaces to large public temples including the 51 Shakti Peethas.

The very act of darshan/view is the crucial key that creates the iconic moment where the devotee and the divine are in complete sync. This is the reason why 'Shakt' worshippers make long and arduous journeys to the Shakti



SINCE ANTIQUITY, GODDESS WORSHIP HAS BEEN PART OF THE INDIC TRADITION OF INDIA. IN FACT, THE GODDESS IS EVEN MORE POPULAR THAN SHIVA AND VISHNU. ALL THE MANIFESTATIONS, AVATARS OR APPEARANCES OF THE MANY FORMS OF DEVI BELONG TO THE PANTHEON OF THE SHAKTI CULT



Peethas. The idea is to take the energy of the Supreme Goddess while receiving her blessings. The religious rites have three distinct classifications: *Nitya*, which is daily, normally done at home; *Naimittika*, which are important days of the deity, and particular festivals (some special to the *ishta deva* at home or to the presiding deity of the temple); and finally *Kamyas*, which are optional, but a highly desired teertha being one of them.

The ritual of prayer to Shakti is also vested in the *panchbhootas*, where the five *gnanaindriyas*, or senses, are included in the aspect of puja:

Panchbhoota	Jnanindriya	Sense	Puja
Akash	Space	Ear	Hear
Vayu	Air	Skin	Touch
Agni	Fire	Eye	Vision
Jal	Water	Tongue	Taste
Bhoomi	Earth	Nose	Smell

## PRASADA

Prasada is both an offering and a blessing. It is offered by the devotee when he/she begins the ritual of puja. In domestic spaces, the devotee performs the puja at an individual, intimate level, often making prasada or an offering of fruits, and a rice and milk pudding with saffron strands and sprinkled with mewa/ nuts, particularly almonds and raisins. What I have observed in the offerings by the devotees, is that for Shakti, it is a bali, or animal sacrifice, normally a lamb and sometimes even a buffalo. The very basic prasada for Shakti is meat, alcohol for Bhairava, and a sweet, normally a rice pudding. Since the Shakti Peethas have been appropriated

by the devotees of the region, naturally the prasada of the Peetha also acquires a local flavour. In Eastern India, it is primarily kichdi and kheer with poori and potato curry; in South India, it is a variation of the local rice, i.e. pulihora; in Andhra Pradesh, a jaggery laddoo; and in Western India, at the Amba temple in Banaskantha, a delicious sweet made of chickpea flour, the mohanthal, is offered along with sindoor, and makhana, or dried lotus seeds. In this way, almost every region brings in its regional flavour and speciality as part of the prasada offered at the Shakti Peethas.

Meat as prasada is served in the temple community kitchens only on special occasions when specific sacrifices are conducted. Holding water in the palm of their hands, or *achaman*, the devotee asks for forgiveness and blessings before beginning their prayer. In the large public temples, it is the priest who becomes the conduit of devotion and reverence. He is the intermediary who while performing the ritual acts, offers food and flowers to the presiding deity of the temple. Worship in a temple begins by circumambulating the temple and the *garbhagriha* where the deity lives.

The myth of Sati and the 51 Peethas is an important myth in the worship of the Supreme Goddess. It lays down the template for all those who believe in the Absolute Power of the Mother Goddess, crossing borders from Tantra to Mantra, from *Devi Bhagwat Purana* to *Yogini Hridaya Tantra*, right down to the popular Grama Devi in a village to the Kula Devi of a Rajput clan.



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# Syrian quagmire: How long and for what?

The Syrian Civil War started as a non-violent uprising in the middle of March 2011. Today it is a full-fledged war which involves several nations and world's prominent jihadi outfits such as Islamic State (ISIS), al-Qaeda and splinter groups of these two mainstream groups. However, the Baathist Syrian Arab Republic headed by President Bashar al-Assad has survived a decade in power despite military challenges from all corners of the country.

Estimates emerging from various human rights agencies and independent media reports say that by end of December last year, the death toll in the war was between 3,87,000 and 5,93,000. The UN reports that more than 5.6 million have already fled the country and over 6 million have been internally displaced so far.

Although many complex events pushed the Syrians into this war, one that stands out is the historic Arab Spring, started in the early months of 2011. This 21st century movement mainly inspired by digital platforms across North Africa through the West Asia finally triggered the uprising in Syria. But then quickly, the Arab Spring had turned into mass gathering in the form of non-violent protests against the authoritarian and family-ruled regimes in all these countries.

In Syria, in the month of March, 15 schoolchildren were arrested and tortured for writing graffiti which was rightly inspired by the Arab Spring. One of the boys was killed as well. The arrest of these schoolchildren sparked outrage across Syria. Soon after, people came out on the road and demanded the release of all the children and raised slogans for basic freedoms for all in the country. The Assad regime responded by killing many protesters and this led to the demand for his resignation by the demonstrators. Subsequently, the clashes broke out between the masses and the supporters of the Government. This gradually spiralled into the full-blown war, what the whole world is witnessing today, involving terror groups of various nations of the world. But at its heart, the conflict highlights the tragic Shia-Sunni divide among the Muslims in the entire region.

The failure of the UN-led efforts to bring the warring parties to the negotiation table last month in Geneva has once



again brought war clouds over this West Asian nation. The United Nations should take the lead and restart the Geneva process. So far, the UN strategies have broadly failed for Syria. If it moves in the same direction, can it be so that the organisation is complicit in the crimes committed by the Assad regime?

Now, what America is doing to bring peace to Syria is that it is back again. The latest American strike in Syria has signalled President Joe Biden's new war game in West Asia.

The so-called messenger of peace and reunion of America badly divided by former President Donald Trump, Biden is now targeting Iran-backed militias in Syria. His administration is justifying the attack as the missile sallies are directed towards rebels that are propping up the Assad regime. The US Air Forces dropped 500-hundred-pound joint direct attack munitions at a crossing used by Iranian backed groups reportedly

killing 17. The particular groups hit by the limited US strike are Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib Syiaid al-Shuhada. Meanwhile, Dennis Ross, a former Senior US official and West Asian expert, says the attack was designed to show that there would be a military response if US forces were targeted, or the militias continued to strike. The Assad administration was quick to remind Biden that the American attacks were a cowardly act and urged Biden not to follow the law of the jungle.

The country's Foreign Ministry condemned the attack on areas in Deir al-Zor, near the Syrian-Iraqi border. The statement released by the Ministry highlighted that Biden Administration is supposed to stick to international legitimacy, not to the law of the jungle as did by the previous administration.

It's really ironic that Biden and Harris, the duo is repeating what once Trump simply did. When Trump ordered a

strike on Iran in 2019, Biden sharply reacted and tried to offer a sermon to him: "Trump's erratic, impulsive actions are the last things we need as Commander-in-Chief. No President should order a military strike without fully understanding the consequences. We do not need another war in the Middle East, but Trump's actions toward Iran only make that likely."

And what Biden is doing now? He knows very well how an American President responds to the crisis zones in the "Middle East". Precisely, nothing has changed in Washington, except the man giving orders. What Obama did, Trump followed and now Biden is taking it forward. America clearly has no strategy for the West Asia and North African (WANA) region. Its policy towards the region is outdated and dangerous. It's meddling carelessly with Iraq, Iran and Syria. Washington has no coherent policy to deal

with Tehran, Damascus and Baghdad. So obviously, finding out a solution for the Syrian war demands a new approach with a purely humanitarian concern.

Only with the collective efforts of the US, Russia, Iran and Turkey, peace can be brought to war-torn Syria. Biden's engagement with Putin, Erdogan, Rouhani and Kadhim (Iraq) would matter the most in bringing a permanent solution to the chaos in Syria. That is why the stability in West Asia demands more than a deal with Iran from Washington. The experts and policy practitioners opine that regional issues in this part of Asia could no way be comprehensively addressed.

They all agree that Iran would no way concede its sustained support for regional proxies and halt its ballistic missile programme in the near future. It is widely felt that isolating Iran was purely counterproductive. So to address, Tehran's troublesome behav-

iour in the region, it is better to handle each regional conflict through separate and parallel platforms at the same time.

Why is Moscow equally concerned about the chaos in Syria? It is not only to save the embattled Assad regime, an old ally of Russia, but also to stave off the growth of the Islamic terror in Russia. Hence, the Syrian conflict is not just a far-away battle for Putin regime. The life-time monarch is longing for stability at any cost. He knows fully well that the jihadists may get enough ground for their subversive models in his vast country. Of course, this might alter Putin's long-term strategies to keep the opposition and western pressure at bay. His regime is not best equipped to counter the ISIS, the way it is raging its ugly head in the WANA region. Russia's relationship with Syria dates back to 1950s and the Cold War. In those days, the USSR used to train the top brass of the Syrian military. What lies ahead in Syria?

By 2020, the Syrian civilians faced another year confronting life-threatening challenges. It is all about their survival as all of them are fighting for basic amenities such as food and medicines.

However, the last year saw the discernible decrease in violent conflicts across the country. But this does not mean that warring groups are retreating. No single rebel group is considering withdrawing from the war zones. The reason behind is that all these groups are backed by strong allies and they want to pursue the war till the fall of the Assad Government.

The Human Rights Watch notes, "With the unprecedented depreciation of national currency, the imposition of further international sanctions and crises in neighboring countries, the Syrian economy went into freefall for much of 2020. For ordinary Syrians, this translated into an inability to procure food, essential drugs, and other basic necessities. As a result, more than 9.3 million Syrians have become food insecure and over 80 per cent of Syrians live below the poverty line."

This correctly reflects the situation on the ground and insurmountable challenges faced by the millions who are caught between warring zones.

Only way to solve the imbroglio in Syria is to establish a UN-backed transitional regime and pressurise Assad to step down. A presidential election is meant to be taking place in Syria this summer. It would be a total disregard to millions of those who are suffering and a sham on global governance platforms such as the UN. The world body is not talking anything about this. And it is abandoning the Geneva peace process.

In fact, the Syria Constitutional Committee that demands a political process would be useless if the UN does not stop the upcoming presidential poll for Assad. This election would offer full immunity and legitimacy to the torturous and autocratic regime in Damascus. It's time to act. Ensure that no more civilians die. There is no need to secure peace when hardly anyone will be there to share the joy of the same. Washington should not employ the old tactics to handle the dictators in WANA.

*(The writer is an expert on international affairs)*



MAKHAN SAIKIA

## PERSPECTIVE

# India's collective responsibility to eradicate TB

**While the prioritisation of TB at the national level has been commendable, States must sustain this momentum by effectively implementing the policies and ensuring optimum fund allocation and utilisation. It is only with the collective approach we will be able to rid the country of this deadly disease**



DIGAMBAR BEHERA

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the value of awareness on infectious diseases. Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease that needs our attention as much as the SARS-CoV2 because it affects over 26.4 lakh Indians each year. An estimated 4.45 lakh Indians lose the battle to this ancient disease that is both preventable and curable.

It has therefore been extremely encouraging to see the heightened commitment towards TB elimination from the highest levels of Government leadership. Since the announcement by the Prime Minister to eliminate TB by 2025, five years ahead of the UN Sustainable Development Goal target, at the End TB Summit in New Delhi in 2018, comprehensive plans have been developed to achieve this goal.

The launch of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination introduced pivotal interventions, including a four-fold increase in funding, launch of private sector engagement to improve access to care as well as initiation of social support schemes to support patients in completing their treatment. However, there is still more to be done.

While the prioritisation of TB at the national level has been commendable, States must sustain this momentum by effectively implementing



the policies and NSP interventions and ensuring optimum fund allocation and utilisation.

The funding of the NTEP is divided on a 60:40 ratio, where 60 per cent of the total funding is provided by the Central Government, and State Governments are expected to fund the remaining 40 per

cent. However, in addition to fund allocation, fund utilisation and efficient implementation of the programme at the State level remains a challenge.

The Central TB Division has developed a State TB Index that highlights the performance of States based on targets achieved, funds utilised, among others towards achieving the

goal of TB elimination. While some States have made significant progress towards these goals, with Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala (among the large States) performing well on all indicators, including fund utilisation, many large States such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal still reflect poor fund

utilisation and thus have challenges in the implementation of the programme. Another critical challenge at the State level remains the paucity of human resources — with vacancies in critical positions required to be filled.

The other challenge that the programme faces is the lack of awareness about the disease

that negatively impacts health seeking behaviour. In the past year, the pandemic has brought about a positive change in people and their appetite for information on health, thereby giving us an opportunity on this positive behaviour to generate awareness about TB.

The launch of the TB Harega Desh Jeetega campaign in 2014, with the country's biggest movie star Amitabh Bachchan as the face of the campaign, was a game changer at the national level. However, there is a need to amplify the campaign at all levels, including States, districts, blocks and villages, to improve access to information and generate the demand for TB care.

Along with improving communications for awareness generation, it is also critical for the programme to directly engage with the community at all levels. Not only do community champions aid in generating awareness to destigmatise the disease, but their voices also serve as an important feedback mechanism for the programme.

Under the NSP, the National TB Elimination Programme established TB forums at the State and district levels to bring to the fore community voices, patient perspectives and understand ground-level challenges faced by patients in accessing care.

Continued and effective functioning of these forums will provide the programme with independent monitors who can help in highlighting localised gaps that need to be addressed. At the district levels, elected representatives can also serve as independent monitors of the programme providing oversight and aid in addressing localised challenges to ensure effective implementation.

The call for a Jan Andolan by Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan is timely and aims to engage 1.3 billion people of this country to take ownership of the programme and ensure we achieve the target of a TB free India. It is crucial for the programme to take cue from this call to action and reflect the targets and initiatives through direct and relatable messaging which will generate awareness among the people on where to seek treatments, what incentives they are entitled to, and thereby improve health seeking behaviours. It is only with the collective approach we will be able to rid the country of this deadly disease.

*(The author is chairman, National Taskforce, National TB Elimination Programme, and Professor and former HoD, Department of Pulmonary Medicine, PGIMER, Chandigarh)*



