

OPINION 6
THE EVER-ALARMING
GROWTH OF CHINA

WORLD 8
SCRIBE JAILED FOR WUHAN
REPORTS 'CLOSE TO DEATH'

SPORT 12
INDO- SA TEST MOVED
TO CAPE TOWN

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY NOVEMBER 6, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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AND WORK NOW
10 VIVACITY

Late City Vol.31 Issue 307
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

CAPSULE

30 MORE TEST POSITIVE FOR ZIKA IN KANPUR
Kanpur: Thirty more people have tested positive for Zika virus here, taking the total number of those infected in the district to 66, a senior official said on Friday. Of those infected, 45 are men and 21 women, according to officials. The first case in Kanpur was reported on October 23 when an Indian Air Force (IAF) warrant officer tested positive for Zika virus.

ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS KILL 69 IN NIGER
Niamey (Niger): Suspected Islamic extremists ambushed a self-defense brigade in western Niger, killing 69 people in the latest attack in the volatile border region near Mali, the Interior Ministry said. The violence took place earlier this week near Baniangou, some 155 miles north of the capital, Niamey, the Ministry said in a statement on Thursday. **P8**

PETROL BOMB HURLED AT HINDU FUNCTIONARY CAR
Coimbatore: A petrol bomb was hurled at a car belonging to a Hindu Mahasabha functionary near here and a search is on for two persons involved in the attack, police said on Friday.

PFIZER: COVID PILL CUT DEATH RISK BY 90%
Washington: Pfizer Inc said on Friday that its antiviral pill for Covid-19 cut rates of hospitalisation and death by nearly 90% in high-risk adults, as the drugmaker joins the race to bring the first easy-to-use medication against the Covid to the US market. **P8**

Pakistan role in Af pernicious: India

'Their NSA's decision not to attend meet unfortunate'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India prepared to hold an important international meet on Afghanistan next week, it has termed Pakistan's decision not to attend it as "unfortunate" and said its role in Afghanistan is "pernicious."

This reaction on Friday came ahead of the National Security Advisers (NSA)-level meet on November 10 here to review the situation in Afghanistan. India has reached to all the neighbouring countries, including Pakistan, to attend the meet.

However, Pakistan played spoilsport by declining the invitation. Its NSA Moeed Yusuf said he will not attend the meeting as there will be no representation of the Taliban.

Taking note of Pakistan's refusal, Government sources here on Friday described "Pakistan's comments against India as an unsuccessful



attempt to deflect attention from its pernicious role in Afghanistan."

Sources also said Pakistan's decision is unfortunate, but not surprising. "It reflects its mind-set of viewing Afghanistan as its protectorate. Pakistan has not attended previous meetings of this format," officials said.

India has extended invitation to several central Asian countries, including Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, besides Russia, Iran and China. Ajit Doval (NSA) will host the conclave. It will be held in offline mode.

Addressing a Press conference in Pakistan, when asked if he planned to visit India for the talks, the Pakistan NSA said, "I will not go. A spoiler cannot play the role of peacemaker."

Meanwhile, sources said the high-level participation in

next week's meeting hosted by India reflects the widespread concern of regional countries about situation in Afghanistan and their desire to consult and coordinate with each other. India has an important role to play in this process.

"Invitations have been extended to China and Pakistan too, and formal responses are awaited. However, Pakistan has indicated through the media that it will not attend," they said.

There has been an overwhelming response to India's invitation. Central Asian countries as well as Russia and Iran, have confirmed participation (first time that all Central Asian countries, not just Afghanistan's immediate neighbours, are participating in this format), sources said.

Two earlier meetings in this format were held in Iran in September 2018 and December 2019. The third meeting in India could not be held earlier due to the ongoing corona pandemic, they said.

Justifying its role in Afghanistan, the Pakistani NSA also said in the Press conference on Tuesday, "It may be a luxury for the Western world sitting 10,000 miles away (to not bother about Afghanistan) but we do not have any option to disengage from Afghanistan."

Explaining Pakistan's support for the Taliban dispensation in Kabul, the NSA said the world needs to engage with them in order to prevent a humanitarian crisis.

"This is not a matter of the Taliban or some other Government but of the ordinary Afghan (citizens) اہل. We are the biggest victim of this (instability in Afghanistan) so when we talk about stability in Afghanistan then one (reason) is that it is the right of our Afghan brothers and sisters. But secondly, it is also necessary for our national security that there is stability in Afghanistan and continuous peace is established," Yusuf said.

Wankhede out, NCB SIT to probe drug case

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Under severe flak from various quarters for its lop-sided investigations in the mid-sea drug bust case involving Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan leading to the grant of bail to the accused, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Friday replaced its Mumbai Zonal team, headed by controversial IRS officer Sameer Wankhede, with a Special Investigation Team (SIT) comprising officers from Operations Branch of NCB headquarters to investigate the sensational case.

Stopping short of saying that it has removed Wankhede — who is facing several serious charges ranging from bribery, forging his caste certificate to join IRS to enjoying "lavish lifestyle" — from the team investigating the mid-sea drug bust case, an apparently embarrassed NCB merely said that its Director General had "constituted" an SIT comprising officers from New Delhi to "take over" as many as six cases with national and international ramifications" from its Mumbai Zonal unit.

In a brief couched statement issued in the evening, Deputy Director-General (Ops) Sanjay Kumar Singh said, "A Special Investigation Team (SIT) comprising officers from Operations branch of Narcotics Control Bureau



Zonal Director of NCB Mumbai Sameer Wankhede poses for a photo with media persons as he arrives at NCB office, in Mumbai on Friday

PTI

(NCB) has been constituted by the Director General, NCB, to take over a total of 6 cases from the NCB Mumbai Zonal Unit, which have national and international ramifications."

"In order to conduct deeper investigations to find out forward and backward linkages, no officer has been removed from their present roles and they will continue to assist the Operation Branch investigation as required until any orders issued to the contrary. It is reiterated that the NCB functions across the country as a single integrated unit," Singh said.

The appointment of an SIT team comes in the wake of the NCB ordering vigilance probe into the "vigilance matters" relating to the ongoing investigations in the mid-sea drug bust case and summoning

of Wankhede to its headquarters in the capital last week for a meeting with the top bosses.

The two events were a fall-out of the allegations made through an affidavit by "panch witness" Prabhakar R Sail, including the charge of ₹8 crore extortion attempt, in the mid-sea drug bust case.

What has embarrassed most is the manner in which is the fact that Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh's son Aryan and two other accused — Arbaaz Merchant and Munmun Dhamecha — were granted bail by the Bombay High Court on October 28, while a special NDPS court granted bail to two accused ahead of the high court granting bail to Aryan and two and two others and it granted bail to nine others on October 30.

Continued on Page 2

Allow airspace for Srinagar flights for people, India asks Islamabad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has asked Pakistan through diplomatic channels to grant overflight clearance to GoFirst's Srinagar to Sharjah flights in the larger interest of the common people. Pakistan on Tuesday did not allow the Srinagar-Sharjah flight to use its airspace, forcing it to take a longer route and fly over Gujarat to reach its destination in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The duration of the Srinagar-Sharjah flight has gone up by 45 minutes, increasing from three hours and 30 minutes to four hours and 15 minutes. The airline began direct flights between Srinagar and Sharjah city in the UAE from October 23.

Top sources said that the matter has been promptly raised through the diplomatic channels in this regard.

Continued on Page 2

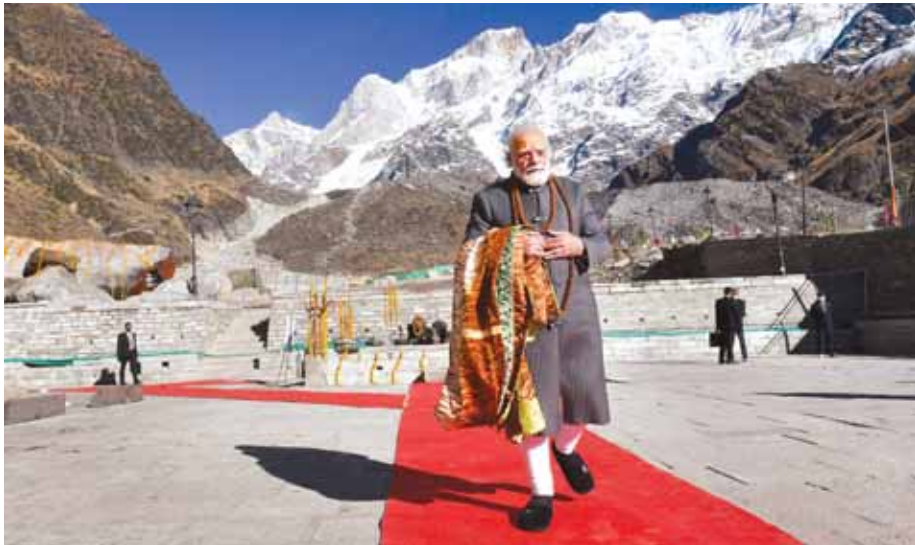
Modi: Take kids to sites linked to freedom struggle, ancient shrines

PM unveils Adi Shankaracharya's statue in Kedarnath, inaugurates works

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi exhorted citizens to take their children to visit historical sites linked to India's freedom struggle and also ancient shrines to give them a sense of the nation's heritage. Modi said this after unveiling the statue of Adi Shankaracharya at the reconstructed Shankaracharya Samadhi in Kedarnath apart from unveiling the foundation stones for various works and inaugurating other works totalling ₹400 crore on Friday.

Addressing a gathering after offering special prayers and unveiling various works, Modi spoke in detail about Adi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Kedarnath Temple in Uttarakhand on Friday

PTI

Shankaracharya, his life, works and teachings. Stating that Kedarnath offers a unique glimpse of India, he exhorted

the people to visit historical sites related to India's freedom struggle and ancient shrines along with their children so

that they are also aware of the nation's spiritual and cultural heritage.

Continued on Page 2

BJP slams Opp States for not slashing VAT on fuel

BJP-ruled States further cut petrol price by ₹8.7/L, diesel by ₹9.52

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Politics over oil prices flared-up on Friday as the BJP accused Opposition-ruled States of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Delhi of not reducing VAT on petrol and diesel after the Central Government announced to a cut in excise duty with slashing of local sales tax (VAT) rates of fuel.

Petrol price has been further reduced by as much as ₹8.7 per litre and diesel by ₹9.52 in the BJP-ruled States and UTs — from Ladakh to Puducherry.

Buckling under pressure, the Union Government had on Wednesday cut excise duty on



petrol by ₹5 per litre and that on diesel by ₹10 a litre to give reprieve to consumers battered by record-high retail fuel prices.

Taking on the "Jeb Katron se savdhan" jibe of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who accused the Modi Government of tax extortion, the BJP asked who is today proving to be "bigger jeb katra" and condemned what it called "vulture politics" of the Congress.

Addressing a Press conference here, national spokesman of the BJP Gaurav Bhatia asked

why the Congress and Opposition-ruled States are not reducing VAT on petrol and diesel to give more relief to the common men as has been done by BJP-run States.

He said in Uttar Pradesh VAT is ₹21.86 and in Uttarakhand it is ₹20.46 while in Maharashtra where, he said, under "maha vasooli aagadi Government" VAT on petrol is ₹31.19 and petrol is selling at ₹110.

Attacking Congress-run Ashok Gehlot Government of Rajasthan and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, the BJP leader said petrol in Rajasthan's Ganganagar is selling at ₹121 and diesel at ₹112 per litre.

Bhatia demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative of reducing oil excise duty should be carried forward by all States by lowering VAT and criticised Gehlot for "not welcoming" excise cut by the centre and seeking further cut on it."

Continued on Page 2

Sidhu takes back his resignation

But sets condition to head Punjab Cong again: 'Will resume charge only when new AG is appointed'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH



party's Government on what it has done in 50 days on the State's two big issues — drugs and sacrilege.

Issuing an ultimatum to the CM, Sidhu said that he will step in the matter if the drugs report is not made public.

Mincing no word while making a direct attack on his own party's Government, Sidhu said no interest or intention was shown in opening the STF's drug reports or to secure justice in the sacrilege cases.

Continued on Page 2

Delhi's air quality sinks to 'very poor'

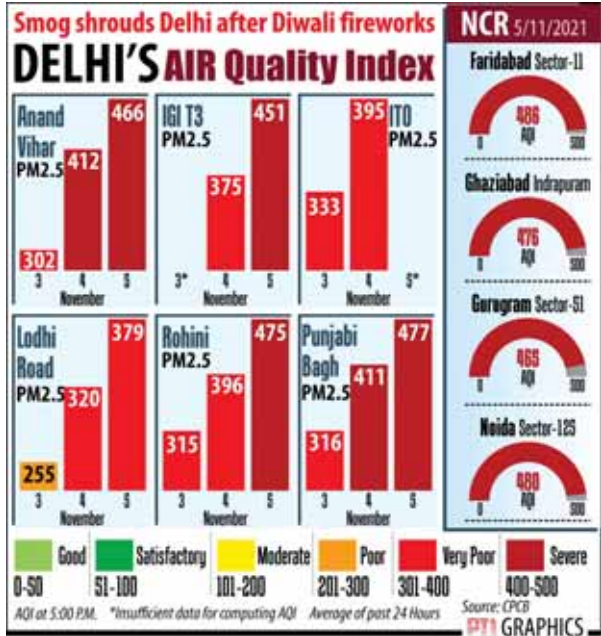
STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Diwali, the air quality of the national Capital on Friday deteriorated to "very poor" category with the air quality index crossing the 600 mark at several locations across Delhi, while Ghaziabad and Noida crossed 800 mark in morning hours.

According to the latest update by System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR), the air quality in several areas in Delhi was recorded in the "very poor" category with AQI ranging around 400.

The air quality in Delhi was recorded in the "hazardous" category at Janpath in the city early on Friday. The particulate matter (PM) 2.5 concentration was recorded at 655.07 in Janpath on Friday morning, according to news agency ANI. As per Government standards, PM 2.5 concentrations over 380 are marked as "severe."

While as per SAFAR model the share of stubble emissions has peaked 36 per cent, in last



24 hours values of Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5 recorded higher as compared to post Diwali day of last year.

RK Jenamani, IMD Delhi said, "Overall air quality in

'severe' category today after bursting for firecrackers on Diwali and presence of biomass pollutants in Delhi. The air quality and fog condition to improve once wind speed picks



Low visibility due to a thick layer of smog, a day after Diwali celebrations in New Delhi on Friday

Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

up. No wind and high moisture is causing fog conditions."

Extremely poor pollution levels were previously predicted in Delhi due to firecracker emissions, unfavourable weather and a significant spike in stubble burning in neighbouring States.

SAFAR in its short range

weather forecast said "very calm" local Delhi wind conditions with little ventilation is expected for the next three days which will be unfavourable for dispersion of pollutants. Delhi's PM2.5 concentration is predicted to be in the upper end of the "very poor" category till November 6.

Delhi HC fines CRPF DG ₹20K for non-compliance of June 9 order

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has slapped a fine of ₹20,000 on CRPF Director General Kuldeep Singh in response to a contempt petition.

The court order came following non-compliance of its order passed on June 9 this year on a writ petition filed by a group serving CRPF officers aggrieved by the discriminatory provisions of promotion for medical officers and combatant officers.

Through its order in June, the court had directed the CRPF chief to address the grievances of the combatant officers within 12 weeks.

The petitioners were aggrieved with the anomalies in the promotional entitlement of the medical cadre officers of the paramilitary who were getting a faster promotion than the combatant officers.

Continued on Page 2

Kerala reports 6,580 new Covid cases

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala reported 6,580 fresh Covid-19 cases and 46 deaths on Friday, taking the total affected in the state to 5,001,835 and the toll to 33,048. Thiruvananthapuram district topped with 878 cases, followed by Ernakulam (791) and Thrissur (743). A total of 7,085 people recuperated from the disease, taking the cumulative to 48,94,435. The state health department said 62,219 samples were tested in the last 24 hours and there are 46 wards across 39 local self government bodies with a weekly infection population ratio of above 10 per cent. "Currently, there are 73,733 active Covid-19 cases in the

state out of which only 7.3 per cent people are admitted to hospitals," the health department said in a release. There are 2,47,485 persons under observation in the state, out of which 6,626 are under observation in various hospitals. Out of those found infected today, 22 arrived in the state from outside while 6,167 contracted the disease through their contacts. The sources of infection of 352 are yet to be traced. Thirty nine health workers were also among the infected, the release said. While 95 per cent (2,53,89,943) of the targeted population received the first dose of the vaccine, 53.2 per cent (1,42,22,957) received both the doses, it said. **PTI**

Karnataka Govt withdraws night curfew, allows horse racing

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Government on Friday withdrew the night curfew and gave the nod to holding horse racing in strict adherence to the Covid-19 appropriate behaviour. With Covid-19 cases coming down significantly in the state, Karnataka Chief Secretary P Ravi Kumar issued an order to this effect. The order said, "Night curfew, which is being imposed from 10 PM to 5 AM is herewith withdrawn." Regarding horse racing, the order said, "Number of racing patrons attending horse racing shall be strictly as per the seating capacity of the venue and only fully vaccinated people with Covid-19 vaccine will be allowed entry into such premises." The night curfew was imposed from July 3 onwards at the end of the two-month lockdown when the second wave hit the state starting from the April-end. The state reported 261 fresh Covid-19 cases, five deaths and 8,267 active cases on Thursday. **PTI**

Andhra logs 150 new Covid cases, lowest in 9 months

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh on Friday reported 150 fresh cases of Covid-19, the lowest number in a day after more than nine months. Only 23,824 samples were tested in 24 hours because of Diwali festival and that reflected in the lesser number of new cases, though the state has been showing a general declining trend in the last few days. The state also logged 217 recoveries and three deaths in the 24 hours ending 9 am today, the latest bulletin said. The cumulative coronavirus positive cases now went up to 20,67,706, recoveries to 20,49,555 and toll 14,391. The active caseload decreased to 3,760, the bulletin added. All 13 districts registered less than 30 new cases each with Guntur topping with 28. Kurnool and Vizianagaram added two each. Chittoor, Guntur and Krishna districts saw one fresh Covid-19 fatality each in a day. **PTI**



Traffic jam on Rohtang Pass after large number of tourists arrived, in Manali on Friday

PTI

Portals of Gangotri closed for winter

Uttarkashi: With the onset of winter, the sacred portals of the Gangotri shrine in Garhwal Himalayas of Uttarakhand were closed on Friday amid Vedic hymns and elaborate rituals. Gangotri Mandir Samiti co-secretary Rajesh Semwal said the temple gates were closed at 11.45 am. The idol of Goddess Ganga was then taken on a palanquin decked with flowers for Mukhba village, her winter abode, he said. Over 32,948 pilgrims visited Gangotri this season after the temple was opened for devotees in September amid Covid restrictions such as a limit on the number of devotees. The daily limit was lifted in October by the Uttarakhand High Court following a drop in Covid-19 cases. The portals of the shrine, which draws a large number of devotees from all over the country, are closed in October-November every year due to snow all around. The portals of Kedarnath and Yamunotri will be closed on Saturday and that in Badrinath on November 20. The shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri are commonly known as Char Dham. **PTI**



A potter makes earthen stoves ahead of the Chhath Puja festival, in Patna on Friday

PTI

Allow airspace for Srinagar flights...

From Page 1 Currently, there are four flights going from Srinagar to Sharjah. Discussions are underway to have daily flights-- or flights every day. Pakistani authorities initially granted overflight clearance to GoFirst airline's flights on the Srinagar-Sharjah route for October 23, 24, 26 and 28, people familiar with the matter said on condition of anonymity. Subsequently, Pakistan put the clearance for flights on the same route on hold for the period from October 31 to November 30, sources said. According to Srinagar international airport director Kuldeep Singh said the flight received a good response, and the airline has had full occupancy. Former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah was among the politicians who were critical of Pakistan's decision. "Very unfortunate. Pakistan did the same thing with the Air India Express flight from Srinagar to Dubai in 2009-2010. I had hoped that @GoFirstairways being permitted to overfly Pak airspace was indicative of a thaw in relations, but alas that wasn't to be," he tweeted. The first international flight from Srinagar airport to Dubai was launched in 2009. However, all international flights stopped after some time because of a variety of reasons, including Pakistan's refusal to allow the use of its airspace.

Modi: Take kids to sites linked to freedom...

From Page 1 He said that reconstruction of Kedarnath after the 2013 disaster is due to the grace of lord Shiva. Thanking all from the top down to the labourers involved in the reconstruction, he recalled his visit to Kedarnath as the then CM of Gujarat after the 2013 disaster. He recalled that many were skeptical about the possibility of reconstruction in Kedarnath. "It is my good fortune that the vision I had for reconstruction of Kedarnath is now getting fulfilled." He said that this decade belongs to Uttarakhand, stating that the number of people who will visit the State in this decade will be more than the number of arrivals in 100 years. He said, "Now, our nation is proudly setting big targets for itself. The nation is setting difficult deadlines to achieve these targets. When some people raise doubts, I say that such fear is now acceptable to India." Though PM Narendra Modi avoided political issues and refrained from targeting Opposition parties in his address, the tone and tenor of his speech set the agenda of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the forthcoming Assembly elections. The PM emphatically stated that he has changed the adage Pahad Ka Pani aur Pahad Ki Jawani Pahad Ke Kaam Nahi Aate as development is occurring at a rapid pace in the Himalayan State and it would stop migration from the mountainous areas. Shifting gears effortlessly between spiritualism and scoring political points in his 50-minute long speech, the PM said that the dream of the highlanders for rail service is getting realised through the Rishikesh-Karnprayag rail link and work on the all weather road is going on at full pace. He also declared that people would be able to reach Kedarnath in their car in the near future. Governor Gurmit Singh, CM Pushkar Singh Dhami and others were also present on the occasion.

Sidhu takes back his resignation

From Page 1 While taking on Channi for delaying justice in sacrilege cases, Sidhu also denied reports of having differences with the Chief Minister. At the same time, Sidhu virtually challenged the party high command and also Channi, asserting that the Congress party would not decide on the Chief Ministerial face, but "the people of Punjab will". Sidhu, who addressed the media on Friday to announce withdrawal of his resignation, said: "The (party's next) CM face will be decided by people not anyone else, neither party, nor you." Notably, Sidhu had stunned everyone with his resignation as PPCC president on September 28, over unfulfillment of impending demands, and announced his decision in a letter to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi. Maintaining that his resignation was not a matter of "personal ego" but the interest of every Punjabi, he said: "Congress

came to power in 2017 owing to the public outcry for justice in the sacrilege cases and the drug trade...Capt Amarinder Singh was removed as the CM owing to his failure to take action on this front...The appointments of the AG and DGP are akin to rubbing salt on the wounds of the victims....I will not take over as PPCC chief until Deol and Sahota are not replaced." Sidhu has all along been opposing AG APS Deol's appointment as the latter had appeared for ex-DGP Sumedh Singh Saini and other accused in the sacrilege cases in the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Sidhu pointed out that Sahota was the head of SIT which was probing the sacrilege cases. He alleged that DGP Saini appointed Sahota as the SIT head, who then gave a clean chit to those accused in sacrilege cases. "No action was taken against him. How can you expect justice from a person who gave a clean chit to the accused? The one who said that he does not trust Punjab

Govt in court? Today people are questioning the appointment of AG and DGP. I will not resume office until they are removed," he reiterated. Targeting the Chief Minister over inaction in the sacrilege cases, Sidhu said: "Before Channi's appointment, only seven FIRs were registered and three SITs were constituted over a span of six years...The Congress party keeps on reminding to deliver justice in cases. Rahul Gandhi had himself stepped into homes of drugs and sacrilege victims. If we cannot stand with our gurus what else can be done?" Denying reports of having differences with the Chief Minister, Sidhu said that he spoke to him for all the good that can be done for the State. "There's nothing personal. I speak to him for the state. I speak to him for all the good that can be done for the state. I have no differences with Charanjit Channi, not at all. Whatever I do is for Punjab. I stand for Punjab. Punjab is my soul. That's the goal," said Sidhu.

Wankhede out, NCB SIT to...

From Page 1 So far, 14 out of the 20 accused in the mid-sea drug bust case. Normally bail is not granted to the accused to the accused in a fool-proof cases registered by the NCB. In the reasoning given in one of the bail pleas case, the NDPS court has said that the NCB had failed to substantiate the conspiracy charge it has slapped against the two accused. While the mid-sea drug bust case is indeed the main case that forms the part of a six cases handed over to the SIT, the NCB has not spelt out which are the other five cases that the new investigating team will look into. On his part, a side-lined Wankhede insisted that he had not been removed from the NCB investigations. "I've not been removed from investigation. It was my writ petition in court that the matter be probed by a central agency. So Aryan case & Sameer Khan case are being probed by Delhi NCB's SIT. It's a coordination b/w NCB teams of Delhi & Mumbai," Wankhede was quoted as saying by news agency ANI.

Wankhede is being currently investigated separately by a vigilance team of the NCB and Mumbai police. The NCB team, headed by its deputy director general (DDG) of northern region Gyaneshwar Singh, and Mumbai are investigating matters arising out of allegations made by a "panch witness" Prabhakar R Sail in the mid-sea drug bust case. It may be recalled that on October 25, 2021, the NCB had ordered a vigilance inquiry against Wankhede after its Deputy Director-General, South West Region Mutha Ashok Jain submitted his report to the NCB headquarters saying among other things: "....As some of the contents of the affidavit relate to the vigilance matters, I am hereby forwarding the affidavit to the Director General of Narcotic Control Bureau and requesting for further action". The NCB had appointed its deputy director general (DDG) of northern region Gyaneshwar Singh to conduct the inquiry. Confirming that he would conduct the inquiry, Singh said: "We are a professional organisation and we are open for

inquiry against any allegation against our staffers. The inquiry will be transparent and fair". Wankhede has also faced a series of allegations from Maharashtra Minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik who has among other things alleged that the raid on the rave party on board Goa-bound luxury cruise was "fake", that the former has been targeting Bollywood in drug-related matters, that he has extorted money from film personalities, that he has forged a caste certificate to join IRS and that he was enjoying "lavish lifestyle" from the proceeds of extorted money. Punch witness Sail's sensational affidavit dated October 23 had caused considerable embarrassment to the NCB. On his part, Wankhede has denied all the allegations made by Malik and Sail. In his sensational affidavit, Sail has among other things said that Wankhede's colleague had taken his signatures on 10 blank papers. Among other things, Sail has made a serious allegation that he "overheard" Kiran Gosavi, for whom he works as

IMPORTANT NOTICE

For the convenience of rail passengers during ongoing festival period, Railways have decided to augment the following Special Trains temporarily from the dates shown against each:-

AUGMENTED COMPOSITION OF SPECIAL TRAINS		
Train No. & Name	Augmented by	Date w.e.f. (Originating Station)
02029/02030 New Delhi - Amritsar Jn. - New Delhi Swarna Shatabdi Express	IIInd Class AC Chair Car - 1	Ex. New Delhi & Amritsar Jn. : 07.11.2021
02234/02233 Anand Vihar (T) - Ghaziपुर City - Anand Vihar (T) Express	Sleeper - 1	Ex. Anand Vihar (T) : 08.11.2021 Ex. Ghaziपुर City : 09.11.2021
02220/02219 Anand Vihar (T) - Ghaziपुर City - Anand Vihar (T) Suhaildev Express	Sleeper-1	Ex. Anand Vihar (T) : 06.11.21 to 09.11.21 Ex. Ghaziपुर City : 07.11.21 to 10.11.21
04654/04653 Amritsar Jn. - New Jalpaiguri - Amritsar Jn. Karmabhoomi SF clon spl	Sleeper-1	Ex. Amritsar Jn. : 10.11.2021 Ex. New Jalpaiguri : 12.11.2021
04652/04651 Amritsar Jn. - Jaynagar - Amritsar Jn. Humsafar Express Special	Sleeper-1	Ex. Amritsar Jn. : 07.11.2021 Ex. Jaynagar : 09.11.2021
04040/04039 Anand Vihar (T) - Madhupur Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) Humsafar Special	Sleeper-1	Ex. Anand Vihar (T) : 08.11.2021 Ex. Madhupur : 09.11.2021
04046/04045 Anand Vihar (T) - Madhupur Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) Humsafar Special	Sleeper-1	Ex. Anand Vihar (T) : 11.11.2021 Ex. Madhupur : 12.11.2021
04050/04049 Anand Vihar (T) - Ballia - Anand Vihar (T) Superfast Express Spl.	Sleeper-1	Ex. Anand Vihar (T) : 06.11.2021 Ex. Ballia : 07.11.2021
02408/02407 Amritsar Jn. - New Jalpaiguri - Amritsar Jn. Karmabhoomi Superfast	IIInd Class - 3	Ex. Amritsar Jn. : 12.11.2021 Ex. New Jalpaiguri : 17.11.2021
04512/04511 Meerut City - Prayagraj Sangam - Meerut City Nauchandi Exp. Spl.	Sleeper-1	Ex. Meerut City : 06.11.21 to 07.11.2021 Ex. Prayagraj Sangam : 07 to 08.11.2021
02265/02266 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Jammu Tawi - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Duronto Exp. Spl.	Sleeper-1	Ex. Delhi Sarai Rohilla : 07.11.2021 Ex. Jammu Tawi : 08.11.2021
04064/04063 H. Nizamuddin - Bhusaval Jn. - H. Nizamuddin Exp. Spl.	Sleeper-1	Ex. Hazrat Nizamuddin : 07.11.2021 Ex. Bhusaval Jn. : 09.11.2021
04066/04065 Anand Vihar (T) - Haldia - Anand Vihar (T) Express Special	Sleeper-1	Ex. Anand Vihar (T) : 09.11.2021 Ex. Haldia : 11.11.2021
04076/04075 Anand Vihar (T) - Naharlagun - Anand Vihar (T) Arunachal Express Special	3 Tier AC - 1	Ex. Anand Vihar (T) : 07.11.2021 Ex. Naharlagun : 09.11.2021

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

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BJP slams Opp States...

From Page 1 BJP spokesperson accused Congress, TMC, and AAP of indulging in "cheap politics" over oil prices and not doing the needful. Bhatia also praised the Prime Minister's 'Kedarnath Yatra' saying BJP believed in "Panth Nirpekshita" and respected all religions as against Opposition parties for whom he said "appeasement politics" was "Panth Nirpekshita". The States and UTs that extended additional VAT benefits are Karnataka, Puducherry, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Assam, Sikkim, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Ladakh. Karnataka saw Rs 8.62 a litre cut in petrol price due to VAT reduction and Rs 9.40 in diesel rates, while Madhya Pradesh gave its citizens an additional Rs 6.89 price relief on petrol and Rs 6.96 on diesel. Uttar Pradesh lowered VAT on petrol by Rs 6.96 and diesel by Rs 2.04 a litre. Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Rameswar Teli had in July told Parliament that the Union Government's tax collections on petrol and diesel jumped by 88 per cent to Rs 3.35 lakh crore in the year to March 31, 2021 (2020-21 fiscal) from Rs 1.78 lakh crore a year back. Excise collection in the pre-pandemic 2018-19 was Rs 2.13 lakh crore.

Delhi HC fines...

From Page 1 "Since the petitioner had to approach this court on account of non-compliance of the aforesaid order, costs of Rs. 20,000 is imposed upon the respondent (CRPF DG) to be paid to the petitioner on or before the next date," the court said in its order. The petitioner Ranjeet Kumar Singh, a combatant in the rank of Deputy Commandant, and other serving officers had filed a contempt petition against CRPF Chief and had sought exemplary costs to be imposed on him on account of non-compliance of the court order. The court posted the matter of the contempt petition after four weeks on November 24 and sought a compliance affidavit to be submitted by CRPF, Director General. A division bench of the court had on June 9 directed the petitioner's representation dated March 28, 2020 to be disposed-

off by the respondent (CRPF DG) within 12 weeks. "However, there is not even a whisper of compliance of the said order, thereby constraining the petitioner to approach this court by way of instant contempt petition for which he has expended monies," reads the order. Through the writ petition filed last year, the petitioner had sought quashing of a CRPF order dated June 10, 2010 and signal (internal message) dated February 21, 2019 relating to assignment of rank and badge to Medical Officers of CRPF in accordance with CRPF (Medical Officers Cadre) Rules. Through an order on September 22, 1999, the Union Home Ministry had decided that medical officers will get their time scale of promotion as is applicable to them but they will wear the rank badges similar to General Duty cadre officers of the same seniority. The Ministry had also laid down that the Medical Officers

will get the rank badge only when at least one cadre officer of that batch (year of recruitment) has been promoted to the next rank. However, the command of the Battalion will be vested with the Commanding Officer irrespective of the seniority of a medical officer. But the CRPF, through its order in June 2010 and a Signal message in February 2019 diluted the position postulated by the Ministry and made provisions to grant promotion to the medical officers without any link to the cadre officers getting a promotion. The court had directed the CRPF boss to correct the anomaly in the grant of rank to medical officers without linking it with the promotion of the cadre officers, within 12 weeks of its order on June 9 this year. The contempt petition against Singh was initiated by the petitioner following the lapse of the time granted by the court for compliance of its June order

Over 87% ONORC beneficiaries in Delhi in 3 months from UP, Bihar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 87 per cent One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) beneficiaries in Delhi in the last three months had ration cards of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Government data showed.

According to the data provided by the Food and Civil Supplies Department, between August and October 25, nearly 1,78,850 people having ration cards of other states have collected food grains in Delhi under the ONORC.

Of the 1,78,850 ONORC transactions, 1,55,715 or 87.06 per cent happened on ration cards issued in Bihar (78,195) and Uttar Pradesh (77,520), the data, accessed by the PTI, showed.

The Delhi government implemented the ONORC scheme in the national capital in starting July this year.

Under the scheme, persons holding a ration card under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) can collect their monthly quota of food grain from any fair price shop across the country.

The portability depends on ePoS machines, which use the Aadhaar-linked biometric authentication to verify the identity and entitlement of beneficiaries.

A senior official of the Food and Civil Supplies department said the scheme is a boon for migrant workers and other such floating population living in the national capital as they can get ration from any of the fair price shops.

"Maximum number of migrant population in Delhi is from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh hence that number is reflecting in the ONORC transactions in the city.



ONORC beneficiaries in Delhi from states other than UP and Bihar include Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan among others," the official told PTI.

Data showed that ration card-holders from Madhya Pradesh come at the third spot, followed by Haryana in terms of availing benefits of the ONORC scheme in Delhi.

As many as 5,764 people having ration cards of Madhya Pradesh collected ration in Delhi under the ONORC scheme between August and October 25.

Similarly, nearly 2,313 people having ration cards made in Haryana collected food grains from fair price shops in Delhi during the period. It was followed by Rajasthan with 1,184 beneficiaries collecting ration in Delhi.

Data also showed that between July and October 25, nearly 1,94,685 people, who have their ration cards made in other states, collected food grains in Delhi under ONORC scheme.

In July, there were 16,150 transactions

under the ONORC scheme, while it was 40,797 in August.

In September, the number rose to 86,430, while in October, till the 25th at least 51,348 people, who have ration cards of other state, collected free ration at fair price shops in Delhi under ONORC.

In comparison to September, the number of ONORC beneficiaries came down slightly in October, which officials say, is because of festival season.

"A good chunk of floating population has gone to their hometowns during the start of the festival season in October. So the number of transactions under ONORC looks slightly low. We are hoping that more people will take benefit of the ONORC scheme in Delhi in coming months," the official said.

The Delhi government distributes free ration to beneficiaries under National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 and the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) through electronic point of sale devices.

Delhi has 17.78 lakh cardholders and has around 72.77 lakh beneficiaries. The city has over 2,000 fair price shops.

Shailendra Kumar, the president of Public Distribution Welfare Association said the ONORC was turning out to be good for the migrant population living in Delhi but holding ration cards of other states.

"The figures show that the Delhi is one of the top performing states in ONORC scheme. With this scheme in place, people having ration cards of other states can get free food grains from any of the fair price shops in the city," Kumar said.

Open namaz in G'gram will be completely stopped in 3 weeks, dist admin said: VHP

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Surender Jain, International Sengeral-secretary, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) announced on Friday that the Gurugram district administration has assured that namaz in open areas will be completely stopped within three weeks.

He also warned that if the Gurugram district administration fails to curb open namaz, the VHP will again launch protests against such activities.

Jain was addressing the media at Sector-12A where a huge Govardhan Puja and community kitchen (Bhandara) event was organized on Friday.

While addressing the gathering, BJP leader Kapil Mishra said, "Blocking of roads every week disrupts the economy, it can't be allowed constitutionally. Muslims should practise their religion inside the mosques and not on roads".

"Gurugram administration has assured us to gradually reduce the number of public places used for Namaz and completely stop offering Namaz in the open in three weeks," said Jain, at Govardhan Pooja in Sec 12A.

He further said offering Namaz in public places is a jihadist activity, under which the main motive of the Muslim



community is to demonstrate their power and later establish their occupation in public places, not for expressing faith.

State President of Samyukt Hindu Sangharsh Samiti,

Mahavir Bhargava said that in a joint meeting was called by the district administration on November 3, it was made clear that no public places would be used for unconstitutional work.

Gurugram Deputy Commissioner also made it clear that the 37 places for open Namaz were not approved by the administration.

Bhardwaj said that the

leaders of the Muslim community supported the Deputy Commissioner's statement in the meeting and agreed that no public place would be used for offering Namaz.

He also told that it was decided in the meeting that within a month the Muslim community would make 37 places completely namaz-free by arranging their places.

The administration had also assured the people of the Muslim community to help them in removing the illegal occupation during the meeting.

Primary schools under EDMC to reopen from Monday

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

All primary schools under East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) will be opened from Monday adhering to strict Covid-19 protocols, Mayor of East Delhi Shyam Sunder Aggarwal said on Friday.

Aggarwal said that all the primary schools, Pratibha Vidyalayas aided and recognised schools will open from Monday. "The consent of parents shall be obtained in the given format before sending their children to school," he added.

The Mayor said that as a precautionary measure, such arrangements are being made that only 50 percent of the children will be called at a time to ensure that the COVID-19 appropriate behaviour is followed.

"Parents are advised not to send their children school in case he or she have any symptoms such as cold, cough or fever," he said.

The Mayor said that although the schools are opening, the classes will be continued on the online mode for the children who are unable to come to the school for any reason.

Delhi's poor air quality a result of anything but Diwali, claims BJP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday hit back at Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai for blaming the party for bursting of firecrackers by people on Diwali despite a ban, and alleged that the Arvind Kejriwal Government has failed to curb air pollution.

National incharge of the BJP's IT department Amit Malviya said Rai was trying to make Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal look good in the background of 'hazardous' air quality in Delhi.

"Delhi's AQI was in hazardous zone even before the crackers came out. Anyone suggesting otherwise is trying to make Arvind Kejriwal look good, who has unleashed a diabolical campaign to dissuade Delhiites from bursting crackers. Poor air quality is a result of anything BUT Diwali," he tweeted.

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor alleged that Rai's thinking was "influenced" by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, and said the Delhi government completely failed to control air pollution.

The people of Delhi by bursting crackers on Diwali night have given a befitting reply to "Aurangzeb influenced" political thinking of Rai.

"The Delhi government



Low visibility due to a thick layer of smog in New Delhi on Friday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

has totally failed to control air and water pollution in Delhi and therefore, to evade responsibility minister Gopal Rai has tried to squarely blame Diwali night crackers for air pollution and Chhath Puja at Yamuna Ghats for Yamuna ji's water pollution in true Aurangzebi style," Kapoor charged.

Delhi BJP leader Neelkant Bakshi said, "Rai is trying to shift attention from failure of the AAP government to tackle poor air quality in winters. They should introspect and

address the true causes of air pollution if they want to solve the problem."

Rai told mediapersons that the capital's air quality took a hit due to a surge in farm fires and some people bursting firecrackers on purpose.

"A large number of people did not burst crackers. I thank them all. But some people burnt crackers on purpose. The BJP made them do it," he said earlier in the day.

A thick layer of acrid smog engulfed Delhi-NCR on Friday

following rampant cracker bursting on Diwali night amid a rapid increase in fumes from stubble burning.

Ahead of the festival season, the Delhi government had announced a complete ban on crackers till January 1, 2022 and ran an aggressive campaign against the sale and use of crackers.

Delhi's air quality index which entered the severe zone Thursday night continued its upward trend and stood at 462 at Friday noon.

Delhi's air quality deteriorated due to farm fires, bursting of firecrackers: Gopal Rai

New Delhi: Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Friday said that Delhi's air quality had deteriorated due to a surge in farm fires and some people bursting firecrackers on purpose on Diwali despite a ban on it.

He alleged that the BJP made people burst firecrackers on Diwali on Thursday.

Rai said Delhi's base pollution has remained the same. Only two factors have been added - firecrackers and stubble burning.

"A large number of people did not burst firecrackers. I thank them all. But some people burst firecrackers on purpose. The BJP made them do it," he told reporters here.

The minister said the number of farm fires has risen to 3,500 and its impact is visible in Delhi.

According to the Ministry of Earth Sciences' air quality forecast agency SAFAR, stubble burning accounted for 36 per cent of Delhi's PM2.5 on Friday, the highest so far this season.

"The overall air quality of Delhi plunged to the upper

end of the severe category with additional firework emissions... The share of stubble emissions has peaked today at 36 per cent," said Gufran Beig, the founder project director of SAFAR.

On Thursday, farm fires accounted for 25 per cent of Delhi's PM2.5 pollution.

Last year, the share of stubble burning in Delhi's pollution had peaked at 42 per cent on November 5. In 2019, crop residue burning accounted for 44 per cent of Delhi's PM2.5 pollution on November 1.

The contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's PM2.5 concentration was 32 per cent on Diwali last year as compared to 19 per cent in 2019.

A thick layer of acrid smog engulfed the Delhi-NCR region on Friday following the rampant bursting of firecrackers on Diwali night amid a rapid increase in fumes from stubble burning.

Ahead of the festive season, the Delhi government had announced a complete ban on firecrackers till January 1, 2022. It ran an aggressive campaign against the sale and use of firecrackers. PTI

Diwali, Bandi Chhor Diwas marked by paying homage to 653 farmers who died during protest: SKM



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha marked Diwali and Bandi Chhor Diwas by paying homage to "more than 653 farmers" who died during the ongoing farmers' protest, it said in a statement on Friday.

The umbrella body of farmer unions said protesters have resolved more strongly that they will not let the sacrifice of these farmers go to waste.

"Protesting farmers resolved more strongly that they will not allow the sacrifice of more than 653 farmers so far to go waste, and that they will end the agitation only after the demands of the farmers' struggle are met fully by the Modi government," the SKM said in the statement.

Earlier on Friday, the windshield of BJP MP Ram Chander Jangra's car was smashed after some miscreants allegedly threw lathis on the vehicle

during a protest over his visit to Haryana's Hisar.

A group of protesters carrying black flags blocked Jangra's route in Hisar's Narnaund, according to police.

Later, the road was cleared, allowing the Rajya Sabha MP to proceed, the police said.

Jangra said police officials informed him that two people have been arrested in connection with the incident.

The SKM said the farmers were organising a sit-in outside Narnaund police station as hundreds of farmers are gathering to ensure that two protestors who have been detained by the Haryana Police during a protest today are released unconditionally.

"The SKM demands that the Haryana administration release all the detained farmers immediately, and also make sure that full medical support is extended to all injured farmers urgently," the statement said.

Police chief visits on-duty personnel on Diwali, distributes sweets



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police Commissioner, Rakesh Asthana, on the night of Diwali, visited several areas of the national Capital and distributed sweet packets to over 1,000 personnel of police and paramilitary staff on duty.

According to a senior police official, the CP visited 10 police districts from 9 p.m. to 1.30 a.m. and had more than 35 halts, including police stations, battalions and Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWAC).

"The CP first went to C-Hexagon at India Gate and later reached Sarai Kale Khan picket via Bhairon Road. He went to New Friends Colony picket, Kalkaji, police picket in front of Saket mall, Malviya Nagar and SPUWAC. Asthana also visited RK Puram police station in southwest district and gave

the staff sweets," he said. "After southwest district, he went to Tilak Nagar in west district, Madhuban Chowk, Mukarba Chowk and Azadpur in northwest district. He met the women patrolling staff," he added.

In north district, the CP visited Maurice Nagar, Civil Lines and Red Fort. Asthana met the women patrolling staff at Daryaganj area in central district. Around 1.30 AM, the commissioner went to Ghazipur in east district.

Firecrackers were burst at several areas in the national capital on Diwali.

Residents of Lajpat Nagar in South Delhi, Burari in North Delhi, Paschim Vihar in West Delhi and Shahdara in East Delhi reported incidents of firecracker bursting as early as 7 PM, despite the blanket ban in the national capital till January 1, 2022.

Delhi HC seeks city Govt's stand on providing medical staff, infra for JNU Covid centre

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has sought the city Government's stand on providing infrastructure and medical staff for a proposed Covid care centre at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).

The counsel for the JNU Teachers' Association and others, who have filed a petition on the availability of medical facilities on the campus to deal with Covid-19, said that though the university administration has earmarked space in the Sabarmati Dormitory for setting up a Covid centre, doctors and requisite infrastructure are not available.

Justice Rekha Palli granted time to the Delhi government's counsel to obtain instructions on assigning staff and providing other facilities to JNU's Covid centre and listed the case for further hearing to January 13, 2022.

"Learned counsel for the respondent No. 2 (Delhi government) prays for time to obtain instructions in this regard. At request, list (the case for hearing) on 13.01.2022," the judge said in her order dated October 27.

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2 shot dead, 4 injured in attack on family of ex-Sarpanch

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Two persons were shot dead and four, including an eight-year-old boy, sustained bullet injuries after 5-6 armed assailants opened fire at the family of a former Sarpanch at Kasan village in Gurugram on Diwali night at around 8 pm.

According to the police, the reason behind the incident is said to be a personal enmity.

As two of the victims were involved in a murder in 2007 and were out on bail.

The complainant Rajesh Kumar stated in his police complaint that Yogender alias Rinku of Kasan village, Deepak alias Bholu of Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, Manish Rana of Bhiwani, Amit alias Gaath of Sonapat and a few other assailants barged into the house of former Sarpanch Gopal around 8 p.m. and opened indiscriminate fire on the family members.

Rajesh told the police that he along with his nephew's Balram and Sohanpal alias Sonu son of Gopal and Praveen cousin brother of Balram were set inside the house while his son Vikas Raghav

and Balram's eight-year-old son Yash Chauhan were celebrating Diwali on the lawn area of the house when the attack took place.

"The assailants entered the house and opened fire on us which hits all of us. Vikas received several bullet injuries and after our screaming, all the armed criminals fled the spot. The injured complainant immediately took his son to a private hospital where he was declared dead by the doctors," the complaint told the police.

"Two have been dead in the incident and the third is critical.

The complaint has been filed by the name FIR. Police are on their task to nab the absconding criminals," said Veer Singh, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Pataudi.

The deceased have been identified as Vikas (21) and Sohanpal alias Sonu (35). Sohanpal was the son of late Gopal. His brother Balram was also injured in the attack and is under treatment at a private hospital. Rajesh is the third person to be injured. The condition of Praveen is said to be critical while Yash Chauhan is also out of danger.

Only 152 fire-related calls received on Diwali in city, lowest in 15 years

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

On Diwali, the Delhi Fire Service (DFS) received 152 fire-related calls, 25 per cent less from the last year and the lowest in the last 15 years. The DFS said that four calls were suspected due to crackers and no major fire incident or casualty was reported.

The fire-related calls go up usually on Diwali mainly due to bursting of firecrackers, not taking adequate precautions when lighting earthen lamps or candles and not checking for loose wires while putting up decoration lights and overloaded extension boards causing short-circuit.



Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

ing short-circuit.

According to Atul Garg, the Director, DFS, this is a very positive sign that fire calls have reduced on the day of Dilwali this year and this is the first time that fire department has recorded only 152 calls on

Diwali, which is the lowest in last 15 years on the day.

"This is also because of public awareness. There were less calls related to fire-cracker bursting and people also behaved responsibly and followed all the safety precautions

as suggested while celebrating the festival be it while lighting diyas or decorating houses and buildings with lights," said Garg.

According to a data shared by fire department, out of the total 152 calls, 117 calls were fire-related incidents including four which were suspected due to crackers while other calls were related to short-circuit, fire in garbage and due to lighting of earthen lamps.

Besides the 117 fire-related calls, there were 10 calls seeking assistance for animal rescue, 12 for bird rescue, one related to house collapse, seven other rescue related operations and

two other cases seeking assistance in connection with two road accidents, the data stated.

According to the DFS, most of the fire-related calls were of minor category. "Around 3,000 fire fighters were on duty for the last two days and Delhi Fire Service teams were deployed in over 30 specific locations across the capital to tackle any incident," a senior DFS official said.

Fire tenders were deployed at 22 locations across the national capital including Bara Tooti Chowk, Tilak Nagar, Lajpat Nagar (Central Market), Lal Kuan Chowk, Lahori Gate, Nangloi, South Extension,

Sonia Vihar, Mehrauli, Ghitorni metro station, among others.

Motorcycles fitted with fire-fighting equipments were also deployed in the streets and narrow lanes at six other locations, including Ambedkar Nagar, Kapashera, Chandni Chowk, Sabji Mandi, Ghanta Ghar, Paharganj, Shiela Cinema and Shadipur depot, a senior fire official said.

Another set of fire-fighting vehicles were also at deployed in the lanes of another six locations, including Connaught Circus, Hari Nagar, Geeta Colony, J Road and Paschim Vihar, he said.

Govt scraps duty on crude palm, soya oil to cut prices



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has cut the basic duty on Crude Palm Oil, Crude Soyabean Oil and Crude Sunflower Oil from 2.5 per cent to nil in a bid to rein in the continuous rise in the cooking oil prices since past one year. The Agri-cess on these Oils has been brought down from 20 percent to 7.5 percent for Crude Palm Oil and 5 percent for Crude Soyabean Oil and Crude Sunflower Oil. Following the above reduction, the total duty is 7.5% for Crude Palm Oil and 5% for Crude Soyabean Oil and Crude Sunflower Oil. According to Food Secretary Sudhansu Pandey, edible oil price in the major retail markets across the country have declined by ₹5-20 per kg after various measures. For instance, retail palm oil price in Delhi declined by ₹5 to ₹133/kg on November 3 from ₹139/kg, while it fell by ₹18 to ₹122/kg from ₹140/kg in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, while by ₹7 to ₹125/kg in

Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu from ₹132/kg in the said period, Pandey said. Even retail price of groundnut oil declined by ₹5-10/kg, while soyabean oil by ₹5-11/kg, and sunflower oil by ₹5-20/kg between October 31 and November 3, he added. Before reduction, the agricultural infrastructure cess on all forms of crude edible oils was 20 percent. Post reduction, the effective duty on crude palm oil will be 8.25 percent, crude soyabean oil and crude sunflower oil will be 5.5 percent each. Major edible oils players including Adani Willmar and Ruchi industries have cut wholesale prices by ₹4-7 Per litre. Prices have been reduced to give relief to consumers during festival season. The other players that have reduced the wholesale prices of edible oils are Gemini Edibles & Fats India, Hyderabad, Modi Naturals, Delhi, Gokul Refoils and Solvent, Vijay Solvex, Gokul Agro Resources and N.K Proteins. To control prices of edible oils, the Government has rationalised import duties on palm

oil, sunflower oil and soyabean oil, futures trading in mustard oil on NCDEX has been suspended and stock limits have been imposed. Domestic edible oil prices have soared in tandem with the global prices which shot up due to reduced availability of edible oils for food use following diversion for biofuel in Indonesia, Brazil and other countries. The Government has taken a number of steps to ensure consumers get relief from high prices. We are happy to share the trend from 167 centres. Edible oil prices have declined quite significantly in the range of ₹5 and 20 per kg in the major retail markets across the country, Pandey said during a press briefing. Despite international commodity prices being high, interventions have been taken by Central Government along with State Governments' pro active involvement have led to reduction in prices of edible oils. While the global edible oil prices have stabilised at higher levels in the last ten days, the reduction in import duty and other steps like imposition of stock limits to curb hoarding has helped cool down domestic prices, the secretary said. Edible prices are higher than year ago period but from October onwards, there was a declining trend. The Government is taking steps to improve the production of secondary edible oils, especially rice bran oil to reduce the import dependence.

No plan to extend free ration under PMGKAY after Nov 30: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has no proposal to extend distribution of free ration via the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKAY) beyond November 30 in view of recovery in the economy and good disposal of foodgrains in the open market. Since the economy is also reviving and our OMSS (open market sale scheme) disposal of foodgrains has also been exceptionally good this year. So, there is no proposal to extend PMGKAY, Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said on Friday during a press briefing while responding to a query. Initially, the additional free benefit under the PMGKAY was provided for a period of three months (April-June 2020) to ameliorate distress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, with the crisis continuing, the programme was extended for another five months (July-November 2020). After the onset of the second wave of the pandemic, the PMGKAY was once again rolled out for a period of two months (May-June 2021) and was further



extended for a period of five months (July-November 2021). The PMGKAY was announced in March 2020 to ameliorate distress caused by Covid-19. Initially, the scheme was launched for the April-June 2020 period but later extended till November 30. The Government has been selling rice and wheat to bulk consumers under the open market sale scheme (OMSS) policy to improve availability in the domestic market and check prices. Under the PMGKAY, the Government supplies free ration to 80 crore ration card holders identified under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). The free ration is given over and above the subsidised grains distributed to them via ration shops. The Government has been giving rice and wheat to bulk consumers under the OMSS policy to improve availability in the domestic market and check prices.

Navy chiefs from 12 nations to discuss maritime issues

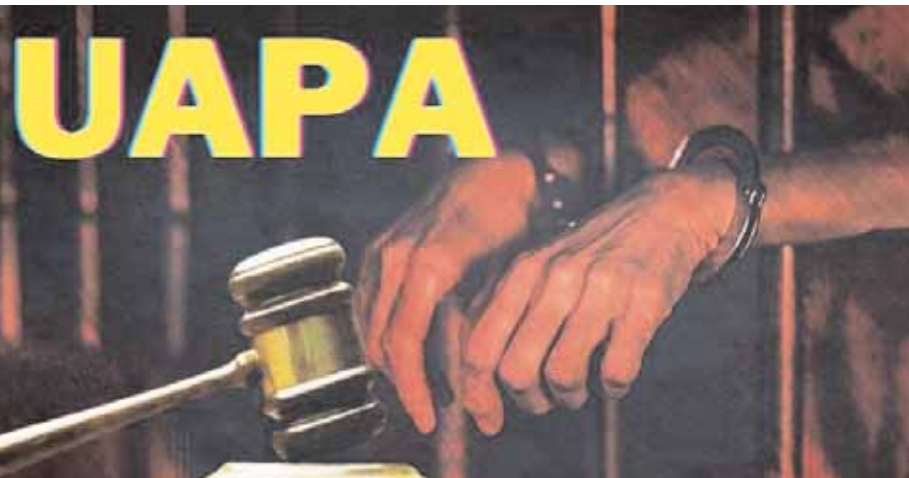
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the growing strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and China's increased maritime presence there, navy chiefs of 12 countries of the region will review the entire gamut of maritime issues in a three-day conclave in Goa starting November 7. It is the third edition of the Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) under the aegis of Naval War College, Goa. The GMC is Indian Navy's Outreach Initiative providing a multinational platform to harness the collective wisdom of practitioners of maritime security and the academia towards garnering outcome oriented maritime thought, navy officials said here on Friday. The GMC-21 will build upon the working level deliberations of the Goa Maritime Symposium-21 held earlier in May this year, as the Sherpa event for the Conclave. The theme for this year's edition of GMC is Maritime Security and Emerging Non-Traditional Threats: A Case for Proactive Role for IOR Navies, which has been derived keeping in mind that necessity of 'winning everyday peace' in the maritime domain. At the GMC-21, Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh will host Chiefs of Navies from 12 Indian Ocean littorals, including Bangladesh, Comoros, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius,



Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary will deliver the Conclave Address and Keynote Address of the GMC-21. With the IOR becoming the focus of the 21st century strategic landscape, the GMC aims to bring together regional stakeholders and deliberate on the collaborative implementation strategies in dealing with contemporary maritime security challenges. The Conclave participants would benefit from interactions with eminent speakers and subject matter experts over three sessions focusing on - Leveraging Collective Maritime Competencies to Counter Emerging Non-Traditional Threats, Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Maritime Law Enforcement and Imperatives for Mitigating Emerging Non Traditional Threats in areas beyond National Jurisdiction in the IOR. There would also be extensive deliberations in the domains of Hydrography and Maritime Information Sharing. The participating Chiefs would also dwell upon the significance of interoperability to effectively deal with emerging and future maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region. As part of the Conclave, visitors would also be afforded an opportunity to witness India's indigenous shipbuilding industry at the 'Make in India Exhibition' and the capabilities of Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel (DSRV) for Submarines at the Marmugao Port Trust, Goa.

Tripura Police books 4 SC lawyers under UAPA



PTI ■ AGARTALA

Tripura police have registered a case against four Supreme Court lawyers under the stringent UAPA and various sections of IPC for allegedly promoting communal disharmony with their social media posts about the recent violence targeting Muslims, a senior official said on Friday. The lawyers have also been served notices asking them to appear before police by November 10 for questioning, Superintendent of Police of West Tripura district Manik

Das said.

A group of Supreme Court lawyers visited Tripura on Tuesday last and after their visit we noticed that several posts were made in social media expressing their discontent regarding the recent communal incidents. Police has registered a case and wants to know if the posts were made by them or were fake posts, Das told PTI. The case was registered at West Agartala police station on November 3 under various sections of IPC including 153 (a) and (b) related to promot-

ing disharmony, enmity or feelings of hatred between different groups on the grounds of religion, race etc, 469 (forgery), 504 (intentional insult, provocation), 120 (b) (criminal conspiracy), besides section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. If convicted under the tough UAPA, an offender may face imprisonment up to seven years. The lawyers belong to different organisations including Lawyers for Democracy, National Confederation of Human Rights Organization

(NCHRO) and the PUCL.

Notices were served to Estesham Hashmi, lawyer of the Supreme Court of India, advocate Amit Srivastav, Coordinator of Lawyers for Democracy, NCHRO national secretary Ansar Indori and PUCL member Mukesh Kumar. They were alleged to have claimed that the Muslim community was targeted, including women, and a mosque was vandalised. The team demanded appropriate police action against the attackers, those who spread rumours and officials who remained inactive during attacks that occurred in the aftermath of violence against Hindus in Bangladesh during Durga Puja. A mosque was vandalised and two shops were set ablaze at Chamtilla during the October 26 Vishva Hindu Parishad rally which was called to protest against the communal violence in neighbouring Bangladesh. Three houses and a few shops, reportedly owned by Muslims, were also ransacked in nearby Rowa Bazar, North Tripura Superintendent of Police Bhanupada Chakraborty had said. The state government had on October 29 alleged that a group with vested interest from outside had hatched a conspiracy against the administration to create unrest in Tripura and malign its image by uploading fake photographs of a burning mosque on social

media after the October 26 incident. In a video message on Wednesday, DIG (Southern Range) G K Rao said, Some mischievous incidents are happening in the state since the last few days. There was some minor loss of property and some incidents of disturbance occurred. Tripura Police registered 11 cases including 4 in North Tripura, 3 in West Tripura, one in Gomati district and three cases in Sepahijala district. In the notice to the lawyers, police asked them to delete the social media posts and appear before the investigators by November 10. The Trinamool Congress, which is seeking to make a political foray into the state, approached the NHRC with a complaint about the incidents of violence. The human rights panel has forwarded its complaint to Tripura Chief Secretary Kumar Alok and Director General of Police V S Yadav, and asked them to submit an action taken report within four weeks. In its complaint to the NHRC on October 28, the TMC alleged that despite reports of violence against people from the religious minority community, the state government didn't take proper action. Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb recently announced compensation for losses incurred by the victims of the violence.

BJP national executive to focus on polls results, upcoming elections

PTI ■ AGARTALA

The recent bypoll results, which were a setback for the BJP in some states, have added new dimension to the party's national executive meeting on Sunday as its top brass is likely to cast a fresh look at its affairs in places like West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan while deliberating its strategy for the upcoming assembly polls. All important issues will be up for deliberations, a BJP leader said of the meeting, adding the party is also likely to laud the central Government for its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the vaccination drive, and hail Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his development initiatives and successful foreign visits. The robust revival in economic activities with the record GST collection last month following a slump due to the pandemic is also likely to come up for deliberation at the meeting. However, it is the bypoll results in three Lok Sabha and 29 assembly seats spread across 13 states and a union territory that may weigh on the minds of the party leadership as it meets for the

The robust revival in economic activities with the record GST collection last month following a slump due to the pandemic is likely to come up for deliberation at the meeting

first time in a physical meeting following the pandemic's outbreak last year. Known for laying great store by every popular verdict, however materially insignificant it may be in the broader context, the BJP leadership may review the party's affairs in West Bengal, where its fortunes have been sliding since the high of the 2019 Lok Sabha poll, and Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, two states where the Congress has put up an impressive performance. The BJP is in power in Himachal and as such the Congress's complete sweep of the bypolls in a Lok Sabha and

three assembly seats there has caused concerns in the party. The party has, however, registered a strong show in Assam, where it won all five seats with its ally, and Madhya Pradesh, where it won the lone Lok Sabha and two of the three assembly seats at stake. A party leader said price rise may have been a factor and added that the Modi Government has done the course correction by slashing the petrol and diesel prices followed by the BJP-ruled states giving further relief to people by slashing the Value Added Tax on the fuel prices. That the opposition-ruled states have not done so may come handy for the BJP leaders in attacking the rivals when they meet. Modi is likely to deliver the valedictory address at the national executive meeting in which he is expected to shape the party's stand on a variety of key issues and set the tone for its preparedness as it gears up for the assembly polls early next year in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur. BJP president J P Nadda will deliver the inaugural address.

'Regulating blood insulin levels may help lower risk of getting Covid-19'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Regulating blood insulin levels may even help lower the risk of getting Covid-19, researchers from Japan said after studying the movement of a protein called GRP78 that helps the Covid-19 causing virus to bind to and enter cells. GRP78 is a protein that is found in adipose tissue (i.e., fat). Older, obese, and diabetic people are all more vulnerable to Covid-19 and, while the reasons for this are still not completely clear, the team from Osaka University sheds some light on this issue. It was recently suggested that adipose tissue might be a major reservoir for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, said lead author of the study Jihoon Shin. Because of this, we wanted to investigate whether there is any link between the excess adipose tissue in older, obese, and diabetic patients and their vulnerability to Covid-19. To do this, the researchers looked at GRP78, which has recently been suggested to be



involved in the interaction of SARS-CoV-2 with human cells. The major method by which SARS-CoV-2 enters human cells is by a spike protein on the viral surface binding to a human cell-surface protein called angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2). Shin and colleagues discovered that the spike protein can also directly bind to GRP78, and that the presence of GRP78 increases the binding with ACE2. To get an idea of GRP78's involvement in COVID-19 vulnerability

they investigated how much GRP78 protein is present in tissues from older, obese, and diabetic patients. The results were very clear, explained senior author Iichiro Shimomura. GRP78 gene expression was highly upregulated in adipose tissue, and was elevated with increasing age, obesity, and diabetes. The study is published in Diabetes. Aging, obesity, and diabetes are known to be associated with increased blood

insulin levels. Therefore, the group wondered whether insulin was involved in GRP78 expression. They found that exposing cells to insulin did induce expression of GRP78. Importantly, they discovered that treatment using widely prescribed anti-diabetic drugs that reduce insulin levels successfully reduce expression level of GRP78. They went a step further and showed that exercise and calorie restriction in a mouse-model also worked to reduce GRP78 levels in adipose tissue. Our findings suggest that a high blood insulin level is an important risk factor that can predispose older, obese, and diabetic individuals to Covid-19 infection. As such, controlling blood insulin with pharmacological interventions or with environmental interventions, such as exercise, could help lower these patients' risk, said Shin. Given the global impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the results from this study provide important insights into how to lower the risk of infection in these vulnerable patients. Reducing GRP78 expression by pharmacological or environmental interventions may improve outcomes in these patients, said the researchers.

Over 28 million more years of life lost in 2020 due to Covid: Study



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 28 million more years of life were lost than expected in 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic, according to a study published in the BMJ. The scientists came to this conclusion after analyzing the effects of the vector-borne crisis on life expectancy and premature mortality in 2020 in 37 upper-middle and high-income

countries. Rate of excess premature deaths was found to be higher in men than women, said Dr Nazrul Islam from the Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford. However, the study did not include most countries from Asia, Africa, and Latin America due to a lack of data, and were unable to take account of other critically important factors,

such as socioeconomic status, regional disparities, and race or ethnicity. In 31 of 37 countries, more than 222 million years of life were lost in 2020, which is 28.1 million more than expected (17.3 million in men and 10.8 million in women). The highest decline in life expectancy (in years) was in Russia (minus 2.33 in men and minus 2.14 in women), the US

(minus 2.27 in men and minus 1.61 in women), Bulgaria (minus 1.96 in men and minus 1.37 in women), Lithuania (minus 1.83 in men and minus 1.21 in women), Chile (minus 1.64 in men), and Spain (minus 1.11 in women). Only Taiwan, New Zealand, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and South Korea, had comparable or lower than expected years of life lost. This underscores the importance of successful viral suppression and elimination policies, including targeted and population based public health policy interventions, the researchers wrote in the study. The team also compared the observed life expectancy and years of life lost in 2020 with those that would be expected based on historical trends in 2005-19 in 37 upper-middle and high-income countries. Overall, excess years of life lost to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 were more than five times higher (2,510 per 100,000) than those associated with the seasonal influenza epidemic in 2015 (458 per 100,000), Islam said. It was also relatively low in people younger than 65 years, except in Russia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, and the US where the excess years of life lost was more than 2,000 per 100,000.

Hooch death toll reaches 33 in Bihar

Nitish calls for fresh campaign against liquor

Patna/Bettiah/Gopalganj: The death toll in the latest hooch tragedy in Bihar climbed to 33 on Friday, while arrests were made and errant officials punished in connection with sale of illicit liquor, even as Chief Minister Nitish Kumar called for a fresh campaign to dissuade people from drinking alcohol in the dry State.

However, officials in West Champaran and Gopalganj districts claimed only 25 of the deaths could be confirmed as having been caused by consumption of spurious liquor.

In West Champaran, alleged hooch trader Ram Prakash Ram (50), besides Dhani Lal Ram (40), Jhakkad Paswan (64) and Vikas Ram (25) died at a hospital.

All of them were residents of Dakshin Telhua village under the Nautan Police Station limits where local people had consumed liquor on the night preceding Diwali, the festival of lights.

According to Champaran

Range DIG Pranav Kumar Pravin, the four casualties have raised the death toll in West Champaran to 14, and seven people were undergoing treatment at the Government Medical College and Hospital in Bettiah town.

The hospital's superintendent Pramod Tiwari said, "Among those who have died, three were brought dead. Bodies are being handed over to bereaved family members after post mortem examinations."

Those undergoing treatment included a 70-year-old person who lost his eyesight on Friday morning- a common side-effect of consumption of illicit liquor.

The DIG said, "Two officials - Manish Sharma, the in-charge of Nautan Police Station, and a village chowkidar- have been placed under suspension for their laxity. One of the alleged sellers has died, while another - Munna Ram - is absconding and a search has



been launched to nab him."

However, according to sources in the local administration, two others, who had died after consuming liquor, were cremated by their family members before word spread about the hooch tragedy.

In Gopalganj, District Magistrate Nawal Kishore Chaudhary confirmed 17 deaths in the Mohammedpur Police Station area but asserted that only 11 of these could be blamed on consumption of spurious

liquor.

"Three persons - residents of a village under the Mohammadpur Police Station limits - had been cremated by family members before post mortem.

"Family members of another three deceased refused post-mortem claiming that deaths were on account of natural causes", he said. Superintendent of Police Anand Kumar said Ranjan Kumar, the in-charge of

Mohammadpur Police Station, and a chowkidar have been suspended, and three alleged sellers - Chhote Lal Sah, Jitendra Sah and Ram Pravesh Sah - have been arrested.

He also claimed that raids conducted at various places in the area has led to recovery of 100 litres of spurious liquor. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, in Patna, vowed stern action against those found responsible for the tragic deaths but expressed dismay over people continuing to consume a "galat cheez" (wrong thing) during festivals. Replying to questions from reporters outside the assembly, where he went to attend swearing-in of two newly elected MLAs of his JD(U), the chief minister said, "I will conduct an in-depth review of the enforcement of prohibition in the state. But, it appears that we need another extensive campaign to spread awareness about the ill-effects of drinking."

PTI

30 more people test +ve for Zika virus in Kanpur

Tally rises to 66

Kanpur: Thirty more people have tested positive for Zika virus here, taking the total number of those infected in the district to 66, including 9 IAF personnel, a senior official said on Friday.

Of those infected, 45 are men and 21 women, according to officials.The first case in Kanpur was reported on October 23 when an Indian Air Force (IAF) warrant officer tested positive for Zika virus.

"Thirty more people have tested positive for Zika virus in Kanpur," District Magistrate Vishak G Ayyar said.

Among the 66 tested positive for Zika virus, 9 are from IAF, the DM said.

Samples were collected from various pockets in the neighbouring areas of IAF station hangars and sent to the lab at King George's Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow for testing.

Thirty of them came back



positive for Zika virus, he said. Zika is a mosquito-borne virus and hence, getting rid of mosquitoes is the safe way out, he said.

To check the spread of the disease, health teams are undertaking sanitisation programmes including anti-larvae spraying and identifying fever patients, screening seriously ill people and pregnant women.

Health officials have been asked to step up surveillance and ensure door-to-door sampling and testing for Zika virus.

"We advise the local people not to panic regarding the sudden spurt in Zika virus cases," Ayyar said.

A high alert has been sounded in the periphery of hangars of the IAF station, another official said.

To check the spread of Zika virus, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed the health department to ensure strict surveillance and to undertake frequent and extensive door-to-door sanitisation and fogging drives to prevent mosquito breeding.

PTI

TMC's Subroto Mukherjee cremated with full State honour

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The body of Subroto Mukherjee, the veteran Trinamool Congress leader and Minister and one of the mentors of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was cremated with full State honour on Friday afternoon with Banerjee repeatedly telling that in her life "the festival of lights had never been filled with so much darkness."

Mukherjee, 75 was admitted to the state-run SSKM Hospital following a major heart attack in late October. A stent was applied on him and was scheduled to be released on Friday morning, family sources said adding he suffered two successive attacks on Thursday evening and succumbed to his ailments past 9 pm.

While senior leaders cutting across party lines and a sea of humanity came to bid the final adieu to the departed leader, the Chief Minister was conspicuous by her absence in the crowd of mourners.

She earlier said "I will not go to see Subroto da in that state ... I do not have that strength to see him lying dead ... let him remain in the eyes of my mind the jovial person he was... I have seen so many

tragedies but not the one like this ... this has affected me personally."

The last of Congress Young Turks from Bengal groomed by SS Ray the then Chief Minister, Mukherjee is often called one of the best Chief Ministers Bengal never had. "A close friend of PR Dasmunshi he was a favourite of former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and President Pranab Mukherjee.

A nine-time MLA Mukherjee and PR Dasmunshi had divided their political zones with the former preferring State politics leaving the central politics to the latter. Later Mukherjee joined the Trinamool Congress in 1999 while Dasmunshi remained in Congress. A former Kolkata Mayor he was an AIICC member for years

The leader whose career spanned more than 50 years still remained the youngest minister to have served in Bengal. He became the Information and Culture Minister and later Minister of State for Home in SS Ray's Cabinet --- during the Emergency.

A leader who was loved by all the opposition Mukherjee was a favourite of former Chief

Minister Jyoti Basu too.

In fact Mukherjee was one of the Congress leaders who in 1984 impressed upon the top Congress leadership to field Mamata Banerjee against a iconic Somnath Chatterjee from Jadavpur parliamentary constituency.

The Jadavpur elections catapulted Banerjee to the political centre stage of Bengal and India after she defeated Chatterjee.

"Despite we had a different ideological path and belief Subroto da was like a good friend ... he was like a grandfather of Bengal politics today ... and his death will leave a big void in the State politics," said BJP national vice president Dilip Ghosh.

His party colleague and State BJP spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said "he was one of the best Chief Ministers Bengal never had ... the circle of his political career could have been completed had he been made the Chief Minister."

CPI(M) central committee member Sujan Chakrabarty said "Subroto da was not only a politician ... he was a social person who mixed with the members of all the parties ... a trait which is fast vanishing in today's politics."

Students with grace marks can enrol in diploma courses

Ahmedabad: The Gujarat Government on Friday announced that Class 10 students who have passed with grace marks can seek admission for diploma courses at polytechnic institutes.

Notably, a rule framed by the State Education Department in 2016 had barred students passed with grace marks from seeking admission to polytechnic diploma courses in the state.

Speaking to reporters in Gandhinagar, state Education Minister Jitubhai Vaghani said the State Government has decided to do away with the rule from this year onwards to help such students pursue diploma courses. "Around 30,000 seats in various polytechnics are currently vacant, and an equal number of SSC students have passed with grace marks this year. To ensure that these students also get an opportunity to build their career, we have decided to allow them seek admission to diploma courses," Vaghani said. The Class 10 board exams in Gujarat were cancelled this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students were given mass promotion. "We have also extended the date for accepting admission forms.

Students with grace marks were considered ineligible for diploma courses since 2016. Now, they will be considered eligible. I urge such students to take advantage of this announcement and fill the admission forms in time," the minister said. When asked about the reopening of primary schools for students from Classes 1 to 5, Vaghani said the final decision will be taken "very soon" after consulting experts.

PTI

K'taka CM Bommai orders measures to prevent flooding

Bengaluru: As the heavy downpour inundated parts of Bengaluru, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Friday said four State Disaster Response Teams would be set up and funds granted for long- and short-term plans to avoid flooding in the city.



The members of the 64 rescue teams would also be increased by recruiting more people from the home guard and civil defence, the Chief Minister said adding that desilting of stormwater drains during summer would be taken up. "There is one Disaster Response Team in Bengaluru, which should be increased to four. The four teams will be raised with the help of State Disaster Response Fund and the Finance Department," Bommai said. Soon after returning from Hubballi, the Chief Minister convened an emergency meeting of the officials following flooding in many parts of the city.

Many areas were inundated due to torrential rain in the IT capital of the country on Thursday. Vehicles were stuck in the water in Chamarajpet, and neighbouring areas.

Water gushed into many low-lying areas and trees came down crashing. Noting that the rainy season has extended this year, the Chief Minister said the Meteorology

Department has predicted rainy weather in the next four or five days. Bommai said there are 64 rescue teams with 15 members each. The members would be increased to at least 30. Home guards and civil defence volunteers have to be added in these teams, he added. While reviewing the reasons behind flooding in Bengaluru, the Chief Minister said he came across the fact that there many clogged stormwater drains due to which water got stagnated. "The old retaining walls of the stormwater drains are giving way. The total length of the SWD in Bengaluru is 842 km and a 389-km-long retaining wall has been built. We have taken up the construction of the rest of the work under the Nagarothhana scheme," Bommai said.

He directed the officials to also report to him on a monthly basis about the reason behind flooding and progress made to achieve the long- and short-term measures to end water-logging.

PTI



A pandal based on the theme of Buddhism on the occasion of Kali Puja, at Bolpur in Birbhum district on Friday

PTI

TN Police files 2,000 cases for violation of SC directive on firecrackers

Chennai: About 2,000 cases have been registered by police across Tamil Nadu against those who violated the Supreme Court directives in respect of firecrackers, police sources said here on Friday.

The total number of cases registered across the State is approximately 2,000 and it includes violations in respect of the two-hour time slab fixed by the apex court to burst firecrackers on Deepavali.

The cases also include those against firecracker shops or units that sold or stored products by breaching 'specific court directives' and also for violation of other norms, police sources here told **PTI**. On

aspects like the law invoked against shops and other violators, they declined to elaborate, saying cases have been filed under appropriate provisions of law.

Deepavali was celebrated on November 4 this year and the Supreme Court had allowed bursting of firecrackers for two hours, from 6 AM to 7 AM and from 7 PM to 8 PM.

On October 29, the Supreme Court had said that celebration cannot be at the cost of others' health and clarified that while there is no total ban on use of firecrackers, those fireworks which contain Barium salts are prohibited.**PTI**

Previous Govts deliberately discouraged startups in J&K: Singh

Srinagar: Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Friday accused the previous governments of deliberately discouraging start-ups in Jammu & Kashmir so that the youth remains perpetually dependent on salaried Government jobs and continues to hang around the political masters of the day.

As a result, the region's immense potential for entrepreneurship and self-livelihood remained unexplored, Singh said while addressing an interactive meet of agricultural start-ups and farmers organised jointly by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST) here.

This is for the first time in the last

few years that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, concerted and technology-based effort has been made to promote the agriculture sector for young start-ups in the region, the Minister of State for PMO, science and technology, earth sciences, personnel, public grievances, pensions, and atomic energy and space said.

"Whereas in the past, farmers and agriculturists would largely depend upon the mood of climate and vagaries of nature for cultivation, in the last few years, new areas like lavender cultivation have been explored at a large scale both in the Kashmir valley and the areas around Gulmarg as well as the Jammu region in Doda and Reasi districts," he said.

Singh said no Government in any country of the world can ensure 100 per cent salaried government jobs to every youth, but a responsible government always plans to promote means of livelihood and this is precisely what the Modi Government is trying to seek.

He said a sustained awareness campaign needs to be launched among the youth and their parents to educate them that there are much more lucrative emoluments available through these self-livelihood and new start-up options and, therefore, they should not be led to waste their time and energy in protesting for Government salaried jobs.

Singh said the farmer today is actually an agricultural technocrat or an

agricultural start-up who has the option of making handsome profits using new technology and provisions introduced in the agricultural sector by the prime minister.

He said the Union Government through CSIR is providing all relevant financial and technical support for new modes of cultivation, multiple integrated farming and also hybrid farming which have the capacity to double farmers' income by 2022, as envisaged by the prime minister.

On the occasion, Singh also distributed farming kits to agriculturists drawn from all the 10 districts of Kashmir valley while the CSIR and SKUAST signed a Memorandum of Understanding for collaboration.

PTI



Sand artist Ajay Rawat creates sand art of camel face ahead of international Pushkar Camel Fair in Pushkar on Rajasthan

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Absent Xi

Xi could be using COVID as an excuse not to travel as China faces criticism on several fronts

World leaders are coming out of their pandemic bubbles, doing away with virtual conferences. One leader missing from the list is Chinese President Xi Jinping. He is not to be seen at any of the world's fora since January 2020, when the Coronavirus outbreak rattled the world and China shut itself up. Xi was missing from the G20 meeting in Italy and COP26 in Scotland. He missed the opportunity of a personal meeting with US President Joe Biden in Rome. The leaders are supposed to have a summit meeting sometime this year. It took a six-hour meeting in Zurich in early October between US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chinese Politburo member Yang Jiechi to finalise the summit details. It is expected to be a virtual meeting as of now. He has not taken up an invitation to meet with any European leader either. Xi has not stepped out of China in over 650 days. His last foreign assignment was a trip to Myanmar on January 17, 2020. It is not that Xi has abandoned international diplomacy. China's negotiations with the Taliban and its request to the world to recognise its Government have Xi's approval. He took conference calls with many leaders in this period, including Angela Merkel, the outgoing Chancellor of Germany, Emmanuel Macron, President of France and Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the UK. Xi sent foreign minister Wang Yi to Rome for the G20 meeting.



His globe-trotting image may have sagged because of him being bubble-bound but within China he is quite busy implementing his "common prosperity" goal, ensuring that economic sectors with the largest private participation, like real estate, technology, private tuitions, fall in line with new State regulations. It is possible that Xi holds himself back at home because of the strict COVID-19 restrictions or uses them as an excuse not to travel when China is facing criticism on several fronts. It is equally possible that his absence from the world stage may signal China looking more inward. Certainly, other than the Taliban, most of the other issues China has tackled in the last year are internal. Is it an indication of a major shift in China's foreign and domestic policies? Or that Xi is unwilling to no longer cooperate at global fora on terms other than his own? Or is Xi preoccupied with internal politics and machinations of his critics as he prepares for the 20th Party Congress in 2022 for another five years as supreme leader? The absence of President Xi is felt nowhere more than in the context of China's race to challenge the global leadership of the US. It is ironic that Xi was travelling all over the world at a time when the US under Donald Trump was in an "America First" self-siege. As the world returns to interaction with vigour after a pandemic lull, it is Xi's turn to go into a shell.

PICTALK



Rashtrapati Bhavan engulfed in smog a day after Diwali

RANJAN DIMRI / THE PIONEER

Stand clean

A couple of cases in Kerala tell the nation that vindictive politics is not the way to go

It's a classic case of the use of politics over ethics and morals. An IAS officer, known for his administrative acumen and with nearly a decade of service to complete before superannuation, is facing an uncertain future following three months of incarceration in a Thiruvananthapuram jail. A corporate liaison executive-turned-homemaker and seven young men imprisoned under the draconian UAPA and COFEPOSA laws on the charges of gold smuggling spent more than 14 months in jail. Though the special courts denied them bail, the Kerala High Court recently granted them conditional bail. The charges of anti-national activities slapped against them by the National Investigation Agency and Customs Department crumbled like a pack of cards as the court asked the probing agency for details that linked the "accused" to gold smuggling and unpatriotic acts. There was not an iota of evidence against the "suspects" and this led to the latter walking out of the jail. Moreover, the elite agencies failed to arrest those who are safely ensconced in their West Asian havens.



The gold smuggling case is seen as a ploy against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the CPI(M) in the 2021 Assembly election. All allegations of corruption and gold smuggling fizzled out and those who accused the Chief Minister of culpability in the LIFE MISSION project, a flagship programme of the Left Democratic Front Government, bit the dust. While accusing Vijayan and his family for their role in the alleged smuggling, the BJP leaders forgot the fact that it was the Chief Minister himself who requested the Union Government to order a probe. The charges of gold smuggling got vapourised in thin air as the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) spy case of the 1990s. Cherian Philip, the person who wrote the script of the Isro spy case to help his godfather become the Chief Minister himself went on record to tell the world that the case was manipulated. The country's elite space mission programmes suffered a setback as two top scientists were entrapped in the cheap political game. Philip, who had quarrelled with his godfathers in the Congress and joined the CPI(M), returned home the other day after spending 20 years as a privileged guest at AKG Centre, the party's State headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram. The Kerala experience is a lesson to those presiding over the Dilli Sultanate that Central agencies should not be unleashed upon enemies to settle political scores.

The ever-alarming growth of China

With its borders still not demarcated with India and its continued belligerent posture, India must be wary of China and face the challenge squarely

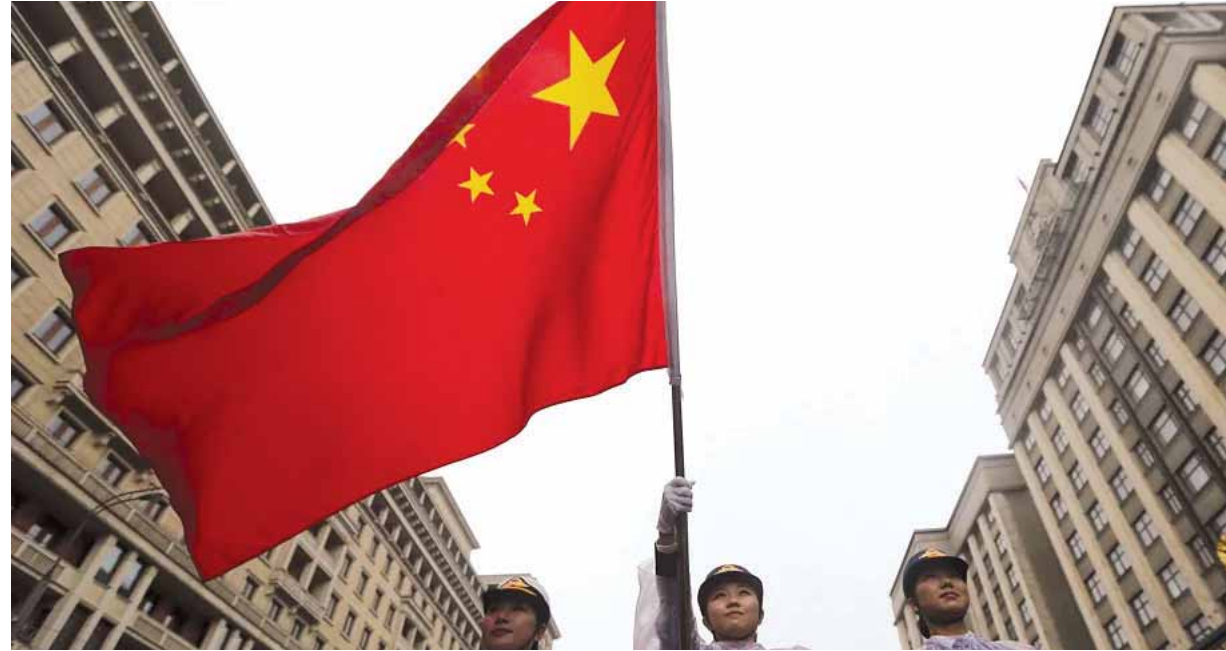


JL KOULI JALALI

Much talked about the rise of China as an economic super power has been inviting attention for years now but it has been intimidating, too. The world opinion has veered around the fact that the attitude of the Communist regime in China, particularly towards most of its neighbours, has been pivoted around aggression and intimidation from the very beginning. In 1962, the first victim of its brazen policy of aggression was its immediate neighbour India. During subsequent years and decades, Vietnam and many other countries in or bordering South China Sea and East China China Sea fell prey to its aggressive attitude. Now after its rise as an economic superpower, it has been throwing around its weight without any regard for international law and rules. It has usurped the rights of its neighbors in the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean and has been illegally hindering free navigation rights of other nations too. This has only endangered the security of the world. The West has its own concerns about the intimidating rise of China.

It is not communist ideology, which is based on revolution, but its own attitude and policies which prompt China to adopt coercive and aggressive means against other countries to maintain and uphold its interests, in a case or two mostly based on mere perceptions. It has had no qualms even in befriending and turning Pakistan, the epicentre of terrorism, into an all weather friend just to achieve its nefarious aims against India. To harm Indian interests, it went to the extent of even supporting terrorism emanating from Pakistan. It continuously vetoed UN resolutions to declare terrorists from Pakistan as international terrorists. Though at a much later stage it had to bow before international pressure.

Although an atheist regime and avowedly against obscurantism, China is not averse even to come nearer to staunch fundamentalist and radical Taliban regime in Afghanistan just for some pecuniary gains.



Fundamentalism and radicalism have been bedeviling the whole world and have caused much distress and wreaked havoc all over the world particularly in Afghanistan itself.

China needs to realise that with the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1993, Communism as a perceived panacea for all human sufferings has proved to be inadequate. Even the hybrid Communism practised in China for decades now has its own limitations. Freedom of spirit is an inalienable non-physical aspect of human beings. But China has failed even to uphold it. With the return of Hong Kong to China, it was hoped that China would uphold this aspect of human personality not only in Hong Kong but allow it to prevail elsewhere also in the country. But forcible civil liberty curbs and other excesses in Hong Kong have even belied this hope. More serious and destabilising is the matter about Taiwan. Taiwan has clearly demonstrated that it cannot be part of the authoritarian and atheist regime of China. Despite armed threats and intimidation Taiwan has avowed to defend its democ-



CHINA HAS EVERY RIGHT TO RISE TO THE TOP BUT NOT THROUGH AGGRESSION AND BY BREAKING INTERNATIONAL LAW AND ORDER. THIS IS BOUND TO CREATE SECURITY RISKS EVEN FOR THE POWERFUL WEST

ratic values and freedom of human spirit.

With its borders still not demarcated with India and its continued belligerent posture, India has to be wary about China and face the challenge posed by it squarely. Along with recalibrated economic development after the Coronavirus, India has to boost its self-reliance in every sphere. It has to encourage and enlarge the pool of developed skilled manpower. Apart from nourishing its democratic values, it has to strengthen its self-confidence to meet the challenge. It should also widen its sphere of influence all over the world and broaden its trade interests. Moreover, apart from the geopolitical context of the challenge, it has to be prepared as usual to come up to the diplomatic challenges that may be thrust on it.

China has had a glorious past and is one of the most ancient civilisations still surviving and on the rise. Like all other countries, China has every right to rise to the top but not through aggression and by breaking international law and rules. This is bound to create security risks even for the powerful West. The announcement of the

Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS) alliance is an ominous manifestation of this threat. With abundant sophisticated nuclear weapons and other armaments all around the world, this could even jeopardise survival of mankind.

The world we live in has changed beyond imagination and come so close that evolution of human civilisation has become a possibility. Despite so many contradictions, widespread uneven economic development and daunting cultural diversities, evolution of human civilisation can no longer be considered a utopia. But this could be possible only after the formation of a democratically constituted world parliament. By changing its attitude, China could aid the formation of such an institution which could ensure survival of mankind and evolution of human civilisation. No doubt evolution of such an institution could be brought nearer when all other countries subject their actions to an ethical and moral compass.

(The writer is a former IIS officer, freelance journalist and producer. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIWALI ALONE CAN'T BE BLAMED

Sir — Delhi's air quality has severely deteriorated after the Diwali festival, allegedly owing to the bursting of crackers in the Capital. However, there are more than 15 factors that contribute to air pollution. It has been proven in an IIT report on Delhi's air pollution that Diwali crackers contribute only about five per cent to air pollution. There are several other factors, both known and unknown, which contribute to pollution in the NCR. Delhi's air pollution is caused mainly by stubble burning. Add to it the innumerable vehicles that ply on the roads of Delhi. Vehicular pollution is also a major contributor. The dust and dirt caused by construction activities and even air conditioners contribute a major share in polluting the air.

Therefore, blaming Hindus for the alarming pollution levels during Diwali is untenable, since the festival is celebrated only once a year. A ban on stubble burning, checking emission from factories, curtailing vehicular and industrial emissions — activities which cause pollution throughout the year — will go a long way in solving the air pollution problem of the Capital as well as the country.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

A FANCY KEDARNATH YATRA

Sir — Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kedarnath was more about himself than the reconstructed Shiv Temple or Adi Shankaracharya, whose statue was unveiled in honour of his exertions to revive Hinduism when Buddhism was embraced by more and more people and his commentaries on Hindu scriptures. We couldn't help noticing that the sole focus was on the VVIP pilgrim. We couldn't help thinking that no ordinary devotee could ever dream of the kind of treatment Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hailed as 'Rashtra Rishi' by his supporters, got in the temple precincts and sanctum sanctorum. Perhaps the fact that he is spearheading the revival of Hinduism automatically qualifies him for such a special treatment.

Not just a girl from India



Vinisha Umashankar, a class 10 student from Tiruvannamalai in northern Tamil Nadu, deserves accolades for her stirring speech on clean energy at the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26) held recently at Glasgow, which was attended by some eminent world leaders, including our Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Intrepidly enough, she took them by surprise, saying, "young people

have every reason to be angry and frustrated at leaders who have made empty promises and failed to deliver." Incidentally, last year, Vinisha won the Children's Climate Prize conferred by the Children's Climate Foundation, Sweden, for designing an innovative and eco-friendly solar-powered mobile ironing cart, which will be an efficient and profitable alternative to the conventional heavy iron box, fuelled by charcoal.

She came up with the idea to use solar energy to heat up the irons. Over the span of six months in 2019, when she was just 12 years old, she designed a cart that had solar panels to power a steam iron. The young girl's achievement shows that India has enormous potential to lead the world in the area of scientific research. "It made me think about the amount of charcoal burnt every day and the damage it does to the environment," says Umashankar. We must learn to be thoughtful of our environment from this young girl.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

The visit was choreographed to the last detail for his cast as a larger-than-life character. Even otherwise, on election-eve, PM Modi has been wanting to get into a temple, preferably a cave temple for televised solitary meditation to connect with the multitudes for whom religion is a centre of devotion, and woo them for favour in elections. Clearly, he cannot do without being bathed in religious symbolism.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

TSUNAMI: A SERIOUS KILLER

Sir — Tsunamis are usually rare but one of the most dangerous natural calamities. Over the last 100 years, 58 tsunamis have taken more than 2.6 lakh lives, or an average of 4,600 lives per disaster. Humanity suffered the deadliest tsunami in the Indian ocean in December 2004. It caused over 2.27 lakh deaths across 14 nations. It is worth mentioning that 80 per cent tsunamis take place in the Pacific ocean only. To educate and

inform people about tsunamis, November 5, 2021, is observed as the "World Tsunami Awareness Day".

The day is observed to promote the target of the 'Sendai Seven Campaign', which aims to sustainably enhance international cooperation with developing countries through adequate support to complement their national actions for implementation of the present framework by 2030. Decisions and resolutions adopted in June 2021 by the UN Ocean Decade (2021-2030) will provide the "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to improve tsunami detection and early warning systems. It is even more important that every person knows the tsunami's natural warning signs and immediately self-evacuates since the waves are infamous to attack spontaneously and dangerously.

Shruti Raikwar | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I want to tell women that I will fight for them, the Congress party will fight for them.



Congress leader —Priyanka Gandhi

May the light of Diwali remind us that from darkness, there is knowledge, wisdom, and truth. From division, unity. From despair, hope.

US President —Joe Biden

Wholehearted appreciation to the team for holding Sooryavanshi for more than a year to revive the theatre business.



Filmmaker —SS Rajamouli

It wasn't the World Cup we expected. It was a tough competition, we should keep our heads high.

West Indies all-rounder —Dwayne Bravo

A large number of people did not burst firecrackers. But some people did it on purpose. The BJP made them do it.



AAP leader —Gopal Rai

FIRST COLUMN

ASEAN NATIONS AND THE CHINA FACTOR



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India wants equitable inclusive development in the region without facing coercion from China

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wound up two high-ticket global events this week. The G20 summit in Rome followed by the COP26 climate change talks in Glasgow. In the last week of October, he was able to interact with his Southeast Asian counterparts, the region gaining increasing significance in India's Indo-Pacific strategy.

India has had lukewarm to cold ties with the ASEAN as a collective bloc of influence in the past. The reasons are varied, as India, in the pre-2014 period, was still trying to take a firm call on its Indo-Pacific strategy. This 'free, open, accessible, follower of international laws and conventions' Indo-Pacific region has been the central focus of many regional bloc and finds prominence in India's foreign policy now.

The QUAD alliance is all about keeping the Indo-Pacific region rules-bound. The equations between members of ASEAN and their outreach and alliances with other countries are now increasingly being dictated by the China factor. China is a close neighbor to many ASEAN nations that have maritime interests in the shared waters. China's economic and military might has silenced many voices within the bloc from coming out in full support of the emerging global consensus on Indo-Pacific strategy. Some have even bought the China rant on alliances like QUAD being 'Anti-China'.



These narratives are detrimental to Indian interests specially, if it has to take a regional influencer's role. The Prime Minister was right when in his address to ASEAN he commented, "This special role of ASEAN, India's Act East Policy which is contained in our Security and Growth for All in the Region — 'SAGAR' — policy. India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and ASEAN's Outlook for the Indo-Pacific are the frameworks for our shared vision and mutual cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.". He clearly brought out the centrality of India's shared vision of equitable inclusive development in the region without facing coercion from China.

China has been a notorious actor in the region (read South China sea). This year, ASEAN statement mentioned pending issues in the South China sea region which many analysts have hailed as an important step. Perhaps, for the first time, the ASEAN leaders agreed to vocalise the need for rules-based order in the South China sea, something akin to UNCLOS. Interestingly, India went through a laborious round of negotiations and consultations to get UNCLOS recognized by the elite security council of the UN, which was under its presidency during the period. In fact, Prime Minister Modi chaired a debate on maritime security in the UNSC in August this year where the statement was adopted. Therefore, the reiteration coming from the ASEAN leadership for ensuring free maritime trade, settling disputes on high seas peacefully and preventing terrorism and drug trafficking via sea routes can be seen as the step in the right direction. This could be seen as early signs of ASEAN leadership's collective frustration with China.

India's strategic partner, the US, has also a key role in building up a consensus among the ASEAN leadership. The US can possibly request the other QUAD to use their past alliances with ASEAN to chart out a new course. It may be worth mentioning that besides India, Australia and Japan both have strategic alliance with ASEAN and have shared interests in the region.

One of the low hanging fruits could be sending away a bulk of the Covid vaccines planned under QUAD agreement to these ASEAN nations which currently may be heavily dependent on Chinese vaccines and the citizens would be greatly benefitted with a new dose of vaccines. Also, developing strategic bilateral ties with countries such as Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam could be the game changer for India.

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

Impact of greenhouse gases and deforestation



BKP SINHA

While natural gas plants are running, they need to purchase fuel and the price of fossil fuels does not reflect the cost of climate change in terms of greenhouse gas emissions

People around the world are experiencing climate change and scientific evidence clearly indicates that the climate is changing and is likely to accelerate in the future. The effects of climate change such as heavier precipitation and longer dry spells are obvious; though advanced models are also inadequate in predicting regional impacts, which are important for the formulation of local adaptation programmes. Climate change will undoubtedly affect water, forests, and coastal areas along with the Himalayan ecosystem, which is most likely threatened by rising sea levels and migrations of species.


Greenhouse gas such as, carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), and nitrous oxide (N2O) are majorly responsible for climate change. Regardless of where these greenhouse gases are emitted, they contribute to global warming.

India is the world's third largest producer of renewable energy and the third largest consumer of electricity in the world and presently 85 million people in India use electricity. As the country advances along with its population, per capita consumption of electricity is likely to rise sharply.

Would it be possible to generate all the electricity we need without emitting additional greenhouse gases?

India emits 83 per cent of greenhouse gases, a number that is likely to increase given the country's energy needs for development. India's population growth will intensify the demand for food, necessitating more urea and irrigation, and using the Haber-Bosch process to produce urea will exacerbate greenhouse gas emissions. Through amplifying the greenhouse effect of the planet, we are increasing the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Therefore, it is necessary to switch to less CO2 intensive energy. Developed nations like the United States and Western Europe have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through appropriate measures and specific innovations because their research and development budgets are relatively large for this purpose. Obtaining carbon-free electricity will be a huge challenge for India because to achieve zero emissions, all of our electricity must come from non-emitting sources. Solar, wind, hydroelectric, biomass, and geothermal power can provide energy without causing global warming. India depends on 74 per cent of fossil fuels to generate electricity.

While natural gas plants are running, they need to purchase fuel and the price of fossil fuels does not reflect the cost of climate change in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. Solar and wind energy are intermittent energy sources. The maximum conversion capacity of solar energy is only 33 per cent. They cannot generate electricity 24



SOLAR POWER AND WIND ENERGY GENERATION IS TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON NATURAL CIRCUMSTANCES. EVEN IN BRIGHT SUNSHINE AND STRONG WINDS, PRODUCTION WILL ALWAYS BE LESS THAN THE INSTALLED CAPACITY DUE TO INTERMITTENT SHUTDOWNS CAUSED BY MAINTENANCE

(The writer is a former Indian Forest Service officer. The views expressed are personal.)



hours a day, so their storage and generation cost should also be considered. Batteries used in off-grid solar systems can be charged during the day and used during the night. It is a reasonable solution for using solar power throughout the day, but it is also quite expensive due to the costs associated with the battery and its life, which will determine how much it adds to the electricity bill and the public exchequer. Installing enough solar panels might be an option, but their effectiveness depends on the time of year. Solar power generation is significantly less in winter than in summer. Solar power and wind energy generation is totally dependent on natural circumstances. Even in bright sunshine and strong winds, production will always be less than the installed capacity due to intermittent shutdowns caused by maintenance. To collect as much sunlight as possible, we need a large number of solar panels that take up a lot of space, and some roofs are not big enough to accommodate them, so space is also an issue. Location is also increasingly important in solar energy. Our installation needs to be increased many times compared to the current one.

Even though nuclear power could be a solution, but it is risky and capital intensive.

The main reason why zero-carbon electricity is so expensive is intermittency. Because of this, the state is aiming to generate more renewable electricity by combining solar and wind power with other options like gas-powered plants, which is a necessity for cities and towns. It can be argued that the grid — a single connected network — is the solution, but in practice, this is not feasible, at least in the near future.

To use renewable energy more efficiently and generate carbon-free energy, we must invest more in research and development. Furthermore, issues such as widespread poverty alleviation, education, health, clean drinking water, water for sanitation and job creation require more money to be diverted to address these issues, which in turn can adversely affect investment in research and development. Even if we take into account the government's efforts towards clean energy, new innovations will be required to remove its impediments. Diffusion of innovations requires R&D expertise and also a long period of persuasion, decision-making, and implementation that will take a considerable amount of time. Conservation, afforestation and sustainable forestry practices are also the most efficient and cost-effective ways to combat carbon emissions.

Trees can absorb four tons of CO2 over the course of 40 years. A forest is considered a carbon sink if it absorbs more carbon from the atmosphere than it emits. Photosynthesis absorbs carbon from the atmosphere. It is then deposited in forest biomass (such as trunks, branches, roots and leaves), in dead organic matter (litter), and in soil and microorganisms. This process of carbon absorption and deposition is known as carbon sequestration. It is estimated that in India, forest carbon sequestration was around +68 (MT CO2 eq/yr) in 2005-2007 and about +203 (MT CO2 eq/yr) in 2008-2011, although no reliable data are available. Type of forest also determine the quantity of carbon it can sequester, such as a closed canopy forests produce less carbon sequestration, because they lack under story vegetation and grasslands. A typical forest would emit close to 22,000 pounds of oxygen but when forests are cut down, plants absorb less CO2 thus increasing the concentration of atmospheric CO2.

In all global climate negotiations, developed countries have put pressure on developing countries (such as India and China) to reduce deforestation, but forests are either fragmented or degraded due to various development activities such as infrastructure, construction, mining, and urbanization. Therefore, to combat carbon emissions caused by deforestation and forest degradation, steps must be taken to sequester and store carbon. COVID-19 is the most recent illustration of our unbalanced relationship with nature and if the current trend of development, deforestation, and sources of greenhouse gas emissions is allowed to increase, there will be a terrible result in the near future. Hence, deforestation must be controlled in order to avoid the adversity that accompanies it.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE CENTRE'S DECISION WILL BRING DOWN PETROL AND DIESEL PRICES PER LITRE BY ₹5 AND ₹10, RESPECTIVELY. —UNION MINISTER BHAGWAT KARAD



IF THE PRICE HAS TO BE BROUGHT DOWN BY ₹50, THEN THE BJP MUST BE DEFEATED COMPLETELY. —SHIV SENA LEADER SANJAY RAUT



Africa: Stumbling towards disintegration

It would be a catastrophe if Nigeria and Ethiopia, containing a quarter of Africa's total population, were to be Balkanised, but that may be coming

Something is going wrong in Africa. Nigeria and Ethiopia, the two most populous countries on the continent, are both stumbling towards disintegration. There are now 54 sovereign African countries, which really ought to be enough, but in a few years there could be 60.


Ethiopia is closer to the brink, so close that it could actually go over this month. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's attempt to force the northern state of Tigray into obedience began well in late 2019, when federal government troops occupied it against only minor resistance, but the Tigrayans were just biding their time.

Tigrayans did most of the fighting in the 16-year war to overthrow the brutal Communist tyranny known

as the Derg. They dominated the less cruel and more competent regime that followed in 1991-2018. And they withdrew from the government when Abiy tried to corral everyone into a non-ethnic, more or less democratic 'Prosperity Party' in 2019.

The military occupation of Tigray didn't last. The Tigray Defence Force (TDF) came down from the hills last June and cleared federal troops out of the state practically overnight. Then it pushed south into the neighbouring state of Amhara along Highway One, which links Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, with the only port accessible to the landlocked country, Djibouti.

In July, the TDF stopped at Weldia, still in Amhara state



and about 400 km. from Addis Ababa, to await the great Ethiopian counter attack — which didn't start until about 10 October. It takes time to organise tens of thousands of half-trained volunteers, which was about all Abiy had left after the June-July debacle.

The battle raged for two weeks, with the attacks of Amhara militia and volunteers from elsewhere failing against the trained, experienced Tigrayan troops. About

a week ago the Ethiopian troops broke and started fleeing south, although you probably didn't hear about that because Abiy began bombing the Tigrayan capital, Mekelle, to distract your attention.

The TDF has already captured Dessie and is advancing on Kombolcha, which is halfway from Mekelle to Addis Ababa. Will the Tigrayans actually go for Addis itself? It's not impossible. They're arrogant enough, and they may be strong enough.

Nigeria is not that close to the edge, but the signs are bad. The huge gap in income, education and simple literacy between the very poor Muslim north and the mostly Christian south is a major irritant. The desperate lack of

jobs for the young is destabilising even the south, as last year's failed youth rebellion clearly demonstrated.

In the north-east, the jihadist Boko Haram has become the local authority in some places, collecting taxes and digging wells. In the north-west, banditry is out of control, with dozens or even hundreds of school children being kidnapped for ransom almost every week. The region is awash with arms, and one gang recently shot down a military jet.

In the 'middle belt' of states, farmers and herders are often at war, and in the southeast Igbo secessionists are raising the call for an independent Biafra again. Along the coast piracy is flourishing, and the oil multi-



GWYNNE DYER

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is "The Shortest History of War". The views expressed are personal.)

GLOBE TROTTER

JAPAN AND GERMANY EXPAND MILITARY TIES

Tokyo: Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi on Friday said Japan will step up military cooperation with Germany in the Indo-Pacific region as he welcomed a port call by the first German warship to visit Japan in about 20 years. The frigate Bayern is visiting Tokyo after two days of joint exercises with the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force destroyer Samidare in the Pacific Ocean amid increasingly assertive maritime activities by China in the region.

5 WORKERS KILLED IN FACTORY FIRE IN DHAKA

Dhaka: At least five workers died after a fire swept through a show factory in Old Dhaka on Friday. The workers at the factory in Old Dhaka's Showari Ghat died from suffocation, firefighters said, *Dhaka Tribune* reported. The bodies were recovered from the ground floor of the multi-storey building. They were then sent to Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital, Chawkbazar police Officer-in-Charge Md Abdul Caiyum said.

NAVY FIRES 2 OFFICERS OF SUBMARINE DAMAGED

Washington: The Navy said Thursday it fired the two senior officers of a nuclear-powered attack submarine that was damaged in an underwater collision last month in the South China Sea. A sailor who served as a senior enlisted adviser to the commander and the executive officer was also removed from his position.

CROATIA PLANS CURBS AS VIRUS SURGES

Zagreb: Croatian authorities will limit gatherings and widen the use of Covid-19 passes to curb soaring infections after the numbers of infected people hit new records again on Friday. The country's crisis team said after a meeting that the new rules for gatherings will apply starting Saturday while the use of Covid passes will take more time to prepare. Like much of Central and Eastern Europe, Croatia has seen a huge rise in infections and hospitalizations in the past weeks due to low vaccination rates and relaxed virus rules.

VATICAN CONFIRMS PAPAL TRIP TO GREECE

Vatican City: Pope Francis will travel to Greece and the eastern Mediterranean island nation of Cyprus on a five-day trip next month, the Vatican confirmed Friday. The pope will visit Larnaca, Cyprus, from Dec. 2-4, before traveling to Greece, with stops in Athens and on the island of Lesbos, from Dec. 4-6. The Vatican released no further details of the trip.

Scribe jailed for Wuhan reports ‘close to death’

AFP ■ BEIJING

A citizen journalist jailed for her coverage of China's initial response to Covid in Wuhan is close to death after going on hunger strike, her family said, prompting renewed calls from rights groups for her immediate release.

Zhang Zhan, 38, a former lawyer, travelled to Wuhan in February 2020 to report on the chaos at the pandemic's epicentre, questioning authorities' handling of the outbreak in her smartphone videos.

She was detained in May 2020 and sentenced in December to four years in jail for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”—a charge routinely used to suppress dissent. She is now severely underweight and “may not live for much longer”, her brother Zhang Ju wrote last week on a Twitter account verified by people close to the matter.

Zhang has been on a hunger strike and was force-fed through nasal tubes, her legal team, which did not have information on her current condition, told *AFP* earlier this year. “She may not survive the coming cold winter,” Zhang Ju wrote, adding that he had



urged his sister in letters to “take care of herself”.

“In her heart, it seems there is only God and her beliefs, with no care for anything else.”

Zhang Ju's posts sparked fresh calls for his sister's release, with Amnesty International urging the Chinese government Thursday to “release her immediately so that she can end her hunger strike and receive the appropriate medical treatment she desperately needs”.

Amnesty campaigner Gwen Lee said in a statement that Zhang's detention was a “shameful attack on human

rights”. Someone close to the citizen journalist, who declined to be named, told *AFP* the family had asked to meet Zhang more than three weeks ago at the Shanghai women's prison where she is being held but had not received a response.

AFP was unable to reach Zhang Ju while Zhang's mother declined to comment.

The Shanghai prison also offered no response when approached by *AFP*.

China's Foreign Ministry on Friday did not comment on Zhang's condition, but dismissed calls from rights groups for her release as “anti-China political manipulation.”

UN rights body opens urgent session in wake of Sudan’s coup

AP ■ GENEVA

The UN's top human rights body is holding an urgent session about Sudan on Friday after a military coup there nearly two weeks ago, with Britain, the United States, Germany and Norway leading a push to commission an expert to monitor the situation.

The Human Rights Council debate is taking place while the United Nations still recognises the ambassador from the deposed Sudanese government as the country's official representative in Geneva, raising questions about how – or if – the military leadership in Khartoum will be represented during the session.

The push for a human rights expert comes amid mounting international pressure on Sudan's top general, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the forces loyal to him who dissolved Sudan's transitional government and detained other government officials and political leaders in the Oct. 25 coup.

“The actions of the Sudanese military are a betrayal of the Sudanese revolution, of the democratic transition, and of the hopes and aspirations of the Sudanese people,” Simon Manley, Britain's ambassador in Geneva, said in



On Thursday, Sudan's state-run news agency reported that Burhan had ordered the release of four Government Ministers who also were detained

a statement sent to *The Associated Press*.

“Fundamentally, this is about respect for democracy and human rights.”

“I hope that fellow council members will stand in solidarity with the brave people of Sudan today,” Manley said.

The four Western countries presented a draft resolution on Wednesday, and the final language still was being worked out.

Human Rights Council spokesperson Rolando Gomez

said a provision remained intact to create a “special rapportur” to monitor the situation in Sudan for one year.

The draft also called for the immediate return to a civilian-led transitional government under Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who was among those detained in the coup.

He is now under house arrest but has been allowed to meet with UN

And international diplomats as part of mediation efforts. On Thursday, Sudan's state-run news agency reported that Burhan had ordered the release of four Government Ministers who also were detained.

A defence lawyer for the ministers said they had not yet been freed.

Russia gets partial win in \$50B case over bankrupt oil giant

AP ■ THE HAGUE

The Dutch Supreme Court on Friday handed Russia at least a temporary victory in an appeal of what's believed to be the world's largest award in an arbitration case after former shareholders of bankrupt Russian oil giant Yukos accused the Kremlin of taking down the company to silence its CEO, a fierce critic of President Vladimir Putin.

The decision further extends what already has been a yearlong legal battle between Russia and former Yukos shareholders. It quashed a lower court ruling, effectively setting aside a \$50 billion award made to the former shareholders in 2014 and sending the case to another court in Amsterdam to consider Russian claims that the shareholders committed fraud in the original arbitration hearings.

However, the highest Dutch court rejected the rest of Russia's arguments, a move welcomed by the former shareholders, who said in a statement that they “won on all substantive grounds of Russia's appeal.”

The Russian prosecutor-general's office welcomed the ruling but said “it is regrettable” the high court did not dismiss the award outright.

Suspected Islamic extremists kill 69 people in Niger

AP ■ NIAMEY, NIGER

Suspected Islamic extremists ambushed a self-defense brigade in western Niger, killing 69 people in the latest attack in the volatile border region near Mali, the Interior Ministry said.

The violence took place earlier this week near Banibangou, some 155 miles (250 kilometers) north of the capital, Niamey, the ministry said in a statement Thursday.

The town's mayor was among those killed in the Tuesday attack and 15 other members of the village defense group were wounded in the ambush, the statement said.

The local self-defense

groups have been helping Niger's military to fight extremists who have stepped up attacks on civilians this year blamed on Islamic State-linked militants.

The resurgence of extremist violence began with a January attack on two villages that killed at least 100 people. The following month 237 more were killed in a series of attacks at the hands of armed gunmen riding motorcycles.

The mounting violence poses a strong threat to Niger's President Mohamed Bazoum, who was sworn into office in April only days after security forces thwarted an attempted military coup at the presidential palace.

Pfizer says Covid-19 pill cut hospital, death risk by 90%

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Pfizer Inc. Said Friday that its experimental antiviral pill for Covid-19 cut rates of hospitalization and death by nearly 90% in high-risk adults, as the drugmaker joins the race to bring the first easy-to-use medication against the coronavirus to the US market.

Currently all Covid-19 treatments used in the US require an IV or injection. Competitor Merck's Covid-19 pill is already under review at the Food and Drug Administration after showing strong initial results, and on Thursday the United Kingdom became the first country to OK it.

Pfizer said it will ask the FDA and international regulators to authorize its pill as soon as possible, after independent

experts recommended halting the company's study based on the strength of its results. Once Pfizer applies, the FDA could make a decision within weeks or months.

Researchers worldwide have been racing to find a pill against Covid-19 that can be taken at home to ease symptoms, speed recovery and reduce the crushing burden on hospitals and doctors.

Pfizer released preliminary results Friday of its study of 775 adults. Patients taking the company's drug along with another antiviral had an 89% reduction in their combined rate of hospitalization or death after a month, compared to patients taking a dummy pill. Fewer than 1% of patients taking the drug needed to be hospitalized and no one died. In the com-

parison group, 7% were hospitalized and there were seven deaths.

“We were hoping that we had something extraordinary, but it's rare that you see great drugs come through with almost 90% efficacy and 100% protection for death,” said Dr. Mikael Dolsten, Pfizer's chief scientific officer, in an interview.

Study participants were unvaccinated, with mild-to-moderate Covid-19, and were considered high risk for hospitalization due to health problems like obesity, diabetes or heart disease. Treatment began within three to five days of initial symptoms, and lasted for five days.

Pfizer reported few details on side effects but said rates of problems were similar between the groups at about 20%.

Thousands of intelligence officers refusing vaccine risk dismissal

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Thousands of intelligence officers could soon face dismissal for failing to comply with the US Government's vaccine mandate, leading some Republican lawmakers to raise concerns about removing employees from agencies critical to national security.

Several intelligence agencies had at least 20% of their workforce unvaccinated as of late October, said US Rep. Chris Stewart, a Utah Republican who is a member of the House Intelligence Committee.

CIA Director William Burns disclosed publicly last week that 97% of the agency's officers have been vaccinated. The National Reconnaissance

Office, which operates U.S. Spy satellites, has more than 90% of its workforce vaccinated.

But Stewart said some agencies in the 18-member intelligence community had as much as 40% of their workforce unvaccinated. He cited information the administration has provided to the committee but not released publicly. He declined to identify the agencies because full information on vaccination rates was classified.

While many people will likely still get vaccinated before the administration's Nov. 22 deadline for civilian workers, resistance to the mandate could leave major agencies responsible for national security without some personnel.

बिहार सरकार

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता – सह-स्थानिक अभियन्ता का कार्यालय

बिहार भवन, नई दिल्ली।

अल्पकालिन निविदा

दिनांक-05 / 11 / 2021

पत्र सं0-679 / स्था0अमि0,

बिहार भवन एवं बिहार निवास वाष्क्यापुरी, नई दिल्ली हेतु निम्नलिखित कार्यों के लिए समुचित श्रेणी में बिहार लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों भवन निर्माताओं से बिहार लोक निर्माण विभाग एफ-2 एकरानामा में होने वाले कार्यों के लिए मुहुरद निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती है।

1. विभागन द्वारा का नाम एवं पता

2. परीमाण विपत्र के बिकी की तिथि

3. निविदा प्राप्त करने की तिथि एवं समय

4. निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय

5. परमाण विपत्र निर्गत का स्थान

6. निविदा प्राप्त का स्थान

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स्थानिक अभियन्ता, बिहार भवन, वाष्क्यापुरी नई दिल्ली

25-11-2021 (कार्यालय अवधि तक)

26-11-2021 (अपराहण 3:00 बजे तक)

26-11-2021 (अपराहण 3:00 बजे से 5:00 बजे तक)

1. स्थानिक अभियन्ता कार्यालय बिहार निवास वाष्क्यापुरी, नई दिल्ली।

2. उपस्थानिक अभियन्ता, कार्यालय बिहार निवास वाष्क्यापुरी नई दिल्ली।

स्थानिक अभियन्ता कार्यालय बिहार निवास वाष्क्यापुरी, नई दिल्ली।

क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	प्राक्कलित राशि	अग्रघन राशि	बीओअमि0 राशि	कार्य अवधि
1	Repair painting and polishing work of Exterior surface at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22	500000/-	5000/-	750/-	एक माह
2	Repair and painting work of 1st floor all rooms at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021 -22	250000/-	5000/-	750/-	एक माह
3	Repair and painting work of 2nd floor all rooms at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021 -22	250000/-	5000/-	750/-	एक माह
4	Repair and painting work of 3rd floor all rooms at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021 -22	250000/-	5000/-	750/-	एक माह
5	Repair and painting work of 4th floor all rooms at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021 -22	250000/-	5000/-	750/-	एक माह
6	Repair and painting work of common area and ground floor at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021 -22	390000/-	8000/-	750/-	एक माह
7	Repair and painting work of Boundary wall at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22	250000/-	5000/-	750/-	एक माह
8	Repair, Painting and polishing work of C.M Shute at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021 -22	250000/-	5000/-	750/-	एक माह
9	Repair, Painting and polishing work of C.J Shute and C.S shute at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22	250000/-	5000/-	750/-	एक माह
10	Repair and painting work of old wing outer surface at Bihar Bhawa for the year 2021-22	400000/-	8000/-	750/-	एक माह
11	Painting and polishing work of 1st floor rooms at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22	360000/-	7200/-	750/-	एक माह
12	Painting and polishing work of 2nd floor rooms at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22	360000/-	7200/-	750/-	एक माह
13	Painting and polishing work of 3rd floor rooms at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22	360000/-	7200/-	750/-	एक माह
14	Painting and polishing work of common area , stair case and corridor at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22	250000/-	5000/-	750/-	एक माह
15	Repair and Painting work of Boundary wall at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22	700000/-	14000/-	1250/-	एक माह
16	Repair painting and polishing work of Governor Shute at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021 -22	200000/-	4000/-	500/-	एक माह
17	Repair painting and polishing work of C.M Shute at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22	200000/-	4000/-	500/-	एक माह
18	Repair and painting work in out house Building at Bihar Bhawan New Delhi for the year 2021-22	350000/-	7000/-	750/-	एक माह

शर्त:-

7. निविदा के साथ उच्चतम निबंधन आयकर प्रमाण-पत्र वाणिज्य कर प्रमाण-पत्र, चरित्र प्रमाण-पत्र, पैन कार्ड आदि की छाया प्रति जो राजपत्रित पदाधिकारी से अभिप्रायित हो संलग्न करना होगा।

8. अग्रघन की राशि वाक्यर के एनएएसी0/सावित्रि जमा के रूप में संलग्न की जानी है जो स्थानिक अभियन्ता वाष्क्यापुरी बिहार भवन नई दिल्ली के नाम से निविदा प्रकाशन के तिथि के बाद के तिथि में निश्चित चेज्ज हो।

9. निविदाकारों को भारतीय मानक विनिर्देश के अनुसार कार्य हेतु अपेक्षित सामग्री की खुर व्यवस्था करना होगा।

10. बिना कारण बताए निविदा स्थगित एवं रद्द करने का अधिकार अधोस्तासारी को सुरक्षित होगा।

11. प्राक्कलन की राशि घट-बढ़ सकती है।

उक्त कार्य के संबंध में किसी प्रकार की जानकारी हेतु अधोस्तासारी कार्यालय से कार्यालय अवधि में संपर्क कर प्राप्त किया जा सकता है।

हस्ता /-
कार्यपालक अभियन्ता-सह-स्थानिक अभियन्ता
बिहार भवन, नई दिल्ली।

Appeal for Identification



General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body **Name:** Unknown, **S/o** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** 40 years, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face :** Oval, **Wearing:** Sky Blue Shirt & Army Printed Pant, **Hairs:** Black. He was laying at HRH footpath and brought to HRH where doctor declared brought dead vide MLC

no.3974/21. In this regard, **DD No. 11-A dated 31.10.2021** has been lodged at PS Subzi Mandi, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this male but no clue has come to light so far.

Any, person having any information or clue about this male may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S., Subzi Mandi, Delhi
Ph. : 011-23823161
8750870126

DP/1653/N/2021



Chief Engineer, Uttarakhand Rural Roads Development Agency
First Floor, Directorate of Panchayatiraj,
Opp-IT Park, Sahastradhara Road, Dehradun

Ref. No. 2112 / II-02(xix)/ITCO/URRDA/21

Dated : 03-11-2021

PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY) e-Procurement Notice- 13/2021-22

The Chief Engineer, URRDA on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of Roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in the Districts of **Almora** for 02 number of Packages with estimated cost totalling to **Rs. 5.54 Crore** including their maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors registered with PWD/CPWD or equivalent".

Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: **05-11-2021.**

Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission: The bid documents are available online and should be submitted online in **www.pmgsytendersuk.gov.in**. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities.

The bidders are required to submit original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B (ii) of ITB with **CONCERNED CIRCLE OFFICES, mentioned in SBD/MBD, only up to or before the time and date of the submission of the Bids (for World Bank funded works) and on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the bid (for Regular PMGSY Works)**, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive. No physical documents will be accepted after the closing date and time of submission of bids.

Last Date / Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: **12-11-2021 01:00 PM.**

For further details please log on to **www.pmgsytendersuk.gov.in.**

Chief Engineer, URRDA, Dehradun

** Non Registered bidders may submit bids, however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.*

Note : For e-Procurement for any sort of queries 0135-2608125 number may be contacted 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM.

Iran says has enriched over 210 kg of uranium to 20%

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iran's atomic agency said Friday that its stockpile of 20 per cent enriched uranium has reached over 210 kilograms (463 pounds), the latest provocative move ahead of upcoming nuclear talks with the West.

In a report carried by semi-official Tasnim and Fars news agencies, spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi said the atomic agency had produced well beyond a 120 kilogram target for 20 per cent enriched uranium set by parliament.

Under the historic 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the World Powers, Iran was not meant to enrich uranium above 3.67 percent. Enriched urani-

um above 90 percent can be used for nuclear weapons.

After months of delays, the European Union, Iran and the US announced on Wednesday that indirect talks to resuscitate the deal would resume on Nov. 29 in Vienna.

The nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for limits on its nuclear program, and is meant to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear bomb. Tehran insists its program is peaceful.

Kamalvandi also said that so far his agency has also produced 25 kilograms of 60 per cent enriched uranium, a level that only countries with nuclear weapons have the physical

capabilities to produce. The US unilaterally pulled out of the nuclear deal in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump, but Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia have tried to preserve the accord.

Tehran's strategy of deliberately violating the deal is seen as an attempt to put pressure particularly on Europe to provide it with incentives to offset crippling American sanctions re-imposed after the US pullout.

On Sept. 15, Iran's nuclear chief Mohammad Eslami said Tehran removed surveillance cameras belonging to the United Nations nuclear watchdog because of unfulfilled commitments by other signatories of the nuclear deal.

Deadly week for migrants on French coast; at least 3 killed

AP ■ PARIS

A train struck and killed a migrant from Eritrea and at least two bodies were recovered from the sea and on a beach in what has been a particularly deadly week for migrants on the northern coast of France. Attempting treacherous crossings to Britain.

Many hundreds of people, setting off in a flotilla of boats, quickly ran into trouble in the waters between northern France and Britain. The water-way with changeable weather, cold seas and heavy maritime traffic is dangerous for the inflatable and other small boats that men, women and children squeeze into for attempted crossings.

**GOVT. OF BIHAR
OFFICE OF THE RESIDENT ENGINEER,
BIHAR B BHAWAN, NEW DELHI**


No 678/ Dated 05/11/2021

Short Notice inviting Quotation


The reputed firms are requested to submit sealed quotation for following work in Bihar Bhawan, Bihar Niwas Chankyapuri, and Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2020-2021. Quotation will be submitted up to 26-11-2021 till 3:00 pm and opened on 26-11-2021 at 3:30 pm at the office of the Resident Engineer, Bihar Niwas Chankyapuri, New Delhi. Undersigned office has right to cancel quotation without any further information. Registration, GST, PAN No. and authorization of firm paper here enclosed. Details of items list can be obtained from the office of the Resident Engineer, Bihar Bhawan, New Delhi. The Earnest Money (NSC/ Term Deposit) should be deposited 5% of total contract value before issue of work order.

S.No	Particulars
1	Supply fitting and fixing Curtain and table runners at 3rd and 4th floor of Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22
2	Supply of oil filled room heater at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22
3	Supply of Lamps and emergency light at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22
4	Renovation of 3rd and 4th floor Bathroom at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22
5	Renovation of R .C office Room No 203 at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22
6	Replacement of Sofa and chair upholstery at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22
7	Replacement of Bath rooms doors at Bihar Bhawan for the year 2021-22
8	Supply fitting and fixing Curtain and table runners at 2nd and 3rd floor of Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
9	Supply of Lamps and emergency light at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
10	Supply of Luggage rack and Coffee table at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
11	Renovation of Bathrooms of 2nd floor at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
12	Renovation of Bathrooms of 3rd floor at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
13	Window replacement at Governor Shute at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
14	Special Repair of 2 Nos lift at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
15	Replacement of Bathrooms doors at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
16	Replacement of Boom Barrier in and out gate at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
17	Renovation of Bihar Handy Craft kiosk at Bihar Niwas for the year 2021-22
18	Supply fitting and fixing work of R.O plat at Bihar Sadan , New Delhi for the year 2021-22
19	Addition alteration work for common toilet at Bihar Sadan , New Delhi for the year 2021-22
20	Addition alteration work for toilet at C.M suite and Governor suite at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
21	S/F/F Roman blind / Curtain Room No 401 to 421 at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
22	S/F/F Roman blind / Curtain Room No 501 to 513 and three halls at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
23	S/F/F Roman blind / Curtain Room No 601 to 617 and three halls at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
24	S/F/F Sony Make TV 43" in Room No 401 to 421 and common area and corridor at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
25	S/F/F Sony Make TV 43" in Room No 501 to 513 and common area and corridor at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
26	S/F/F Sony Make TV 43" in Room No 601 to 617 and common area and corridor at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
27	S/F/F furnishing work of 2nd floor office for Room No 201 to 203 at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021 -22
28	S/17F furnishing work of 2nd floor office for Room No 204 to 206 at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
29	S/F/F furnishing work of 2nd floor office for Room No 207 to 209 at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
30	S/F/F furnishing work of 2nd floor office for Room No 210 to 212 at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021 -22
31	S/F/F furnishing work of 2nd floor office for Room No 213 to 215 at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
32	S/F/F furnishing work of 2nd floor office for Room No 216 to 218 at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22
33	S/F/F furnishing work of 2nd floor office for Room No 219 to 221 at Bihar Sadan, New Delhi for the year 2021-22


**Sd/-
Executive Engineer-Cum-Resident Engineer
Bihar Bhawan, New Delhi**




AMITABH BACHCHAN
'It has been deafeningly silent for a Diwali night at home, with no or hardly any sound of fire crackers. Even in a room full of family members, everyone is on their mobile phones. What has the age of rapid communication done to us? Do you remember the gaiety, the fun and frolic of past celebrations of this festive day.'




BHUMIKA CHAWLA
'Tere Naam was my debut in Bollywood and I had a very good experience. I remember we were shooting at the Birla temple and I was taking a little extra time to do the shot. Salman was extremely supportive and he was kind enough to tell everyone to not put any pressure on me and that I should do it the way I want.'



JAIDEEP AHLAWAT
'I finished shooting for *Tryst With Destiny*, the forthcoming show, in 2019, much before we began shooting for *Paatal Lok*. In both the shows, I play a cop, but with different shades to the character. I can't wait for you to finally watch *Tryst With Destiny*, where I play a cop who has a simple dream.'



KATRINA KAIF
'Akshay Kumar and I have impeccable understanding, we have done over six films together. In *Sooryavanshi*, there is a scene where I had to slap him and would you be surprised if I tell you that we did not require any retakes for that shot? Just one shot was enough.'



DWAYNE JOHNSON
'I think there should be a crossover between the Marvel and DC Universe. The other day, I was talking about this with my co-actors in *Red Notice*, Ryan Reynolds and Gal Gadot, who play Deadpool and Wonder Woman in the Marvel Universe respectively. I think we can make it happen.'

STUDIO TALK : 60 MINUTES

TRULY A THRILLER

An extremely upbeat AFTAB SHIVDASANI, touted to play a pivotal role in *Special Ops 1.5: The Himmat Story*, tells CHRISTY VARGHESE that if you try to second-guess what will happen next in this espionage-thriller, you are bound to be wrong

Last month, *Special Ops 1.5: The Himmat Story* was in the news for an intriguing promotional ploy. The trailer for the show, which is a prequel to last year's critically acclaimed Hostar special, *Special Ops*, was supposedly 'leaked' on Twitter by an account, named 'ByeHimmat', which called out the show's protagonist. It wasn't long before everyone jumped on the bandwagon and unknowingly did their bit in promoting the show before Hostar officially released the trailer.

Set to be a fitting precursor for *Special Ops*, ahead of the second season which will release next year, *Special Ops 1.5: The Himmat Story* features Kay Kay Menon playing the titular role of Himmat Singh, a member of the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW). The espionage-thriller, *Special Ops*, universe was conceptualised by Neeraj Pandey and has developed an immense following; receiving eight nominations at the Filmfare OTT Awards, winning two of them.

What's surprising is that the trailer featured a mustachioed Aftab Shivdasani, who is a familiar face in romantic and comedy flicks. When we read up on his appearance in the show, all we could find out was that he is set to appear in a very 'pivotal role' in the



show. Curiosity got the better of us, and we connected with the veteran, who has been in the industry for over 22 years, to find out more about his role. Read on for excerpts of the interview:

Even after some extensive research on the internet on your role in the show, all we could find out was that you would be playing a very pivotal role. Could you please be kind enough to elaborate?

All I can say is that you will see

me in a very pivotal role. (laughs before continuing) You know when you do a show like *Special Ops*, which with deals with the reclusive RAW, there is not a lot that we could share before the show is aired. When we do such a show, everything cannot be black and white. With respect to the show, I can only tell you one thing — expect the unexpected. With a show like this, you can never predict anything. The moment you feel that you know what is going on, you are bound to be surprised.



Aftab Shivdasani, pictured alongside Kay Kay Menon and Aadil Khan, behind the scenes of *Special Ops 1.5*

If I tell you what I am doing in the show, it will unfortunately take away the element of intrigue. I am afraid my hands are tied on this regard, all I can tell you is, once again, that I will be seen in a pivotal role. (chuckles heartily once again) Hard luck, though, if you were interviewing me for a comedy or a romantic film, I would have been talking minus any filters — such projects are so much more easier to promote. When it comes to show such as *Special Ops*, talking about the show is a different ballgame altogether because much of what the show depicts is 'classified information'. But rest assured, the show will speak for itself. It's got so many twists and turns and so much grey area that its very difficult to put your finger down on how things will pan out.

At this moment I would like to highlight that I am extremely grateful that Neeraj Pandey thought of me for something like this, because I wanted to work with him for a really long time.

The trailer shows you sporting a thick moustache, as opposed to your usually clean-shaven appearance, and we have to say that it looks quite striking. Do you like it though?

I actually had it for the duration of the shoot and, quite frankly, I enjoyed it.

I have sported the moustache on-screen previously, in a movie called *Setters*, where I played a cop, but that was a slightly thinner moustache. I am back to my old ways now; it was good fun while it lasted, though.

Last year *Special Ops* received eight Filmfare OTT award nominations, winning the award in two categories. How many nominations will *Special Ops 1.5* receive?

Such awards are never the end goal for us, the people behind the scenes. I mean, please don't get me wrong, I am quite glad that the show received the recognition it deserves, because I myself became a fan of the show after closely following it. And it comes as no surprise that it courted immense critical acclaim.

What were you up to during the lockdown?

Well, we had a baby last year in July and it was a life-altering experience. That kept us busy and what was amazing was that we got to spend a lot of time together as a family. Regardless of the unfortunate context as to why we all were cooped up indoors, it was actually a blessing in disguise.

Not that we did not go through any difficulties, but my wife and I, we decided to look at things in a very positive light. And every since our daughter entered our lives, everything has changed. She is almost 15 months old and life, as we knew it, has changed. For me, it is all about family and work now.

Any future projects that you would like to shed light on?

There are a couple of scripts that I liked and I am working on, but I haven't signed them, hence I cannot really speak about them. I am quite superstitious, I do not like to talk about something till I am sure of it. I am afraid you would have to wait for the official announcement.

(*Special Ops 1.5: The Himmat Story starts streaming on Disney+ Hotstar from November 12.*)

In the memory of an enthusiastic entertainer

British stage and TV veteran Lionel Blair dies at 92, leaving behind some memorable appearances for the masses



Entertainer Lionel Blair, who taught himself to dance by watching Fred Astaire movies and became a staple on British stage and television for decades, has died. He was 92.

Blair was born Lionel Henry Ogus in Montreal to Russian Jewish parents. The family moved to Britain when he was a toddler and settled in London, where he and his sister Joyce performed for people sheltering in subway stations during World War II bombing raids.

He began his career as a teenage actor, but soon focused on dancing, taking the stage name Lionel Blair.

"I really wanted to be an actor," he said in 2014. "I was the breadwinner after my father died when we were quite young, and I got into a musical, became well-known and stayed in musicals. But really, I want to be in (soap opera) *EastEnders*."

He became close friends with Sammy Davis Jr after the two performed a dance-off at a royal variety performance in 1961 at London's Prince of Wales Theatre.

He performed as a dancer,

worked as a choreographer for television shows and during the 1960s, 70s and 80s was an increasingly prominent presence on TV variety and game shows. He was a panelist on charades-based game show *Give Us A Clue* and a presenter on the UK version of *Name That Tune*.

He made several film appearances, including, as a choreographer in The Beatles' 1964 caper *A Hard Day's Night* and in the 1986 musical *Absolute Beginners*.

He was an annual star of the hugely popular seasonal stage shows known as Christmas pantomimes, and also appeared in reality TV shows *Celebrity Big Brother* in 2014 and *The Real Marigold Hotel* in 2017.

Fellow entertainers remembered Blair as an irrepressible, upbeat presence both onstage and off.

His style was often called camp, but Blair revealed, "I prefer 'flamboyant,' or 'enthusiastic.' I've always been a bit over-the-top."

Blair is survived by his wife Susan, three children and three grandchildren.

—AP

New beginnings

Kumkum Bhagya's POOJA BANERJEE reveals how she and husband Sandeep have started reading up on parenting, babies and more as they expect their first child in March. By TEAM VIVA

Zee TV's popular fiction show, *Kumkum Bhagya* has been an audience favourite courtesy its intriguing plot and the authentic portrayal of relatable characters like Abhi (Shabbir Ahluwalia), Pragya (Sriti Jha), Rhea (Pooja Banerjee), Aaliya (Reyhna Pandit), Tanu (Leena Jumani), Ranbir (Krishna Kaul) and Prachi (Mugdha Chapekar). While all the actors have been working round the clock to keep their viewers entertained, Pooja recently got some 'good news' of her own.

Pooja recently opened up about her pregnancy for the very first time and everyone has been over the moon after hearing this piece of news. The actor, who is six months pregnant, has been shooting for the show continuously and also mentions that she is happy to continue shooting till she feels fine. In fact, she came to know about her pregnancy on the sets of *Kumkum Bhagya* itself and ever since then, her team has been extremely supportive and has also made her feel at home.

Talking about her pregnancy, Pooja reveals, "Sandeep and I are really excited and happy to announce the arrival of a new member in our family. To be honest, we've wanted to start our family since a couple of years now, however, we never put a timeline on it. We always thought that whenever it has to happen, it will happen, and I guess we're going to be parents at the most perfect time! We are in a very happy space and I feel everything is falling in the right space. We are gearing up for the baby to come in and we've started reading up about pregnancy, babies and parenting as well. Both of us want to have a daughter, but we will be happy irrespective of whether it is a boy or a girl. I am sure he or she will be the most pampered child for sure."

Reminiscing the initial days when she found out about her pregnancy, Pooja adds, "*Kumkum Bhagya* has been a blessing in disguise for me. I joined the show just after the first wave of Covid-19 and since then, it's been a joy working on the show. One fine day, I felt that something was not right and hence, I went for a blood test. Around 4 pm, during the shoot, I got the report stating that I was pregnant. I immediately called Sandeep and asked him to come



pick me up. He felt that I was not well, but I just didn't want to break the news over a phone call. When I finally revealed the news to him, he jumped up and started dancing."

She goes on to add, "Initially, due to the fatigue and morning sickness, it did get taxing. In fact, I even approached the makers with an option to release me if it was getting difficult for them. However, they told me that they wanted me on the show and have been considerate and working around my requirements and comfort. I wish everybody would do that. Working women, who wish to go the family way, should be encouraged to do it."

While Pooja is prepared for her bundle of joy, her onscreen character Rhea is all set to plot several twists to separate Ranbir and Prachi. But will she be successful?

To know all this and more, tune in to *Kumkum Bhagya* every Monday to Friday at 9 pm, only on Zee TV

We finally caught America's favourite serial killer hiding out in upstate New York and the good news is that he hasn't killed anyone in a decade. The bad news is his knife skills are still top-notch. The lead actor Michael C Hall, who plays the troubled hero of the *Dexter* series, steps back into the role once again with the forthcoming season — *Dexter: New Blood* — resurrecting one of TV's darkest characters after almost a decade-long break and an ending that many found unsatisfying.

Hall shares, "The fact that the ending of the series was both open-ended and unsatisfying was part of the motivation to come back and revisit the character; especially after all this time, to find out more definitively what happened to him".

The latest series isn't just the ninth season of the show, but a departure. Dexter Morgan has shunned warm and bustling Miami for the fictional small town of Iron Lake, New York. The 10-episode series takes place over 17 days in the icy winter, as blood mixes with snow.

Dexter left a trail of corpses in Florida, but in New York, he has managed to keep his murderous impulse — he calls it his dark passenger — in check for 10 years. With just 3,000 residents, his new town has few secrets. He's got a job at a fish and game outfitter, which provides access to guns and knives — and is even dating with the chief of police. They also perfectly line dance to a Blondie song at the local bar.

But this charade ends as the new twist comes in the face of his dead sister, played by Jennifer Carpenter, who haunts Dexter. Additionally, Harrison — his long-lost son, now a moody teen with lots of questions about why he was abandoned by his dad — forces Dexter out of his comfort zone.

"People are going to die. We all know that. I wanted to present Michael with a theme; and the theme, which is very dear to me, is fathers and sons," expresses showrunner and

Back with vengeance

After over eight years, the psychological-thriller, *Dexter*, is back with a new season. *New Blood* is here to test monstrous family bonds, says actor, musician and producer *MICHAEL C HALL*



executive producer Clyde Phillips. The arrival of Dexter's son coincides with the bubbling out of his murderous impulses, notes Hall, as he explains, "A sort of door to his humanity, that he's shut, is opened, but you can't selectively open internal doors. They all open and everything starts to get out."

Dexter is both fearful and excited in addition to coming to grips with fatherhood and by the notion that his son also might have a dark passenger. Is his murderous streak genetic? Or does it have to do with both of them experiencing horrific events when they were infants?

He adds, "The lines remain blurred and the blacks and whites turn to gray. And that's a part of what the show always does, and where the show has always lived, I think."

debate takes centre-stage, the series also delves into opioid abuse, bullying, school shootings and climate change. And it goes without saying that the show is underlined by its trademark dark humour. In one scene, Dexter butchers a body while the Christmas song *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* is sung by a choir.

"Sorry about the mess," he tells the victim, "I'm out of practice."

Hawk-eyed fans will watch as Jack Alcott, who plays Harrison, mimics many of Dexter's behaviors, like the way he eats his food aggressively or the similar ways they sleep or cross a room. Phillips shares, "It's all reminiscent. The question on everyone's mind is whether he has the essence of Dexter? Does he have the dark passenger?"

Dexter ran for eight seasons from 2006 to 2013, winning four Emmys

and a 2007 Peabody Award. The lead actor Hall also earned five straight Emmy nominations as the title character between 2008-2012.

Dexter: New Blood was shot earlier this year in northern Massachusetts over 119 days. They began in frigid February when, the temperature would drop from 20 degrees to two degrees, if the wind changed. All the snowy scenes were filmed first before spring arrived and the cast and crew had to act like it was cold, even when it wasn't anymore. Phillips laughs about one final scene which was shot on July 28 when the crew was in shorts and T-shirts and the cast was in overcoats, boots and hats.

Phillips reveals, "It was a very challenging and rewarding shoot. You stand there in a snowstorm, in knee-deep mud and you look at each other and you say, 'God, I love what I do for a living!'"

Since the conclusion of the last season of *Dexter*, Hall has been on Broadway in *The Realistic Joneses* and *Hedwig And The Angry Inch* as well as in the film *In The Shadow Of The Moon*. He has also been making music with his band, Princess Goes to the Butterfly Museum, but *Dexter* still tempts.

"The fact that the show is as broadly appealing as it is would suggest that perhaps we all have some version of a dark passenger we contend with. Our experience of being human is at least a part about managing our darker impulses," concludes a thoughtful Hall.

—AP

VOICES OF CHANGE

The panel discussion, at the launch of NRAI Covid Impact Assessment report, elaborated on ways to revive the food and delivery industries post lockdown. By KHUSHBU KIRTI

While I was aware this was one of the biggest events in the F&B industry, it was a panel discussion I didn't think I would be so thoroughly invested into. I was afraid it might get boring, but to face the reality of the worst pandemic affecting even the roots of our beloved industry was something one should really know.

After two years of interlude, NRAI (National Restaurant Association of India) announced the launch of the NRAI COVID Impact Assessment report at their first flagship event post lockdown. The Restaurant Roundtable held at Essex Farms on October 25, saw a strong panel of industry leaders including the moderator, food writer and television personality Kunal Vijayakar, corporate chef Manish Mehrotra, founder and CEO of FreshMenu, Rashmi Daga, CEO and MD of Impresario Entertainment & Hospitality Pvt Ltd, Riyaaz Amlani, and Zorawar Kalra, the MD & founder of Massive Restaurants Pvt Ltd. The panel of the eminent speakers discussed together the road to be chosen by food and delivery industries post-pandemic.

At the beginning of the elegant conference, Kabir Suri, the current president of NRAI and co-founder and director of Azure Hospitality, stated the reality and the alarming statistics. Amongst the worst hit industries by Covid-19 is the food services industry globally.

He noted, "In the financial year of 2021, Indian Food Services industry contracted severely leading to permanent closure of over 25 per cent of food business operators which resulted in job losses of nearly 24 lakh people. The Food Services industry employs approximately 73 lakh people and is one of the largest employment generators for the economy. The industry in India declined by 53 per cent and was estimated to be worth ₹ 2,00,762 crores, compared to ₹ 4,23,624 crores in the financial year of 2020. However, the industry is expected to recover and reach a size of ₹ 4,72,285 crores in the financial year of 2022."

"The people who are here are the ones who have survived," Amlani ruminated.

During the presentation on the said report of Nitin Saluja, the founder of Chaayos, he expressed, "Looking at the report, you will realise that while we, as an industry, have thoroughly suffered and are now only struggling to come out. The government has also been equally impacted. The direct taxes or the GST funds that the government would get have also suffered a blow. The partner ecosystem has had a negative impact."

Overall, the biggest beneficiary is going to be a chained organised player. An organised retail business is one which



Panelists of restaurant roundtable: (L-R) Zorawar Kalra, Riyaaz Amlani, Chef Manish Mehrotra, Rashmi Daga and Kunal Vijayakar



Nitin Saluja, founder, Chaayos

is registered with GST, whereas a chained restaurant is defined as a restaurant with three or more stores.

He explained, "20 per cent com-

pounded annual growth rate of chained organised players as compared to a 13 per cent of organised standalone store players, versus a five per cent growth rate of



Kabir Suri, president, NRAI

unorganised players."

Elaborating on the intense restructuring that the industry is going through, to adapt to the challenges hurled by Covid,

he highlighted the emerging trends in the report, saying, "There are certain trends that have emerged due to Covid. First and foremost is the overall shift of consumers

towards organised retail. Two, consumers making hygiene a priority. Which is a good thing, honestly. People care about cleanliness and hygiene."

"People are becoming more aware and conscious of what they are doing behind the kitchen, not just in front, which is a good thing," Mehrotra joined in.

"The Covid protocols are being followed by the employees vigilantly and that has helped bring customers back, too," Amlani added.

Further, Saluja spoke of the delivery industry shooting from a 10 per cent rate to a 33 per cent hike, "Ordering in has become the norm now. It is now a thing for everyone. People prefer virtual brands. For some, it might be 100 per cent, depending on whether it is a cloud kitchen or not. However, overall revenue has increased to 33 per cent."

The report stated certain recommendations for the government to aid the industry, of which the biggest is to allow tax credit. Second most vital request is to allow businesses to operate 24x7. It helps them grow faster.

"We, as a fraternity, need from the government — business support, demand stimulus and regulatory interventions. All the major economies ended up supporting the food services industry by giving some business support or overall stimulus. We ask for the same," Saluja concluded.

The panel also examined the difficulties faced by the industry as a whole. A question that was on my mind, also asked by the moderator Vijayakar, was that there were two sides of the story - "I've seen restaurants short of staff and chefs without jobs, because of the pandemic. Where is the truth in this?"

"Most of the workforce in the metropolitan cities come from outside and with the onset of the pandemic, everyone went back. Now, getting them back is a bigger task. Most of the companies have started re-hiring but have, at the same time, suffered losses that they haven't exactly been able to make up for. In some cases, the chefs don't want to return because of the fear after so much hardship that they faced," Mehrotra answered.

Suri believed that 80 per cent of the losses will be revived in the next two months and considered the report to be pivotal. He said, "the report is crucial for the industry to garner the necessary support and recognition from the Government and its agencies for providing a fillip for consistent and sustained growth."

He later thanked all the NRAI members for their contribution to the research study leading to the formation of the report.

Be it your high school sweetheart, your work buddy, or your connection you met on a dating app, figuring out how to pop the big question is not always easy.

A couple, Aradhana and Vinay, that met on the dating app, Bumble, found each other on the women-first dating app when they both were looking for marriage. After dating for a year and half, Vinay carefully planned to pop the question and Aradhana got her dream proposal. While they were dating, every time Aradhana watched a proposal video, it would bring a smile to her face. Also, since both Aradhana and Vinay are extremely close to their families, "he thought of combining the two, and when our families were supposed to meet each other for the first time over dinner, he planned a surprise proposal for me! Everyone knew about it except me," exclaimed Aradhana.

Another pair, Madhura and Yatharth, had the most adventurous proposal before they got married in June 2020. They were both scared of marriage and giant wheels. So, Madhura somehow found a giant wheel at a fair and persuaded Yatharth to get onto it with her. Just as it started spinning faster, Madhura took out the ring and proposed to him by telling him that, "I hate giant wheels, you hate giant wheels. I hate marriage, you hate marriage. But if I have to be on a giant wheel or in a marriage, I'll only do it with you."

You, too, can plan your grand proposal with the help of these tips, given by Aradhna:

◆Make it personal

Observe what your partner likes and incorporate those elements into the proposal. It's fun when you tailor the proposal to what your partner likes and wants. Vinay had noticed me tearing up while watching a proposal video that I saw sometime back and when it was our time, he took inspiration from that video, it absolutely touched my heart.

The perfect proposal

A quick guide, ahead of the wedding season, on confessing your innermost feelings to your beloved. By TEAM VIVA



◆The proposal is all about the couple and not just one partner

Make the proposal about the two of you and not just one person. Do add things to the proposal that both of you enjoy. Since both of us are big Game of Thrones fans, while proposing to me, Vinay added a reference to GOT which made it extra special.

◆If you are close to your families, involve them as well

Having your family present during this special moment of your life can mean a lot. My proposal was a surprise for me but Vinay involved both our families as we are a tight-knit bunch and they also got to



experience it. They were, thus, a part of our important moment which made them very happy.

◆Make sure someone is capturing the special moment on camera

This goes without saying. This is the only way to cherish the proposal forever and pass it on to your kids one day.

◆You can make a trip out of it

If you both love to travel and want the memory to be a private one, you can venture out on a weekend getaway to a beautiful location and do it there. What's great is that if you tell the hotel management in advance about your proposal plans, they will help you in making your vision a reality.

Last but not the least, don't get too caught up in executing everything perfectly. While having the perfect proposal can be daunting, don't lose sight of the big picture. You've found your everlasting love and that's what you need to celebrate, so enjoy it.

Enriching experiences

The AYUSHMANN-RAKUL starrer, *Doctor G*, set to release in cinemas in June next year, is a campus comedy. By TEAM VIVA

After announcing the release date of *Badhaai Do* last week, Jungle Pictures studio has now revealed the theatrical release date of their much anticipated film, *Doctor G*, starring Ayushmann Khurrana, Rakul Preet Singh and Shefali Shah on June 17, 2022.

It will be interesting to see Ayushmann portraying the role of a gynaecologist for the first time in the campus comedy drama, alongside Rakul and veteran actor Shefali Shah.

After two successful collaborations *Bareilly Ki Barfi* (2017) and *Badhaai Ho* (2018), both Ayushmann and Jungle Pictures have collaborated yet again to score a hat-trick at the box office.

Amrita Pandey of Jungle Pictures says, "The writers of the film — Sumit, Saurabh and Vishal



along with Anubhuti have created a fabulous script of *Doctor G* which Anubhuti has taken to the next level. We can't wait to bring it to the theatres next year."

Anubhuti Kashyap, who is making her feature directorial debut with the movie, adds, "With the shoot of the film wrapped up, we are now gearing up to get the movie ready for theatres. I am really happy to have got the opportunity to work with Ayushmann, Rakul, Shefali, Jungle and the entire team of *Doctor G* who stood by me and that reflects on screen. It has been an enriching experience. I am really excited to bring the movie to audiences."

Directed by Kashyap, *Doctor G* is a campus comedy drama, co-written by her, Sumit Saxena, Vishal Wagh and Saurabh Bharat.

Saif Ali Khan plays the

role of the original Bunty in the completely rebooted big-ticket family entertainer *Bunty Aur Babli 2* and he is heaping praise on the young Bollywood actor, Siddhant Chaturvedi, who is playing the new Bunty – a super slick, a big city comman.

Saif expresses, "Siddhant is a star, no question about that. For someone so young to have the screen presence that he has and the acting maturity that he exhibits, he is definitely one of the most exciting talents that the industry has chanced upon."

"We have to give credit to Zoya Akhtar for discovering him for *Gully Boy* and Adi for believing that he can be a quintessential hero in the comedy genre which is one of the toughest for any actor to crack," he adds.

Saif reveals that

Passing the baton

SIDDHANT is one of the most exciting talents that the industry has chanced upon, says SAIF ALI KHAN.

By TEAM VIVA



Siddhant is natural in front of the camera and that he was born to be an actor.

"He is fantastic in *Bunty Aur Babli 2* and he lights up the screen with his

performance and persona every time he comes on screen. This film will showcase him as a masala Hindi film hero and from what I have seen of him, he thoroughly relishes being one."

Yash Raj Films' *Bunty Aur Babli 2*, which is set to release worldwide on November 19, is a rib-tickling comedy that will pit two sets of con artists, from different generations, against each other as they show their mastery over disguises to outwit each other. It will also star Rani Mukerji as the OG Babli and debutant Sharvari as the new Babli – a hot, sassy, drop-dead gorgeous con-artist from a big city. *Bunty Aur Babli 2* has been directed by Varun V Sharma, who has previously worked as an assistant director in YRF's biggest blockbusters like *Sultan* and *Tiger Zinda Hai*.



ICC T20 WORLD CUP



12

WHEN PEOPLE TAKE PACE OFF THE BALL, YOU'VE GOT TO WAIT FOR THE BALL. WHEN THERE'S PACE ON IT, THEN YOU CAN SIT ON IT

— DAVID WARNER

INDIA ROUT SCOTLAND BY 8 WICKETS

PTI ■ DUBAI

India pulverised minnows Scotland by eight wickets in a Super 12 Group 2 match of the T20 World Cup to keep their semifinal hopes alive, here on Friday.

Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja and pacer Mohammed Shami took three wickets apiece as India bundled out their opposition for just 85 in 17.4 overs.

Opener George Munsey top-scored for Scotland with his 24-run knock.

KL Rahul (50), and Rohit Sharma (30) and treated the Scotland with utter disdain to add 70 runs in five overs.

India knocked off the target in just 6.3 overs.

India's seasoned bowlers made short work of the unheralded Scotland by bundling them out for just 85 in 17.4 overs in a Super 12 game of the ICC T20 World Cup here on Friday.

With one eye on the net run-rate, skipper Virat Kohli finally won a toss on his 33rd birthday and pacer Jasprit Bumrah (2/10), made the life of Scottish batters miserable during his first spell.

Bumrah surpassed



Yuzvendra Chahal (65 scalps) to now become India's highest wicket-taker in shortest version.

Plucky left-handed opener George Munsey (24 off 19 balls) clipped Bumrah over square leg for a six and reverse swept Varun Chakravarthy for a boundary to signal positive intent but the gulf in class was always obvious.

Skipper Kyle Coetzer (1) was pegged on the backfoot by a Bumrah yorker first up and then he bowled a slower one which beat the Scotsman all ends up.

A lethal Mohammed Shami (3/15) then sent back the dangerous looking Munsey, who failed to clear mid-on. That was the end of Scotland batting's brief bright spot.

The disciplined Ravindra Jadeja (3/15), with his 'darts-like' accuracy, removed Matthew Cross (2), Richie Berrington (0) and Michael Leask (21 off 12 balls) in quick succession to blow away the middle-order.

Jadeja varied the pace of his deliveries but occasionally bowled the ones that skid through the surface hurrying the batters.

Once Scotland were 44 for

4 after 10 overs, there was no looking back for the Indian bowlers.

It was a game where even percentage bowling was enough to rattle the Scotland batters, who didn't find too many options to keep the scoreboard ticking.

Scotland's previous poor show with willow against weaker teams like Namibia and Afghanistan was an indicator that they wouldn't do any better against India.

Once half the side was out with less than 60 on the board, the lower order was caught between survival and attack.

Calum MacLeod (16 off 28 balls) laboured along before being cleaned up by Shami as Indians hardly had to bowl too many effort balls to dismantle the opposition.

Save one where No. 10 Alasdair Evans was yorked by a 90 mph thunderbolt by Shami.

It was one such happy evening in the office where skipper Kohli wasn't bothered whether there was a sixth bowler available or not.

Ravichandran Ashwin (1/29) and Varun Chakravarthy (0/15) were also accurate for the better part of their spells.

► Scoreboard

NEW ZEALAND (BATTING)	NAMIBIA (BOWLING)
Glenn Phillips (39)	Bernard Scholtz 3 (15, 1wkt)
James Neesham (35)	Gerhard Erasmus 4 (22, 1wkt)
Kane Williamson (28)	David Wiese 4 (40, 1wkt)

Total 163 (4 wickets, 20 overs)

NAMIBIA (BATTING)	NEW ZEALAND (BOWLING)
Michael van Lingen (25)	Tim Southee 4 (15, 2wkt)
Zane Green (23)	Trent Boult 4 (20, 2wkt)
Stephan Baard (21)	James Neesham 1 (6, 1wkt)

Total 86 (4wickets, 13.3 overs)

► Scoreboard

SCOTLAND (BATTING)	INDIA (BOWLING)
G. Munsey (24)	R. Jadeja 4 (15, 3wkt)
M. Leask (21)	M. Shami 3 (15, 3wkt)
C Macleod (16)	J. Bumrah 3.4 (10, 2wkt)

Total 85 (0 wickets, 17.4 overs)

INDIA (BATTING)	SCOTLAND (BOWLING)
KL Rahul (50)	Mark Watt 2 (20, 1wkt)
Rohit Sharma (30)	Brad Wheal 2 (32, 1wkt)
Suryakumar Yadav (6)	Chris Greaves 0.3 (7, 0wkt)

Total 89 (2 wickets, 6.3 overs)

► points table

Team	Matches	NRR	Points
England	4	+3.183	8
Australia	4	+1.031	6
South Africa	4	+0.742	6
Sri Lanka	5	-0.269	4
West Indies	4	-1.558	2
Bangladesh	5	-2.383	0

Team	Matches	NRR	Points
Pakistan	4	+1.065	8
New Zealand	4	+1.277	6
India	4	+1.619	4
Afghanistan	4	+1.481	4
Namibia	4	-1.851	2
Scotland	4	-3.494	0

Nitish Rana smashes 25-ball-50

PTI ■ ROHTAK

Nitish Rana smashed half a dozen sixes in his unbeaten 25-ball-50 to lead Delhi to a comfortable seven-wicket win over Chandigarh in a Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Group E encounter, here on Friday.

Chasing a target of 145, Delhi knocked off the runs in just 17.2 overs as Rana with six sixes and a boundary.

All-rounder Lalit Yadav's (23 not out off 13 balls) five fours made it difficult for

unheralded Chandigarh bowling attack.

Rana, who plays for Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL, and Yadav added 65 runs in just 5.1 overs to also bolster their net run-rate. They are now on top of the group E table with eight points.

The other contributor with the bat for Delhi was left-handed keeper-batter Anuj Rawat, who hit three sixes and three fours in his 35-ball-44.

However credit also go to the Delhi pacers as well.

Niaz apologises to Akhtar for on-air spat

PTI ■ KARACHI

TV anchor Nauman Niaz has offered an "unconditional" apology to Shoaib Akhtar for the on-air spat between them but also said that PTV was being "taken for granted" by the former Pakistan pacer and that also contributed in the ugly episode.

Akhtar was told to leave the set by Niaz and former Pakistan cricketer immediately announced that he is resigning as PTV's cricket analyst. The manner in which Niaz treated Akhtar had caused a storm on social media with many demanding the termination of the TV host. The incident took place during a World Cup show in which stalwarts like Sir Viv Richards, David Gower, Rashid Latif, Aaqib Javed, Azhar Mahmood, Umar Gul and Sana Mir were also present.

Akhtar had refused to appear before an inquiry committee formed by the PTV management until Niaz was sacked for his behaviour.

New Zealand's big win over Namibia

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Glenn Phillips and Jimmy Neesham's game changing partnership on a tricky surface helped New Zealand beat Namibia by 52 runs in a Super 12 game here on Friday and stay on course for a semifinal berth in the T20 World Cup.

Courtesy some late-hitting by Phillips (39 not out off 21 balls) and Neesham (35 not out off 23 balls), New Zealand posted 163 for four and then restricted the opposition to 111/7 to complete a convincing win.

Tim Southee (2/15), Trent Boult (2/20), Mitchell Santner (1/20), Ish Sodhi (1/22) and Jimmy Neesham (1/6) shared the wickets.

The win also meant that



Kiwis jumped to the second spot in the standings and now have six points with a net run rate of +1.277.

They play Afghanistan on Sunday in what could be a virtual quarterfinal. Chasing 164, Namibia

openers Stephen Baard (21) and Michael van Lingen (25) conjured 47-runs for the opening wicket.

But New Zealand sent back both the openers, first Neesham cleaned up Lingen in the eight over and then 29-

year-old slow left-arm orthodox bowler Santner castled Baard with Namibia slipping to 51/2. Leggie Sodhi removed rival skipper Gerhard Erasmus (3) cheaply to put tighten the screws on Namibia.

Zane Green (23) and David Wiese (16) only delayed the inevitable and experienced pacer Southee trapped the latter in front in the 15th over to dash the remaining opposition hopes.

Earlier, Phillips and Neesham took the Namibian attack to the cleaners and propelled New Zealand past 150 which looked unlikely at one stage. New Zealand were struggling at 87/4, but brutal hitting by Phillips and Neesham ensured that the Kiwis were back in the game.

Indo- SA test moved to Cape Town

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

The third and final Test between India and South Africa in the upcoming Test series between the two teams has been moved to Cape Town from Johannesburg, the CSA announced on Friday.

Johannesburg was scheduled to host both the series-opener (starting December 17) and the third Test (January 3-7) while Centurion is set to host the Boxing Day Test from December 26.

However, Cricket South Africa (CSA) announced the change in venue for the third Test but did not specify the reason for the move.

"CSA has announced a key schedule change as the 3rd Betway Test of the Freedom Series has been moved from the Imperial Wanderers in Johannesburg to Cape Town's Six Gun Grill Newlands," CSA tweeted.

India will be backing themselves



for their maiden Test series win in South Africa, having beaten Australia in their backyard twice in the last three years.

On the tour of South Africa,

India will also play three ODIs and four Twenty20 matches, beginning January 11.

The tour will conclude with the fourth T20 on January 26.

Dwayne Bravo to retire from international cricket after T20 WC

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Star West Indian all-rounder Dwayne Bravo says he will retire from international cricket after the ongoing T20 World Cup here as "time has come" to leave the stage after a career he can be proud of.

The 38-year-old Bravo came out of retirement in 2019 and has been a key member of the West Indies team defending its title in the ongoing T20 World Cup.

But the Caribbeans are out contention for a semifinal spot after losing to Sri Lanka -- their third in the showpiece -- in a Super 12 match on Thursday.

West Indies' inconsequential match against Australia here on Saturday will be Bravo's last international outing, bringing down the curtains on a career spanning

more than 17 years.

"I think the time has come. I've had a very good career. To represent the West Indies for 18 years, had some ups and downs, but as I look back at it I'm very grateful to represent the region and the Caribbean people for so long," said Bravo who has been an integral part of the four-time IPL champion Chennai Super Kings team.

"To win three ICC trophies, two with my captain (Daren Sammy) on the left here. One thing I am proud about is that the era of cricketers we had we were able to make a name for ourselves on the global stage and not only do that but have silverware to show for it."

Earlier in the year, during their home series against Pakistan, skipper Kieron Pollard had said that Bravo was playing his last T20I game on the Caribbean soil.



Anushka Sharma pens heartfelt note on Virat Kohli's birthday

PTI ■ MUMBAI

It's Indian skipper Virat Kohli's 33rd birthday and Anushka Sharma marked the occasion with an emotional note, praising her "amazing man" for his courage, honesty and guts of steel. Sharma said the sports star has the unmatched ability to bring himself out from "dark place".

"No filter needed, for this photo and the way you lead your life. Your core is made of honesty and guts of steel. I know no one who can pick themselves up from a dark place like you can."

"You grow better in every way because you hold on to nothing in you as permanent and are fearless," Sharma wrote on Instagram alongside a photograph with Kohli.

The celebrity couple have always been particular about their privacy, but Sharma said



she decided to share her feelings on Kohli's birthday because she wanted to tell the world how amazing her husband is.

"I know we are not ones to talk to each other through social media like this but sometimes I just want to scream and tell the world what an amazing man you are. You are a man who really truly know you. Thank you for making everything brighter and more beautiful. Oh, and Happy Birthday cuteness!" she added.

GM SASIKIRAN LOSES TO FIROUZJA

PTI ■ RIGA (LATVIA)

Indian Grandmaster K Sasikiran went down to Alireza Firouzja of France in the eighth round of the Open event to slip to third spot in the FIDE Grand Swiss tournament here.

Firouzja won in 43 moves with white pieces against Sasikiran on the first board Thursday night.

He moved up to 6.5 points to grab the sole lead by a full point.

A group of 10 players, including top seed and world No.2 Fabiano Caruana and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, are in joint second place.

Sasikiran remained on five points to share the third spot with a bunch of players, including compatriots Nihal Sarin and P Harikrishna.

Jaglan T-13 at Asia-Pacific

PTI ■ DUBAI

Shubham Jaglan negotiated the tough closing stretch at the Dubai Creek Golf and Country Club with two birdies and a superb par to card 2-under 69 in the third round of the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship.

With three straight rounds under par (70-68-69), the 17-year-old Jaglan is 6-under for 54 holes and five behind the leader World No. 1 Keita Nakajima (67).

At T-13th, he has a great chance for a Top-10 finish. The other two Indians who made the cut -- Milind Soni and Akshay Naranjan shot 71 each and were placed T-24 and T-37 respectively.

Nakajima (67) moved to the top of the leaderboard and held a slender one-shot lead over the two-time champion Lin Yuxin of China.

The overnight leader Jin Bo

(69), who is trying to emulate his brother Jin Cheng by winning the AAC, slipped to T-3 with Sam Choi of Korea.

Jin Cheng won in 2015 and Bo accompanied him to Augusta National. "It was pretty good. I was nervous going into the round knowing I was going to play with Puwit (Anupansuebsai). He's a really good college golfer and somebody I look up to, so it was a pleasure playing with him," Jaglan, who had four birdies against two bogeys, said. "I got off to a solid start, hit the green on the first seven holes in a row, so that settled me into the round. I didn't hole too many putts. I gave myself some good opportunities and the wind was up a little bit today."

"I sort of hung in there and kept giving myself good opportunities and came back with birdies on 15 and 16, which was pretty good. I saved a good par on 18," he added.

OTHER SPORTS

Xavi become Barcelona coach

AP ■ BARCELONA

Xavi Hernández, the player who personified the attacking style popularized by Barcelona and Spain's national team, is close to returning to Camp Nou as coach.

Xavi's current employer, Qatari club Al-Sadd, said Friday that the former midfielder would be freed from his coaching contract once his release clause is paid. His current contract runs into 2023.

Barcelona declined to comment on the cost, but Spanish media reports say Xavi's buy-out clause is 5 million euros (\$5.7 million).

"Xavi informed us a few days ago of his desire to go to Barcelona at this particular time, because of the critical stage his hometown club is going through, and we understand this and decided not to stand in his way," Al-Sadd



CEO Turki Al-Ali said in a posting on the club's Twitter account.

"We've agreed on cooperation with Barcelona in the future. Xavi is an important part of Al-Sadd's history and we wish him success."

Xavi is set to replace Ronald Koeman, who was fired last week following a series of losses for a club that failed to re-sign Lionel Messi. Sergi Barjuan has been coaching Barcelona since, overseeing a

draw in the Spanish league and a victory in the Champions League. He will return to coaching the reserve team.

Faced with a barrage of questions about Xavi in a regular pre-match news conference, Barjuan repeated that Barcelona had yet to announce the signing of a new coach. Even so, he spoke of Saturday's match at Celta Vigo as his last in the dugout. "Barcelona has not made anything official, but we all hope this can be worked out," Barjuan said. "If Xavi comes, I will be happy to help him in any way I can."

The 41-year-old Xavi left Barcelona in 2015 after helping the club win 25 titles, including four Champions Leagues and eight Spanish leagues in 17 seasons. He was also key to Spain's streak of titles when it won the 2010 World Cup and European Championships in 2008 and 2012.