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RETIREMENT

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FARMERS REAP A BIG WIN

Govt climbs down on 3 farm laws

With eye on UP, Punjab polls, PM says 'sorry' to farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi gestures during his address to the nation in New Delhi on Friday PTI

With eyes on the forthcoming polls in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh (UP), Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday — coinciding with Gurmurab day — announced the withdrawal of the three controversial farms laws which his Government strongly defended for nearly two years and said “sorry” to the very farmers who his party men painted as anti-nationals along with anyone who threw their lot behind the protestors.

Prime Minister Modi said, “I apologise to the people of the country with a true and pure heart... we were not able to convince the farmers. There must have been some deficiency in our efforts that we could not convince some farmers.”

“Today I have come to tell you, the whole country, that we have decided to withdraw all three agricultural laws. In the Parliament session starting later this month, we will complete the constitutional process to repeal these three agricultural laws,” said Modi in his 18-minute-long address to the nation.

The Prime Minister started his speech by greeting the nation on Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Jayanti and talking about the teaching and philosophy of the guru in general. Then he spoke about his long association with farmers and his thoughts on the need for changes in the agricultural sector, especially for the benefit of small farmers who constitute more than 10 crore of the Indian population.

Detailing his Government's welfare measures for the benefit of farmers and reasons for bringing the controversial three farms laws, all of a sudden Modi said: “...such a sacred thing, absolutely pure, a matter of farmers' interest, we could not explain to some farmer brothers despite our efforts.

Continued on Page 2



Farmers dance as they celebrate after hearing the good news regarding the repeal of the three farm reform laws, at Tikri Border in New Delhi on Friday PTI

'Modi chose politics over farmers' betterment'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A member of the Supreme Court-appointed panel on farm laws and Shetkari Sanghatana president Anil J Ghanwat on Friday said the Centre's decision to repeal the three contentious farm laws was a “regressive political move”. The SC panel has already submitted its report to the apex court.

“This is the most regressive step by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as he chose politics over farmers' betterment. Our panel had submitted several corrections and solutions over the three farm laws, but instead of using them to solve the impasse, Modi and the BJP chose to backtrack. They just want to win elections and nothing else,” said Ghanwat adding that the panel's report was in favour of farmers.

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Opp seeks compensation for martyred farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Friday congratulated the farmers of the country on the Centre's announcement to repeal the three farm laws while taking a swipe at the Government, saying the “fear of defeat” in the upcoming Assembly elections has forced the BJP to take the decision.

Some of the parties like the Congress, the TMC and the AAP sought appropriate compensation for the farmers and the over 700 protesters who lost their lives in the rigorous struggle.

The parties also said the decision had come in late and had the Modi Government shed its “arrogance earlier” and repealed the laws, a number of precious lives lost during the protracted agitation could have been saved.

The Congress said the fear of defeat in the forthcoming Assembly polls had forced Prime Minister Modi to take back his decision. The SP, BSP, NCP, Left parties, RJD, TMC and AAP, the NC all welcomed the big announcement by Modi and at the same time demanded appropriate compensation.

Continued on Page 2

'Work is still unfinished'

Repeal laws in Parl, give legal guarantee on MSP: Tikait

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Terming Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement to withdraw the three contentious farm laws as a beginning, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson Rakesh Tikait on Friday reiterated that the protesting farmers will return to their homes only after the decision is duly passed by the Parliament and a legal guarantee on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops is made.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of 40 farm unions, with the BKU also being one of its members, announced the mobilisation of a large number of farmers to the protest sites on November 26 to mark the first anniversary of the anti-farm law agitation. Similarly, there is also intense mobilisation happening to make the Lucknow Kisan Mahapanchayat a success.

Tikait reiterated: “*Khoonta tabhi ukharenge jab kaam pakka ho javega* (we will return only when the deed is done).”

Tikait, who was in Maharashtra's Palghar for an event on Friday, took to Twitter soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced repeal of the three farm laws,



Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait speaks to the media after PM announced that the Government has decided to repeal the three farm laws, in Palghar district on Friday PTI

which were at the centre of the farmers' protest since November 26 last year.

“The protest will not be withdrawn immediately. We will wait for the day when the farm laws are repealed in Parliament. Along with the MSP, the Government should talk to farmers on other issues too,” Tikait tweeted in Hindi.

“The farmers are not going back home without this... Where we are in (Palghar), crops are not bought at the MSP. The issue of MSP is one that affects the entire country,” the BKU national spokesperson said. He also asked people not to celebrate or distribute sweets now as the “struggle” has to continue. Invoking Birs Munda, the legendary tribal freedom fighter, Tikait lauded the Bhumisena — Adivasi Ekta Parishad for their support to the ongoing farmers' protest and for fighting for the cause of tribals at the village level.

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Ultimately, as UP and Punjab elections came closer and particularly when the BJP people saw the reaction of farmers in the villages of Haryana and Punjab and some other States. They could not ignore this aspect and keeping in mind the upcoming elections they decided to withdraw the three farm laws.



SHARAD PAWAR

I would like to congratulate all farmers. As a result of their continuous agitation and struggle, all three black laws have been withdrawn today. The withdrawal of the black laws is the defeat of their (Government's) arrogance



AKHILESH YADAV

My heartfelt congratulations to every single farmer who fought relentlessly and was not fazed by the cruelty with which @BJP4indiatreated you. This is YOUR VICTORY! My deepest condolences to everyone who lost their loved ones in this fight.



MAMATA BANERJEE

After almost 12 months of Gandhian agitation, today is the victory of the struggle and will of 62 crore farmers and farm labourers and the sacrifice of more than 700 farmers who laid their lives for this struggle and their families have paid. Today is the victory of truth, justice and non-violence



SONIA GANDHI

The Government tried to have a dialogue with farmers at every level. But maybe because of some deficiency on our part, we failed to explain our point to the people. I sincerely welcome the withdrawal of three agricultural laws by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Uttar Pradesh Government



YOGI ADITYANATH

There is a sad part that more than 700 farmers lost their lives. Had the laws been repealed earlier, the lives of these farmers could have been saved. I salute these martyrs and their families. Nobody will forget your sacrifice.



ARVIND KEJRIWAL

China's actions violate bilateral pacts: Jaishankar

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Friday that India and China are going through a “particularly bad patch” in their ties because Beijing has taken a set of actions in violation of agreements for which it still doesn't have a “credible explanation” and it is for the Chinese leadership to answer where they want to take the bilateral relationship.

India has told China that progress in the disengagement process in eastern Ladakh was essential for the restoration of peace and tranquillity and that it is the basis for the development of overall bilateral ties.

During his previous meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Tajikistan's Capital Dushanbe on September 16, Jaishankar

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'Too late to benefit BJP in Punjab'

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

By scrapping the three contentious farms laws, the BJP may have made attempts to douse the fire of resentment among the farmers and their supporters before the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh polls, but the end of the tunnel, even after the fire-fighting attempts, appears to be bleak in Punjab.

Facing social boycotts and protests across the State for over a year now, the BJP leadership is expecting a turnaround with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement to repeal farm laws that comes close on the heels of its decision to



reopen Kartarpur Sahib Corridor to woo a majority of Sikh voters in the

border State. However, the political observers are of the view that the “announcement” was too late to benefit the BJP

in the agrarian State of Punjab.

In Punjab, the BJP bore the brunt of the farmers' agitation with its leaders virtually confined to their houses under the fear of being attacked by the farmers or the protestors. The farmers have staged protests against the BJP leaders across the State and also announced their social boycott. So much so, that the BJP's every public meeting or programme was disrupted by the angry growers.

The villages banned the entry of politicians, particularly those from the BJP. They were stopped midway and gheraoed. BJP's MLA from Abohar Arun Narang had to face farmers' wrath twice.

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'Sabar, eka sustained protest against odds'

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

For more than a year, the farmers in Punjab kept the hope alive of reaping the benefits of their struggle against the contentious farm laws. They, in the process, nourished the movement by maintaining a united stand, mass support, and innovative ways to protest.

Besides maintaining unity among themselves, the farmers acted with patience, determination, by gathering support from all quarters, and reaching out to even the younger population via social media, and mobilising the support right from the ground

level. Notwithstanding fateful incidents — like the January 26 Delhi violence and recent murder at Tikri border, the farmers leaders managed to keep the momentum of their agitation against the three farm laws alive. The farm



leaders, though hailing from various outfits and States, remained united all through despite differences in opinion, having diverse ideologies. Reason: their demand was the same — repealing all three farm laws and a guaranteed

MSP. A pan-India umbrella body — Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) comprising senior farmer leaders from different outfits and States — was constituted to head the struggle and negotiate with the Centre.

The SKM, in fact, gave the farmers' movement a face, as it was given authority by the thousands of hundreds of protesting farmers to take a call on their behalf. The farmers in Punjab were first to oppose the Centre's three ordinances — Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020; The Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020; and The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020 — which later became laws.

Continued on Page 2

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Repeal of farm laws victory of common man: Uddhav

■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said here on Friday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement that the Government would repeal the three controversial farm laws established the power of common man in the country. Congratulating the farmers on the Government's decision to "repeal" the three farm laws, Uddhav said: "Farmers across the country were protesting against the three farm laws. The farmer agitation against three laws was going on and it still continues. The decision has given us a lot of happiness. The farmers have proved their strength. My big salute to all the farmers. At the same time, I pay my homage to all the farmers who died during the course of the agitation". Uddhav said that the MVA government was all along against the three farm laws. "Henceforth, I expect the Modi government to take all the opposition parties into confidence before taking such major decisions like the farm. The decisions thus taken should be

in the national interest. If such a thing is done, the Government will not face the kind of embarrassment it faced with regard to the three farm laws". "Now I expect the Government to complete the technical process of completing the technical process involving the repeal of three laws," the chief minister added. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar described Modi's decision to three farm laws as a "victory of farmers' unity and non-violence preached by Mahatma Gandhi". "I thank the Prime Minister for his decision. I congratulate the farmers for undertaking a prolonged agitation to achieve their goal. The Centre should now ensure Minimum Support Price to agriculture produce. It has been proved yet again that ultimately it is the people's writ that runs". NCP Chief Spokesman and Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik said: "The farmers have brought the Government to its knees. This is just the beginning. Now, the Government cannot turn the country in an arbitrary

manner". Congress leader and Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation Vijay Wadettiwar said that the "arrogant" BJP government had to bow down to farmers. "The farmers thwarted the Modi Government's ploy to impose black laws on the farmers and exploit them financially. Congratulations to all the farmers in the country, Jai Hind, Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan!". Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut said that the ruling BJP at the Centre had realised the "power" of the farmers. "The BJP had no other go but to repeal the farm laws in view of its poor performance in the recent Assembly and Lok Sabha by-polls and apprehension of a debacle in the forthcoming Assembly polls in UP and Punjab". All India Kisan Sabha's Maharashtra unit secretary Dr Ajit Nawale said that while the Prime Minister's announcement was a victory for farmers' unity, it was essential for the Centre to bring in legislation promising the Minimum Support Price for the agricultural produce.

Ayurveda now combines beauty with health

New Delhi: Not keeping itself limited to healing various ailments, Ayurveda is now coming up as a key to beauty combined with health. More so at a time when various cities like the national capital are combating toxic air, herbal experts say that products enriched with time tested herbs can reduce the ill effects of the poisonous particulate matter in polluted air on the body. In fact, the Government is also encouraging Ayurveda in food and beauty products. The Central Government with the assistance of the State Government, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) had set up Fragrance and Flavour Development Centre (FFDC) at Kannauj in 1991. Its objective is to act as an interface between essential oil, fragrance and flavour industry and the research and development institutions, both in the field of agro-technology and chemical technology, and sustain and upgrade the status of farmers and the industry engaged in the cultivation and processing of aromatic plants. In one of such initiatives, in collaboration with FFDC, the Delhi-based AIMIL Pharma has developed a line of beauty products -- Ayouthveda -- for the health-conscious beauty market. "This has twin benefits...on the one hand these products enhance beauty without compromising with health and on the other hand, the well-being of the consumers is also ensured by acting as natural supplements and curbing progression of infection, if any", said Dr. Sanchit Sharma, Executive Director, AIMIL Pharma on Friday during the launch of line of products at an event here. According to experts, Ayurveda is all set to become a USD 15 billion industry by 2023 in view of growing demand from the health conscious consumers. **PNS**

Recruitment process would be meaningless without timeline: SC

New Delhi: The recruitment process undertaken by a competent authority would be meaningless "without a timeline", the Supreme Court has said while setting aside the orders passed by the Allahabad High Court in a matter about the recruitment of police constables to the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in Uttar Pradesh. The apex court allowed the appeal filed by the Uttar Pradesh Government and others against the August 2019 order passed by a division bench of the high court which had upheld an order of the single judge. The single judge had directed the authorities to permit the petitioner, who was one of the candidates in the recruitment process, to appear for document verification and physical fitness test for the post of constable in pursuance to the recruitment advertised in the year 2015. "In any event, though indulgence was shown in the earlier cases, a line has to be drawn at some stage as otherwise, the recruitment process undertaken by the competent authorities would be meaningless without a timeline and the next recruitment process will also get affected since the determination of the number of vacancies for the next process will keep fluctuating," a bench comprising Justices D Y Chandrachud and A S Bopanna said. **PTI**

Agra hospital treats a special patient

Agra: The staff at the district hospital here found themselves in a baffling situation on Friday, when a priest came wailing with a request to bandage the broken arm of an idol of Lord Krishna. The staff was faced with a priest who came distraught to the hospital urging them to attend to the deity's idol, whose arm he accidentally broke while giving it a bath in the morning. After some reluctance, the hospital carried out a registration in the name of 'Shri Krishna' and also bandaged the arm of the idol back. A video of the crying priest with an idol of 'Laddu Gopal' - the childhood form of the deity - with a broken arm also circulated on social media. According to some eyewitnesses, the priest reached district hospital at about 9 am and insisted that the hospital staff tend to the idol. **PTI**

6 PLFI activists held in Jharkhand

Chaibasa (Jharkhand): Six activists of the banned People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) were arrested in West Singhbhum district and arms and ammunition recovered from them, a senior police officer said on Friday. Acting on a tip-off, a team, led by Sub-Divisional Police Officer (Kiriburu) Ajit Kumar Kujjur, conducted a raid here on Thursday and apprehended the extremists as they were trying to flee, he said.

Three country-made firearms, including a pistol, eight rounds of live cartridges, one magazine and PLFI literature were recovered from their possession, Superintendent of Police Ajay Linda stated. The extremists had allegedly assaulted a local contractor recently and sought Rs 30 lakh levy from him, he said. A case under various sections of the IPC and Arms Act has been registered at Gua police station, the SP added. **PTI**

'Too late to ...

From Page 1 Once he was ghereao by the protesting farmers in Lambi Assembly segment in Muktsar district in November 2020 and was even forced to sit on the road. Later, Narang was roughed up and his clothes ripped off in full public view by a group of protesting farmers at Malout in Muktsar district where he had gone to address a press conference. However, the BJP thinks it can capitalise on the PM's decisions. "The decision is such a big news for Punjab and farmers. This would definitely be a big gain for BJP which has been on the defensive ever since the farmers protest started in Punjab. At least, the party leaders can now move out of their houses and campaign. This would be a big relief for BJP leaders and workers who have been living under fear," a senior BJP leader, who did not wish to be named, told The Pioneer.

sacrifices of all those farmers who laid down their lives for the struggle, and how the BJP leaders and their supporters dubbed them as Khalistanis, terrorists, would not be that easy. saffron party was left to fend for itself after its decade-old ally, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), snapped ties in 2020 in protest of bringing the three agriculture laws. While SAD has forged an alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), BJP is gearing up to contest polls on all 117 Assembly seats banking on the BJP-led Central Government's pro-Sikh and pro-Punjab decisions and initiatives, including Kartarpur corridor. The BJP is reportedly making all out preparations in all assembly seats even as the former Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, who has recently parted ways with the Congress, has given enough indications to enter in seat sharing arrangement with the BJP only if the farmers' issue was resolved "in their interest". Now with the announcement, Capt Amarinder was quick to welcome the move and claim credit by tweeting that he had been working for the resolution of the issue for more than a year and had met the Prime Minister and Home Minister. He even maintained that he was looking forward to working "closely with BJP led Centre for development of Kisans".

China's actions...

From Page 1 emphasised that the two sides should work towards early resolution of the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh while fully abiding by bilateral agreements and protocols. "I don't think the Chinese have any doubt on where we stand on our relationship and what's not gone right with it. I've been meeting my counterpart Wang Yi a number of times. As you would've experienced, I speak fairly clear, reasonably understandably (and) there is no lack of clarity so if they want to hear it, I am sure they would have heard it," Jaishankar said in response to a question at a panel discussion on "Greater Power Competition: The Emerging World Order" at the Bloomberg New Economic Forum in Singapore. "We are going through a particularly bad patch in our relationship because they have taken a set of actions in violation of agreements for which they still don't have a credible explanation and that indicates some rethinking about where they want to take our relationship, but that's for them to answer," he further said, in an apparent reference to the eastern Ladakh border clash with China.

Opp seeks compensation ...

From Page 1 Both the AAP and TMC referred to the deaths of farmers during the course of the protest, reminding the Government that a quicker decision could have saved their lives. In her reaction Congress president Sonia Gandhi said after almost 12 months of the Gandhian agitation, the repeal of farm laws is a "victory of the will of 62 crore farmers and sacrifices of more than 700 farmers who laid down their lives for this struggle". In a statement issued after the announcement by the Prime Minister, she also hoped that the Government would shed its pride and arrogance and works towards the welfare of farmers. "I hope the Prime Minister and the BJP Government would leave their stubbornness and arrogance and focus on implementing policies for farmers' welfare, ensure MSP for them and evolve a consensus with State Governments, farmer organisations and Opposition parties before taking any such step in future", she said. Sonia Gandhi also said the conspiracy against farmers and labourers by those sitting in power and the arrogance of dictatorial rulers also stand defeated. "Whether it is a refusal to pay the farmers their cost plus 50 per cent profit as promised by the Prime Minister or the huge increase in the cost of diesel and agricultural products, or the attack on them through three black anti-farm laws, they all stand defeated," she said. Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi said the "Country's 'annadats' (food providers) have made arrogance bow its head through satyagraha." "Congratulations on this victory against injustice! 'Jai Hind, Jai Hind ka Kisan', Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet message. Congratulating farmers for their relentless fight against three new farm laws, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said they were not fazed by the "cruelty" of the BJP. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, while welcoming the announcement, said it is not just a victory of farmers but also of democracy. "This golden day will be written in the pages of history like August 15 and January 26. The Centre bowed down to farmers. This is not just the victory of farmers but also the victory of democracy. This victory proves no matter which party or leader is there, your ego will not stand before people," he said. "This was independence struggle for them," he added. While SP leader Akhilesh Yadav charged it is the fear of election defeat that the BJP has been forced to take this decision, BSP supremo Mayawati congratulated farmers but termed the Central Government's move a "very

late one." "Apology will not help this time. The people understand everything and will teach the BJP a lesson," Yadav said. Taking a dig at the Government, National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah said, "Anyone who believes the Government repealed the #FarmLaws out of the goodness of its heart is completely mistaken. This Government only responds to cold hard numbers - bypoll setback = fuel price reduction. Poor internal polls numbers for Western UP and Punjab = #Farmlawsrepealed". Hailing the Centre's announcement to repeal farm laws as a victory of farmers, SAD supremo Parkash Singh Badal said it is "a defining moment in history and a historic victory of farmers on Gurupurab". "It was for the first time in the history of democratic governments that brazen and cruel laws were made without even taking the stakeholders on board. No government should ever do such an insensitive and cruel thing again," he asserted. AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said the farmers' movement succeeded due to the persistence of the peasants. "Impending elections and protest movements can force PM to rethink. He's never beaten a peoples' movement, just managed to harass. Anti-CAA movement ensured that talks of national NRC were shelved; CAA rules yet to be made. Farmers movement succeeded due to their persistence," he said. Welcoming the decision, the Shiv Sena and the NCP, which share power in Maharashtra, said the Government had to finally bow down before the agitating farmers. Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said, "For the first time, PM Modi has expressed the 'mann ki baat' of people. BJP leaders were openly calling these farmers Khalistanis and Pakistanis, but the Union Government had to bow before the farmers' pressure." RJD patriarch Lalu Prasad Yadav said the BJP Government was compelled to repeal the laws out of fear of losing the upcoming state polls in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand. Nawab Malik, chief spokesperson of the NCP, said in a tweet, "Jhukati hai duniya, jhukane wala chahiye (The world bows, we need the one who can make it happen)". The CPI(M) demanded that Prime Minister Modi should apologise for the hardship and trouble caused by his "dictatorial step" of enacting the three farm laws. "The quest for justice for those 'targeted' by the government and its agencies through 'false' cases will continue. The PM must apologise for the hardship and trouble caused by his 'dictatorial' step of farm laws to 'benefit his crony business partners'," CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury in a tweet.

'Modi chose politics over farmers'...

From Page 1 "The purpose of the report is over now and will release the report in the public domain, if the apex court does not do so. The members of the panel will meet on Monday and will take views of all three members on releasing the panel's report in the public domain," he said after Modi announced to repeal the three controversial farm laws on Friday. Ghanwat claimed that the Government had not read the farm panel's report submitted to the Supreme Court in March. The report was submitted by the committee after 12 rounds of consultations with farmer groups and other stakeholders. "The decision to repeal the farm laws has now closed the doors of all types of reforms in agriculture and its marketing sector," he said. The three-member Supreme Court-appointed committee -- after studying the three farm laws and consultation with stakeholders -- had submitted its report to the apex court on March 19. The report has not been made public yet despite Ghanwat having requested the Chief Justice of India in a letter dated September 1, to release the panel's report saying its "recommendations will pave the way to resolve the ongoing farmers' agitation". Ghanwat said, "If these three farm laws are withdrawn, this report has no sense at all...If the apex court does not make it public, I will make it public." The committee has spent three months preparing the report. "This should not go into the dustbin. It should not happen. I will make it public," he said. Ghanwat further said, "The other members are academicians and professionals and they don't have anything to do with the farmers' movement. But I am a farmers' leader. I have to take care of farmers."

'Sabar, eka...

From Page 1 In no time, the protest from Punjab started spreading to Haryana, and then other parts of the state, including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal. Soon, the political parties joined too. But it was only after the ordinances were promulgated, and bills were passed in the Parliament and the three laws came into force, the agitation started intensified. Thousands of farmers, well-prepared for a long stay with their tractor-trolleys laden with food and basic amenities, marched towards Delhi, braving water cannons, tear gas, lathis, and made the borders of the national Capital epicentre of protests on November 26, 2020 - the day real agitation started, which eventually turned out to be the longest agrarian movement in the recallable history of the independent India. The visuals of farmers being halted by installing massive boulders or sand mounds on roads, women and old protestors braving water cannons, tear gas, and lathis attracted global attention with the foreign leaders and activists coming all out in open support of the Indian farmers. Initially, it was believed that the farmers' protest would fizzle out in the wake of the approaching winter season. But, the farmers took everyone by surprise by virtually setting up a mini township on Delhi borders, and continuing their agitation wreathing bone-chilling winters and simmering hot summers, acting with patience and being determined that they would win. "The farm protest managed to sustain for more than a year because of the teachings of our Gurus...sabar and eka" (patience and unity), and also determination," B.K.U. Kadian's national spokesperson Raveen Brar said, while talking with The Pioneer. Brar said that many lives were lost, many unfortunate incidents happened, many attempts were made to derail our protest, "but we remained determined as our agitation is for our existence...for our future, and we had faith that we are fighting for the right". After the January 26 violence in Delhi, the farmers were dubbed as Khalistanis, terrorists, with the pressure mounting on them to withdraw the agitation and vacate Delhi borders. The number started decreasing, but the visuals of senior farm leader Rakesh Tikait in tears changed the game. His supporters started returning to the protest sites, as Tikait's tears gave a new lease of life to the agitation. For any agitation to continue, financial support plays a crucial role. The farmers started fund collection, with people, especially those from villages, making as much contribution as they can. Then big personalities - like actors, singers, activists - came forward for support. The funds were also received by the NRI supporters, who were also mobilising support in the foreign lands, especially Canada, London, Australia, and America. The funds were used to construct shelters, toilets, buying gensets, food, and digging up borewells at the Delhi border - all the necessities that made it easier for the protesters to continue their stay. Then organisations, like Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee (DGMCM) and some other NGOs, came forward for help arranging langar. What is more, mechanics, electricians, plumbers, offered free services at the protest sites. "The movement was well-led, well-organised, and well planned. People's spirits were unimaginably high...They fought this fight in such an organised way that BJP, which has such a strong social media presence, was defeated everyday...We remained a step ahead than the BJP in every sphere. We actually won the fight of perception that BJP tried to create against the farmers," said Manic Goyal, Member of SKM's core media team.

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Office of The Chief Engineer M.P.P.W.D Bridge Construction Zone Bhopal (M.P.)

Tender Notice

NIT No- 09/C.E.(Bridge Zone)/2021-21 **Date 12.11.2021**

Online Tender for mentioned below are being invited. The Tender have been uploaded on the mptenders. system of Public Works Department on the Portal www.mptenders.gov.in Tender details are as below:-

S. No.	Tender No.	District	Nature of work	Name of work	Call No.	Cost of Project (PAC) (Rs. In lakh)	(EMD Fee/Tender Fee) All Tender Document Other Document Submission
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2021_PWDRB_167945_1	Sehore	Bridge Work	Re-Construction of High Level Bridge across Seep river on Nasrullaganj to Khategaon road in km 59/4 on SH 22 District Sehore	Second	841.13	Online Only
				Total		841.13	

The document can only be purchased online from the above website after making online payment. The last date & time for purchase of Document on line is **Dated 27/11/2021 up to (17:30)** Detailed NIT and other details can be viewed on the above mentioned portal. Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in newspaper.

Chief Engineer MP, PWD

G-19360/21 कोरोना में सावधानी हटी, समझो दुर्घटना घटी। Bridge Construction Zone, Bhopal

Sisodia: Food prices in Delhi lowest in country

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday said the rate of inflation in Delhi was lowest among the five metro cities in 2020-21. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) kept prices under control in Delhi even during Covid-19, he claimed.

Delhi is more affordable to live in as compared to other cities and food prices in the city are the lowest in the country, said Sisodia, who also holds the portfolio of Finance Minister in Delhi Cabinet.

Releasing the annual price index report prepared by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Sisodia said the average annual inflation growth rate based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) in 2020-21 was only 3 per cent in Delhi as compared to 5 per cent nationally.



The Kejriwal Government efficiently managed to keep inflation under control in Delhi even during Covid-19 and that was the lowest rate of inflation among the five metro cities, Sisodia added. "In 2020-21, the increase in inflation in Delhi was 3.0 per cent while Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Bengaluru registered 4.6 per cent, 4.4 per cent, 4.1 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively," he said, adding the Kejriwal Government is committed to the common man and will

always stand with him.

"The timely measures adopted by the Kejriwal Government, kept the prices of commodities in Delhi stable during the Covid-19 period and did not increase much." "The Government is constantly monitoring the prices of essential commodities," the deputy Chief Minister said. The national inflation rate for food prices was 5.7 per cent while it was recorded at only 4.1 per cent in Delhi, the lowest in the country, he said.

The Housing Index of the Consumer Price Index saw an increase of 5.2 per cent in India in the financial year 2020-21, but in Delhi, it was only 3.9 per cent, Sisodia highlighted.

The Delhi Government makes efforts at regular intervals to control and stabilise the prices of commodities through market interventions, he said.

Move to repeal farm laws victory of farmers: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) called the decision to repeal three farm laws a victory for farmers and demanded the Centre to pay a compensation of ₹1 crore and provide a job to the kin of the farmers who died during the protests against these laws. Senior party leader and MP Sanjay Singh on Friday also demanded that the Centre give status of "martyr" to each of those farmers who "sacrificed their lives" while protesting against the "three black laws".

"The Government has decided to withdraw the three black farm laws because of their (BJP's) defeat in elections. Farmers and the people were teaching them lessons in elections. Narendra Modi's egoistic Government had to eventually bow down before the long struggle, strength and sacrifice of the farmers," Singh said. He congratulated the farmers on the "success" of their struggle and took a swipe at Modi, saying the Government's decision to repeal the three farm laws is "a victory

of Andolanjivi farmers and defeat of Chunarjivi Modi Government".

The AAP under the leadership of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was with the farmers "since the day one" of their protest against the three farm laws and will always stand by them in future, he said. More than 750 farmers sacrificed their lives during the protests against the three black laws. They should be given status of martyr and dependents of each of them should be given Rs one crore as compensation and government job," he demanded.

AAP spokesperson and co-in charge of the political affairs in Punjab Raghav Chadha also congratulated farmers. "It's big victory of the farmers of the country. I congratulate the farmers for the success of their long struggle. An egoistic government of the country had to kneel down. We salute the farmers of the country and their 'inquilab' (uprising) and pay tribute to those farmers who sacrificed their lives (during the protest)," he said.

Farmers celebrate at Tikri, Ghazipur borders

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced repealing the farm laws on Friday, celebrations broke out at national Capital's Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders where thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh under the aegis of various farmers unions have been protesting at the borders since November 26 last year demanding repeal of the three farm laws. However, the farmers said that the agitation will continue till Parliament repeals the legislations and their other demands are met.

At Singhu borders, scores of farmers, with smile on their face, distributed sweets and they were seen dancing to songs blaring out of music systems placed on tractors. Same scenes were witnessed at Tikri border while hundreds of



Farmers celebrate with sweets after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the repealing of the three farm laws, at Ghazipur border, in New Delhi on Friday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer Photo

farmers were also seen offering sweets to each other at Ghazipur on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border to celebrate the half victory of their almost year-long protest.

Parvesh Nandal, a farmer from village Garhi Bohar near Rohtak in Haryana at Tikri border said that they are happy with the repealing of laws but the decision came late. "Around 750 farmers have lost lives and the government should think about their family members. Compensation

and a job should be given to one of their family members," said Nandal.

"With blessing from Guru Nanak Dev ji on Guru Purab, the decision to repeal black laws has come today but the struggle is not over. The protest will continue till the time repealing of laws come into effect. Till then we will continue our protest," said Harinder Singh, a farmer from Punjab protesting against the Centre's three farm laws at Singhu border.

70% of city's pollution external, says Rai

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Launching the second phase of 'Red Light on Gaadi Off' campaign on Friday, Environment Minister Gopal Rai said various surveys on air pollution has shown 70 per cent of Delhi's pollution is sourced from outside the city while vehicular pollution is the biggest contributor in the remaining 30 per cent that comes from within the national Capital.

The campaign to curb vehicular pollution has been entered in its second phase and will run till December third. Rai, said that additional measures to tackle vehicular pollution like work from home

provisions and banning of trucks entering Delhi have also been imposed by the Delhi Government, which will prove to be successful in curbing pollution in the city.

The 'Red Light On, Gaadi Off' Campaign which had been running for the past one month, has been extended for 15 more days starting today.

Explaining how this campaign can help in reducing vehicular pollution, Rai said on an average a person in Delhi crosses ten to twelve intersections or traffic signals in a day, for which even a rough waiting time of 2 minute per intersection amounts to 20-25 minutes of unnecessary fuel burning.

Capital's air in 'very poor' category

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality has reached the higher end of the very poor category with the air quality index (AQI) on the National Ambient Air Quality Index (NAAQI) recorded at 355 micrograms per cubic.

While the stubble burning impact in PM 2.5 was negligible according to SAFAR's mapping, the values of both major pollutants - PM 10 and 2.5 were recorded - 313 and 191 micrograms per cubic.

According to SAFAR's short range air pollution forecast air quality will improve November 21st onwards. "The AQI today indicates very poor air quality and likely to improve

marginally but remain within the same category tomorrow as farm fire counts percent share has reduced considerably and transport level winds have become low and coming from the north/northwest direction. Local surface winds also are low with moderate ventilation of near surface pollutants. From 21st onwards surface winds are likely to be strong resulting in effective dispersion that improves air quality." "Transport level winds are likely to be strong during 21st - 23rd flushing out locally emitted pollutants from Delhi to the southeast region that may improve air quality further to the lower end of very poor or poor in Delhi.

Rajiv Chowk Central Secretariat section to be out of service in morning hours

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro services on Yellow Line's Rajiv Chowk-Central Secretariat section will be suspended for a few hours in the morning on November 21 due to scheduled track maintenance work.

"To undertake the scheduled track maintenance work at Central Secretariat metro station of Yellow Line on the intervening night of November 20 and 21, train services on the morning of November 21 on this line will be briefly regulated," the DMRC said in a statement.

PICTALK



Rashtrapati Bhawan illuminated in blue to support child rights on the eve of World Children's Day in New Delhi on Friday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer Photo



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Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

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• FARM LAWS REPEALED •

CONTROVERSY AND FACE-OFF AFTER ENACTMENT

Hundreds of farmers died while Govt termed laws ‘historic’ but failed to explain contentious clauses

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

From day one, the farmers unions had maintained that the Centre's farm laws would pave the way for the dismantling of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporates. On the other hand, the Government termed these three laws 'historic' and asserted that they will bring farmers better opportunities and usher in new technologies in agriculture.

There were several contentious clauses and issues in the farm laws which the Government failed to explain to the farmers. As many as 669 farmers lost their lives while protesting against the three farm laws between

November 24, 2020 and November 19, 2021, which is considered the longest protest in the country.

The reason behind the deaths kept changing; run over by recklessly driven trucks, falling from tractor trolleys, dying from harsh cold and dengue or multiple Covid-19 outbreaks. The first such casualty took place on November 24 last year when a large group of farmers was covering tractor-trolleys with waterproof sheets at Mehal Kalan in Barnala. Kahan Singh, an activist of the BKU (Dakaunda) from Dhaner village, was hit by a car on the roadside where trolleys were parked and died on the spot. Since then, the tally of casualties rose to 669.

LOW-DOWN ON THE STAND-OFF BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND FARMERS' UNIONS

FARMERS' PRODUCE TRADE AND COMMERCE (PROMOTION AND FACILITATION) ACT, 2020

PROCLAIMED AIMS AND BENEFITS:

- ❖ To give freedom to farmers to sell their produce outside the notified marketing yards (mandis) of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee;
 - ❖ To facilitate remunerative prices through competitive alternative trading channels;
 - ❖ No cess or levy on sale of agricultural produce under this Act;
 - ❖ To allow more choices for farmers, reduce marketing costs, and help them get better prices.
- #### WHY THE FARMERS OPPOSED?
- ❖ Farmers and Opposition parties said the law will lead to the end of the MSP-based procurement system and may lead to exploitation by private companies
 - ❖ States will lose revenue in the form of 'mandi fees' if farmers sell their produce outside registered

APMC markets and Commission agents stand to lose if the entire farm trade moves out of mandis

- ❖ Clauses in sections 3 and 4 of the Act gave the farmer freedom to indulge in intra-state or inter-state trade in areas outside the APMC mandis
- ❖ Section 6 prohibited the collection of any market fee or cess under any state APMC Act or any other state law with respect to trade outside the APMC market
- ❖ Section 14 gave the Act an overriding effect over the inconsistent provisions of the State APMC laws. Section 17 empowers the Centre to frame rules for carrying out the provisions of the law
- ❖ Farmers were also angry with the clauses in Section 8 of the law that said that a farmer and trader can approach the Sub-Divisional Magistrate to arrive at a solution through conciliation proceedings
- ❖ Farmers said they are not powerful enough to access the SDM offices for dispute redressals, and critics said this is akin to usurpation of judicial powers

FARMERS (EMPOWERMENT AND PROTECTION) AGREEMENT ON PRICE ASSURANCE AND FARM SERVICES ACT, 2020

PROCLAIMED AIMS AND BENEFITS:

- ❖ To give farmers the right to enter into a contract with agribusiness firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters, or large retailers for the sale of future farming produce at a pre-agreed price.
 - ❖ To transfer the risk of market unpredictability from farmers to sponsors
 - ❖ To boost farmer income by reducing the cost of marketing by giving them access to modern tech and better inputs.
- #### WHY THE FARMERS OPPOSED?
- ❖ Farmer bodies and opposition parties said the law is framed to suit "big corporates who seek to dominate the Indian food and agriculture business"
 - ❖ They also feared the law will weaken the negotiating power of farmers
 - ❖ Farmers suspected big private companies, exporters, wholesalers, and processors may get an edge

THE ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2020

PROCLAIMED AIMS AND BENEFITS:

- ❖ To remove commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, onion, and potatoes from the list of essential commodities and to do away with the imposition of stock holding limits on such items except under 'extraordinary circumstances' like war, famine, extraordinary price rise and natural calamity
 - ❖ To attract private investment/FDI into the farm sector as well as bringing price stability
- #### WHY THE FARMERS OPPOSED?
- ❖ Big companies will have the freedom to stock commodities, helping them dictate terms to farmers

Govt to form panel to make MSP more effective, transparent

New Delhi: After the announcement to repeal the farm laws, the Government will set up a committee to make the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system more effective and transparent as well as suggest ways to promote zero budgeting based-agriculture. The committee will have representatives of the Central Govt, State Govts, farmers, agricultural scientists, and agricultural economists. Prime

Minister Narendra Modi has announced that a committee will be formed to make MSP system more effective and transparent.

Presently, the government decides the MSP based on the recommendation of the expert body the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP). The factors considered by the CACP for fixing MSPs include cost of production, domestic and interna-

tional prices, demand-supply conditions, inter-crop price parity, terms of trade between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the committee will submit the report, which will be beneficial to the farming community. He highlighted that the government had decided to fix the MSP at least 1.5 times higher than the cost of

production.

He welcomed the Prime Minister's decision to repeal the three farm laws but expressed regret that the government was unsuccessful in convincing some farmers group about the benefits of these laws.

Minister of State for Agriculture Kailash Choudhary urged them to return home and not be adamant as the Centre has met their demand of repealing three farm laws. Despite the

announcement to repeal the farm laws, farmers' leaders have decided to continue their protest till there is a legal guarantee for the minimum support price for crops.

Tomar, in a video message, said that the government wanted to remove hurdles being faced by the farming community by bringing three new farm laws. These laws, which were passed by Parliament,

would have definitely benefited farmers, he said adding the PM's intention behind these laws was to bring a "revolutionary change" in the lives of farmers. "I am sad that we were not successful in convincing some farmers about the benefit of these laws," Tomar said. The PM always tried to bring changes in the farm sector through these laws. But such situation arose that some farmers found problems in these laws.

PNS



JUNE 5, 2020: Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act first introduced as Ordinances. Farmers oppose; launch protest in Punjab

JUNE 14, 2020: Ordinance brought to Parliament. The Bharatiya Kisan Union issued a statement against the Ordinances

SEPTEMBER 17, 2020: Ordinance is passed in Lok Sabha. Anticipating mass protests, Shiromani Akali Dal, BJP's NDA ally from Punjab quits alliance and Government. Food and Agriculture Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned from the union ministry

SEPTEMBER 20, 2020: Ordinance is

passed in Rajya Sabha by voice vote

SEPTEMBER 24, 2020: Farmers in Punjab announce a three-day rail roko.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2020: Farmers across India take to the streets in response to a call by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC)

SEPTEMBER 27, 2020: Farm Bills are given presidential assent and notified in the Gazette of India and become Farm Laws. Farmers' protests grow, 'Rail Roko' held in Punjab

NOVEMBER 26, 2020: Farmers marched towards Delhi; police tried to disperse them at Haryana's Ambala district. Later, allowed them to enter Delhi for their peaceful protest at Nirankari ground in North-West Delhi

NOVEMBER 28, 2020: Home Minister Amit Shah offered to hold talks with farmers after they vacate Delhi borders and move to the designated protest site

in Burari. Farmers rejected his offer, demanding to hold the protest at Jantar Mantar

DECEMBER 3, 2020: Government held first round of talks with representatives of farmers; meeting remained inconclusive

DECEMBER 5, 2020: Second round also remained inconclusive

DECEMBER 8, 2020: Farmers gave a call for Bharat Bandh

DECEMBER 9, 2020: Farmer leaders rejected government's proposal to amend the three laws. Reiterate demand for repeal

DECEMBER 11, 2020: BKU moved the Supreme Court against the three farm laws

DECEMBER 21, 2020: Farmers held a one-day hunger strike at all protest sites

DECEMBER 30, 2020: Sixth round of talks between government and farmer leaders saw some headway; Centre agreed to exempt farmers from stubble burning penalty and drop

changes in Electricity Amendment Bill, 2020

JANUARY 4, 2021: Seventh round of talks remained inconclusive; Centre not to repeal farm laws

JANUARY 7, 2021: SC agreed to hear petitions challenging the new laws and those against the protests on Jan 11

JANUARY 12, 2021: SC stayed the implementation of the farm laws; set up a four-member committee to make recommendations on the legislations after listening to all stakeholders

JANUARY 26, 2021: Thousands of protesters clashed with the police during the tractor parade called by farmer unions on January 26,

demanding a repeal of the laws

FEBRUARY 4, 2021: Pop icon Rihanna, teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg and lawyer-author Meena Harris, niece of US Vice President Kamala Harris, Porn star Mia Khalifa spoke in support of farmer protests

FEBRUARY 5, 2021: Cyber-crime cell of Delhi Police registered FIR on charges of "sedition", "criminal conspiracy" and "promoting hatred" against the creators of a 'toolkit' on farmer protests, which was shared by Thunberg

FEBRUARY 6, 2021: Protesting farmers held a nationwide 'Chakka Jam' for three hours

FEBRUARY 9, 2021: Punjabi actor Deep Singh arrested

FEBRUARY 14, 2021: Disha Ravi, an activist arrested

MARCH 6, 2021: Farmers protest

completed 100 days

MAY 27, 2021: Farmers observed black day

OCTOBER 3, 2021: A convoy of three vehicles, including one owned by Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra, ploughed into a group of protesting farmers, killing four of them

OCTOBER 9, 2021: Ashish Mishra, the son of Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra, was arrested in Lakhimpur incident

OCTOBER 18, 2021: Farmers call the 'Rail Roko' protest against the Lakhimpur killings

OCTOBER 29, 2021: After SC signal, Delhi Police started removing barricades from Ghazipur, Tikri, Singhu borders where farmers have been protesting

NOVEMBER 19, 2021: PM announces repeal of farm laws

Rules of 25-yr-old PESA still not implemented in 4 States

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Despite 25 years after its enactment, the rules of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA) are yet to see the light of the day in four tribal populated States--Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand in the country, thus depriving the adivasis (tribal communities) from their right to empowerment.

Taking serious note in the matter, the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has urged the Governors of these laggard States to discuss the matter with the Chief Ministers

and Ministers of these four states and exhort them to notify the rules at the earliest. The provisions of the Pesa Act seek to empower local self - governments in the Schedule V areas of the country to help safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the tribal communities.

The draft model Pesa rules had been circulated by (MoPR) in 2009 to the 10 Pesa states. Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Telangana have notified their state Pesa rules, noted Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Giriraj Singh

and Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda at a national conference held here to deliberate the issue.

Singh said that while preparing the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs should create a new model of development for the tribal community through convergence, keeping in mind the traditions of the tribal community adequate facilities should be provided to them.

He also stressed upon the need to prevent land alienation of tribals for which a well

organised data base must be maintained and the need for convergence between Pesa and the execution of the Forest Rights Act.

At the meeting Singh also enlisted various measures taken by the Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the development of tribal areas. "The budget of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, which was Rs.4,000 crore during 2013-14, has increased to more than Rs 7,500 crore during 2021-22. The scholarship given to tribal students was Rs 978 crore during the year 2013-14, which has now increased to Rs. 2546 crore.

These facts show that the Centre is serious about improvement in day-to-day lives of the tribal community. The State Governments should also show similar commitment and seriousness in this matter," he said.

Similarly, Munda called upon the States to look at the tribal welfare from a national point of view while understanding the basic spirit of the Constitution along with local concerns and issues. He emphasized on the welfare of tribals by convergence of Schemes of Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Union Ministry of Environment.

CBI arrests 2 senior officials of Ratnakar bank in bribery case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Friday arrested two senior officials of Ratnakar Bank Ltd. (RBL) in a bribery case of ₹ 30 lakh.

The arrested accused are Regional Head, Agro Division, RBL, Ahmedabad, Nimesh Manger and Recovery Head of the Bank at Pune, Saurabh Bhasin,

A case was registered on a complaint against the accused on the allegations of demanding undue advantage of Rs 1 crore for issuing a valuation certificate. It was further alleged that the

complainant along with his 12 family members applied for Agri Term Loan under the Development of Commercial Horticulture through Production and Post Harvest Management of Horticulture Scheme of National Horticulture Board, in which government gives subsidy at the rate of 50 percent of the total project cost limited to Rs 56 lakh for each project, the agency said in a statement.

Due to non-availability of subsidy, all the agri term loans of the complainant and his family members became NPA and for availing subsidy, a valuation cer-

tificate for mortgaged properties was required.

It was also alleged that the bribe was settled to an amount of Rs 30 lakh on negotiation.

The CBI laid a trap and caught Manger from Ahmedabad and later on his colleague in Pune, Bhasin was also caught.

Searches were conducted at five locations including at Ahmedabad, Pune and Delhi at the office and residential premises of arrested duo.

Both the arrested accused are being produced today before the Competent Court, it added.

India to face investment shortfall of \$3.5 tn to achieve target of net-zero emission by 2070

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India could face a significant investment shortfall of USD3.5 trillion to achieve its target of net-zero emission by 2070. Of this, it would need investment support of USD1.4 trillion in the form of concessional finance from developed economies to mobilize foreign capital. Overall, India would need cumulative investments of \$10.1 trillion to achieve net-zero emissions within the next fifty years, according to an independent study released here by The Council for Environment, Energy and Water – Centre for Energy Finance (CEEW-CF).

The first of its kind study 'Investment Sizing India's 2070 Net-Zero Target' estimates that these investments would help decarbonize India's power, industrial and transport sectors. However, the first-of-its-kind study estimated that India could face a significant investment shortfall of \$3.5 trillion to achieve its net-zero target.

At the recently concluded climate change summit (COP26),



Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's aim to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070. Net zero is a concept where any unit either prevents putting into or pulls out as much carbon from the atmosphere as it consumes; the unit can be a home, factory, state or a country.

The study said that the majority of the investments would be needed to transform India's power sector. Such investments totaling USD 8.4 trillion would be required to significantly scale up generation from renewable energy and associated integration, distribution and transmission infrastructure. Another USD1.5 trillion would have to be invested in the industrial sector for setting up green hydrogen production capacity to advance the sector's

de-carbonization, the study added.

At COP26, India announced bold near-term and long-term climate targets. Our analysis finds that a transition to net-zero emissions would require mammoth investment support from developed countries. Developed countries must ramp up hard targets for climate finance over the coming years," Arunabha Ghosh, CEO, CEEW, said.

Programme lead and lead author of the study, Vaibhav Pratap Singh, said, "India's 2070 net-zero target is a bold commitment that would not only contribute to global de-carbonization efforts but would also shape how businesses and jobs of the future would look like."

"Traditional domestic and foreign sources such as domestic banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), and debt capital markets — both local and international — would not be able to fund the massive investments they themselves would need. Therefore, access to foreign capital on concessional terms would have to play a key role," Singh added.

Centre announces resumption of cooked food in passenger trains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday announced to resume serving cooked food in the Indian railways passenger trains, which was discontinued in the first place due to coronavirus-related restrictions.

The Railway Board, in a letter on Friday, asked its tourism and catering arm Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to resume the service.

Ready-to-eat meals will also continue to be served to passengers, the Railway board also said.

"In view of the restoration of normal train services, requirements of travelling passengers and easing of Covid lockdown restrictions in eateries, restaurants, hotels and such other places across the country, it has been decided by the Ministry of Railways to resume the services of cooked food in trains. Service of ready-to-eat meals will also continue," the letter stated.

Recently, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has also allowed airlines to serve meals on all domestic flights.

Both the decisions come as India's coronavirus scenario remains under control with average daily cases hovering around 10,000-15,000 since the past few days.

Earlier this month, the Railways had announced the running of normal trains, withdrawing the special tag which had been in place for the pandemic.

In the letter to zonal railways, the Railways said trains will now be operated with their regular numbers and fares will revert to normal pre-Covid prices.

With the operation of special trains and no concessions, the Railways' revenue has seen a substantial growth. It registered an increase of 113% in earnings from the passenger segment during the second quarter of 2021-2022 as compared to the first.

2 booked by ED in Shakti Bhog Foods bank fraud case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed prosecution complaint (chargesheet in police parlance) against entry operators Ashok Kumar Goel and Devki Nandan Garg for their active involvement in money laundering in the bank fraud of ₹ 3,269.42 crore by Shakti Bhog Foods Limited.

The ED had initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of FIR registered by the CBI against Shakti Bhog Foods Limited and others, for criminal conspiracy, cheating and criminal misconduct.

Investigation revealed that Kewal Krishan Kumar, CMD Shakti Bhog Foods Limited (SBFL), Raman Bhuraria, CA, Devki Nandan Garg and Ashok Kumar Goel had conspired to defraud the consortium of 10 banks led by the State bank of India, the agency said in a statement.

Garg and Goel had assisted Shakti Bhog Foods Limited and its directors in generation, acquisition, layering and siphoning off its loans funds through the platform of shell com-

panies under their disposal, it said.

The two accused entry operators were actively involved in providing fake bills to Shakti Bhog Foods Limited without actual business transactions. These fake bills facilitated inflated stock, turnover and purchase/sale of SBFL to enable it to secure enhanced credit facilities from consortium banks on the basis of the inflated financial reports, the agency further said.

Investigation unearthed that Garg and Goel were also beneficiaries of the proceeds of crime.

In this case, ED has so far provisionally attached movable and immovable properties worth Rs 98.31 crore under ownership of Shakti Bhog group companies and their directors/promoters, Chartered Accountant Raman Bhuraria, his wife, Usha Bhuraria under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act.

After the filing of the prosecution complaints of the ED, the PMLA Special Court has taken cognizance of the offence against Shakti Bhog Foods Limited, Kewal Krishan Kumar, Sunanda Kumar, Raman Bhuraria and others, it added.

PM launches projects worth ₹3,240 cr in UP

Mahoba (UP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated multiple projects aimed at ending water scarcity for farmers in the parched Bundelkhand region.

The Prime Minister who arrived in Mahoba in Uttar Pradesh this afternoon inaugurated Arjun Sahayak Project, Ratauli Weir Project, Bhaoni Dam Project and Majhgaon-Chilli Sprinkler Project, among others.

The cumulative cost of these projects is more than ₹3,240 crore and once fully operational, these will help irrigate around 65,000 hectares of land in the districts of Mahoba, Hamirpur,



Banda and Lalitpur, These projects will also benefitting several lakh farmers, provide potable water to the people of the region. *PTI*

Previous Govts devastated Bundelkhand, let mafia loot it: PM

Mahoba (UP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday accused the previous State and Central Governments of devastating the Bundelkhand region by handing over its resources and forests to mafia elements who “looted” them.

“The Governments which had been there in Delhi and UP left no stone unturned in devastating this region turn by turn,” Prime Minister said here while inaugurating a slew of projects aimed at ending the water scarcity in the parched Bundelkhand region.

“It is not hidden from anyone that the jungles and resources were handed over to the mafia. The manner in which these people behaved with Bundelkhand will not be forgotten by the people here,” he said. “A lot was said and done in the name of ‘nalkoop’ and hand pumps but earlier

Governments did not tell how water could be made available in the absence of groundwater,” the Prime Minister pointed out.

“Now when the bulldozer is being used against mafia (elements), some people are raising hue and cry. But whatever they may try to do, the development of UP and Bundelkhand will not stop,” the Prime Minister asserted.

“The question is how this area, which was an example for water conservation in the past, turned into a centre of exodus and water-related problems,” the Prime Minister said.

“Why were the people not ready to marry their daughters here and daughters here wished they got married to areas where there is water?” he asked.

While inaugurating various projects, including the Arjun Sahayak Irrigation

Project, aimed at turning the parched Bundelkhand into a water-surplus one, Prime Minister Modi recalled his frustration over the Akhilesh Yadav Government’s “indifference” to the plight of the project.

“This Arjun Sahayak Project was left lying incomplete for years but was taken up after the BJP formed government in the Centre in 2014 and I enquired about the pending irrigation works,” he said.

Accusing the Akhilesh Yadav government of not taking any interest in its completion, the PM said, “Talks were held at different levels for its early completion with the then UP Government but these ‘gunehgaar’ (culprits) of Bundelkhand’ did not show any interest in completing the irrigation facilities here.”

In 2017, when the Yogi

government came to power, this project gained momentum and today it is being dedicated to the people, he said.

Attacking the “pariwarwadis” (dynastic) Governments, he said they kept most of the UP villages thirsty for decades but the Government of ‘karma yogis’ in two years gave tap water to 30 lakh people, said Modi, lauding the Yogi Adityanath government’s work in the parched region.

“The governments of ‘pariwarwadis’ kept children and daughters deprived of drinking water facilities but the double engine Government made separate toilets in schools,” he said. They made announcements in the name of farmers but not a paisa used to reach them, he said.

In the name of ponds, ribbons were cut but the ‘commission’ was taken in the dig-

ging work for embankments and there was corruption in drought relief works.

“Those in the Government looted Bundelkhand and benefited their families without caring for your families crying for every drop of water,” he said, citing the example of the Arjun Sahayak project, inaugurated by him today, as an example of their work culture.

“For decades, the people of Bundelkhand have seen the governments that looted them, it is for the first time that they are seeing a Government which works for the development of the region,” he said.

Contrasting the work culture of BJP governments with that of previous governments, the Prime Minister said, “No one can forget this harsh truth that they did not get tired looting UP and we do not get tired working for it.”

Kolkata trader arrested for ₹200 crore bank fraud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday arrested a Kolkata businessman Ashish Junjunwala on charges of ₹200 crore bank fraud.

Acting on a 2017 case initially lodged by the CBI, the ED summoned Ashish and then arrested him. The ED lawyers later said that the businessman had committed a bank fraud which could go up to ₹1,000 crore. “Presently it is ₹200 crore and the probe is on,” a lawyer said adding the fraud was done on public sector banks.

ED officials said that the businessman was being interrogated to find out whether any other persons were involved in the scam or not.

‘Defeat of arrogance & victory of farmer unity’

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has termed the Centre’s withdrawal of the controversial farm laws a defeat of arrogance and victory of the farmers’ unity.

Soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the withdrawal of the farm laws, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee came out congratulating the farmers saying every single farmer of the country merited a congratulatory note.

“My heartfelt congratulations to every single farmer who fought relentlessly and were not fazed by the cruelty with which BJP ... treated you. This is YOUR VICTORY! My deepest condolences to everyone who lost their loved ones in this fight,” the Chief Minister said even

Demanding more power for the farming community TMC national general secretary and Chief Minister’s nephew Abhishek Banerjee called Friday’s development a “defeat of arrogance” adding “the long and arduous struggle” of the farmers “their grit and determination against all adversities has shown BJP ... their true place. This is the real power of dissent in a democracy and I salute every farmer for their courage.”

Attacking the farmer for tendering apology to the farmers in his speech senior TMC MP Sukhendu Shekhar Roy wondered why the

Government did not take the decision earlier so that the lives of many farmers could be saved.

“Now the Prime Minister’s conscience has woken up when more than 700 farmers have died,” he said in a hard-hitting statement adding the Centre’s decision to withdraw the farm laws was not the result of its realization of guilt but it was the result of fear for the approaching elections.

“There is no conscience in it ... they would have continued with the decision and allowed more farmers to perish ... what made them withdraw the laws is their dread of approaching elections in the five states ... they know that they will lose ... with the pre-poll surveys presaging electoral defeat for the BJP the Centre has taken this decision,” the TMC leader said adding Friday’s withdrawal might not however help the saffron cause as “there end has begun and in 2024 they will be have to go out of power with their bag and baggage.”

Both CPI(M) and State Congress leadership called it a biggest victory after the Independence. CPI(M) politburo member Biman Bose said that “it was a historical reality” while his party central committee member Sujana Chakrabarty said “the Centre did not withdraw the laws out of generosity but out of fear ... they were forced to do so.” PCC president Adhir Chowdhury said “Friday’s withdrawal of the farm laws were perhaps the biggest victory of the people after Independence.”

DMK hails Stalin for farm Bill repeal

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The DMK leadership and cadre were in cloud nine on Friday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his Government’s decision to repeal the controversial agriculture reforms bill. K N Nehru, Minister for Municipal Administration told reporters that it was a victory for Stalin.

“It was Stalin who first demanded that these bills should not be implemented at all. While other farm leaders were eulogising the bill, Stalin pointed out the defects in these legislations and demanded its repeal. He led many demonstrations across the State demanding the Union Government to withdraw the same,” said Nehru.

Chief Minister Stalin, whose election campaign in May 2021 was focussed mainly on the repeal of the bills said that the decision of the Modi Government was a victory for the non-violent agitation staged by the farmers in the country. “People’s views should get precedence over all issues in a democratic society,” the chief minister said in a statement. He said the victory of the farmers proved again that this is Mahatma Gandhi’s country.

Dr S Ramadoss, founder of the



PMK, an ally of the BJP, too welcomed the move by the Union Government to withdraw the Bills.

“These reforms were of no use to the farming community. The PMK was against these reforms from the word go and I am happy to note that netter sense had prevailed,” said Dr Ramdoss.

But P Chengal Reddy, veteran farmer and advisor to Consortium of Indian Farmers’ Association described Friday as the most tragic day for farmers. He said that the image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP have taken a beating following the repeal of the agriculture bills.

“Since the opening up of Indian economy by the then Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao in 1991, service and industry have been progressing at 10 per

cent while the growth of agriculture remained at one per cent. This was due to the non-implementation of reforms in the farm sector. Modi has brought in these reforms and almost every farmer was happy that in future technologies will come, investment will come and there would be market arrangements for long term value addition, traceability and quality and Indian agriculture economy will really go beyond 4 to 5 per cent,” Reddy told The Pioneer over phone from Hyderabad.

He said the political farmers in Delhi have won while the real farmers are put to loss by the decision to repeal the Bills.

Reddy also pointed out that despite the setbacks suffered by demonetisation and Covid-19 pandemic which put the industrial and service sectors to serious problems, it was the farmers and agriculture sector that supported and sustained the nation.

“Modi could have asked the Supreme Court to decide on the judicial validity or if there is any deficiency, the same could have been rectified. The withdrawal of the Bills shows the weakness of Modi as a leader and BJP itself has to rethink because this is not the way you have to go about,” said Reddy.

No need for DM’s conversion certificate for registration of interfaith couples’ marriages: Allahabad HC

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court has ruled that marriage registrars do not have to ask interfaith couples to bring their faith conversion certificates from district authorities.

A bench of Justice Suneet Kumar gave the ruling also asking the district marriage registrars to register forthwith the marriages of interfaith couples.

The bench gave the verdict on a bunch of 17 petitions by as many interfaith couples who complained of marriage registrars’ refusing to register their marriages in absence of their faith conversion certificates from district magistrates. The petitioners included an Uttar Pradesh resident, Mayra alias Vaishnavi Vilas Shirshikar.

Justice Kumar gave the verdict ruling that the insistence on production of conversion certificate will amount to breaching the couples’ fundamental rights to life, liberty and privacy.

“The state and private respondents are restrained from interfering with the

life, liberty and privacy of the petitioners to live as man and woman and the police authorities of the respective districts shall ensure the safety of the petitioners and provide protection to them if demanded or needed,” the judge said in his order on Thursday.

Petitioners had claimed in their petitions that they were majors and one of the parties to the marriage had converted to the religion of his or her partner.

Standing Counsel appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government had argued that as conversions were for the marriage, interfaith marriages cannot be registered without the district authority ascertaining if the conversion was voluntary and was not induced by coercion, allurement and threat.

Counsel for the petitioner, however, had contended that even taking a case that approval of the authority was not taken before the conversion, the petitioners still have the right to live together as majors. *PTI*

Temple priest and ‘sadhvi’, bludgeoned to death in Maharajganj

Maharajganj (UP): A priest and a ‘sadhvi’ were found killed inside a temple in Mahdeiya village of Maharajganj, police said on Friday.

The incident allegedly took place Thursday night and the bodies of both persons were found lying in the temple on Friday morning by the villagers after which they informed the police.

According to the police, they were killed with a blow to their heads with the deity’s idol installed in the temple.

Their bodies have been sent for a post mortem examination and an investigation is on, officials at Parsa Malik Police Station said. According to villagers, Ram Ratan Mishra (73), a resident of Mahdeiya village, had built Mata’s temple in the village at his own expense and used to live there.

For the last two and a half decades, a woman named Kalavati (68) from Nepal had also been living and worshipping there, and people referred to her as ‘Sadhvi’. *PTI*

APPLICATIONS INVITED FOR CELEBRATION OF MAHAPARINIRWAN DIWAS

Government of NCT of Delhi is inviting applications for celebration of **Mahaparinirwan Diwas of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar on 06-12-2021 under "Scheme for Celebration of Birth/Death Anniversary of Eminent personalities".**

Government of NCT of Delhi will provide assistance through empanelled agencies to the Organizations desiring to celebratre the event in the form of arrangement for tentage, sound, system, lighting, banners, chairs etc.

Eligibility:- NGOs / Organizations involved in social activities are eligible for the assistance.

Procedure for applying:

The Organizations desiring to avail the assistance may submit their application duly recommended by area MLA submitted by the NGOs/Organization to the Department for the welfare of SC/ST/OBC, GNCT of Delhi, B Block, 2nd floor, Vikas Bhawan, I.P.Estate, New Delhi- 02 by **30/11/2021** positively. **Applications received thereafter will not be considered.**

Selected NGOs/ Organizations have to provide photographs of the event organized by them and abide by stipulations of the department for proper organization of the event. Organizers will also be required to submit a declaration to the effect that Govt. guidelines/SOP applicable for organizing religious/cultural functions will be followed scrupulously to prevent spread of Covid-19.

Note:- The celebration of Mahaparinirwan Diwas of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar on 06-12- 2021 is subject to the existing DDMA Guidelines related to prevent spread of Covid- 19 pandemic and modifications, if any, in existing Guidelines. The assistance will be provided to only those organizations who will be able to produce the necessary permission as per DDMA guidelines from the conceredned District Magistrate and other concerned agencies.

DIP/Shabdarth/0437/21-22

Wankhede running liquor bar in violation of DoPT rules: Malik

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Seeking not to let Zonal Director of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Sameer Wankhede off the hook, Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik on Friday made a fresh allegation that Wankhede was -- in violation of Central Civil Services (CCA) Rules, 1965 -- running a liquor bar IN Navi Mumbai which violates DoPT rules.

A day after he produced a purported School Leaving Certificate that mentioned the controversial IRS officer was as Muslim and not Hindu Dalit as the latter has been claiming all along, Malik alleged that Dnyandeve Wankhede, who was working in the State Excise Department earlier had managed to get a permit room licence for his son Sameer Wankhede’s name when the latter was a minor in 1997-1998.

Talking to media persons here, Malik said: “As per the law, minors cannot be issued such liquor bar licence. Sameer Wankhede was only around 17 years 10 months old at that time, when he was issued the liquor licence. This was a big fraud perpetrated by his father”

“Sameer Wankhede’s ‘Sadguru Restro Bar’ is located at Vashi in Navi Mumbai.

The licence has been continuously renewed, without fail and is currently valid till 2022,” Malik said.

“Sameer Wankhede had concealed the information about his owning a liquor bar while joining the central government services. It was only in 2017 that Wankhede declared that he owns the inherited property along with his father, which is a hotel but is on a lease, Malik alleged.

“At that time, Sameer Wankhede declared that he owned a bequeathed property jointly with his father Dnyandeve, where a ‘hotel’ is running from which he gets an annual rental income is ₹240,000 for the huge 1,600 sq feet premises and the property was worth just ₹1 crore,” Malik said.

The Maharashtra Minister said that Sameer Wankhede had clearly flouted central service rules that prohibit any officers from running businesses. “I am filing complaints with the DoPT, Vigilance Commission and the IT Department as he belongs to the IRS cadre. He has no right to continue in service,” Malik said.

On their part, Wankhede have gone on record saying that they have informed the government that the property was willed by the late wife of

Dnyandeve and there was no illegality in the whole thing.

During the news conference, Malik shared documents to corroborate the claims which comprised a report from the state excise department that states that a licence to serve liquor in a hotel was issued in the name of Sameer Dnyandeve Wankhede on October 29, 1997. The documents further showed that the license was renewed every year till February 3, 2021.

Malik -- who has been “exposing” NCB’s Zonal director Sameer Wankhede’s efforts to implicate falsely innocent people including Bollywood super star Shah Rukh Khan’s son Aryan and Fadnavis’ alleged links with the underworld -- has been making a series of allegations against

Wankhede.

The NCP leader 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.

In what came as a boost to Malik, the Bombay High Court on Thursday took on record several of his documents, including the copy of the latter’s School Leaving Certificate (SLC) -- which mentions that he was a Muslim and not Hindu Dalit as he has been claiming.

Will go to Dubai, keep track of me: Malik to probe agencies

Mumbai: Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik announced here on Friday that he would be travelling to Dubai for four days after taking all the requisite permissions from the Centre and state and asked in tongue and cheek all the government agencies “to keep an eye on me and track my movement”. In a tweet put out on

his official handle, Malik said “Hello Everyone, this is to inform you that I am traveling to Dubai after taking all required permissions from our Central and State Governments I will be back in India on the 24th of November 2021. Requesting all government agencies to keep an eye on me and track my movement.

About turn

The Government, after facing a year-long national protest, has repealed the farm laws

Somebody cheekily said the controversial farm laws could go the same way they came in — by the ordinance route. This was after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the constitutional process will be followed to repeal the laws in the upcoming session of Parliament. Yes, there is nothing unconstitutional about an ordinance but what it does is shortcircuit the democratic and legislative process of bringing in law or facilitating its exit. Had the process been followed, perhaps the decision to repeal the laws could have been avoided. The Prime Minister chose the occasion of Gurpurab to tell the nation, and the protesting farmers in particular, that his Government was repealing the laws. He said that though the laws were enacted for the benefit of the farmers, the Government failed to convince a section of them. Parliament passed the laws last September. The farmers did not like the laws. They gave myriad reasons. Their talks with the Government failed. They moved the courts and began a national protest symbolised by a year-long sit-in on the borders of Delhi. Hundreds of them died during the protests. They faced police ire in Haryana and Delhi and political anger in Lakhimpur Kheri. Their patriotism was called into question, with them even being called Khalistani. Bringing in agricultural reforms in a predominantly agricultural country is an onerous task. Farmers constitute the biggest single vote bank. The sector is the backbone of the economy.

Any changes in the mode of farming or handling produce have societal implications. This is reason enough for such a reform to pass people's scrutiny before becoming law. So much so, the Supreme Court, which ordered a stay on the implementation of the laws this January, did not act on the report of a committee it appointed on resolving the farm laws controversy. A committee member even wrote to the Chief Justice, saying there was no point in keeping the report in cold storage while the protests raged. The apex court perhaps thought it fit to allow the Executive and Legislature to handle the matter as it primarily falls in their domain. The Government will address the agriculture reforms issue once again in the coming days. The hasty ordinance route can be avoided and the Bills must first be subjected to parliamentary scrutiny and then debated in both Houses. Of late, it has become a norm of sorts for Parliament to focus only on debating laws before passage because that is what Parliament rules say. There is no practice of Bills being first mandatorily referred to parliamentary committees. As a result, very few Bills are referred and most legislative proposals fail to get full parliamentary attention. Members debate the Bills without the benefit of a comparative study of the Government's proposals and the committees' recommendations. That is what happened with the three farm laws, too, and the result is there for all to see. It's time to restore the sanctity of law-making.



Devotees bathe in the Ganga on the occasion of Kartik Purnima, in Haridwar

PTI

Butt, of course

Today more than ever, there is an exigent need to control tobacco use and save lives

It's simply unacceptable that global consumption of cigarettes is the same today as it was 30 years ago. India ranks second in the number of smokers (250,002,133) aged between 16 and 64 years and is among the countries with one of the lowest quit rates for smoking (less than 20 per cent for men), a new report states. The report, prepared by 'The International Commission to Reignite the Fight Against Smoking' using secondary data from sources such as the World Bank, said that India and China are home to more than 500 million tobacco users in the 16-64 age group. India also accounts for some of the highest rates of smokeless tobacco (ab)use and oral cancer in the world. Hardly any surprises here, since cigarettes cost significantly cheaper here in India than in the developed countries and, as far as the use of smokeless tobacco is concerned, the red pools deposited along the sidewalks and the colourful graffiti created by spit-out *gutkha*, *khaini* and suchlike substances on building walls and other public spaces are proof enough of our citizens' dedication to chewing tobacco. On the positive side, 37 per cent Indians are reported to be desirous of changing their behaviour by quitting smoking.

An estimated 1.14 billion people worldwide still use tobacco, which kills nearly eight million people and eliminates nearly 200 million disability-adjusted life years annually. The cost of this guilty pleasure to the world is nearly \$2 trillion a year. "The drastic socio-economic impact makes it expedient to reignite the fight against smoking," the report points out. It adds that though nearly all countries ban the marketing and direct sale of tobacco products to children, the reality is that these prohibitions are not rigorously enforced in low-to-middle income countries. To kick the habit, the report recommends adopting best practices to combat misinformation and to reduce harm from tobacco (mis)use by leveraging multinational, multidisciplinary and participatory foresight studies. It also advocates risk-proportionate regulations to make it easier for smokers to quit while nudging expansion of access to tobacco harm-reduction products in low-to-middle income countries, including India. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new attention to public health, including its role in tobacco control. As part of emerging innovations, the efforts to kick smoking now have the most powerful tool in history at its disposal: Technology that delivers nicotine without the dangers to health caused by the combustion of tobacco.

Portrayal of mental illnesses is just filmi

The manner in which Bollywood projects mental disorders is far removed from reality; it has failed to correctly address the issue of mental illnesses

We are in the midst of a pandemic, with this state of health emergency nearing two years. This drastic change in people's lifestyles is taking a toll on their mental health, especially of the young. With Statista reporting that as of 2017, more than 14 per cent of India's population suffered from variations of mental disorders, higher than the estimated world average of 10.7 per cent, one wonders what the post-pandemic position would be. I have firsthand experienced the mental state of students during COVID, especially the second wave, and wanted to explore the connection between cinema as a mass media tool to heighten awareness about mental health and illness.

Cinema as mass media is a powerful way to bring awareness and educate people on burning issues and mental health and mental illness will certainly be a burning topic post-COVID. With Hindi cinema leading the number of films a year in India, Bollywood sets the tone in changing opinions, thoughts and behaviour. It is certainly important to note that the tone and tenor of mental illness as represented by Bollywood has changed from the earlier broad term "madness" used.

According to movie magazines and commentators, of late Indian cinema has produced films on diverse topics of mental health and illness like *Kaasav* (2017) about depression, treatment, suicide, care and loneliness; *Dear Zindagi* (2016) about depression; *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) on dyslexia; *Black* (2005) depicting Alzheimer's; 15 *Park Avenue* depicting schizophrenia; and Marathi film *Devrai* (2004) dealing with mental breakdown. Then there have been others which have varying themes of mental health: *Judgementall Hai Kya* and *Chhichhore*, both in 2019; *Tamasha* (2015); *Barfi* (2013); and *My Name is Khan* and *Karthik Calling Karthik* (both 2010).

Is there a correlation between increased mental health representation in Bollywood and the decreasing stigma? Did the movie *Taare Zameen Par* manage to do more for learning disorders like dyslexia than many psychiatrists put together, as has been written



by the author in *Vogue India's* October 2019 story "How Bollywood's portrayal of mental illness has evolved over the last decade"? The answer is more complex than a simple "yes" or "no".

First and foremost, dyslexia is a learning disability and not a mental illness. The fact that the author of the story bunched it with other mental illnesses is a reflection how mental health is not correctly understood. It may be secondary that psychologists admit that dyslexic people are very likely to present other kinds of learning disabilities or psychiatric disorders. Besides, if we analyse various movies based on the Theory of Reception Studies, it is not what the story writer, producer and director wants to convey, but what the audience understands — and that is based on the larger social and political context in which the film is produced and consumed.

In other words, how the audience makes sense of a movie is not a straightforward equation, but dependent on many factors. In the absence of any media research on the effects of movies across class and caste as well as across urban and rural areas, one cannot comment with any certainty. The parameter of a box



A STUDY SAYS THAT THE PORTRAYAL OF MENTAL ILLNESS NEGATIVELY INFLUENCES PUBLIC PERCEPTION WHILE SUSTAINING STIGMA. UNLESS CHANGES IN MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES PARALLEL THE CHANGES IN MEDIA PORTRAYALS, REAL PROGRESS BECOMES DIFFICULT

office "hit" could be simply attributed to the entertainment aspect of the film without any social gains, or the film actually helping to reduce the stigma arising from mental health issues.

A study by Banwari published in 2011 found the Bollywood portrayal of a psychiatrist as mostly a middle aged male, clinically incompetent, being unable to make accurate diagnosis while breaching professional ethics and also frequently transgressing sexual and non-sexual boundaries. While another study by Pathak and Biswal in 2020 states that the use of mental illness as a topic of entertainment strengthens existing notions of mental illness. For example, the 2019 movie *Judgementall Hai Kya* was earlier titled 'Mental Hai Kya'. The initial title itself is a depiction of how incorrectly society understands mental illness. The title was changed after widespread criticism. The movie depicts the use of Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) without anesthesia, which is rarely done in real life. This one misrepresentation might have done more damage to the understanding of mental illness than all previous correct representations.

Things become more complicated than straightforward



ABHAY CHAWLA

media messaging as another study by Pirkis, Blood, Francis & McCallum in 2006 says that portrayal of mental illness actually negatively influences public perception while sustaining stigma. Furthermore, unless changes in mental health policies parallel the changes in media portrayals, real progress becomes difficult to achieve. India has a very high suicide rate (especially in the 15-29 age group) which was 15.7 per lakh in 2015 while the global average was 10.6.

According to a 2018 story quoting reports, India needs about 13,000 psychiatrists and actually has 3,500. We need 20,000 clinical psychologists as against the 1,000 we have; need 35,000 psychiatric social workers against the current 900 and 30,000 psychiatric nurses against the 1,500 we possess.

One only needs to check responses and reactions in one's family and friends when keywords like 'mental illness' and 'psychiatrist' are used. Meanwhile, I worry for various children and young adults in lockdown and other situations with misrepresented messaging by Bollywood and the overdependence of policy makers on mass media as messaging tools.

(The writer is an author and a Visiting Professor, Delhi University and IIMC. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CENTRE'S U-TURN ON FARM LAWS

Sir — The momentous and somewhat surprise decision announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to repeal the three farm laws assumes significance as a victory of farmers' rights and added significance for the truths and takeaways it holds out. The saga of 'democratic resistance' by farmers spanning over a year against the odds makes a difficult, yet glorious chapter in the country's history. There is no way the lives of hundreds of farmers lost in the long battle against the laws would have gone in vain.

The majority that a Government enjoys in Parliament does not mean unfettered freedom to do whatever it wants unilaterally and arbitrarily. A party or an alliance is voted to power to govern according to the will of the people and not to do things at the whim of a leader, even if it was in his name that the mandate was secured. It is crystal clear that the decision to scrap the contentious farm laws was influenced by political calculations. The claim that PM Modi has astutely taken the BJP to the pole position in poll-bound States at a stroke (a master stroke?) says it all.

G David Milton | Maruthanadocore

HUMANITY IS THE ULTIMATE REALISATION

Sir — No praise is enough for the Sikh community for opening the gates of a Gurgaon gurdwara for Muslims to offer Friday prayers as the latter are often forced to offer their prayers in the open due to the lack of mosques in the area and thereby inviting wrath of the Hindutva muscle-flexers. And heartiest salute to the broad heart and mind of Sheridil Singh Sidhu — president of the Shri Guru Singh Sabha — which has prompted him to utter such sane words — "Gurdwaras are the abode of the Guru (Granth Sahib) and all are welcome here. The Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians have all made sacrifices for our country and no one should feel that they don't have a place".

Right through their humanitarian all-embracing action, Sikhs have proved that they do not offer mere lip service to the Almighty or Guru Nanak Sahib.

Football will never be the same



Football guru for some and football encyclopaedia for others, veteran commentator and author Novy Kapadia (68), widely regarded as the voice of Indian football, passed away due to motor neuron disease, a rare condition that causes nerves in the spine and brain to lose function over time. Though Kapadia was also a professor of English at SGTB Khalsa College, Delhi University, where he worked for 41 years, besides being the Deputy Proctor of the university from 2003-2010, he was most

recently in news because he was not able to avail pension benefits, prompting former Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju to intervene and provide a financial aid of ₹4 lakh.

A true Delhiite to whom Ambedkar Stadium was second home, Kapadia made an unparalleled contribution to football in Delhi. He represented the Delhi State Team in the Junior National Championship and played in the Delhi league for many years. Popularly known as the "voice of Indian football", Kapadia also authored the book titled *'Barefoot to Boots: The Many Lives of Indian Football'*, which traces the history of the sport in India over the years. Kapadia, who began commentary in 1980, covered nine football World Cups along with the Olympics, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and other multi-sport events. He remained a bachelor in life but it would be right to say that he married football and commanded such authority and respect in it. Rest in peace, sir.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Rather, they translate the reverend Guru's preaching into practice and offer a hand of cooperation and a heart full of love towards Muslims who are also creations of the same God. Indeed the Sikhs of Gurgaon have found God and also perceived the eternal truth i.e. our ultimate reality of humanity. People of all religions should learn humanity from the gallant example set by the Sikhs.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

INCULCATING THE RIGHT VALUES

Sir — Children, when guided wisely, distinguish themselves and later contribute incredible things to the world. November 20, also recognised as the World's Children's Day, tends to promote togetherness around the world and creates awareness of the problems children face in every corner of the globe. It is of immense importance to take care of the kind of milieu a child lives in. Parents and guardians must understand that every single act done by them is moulding the

subconscious mind of their child unknowingly. In this sphere of dichotomous thinking of good and bad, rich and poor, fearless and cowardly, intelligent and non-rational, let us make the children know that there exists a 'zone of acceptance' that welcomes mistakes and offers for their rectifications, too.

Let us teach them that perfection is a wonderful goal but not a practical standard to rely upon. This day is observed to remind us about children's right to enjoy their childhood without any boundaries and to become educated and well-developed adults in the future. World Children's Day offers each one of us an inspirational entry point to advocate, promote and to celebrate children's rights, translating into dialogues and actions that will build a better world for children.

Anushka Jaiswal | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

If the BJP thought the farm laws were detrimental to farmers' interest, it could have repealed them months ago.



AAP leader —Raghav Chadha



We have to end the pandemic and take decisive action to curb the climate crisis.

US President —Joe Biden

It's wonderful to see so many different kinds of actors in the industry. We are blessed to be in this day and age.



Actor —Kartik Aaryan



Cricket has been exceptionally kind to me. It has been an incredible journey, but I have decided to retire from cricket.

South African cricketer —AB de Villiers

The protest will not end immediately; we will wait for the day when the farm laws are repealed in Parliament.



BKU leader —Rakesh Tikait

FIRST COLUMN

BELARUS: A SMALL STORM IN A SAMOVAR



GWYNNE DYER

It's not a tempest in a teapot; it's smaller than that. A few thousand Arabs and Kurds, mostly young men but including women and children, are trapped between Poland, which will not let them in, and Belarusian border guards and militia who will not let them back into Belarus. But the language is getting menacing. Alexander Lukashenko, the dictator who has ruled Belarus for the past quarter-century, is leading the rhetorical parade. Angry and fearful, he concocted a bizarre scheme in August to put pressure on the EU by luring would-be migrants in the Middle East to come to Belarus and try their luck from there. Travel agents in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, all countries full of desperate people, were told they could issue free visas to anybody who wanted to come. None of those prospective migrants actually wanted to live in Belarus, of course, but the word was spread that it was easy to cross the border from there into Poland, which is an EU member. None of the migrants wanted to live in Poland either, but from there, the story was, it would be easy to get to Germany or the United Kingdom. Belarus would even help them to cross. As Lukashenko doubtless foresaw, the Poles overreacted. Poland's current populist government makes its living by promising to defend the homeland from hordes of imaginary migrants who dream of living in Szczecin and ravishing Polish maidens, so finding some real Arabs and Kurds on the border was a political godsend. The actual number of migrants trapped between the Polish border fence and the Belarusian forces who won't let them go back to Minsk is modest: somewhere between 3,000 and 6,000. But there are now 17,000 Polish border guards facing them in a no-go militarised zone that even the Polish media are excluded from. So there the poor deluded migrants sit, freezing and half-starved, while both governments profit politically from their misery. And when the EU announced last month that it is imposing a further round of sanctions on the Lukashenko regime for the migrant caper, he spun out even further.

"We are heating Europe, and they are threatening us," Lukashenko raged (referring to a Russian gas pipeline that crosses Belarus and supplies Poland and Germany). "What if we halt natural gas supplies? Therefore, I would recommend the leadership of Poland, Lithuania and other empty-headed people to think before speaking." But it's not Belarus's gas, and at this point Russia's President Vladimir Putin finally spoke up on the issue. Belarus is one of Russia's few allies and Putin usually puts up with Lukashenko's antics, but now he was threatening Moscow's business interests. "Of course, in theory, Lukashenko as president of a transit country could order our supplies to be cut to Europe. But this would mean a breach of our gas transit contract and I hope this will not happen," Putin said. "There's nothing good in this, and I will, of course, talk to him about this subject. Perhaps he said that in a fit of temper." And that was that. Putin is waiting for Germany's energy regulator to approve the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline under the Baltic, currently suspended, which would double Russia's gas sales to Europe. A military crisis in Eastern Europe would definitely queer that deal, so Lukashenko will have to climb down and shut up. Putin won't abandon Lukashenko utterly, because he's terrified that a successful non-violent democratic revolution in a neighbouring country might infect Russia too, but he has yanked on the Belarusian strongman's chain very hard. Not so much a tempest in a teapot, then. More like a very small storm in a samovar.

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

Sanitation, prosperity are sides of same coin

Faecal Sludge Management is critical for delivering safe sanitation in rural areas due to the considerable number of toilets linked to on-site sanitation



Recently a photo went viral on social media and made heads turn — the photo of 72-year-old Padma Shri awardee Tulsi Gowda clad in her tribal attire sans footwear. That photo singularly underlined the Government's commitment to reward the champions who have been contributing at the very roots of the society, away from the spot light, silently working with sage-like focus. A similar photo had gone viral in 2016, the photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi bowing to 105-year-old Kunwar Bai who had sold 10 goats, most of her assets, to construct toilets in her village. These visuals are as poignant and worth celebrating as our achievements in numbers and data.

When India achieved open defecation-free status by constructing 108 million toilets, it was as much Kunwar Bai's victory as it was the Prime Minister's. Champions are not always the by-product of Government's policies. Sometimes policies take inspiration from champions. As the Prime Minister often quips, when each Indian takes just one step, India takes 135 crore steps forward. Mass movements like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jal Shakti Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan mission and most recently the vaccination campaign are living testimonies of this adage.

Poignancy and inspiration aside, heralding a movement and giving it momentum is only a single domino in the policy value chain. To sustain the momentum and to discourage any roll back to past habits is a much bigger challenge, one that requires immense technical expertise and infrastructural needs. For this purpose, examining all the stationary and moving parts in the sanitation value chain, i.e., containment, emptying, transport, treatment and reuse or disposal of faecal waste is of prime importance.

In light of these facts, the Government of India approved the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) phase 2 with a total outlay of ₹1,40,881 Crore with focus on sustainability of ODF status and solid and liquid waste management.

The centre piece of this large problem and one of the biggest riddles to solve is Faecal Sludge Management (FSM), a critical yet challenging part of "Open Defecation Free" plus India.

Along with construction of community toilets, effective management of solid and liquid waste and visual cleanliness of villages, ODF Plus counts as major focus area of Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen Phase II. FSM is critical for delivering safe sanitation in rural areas due to the considerable number of toilets linked to on-site sanitation, such as septic tanks and single pits.

The magnitude of the challenge ahead compels us to identify best practices and case studies. An example worth mentioning is of Kalibillo village in Indore district, Madhya Pradesh. The Kalibillo Faecal Sludge Treatment plant operated and maintained by the Gram Panchayat caters to 45,870 people in a cluster of three Gram Panchayats and has a capacity of 3 Kilo Litres of faecal sludge. Service providers collect 3000 litres of sludge every day which then goes through a sequence of treatments, the end result being the treated effluents that end up beautifying the landscape.



THE FAECAL MANAGEMENT SPACE IS CROWDED BY SMALL SCALE, UNSKILLED, INFORMAL AND OFTEN NON-MECHANISED SERVICE PROVIDERS AND TO BUILD SENSE INTO THIS CHAOS AND BRING DISCIPLINE INTO THE SYSTEM IS A TOUGH CHALLENGE THAT WE WILL BE FACING ALONG THE PATH

(The writer is the Union Minister for Jal Shakti, Government of India. The views expressed are personal.)



Kalibillo is one example on a board studded with other champions, each customised to fit local conditions and challenges. Rural India throws a gargantuan obstacle in front of any initiative in this sector. The obstacle being the non-existence of sewerage systems in rural India, thus putting maximum onus on the safe management of faecal waste. Barring twin leach pits other containment systems like single pits and septic tanks require emptying removal of faecal sludge.

The reason why Swachh Bharat Abhiyan saved ₹50,000 per household per year in terms

of health and mandays was only because of the brilliance of introducing twin pits without which SBM would have been the harbinger of a much bigger and much more unsolvable problem. A twin pit is a perfect example of this Government's foresight, as it provides on-site treatment at ultra-low cost otherwise 108 million toilets built without twin pits would have destroyed whole ecosystems, poisoned our ground water and in general made life a stinking hell for everybody.

The scale of the challenge mostly bears its origins to pre-Swachh Bharat days where toilets were constructed without much thought about their sustenance. What SBM is doing presently with Faecal Sludge Management is undoing mistakes of the past, preventing seepage of faecal pathogens into ground water and water bodies because of poorly built sanitation systems. The faecal management space is crowded by small scale, unskilled, informal often non mechanised service providers and to build sense into this chaos, to bring discipline into the system is a tough challenge that we will be facing along the path. Institutionalising best practices is one of the ways forward which we have discussed earnestly in this article. The magnificent twin pit system makes itself known once again as we are also rapidly converting single pits into twin pits. For septic tanks, leach pits are being built for septic tanks to dispose partially treated waste water.

The theme for World Toilet Day 2021 is 'Valuing Toilets.' If there is any country on the planet that has truly valued the toilet, it is this country under this Government. Where others saw waste, we saw a means to uphold self-esteem of women, where many saw toilets as a topic beneath the status of a Prime Minister to discuss, he spoke about it from the ramparts of the Red Fort. He made it his life's mission and millions like Kunwar Bai joined in this march. Now the baton has been passed for the SBM Phase-2, and I am confident that by 2030, Goal 6 of Sustainable Development Goals, i.e., water and sanitation for all, will be achieved. It will be a proud achievement standing on that pedestal, and as a nation, we are prepared to retain our position as champions of sanitation, prepared to make ourselves proud once again.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

PM MODI'S MOVE TO REPEAL THE FARM LAWS IS STATESMANLIKE. THE GOVERNMENT WILL KEEP SERVING AND SUPPORTING OUR FARMERS. —UNION HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH



THE BJP IS SENSING DEFEAT IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS AND HAS STARTED REALISING THE REALITY THAT THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN BUILT BY FARMERS. —CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY PRIYANKA GANDHI

Scrapping farm laws will recoil on poll-bound politics

Indian farmers have reasons to be unhappy. The prices they get are less and as the cost is high, approaching international markets is not easy

Finally, the three farm bills are to be withdrawn as UP, Punjab and three other States go to polls. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement will lead to a sea change in the polity already impacted by the year-long struggle by the farmers. Yes, it would now be a direct battle for votes with the farm issues and the Prime Minister taking the centre stage. It is not an issue of who wins and who loses but calls for a process where there is no need for adopting an adamant attitude that has caused over 600 deaths, innumerable conflicts and vitiated the political atmosphere. The Prime Minister lamented that despite his concern for the farmers "we



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

couldn't convince a section of farmers despite best efforts" and that the goal of the laws was to "empower farmers, especially small farmers". There is a general relief and Modi can do more by also taking this opportunity to scrap the whimsical NGT order of scrapping 10-year-old cars, tractors and other vehicles.

As the bills are withdrawn, the Opposition may get emboldened. The government would come out with the plank of a responsive government and 'sabka sath sabka vikas'. The slogans and counter slogans may warm up the poll pitch with curious voters observing how things pan out. It would be yet another move to re-establish the brand Narendra Modi by the BJP-NDA. The opposition may try



to undo the ruling party's efforts. Ultimately it would turn the elections into an interesting phenomenon. Possibly it would also make any government not to act in haste as it happened with the June 5, 2020 farm ordinances, at the height of lockdown, leading to fears of corporate stranglehold. Whether the Bharatiya Kisan Union makes an impact in the coming polls with its possible allies SP and RLD or

just wither away also needs to be seen. Since 2018 and during the past one year, BKU has been in the news in the northern states and particularly UP, where the parties have high stakes.

The bills had generated enough corporate and foreign investor interest. It increased the hope of more investment in warehousing though the farmers have the reservation of losing to corporate and finally loss of livelihood. Several rounds of talks and its failure had led to a kind of desperation as they feared that returns would continue to fall.

Farmers refused to accept government's offer of written guarantee on minimum support price (MSP) and offer of levying cess on the new pri-

vate mandis outside the APMC mandis.

Over the years, between 2013-14 and 2017-18, as farmers' return on their produce started reducing, the foreign portfolio investment (FPI) was booming and funding for giant grain silos increased. Indian farmers have reasons to be unhappy. Their yields are low. World average for rice per kg per hectare in 2018 was 4679, maize 5924, all pulses 964, arhar 852, soybean 2791, groundnut 1611, wheat 3425, barley 2951 and gram 965. The Indian average was rice 2638, maize 3070, all pulses 757, arhar 757, soybean 1192, groundnut 1422, wheat 3371, barley 2693 and gram 956. The prices they get are less and as the cost is high, approaching international

markets is not easy.

In this backdrop if it is linked to foreign portfolio investment (FPI), the trend is surprising. In June 2020, the FPI was ₹11,736 crore. It doubled to ₹22,866 crore in July. The farm laws were introduced as ordinances on June 5, 2020. In August as the farm bills were introduced for passing by Parliament, the investments jumped to Rs 1,30,576 crore. About half the investments surprisingly came from two tiny countries, Mauritius and Singapore.

The State of Indian Agriculture 2015-16 (SIA15) says in its preface: "In recent years the agriculture and allied sector has been facing numerous challenges. The sector remains constrained by low productivity, excessive depen-

dence on monsoon and weather conditions, continuing fragmentation of land and preponderance of fragmented markets. A combination of these factors has led to episodes of agrarian distress which have been widely reported".

Various other issues like toll roads, building of silos and the falling farm GDP to 14 percent may become poll issues. The election plank interestingly may become farm issues though the BJP may like to keep it focused on Ram Mandir.

As it appears now farm growth and structural changes in economy would be at the centre stage but many new political issues may be added to the vexed problem impacting the 2022 election results.

‘China sent missile around the world’

PTI ■ WASHINGTON/BEIJING

China might one day be able to launch a surprise nuclear attack on the United States, the second highest-ranking American military officer has warned as he shed new details of Beijing's hypersonic weapons test in July, which sent a missile around the world at more than five times the speed of sound.

"They launched a long-range missile," General John Hyten, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told CBS News while commenting on China's hypersonic weapons test on July 27.

"It went around the world, dropped off a hypersonic glide vehicle that glided all the way back to China, that impacted a target in China," he said on Tuesday. When asked if the missile hit the target, Hyten said, "Close enough."

UK hospital terror-bomb was homemade with ball bearings, confirm police

PTI ■ LONDON

The homemade explosive used by a 32-year-old suspect in a terror attack outside Liverpool Women's Hospital was made up of ball bearings and its shrapnel had the potential to cause significant death or injury, UK Police investigating the incident said on Friday.

The terror attack by asylum seeker Enmad Al Swealmee, who was originally from Iraq, on Sunday ended in his own death as the taxi he used exploded with the homemade bomb.

The UK Counter-Terror Police, which has been investigating the circumstances behind the explosion, said it remains unclear why the device exploded the way it did. The attack led to the UK raising its terror threat level from substantial to severe.

"It was made using homemade explosives and had ball bearings attached to it which would have acted as shrapnel. Had it detonated in different circumstances we believe it would have caused significant injury or death," said Assistant Chief Constable Russ Jackson, Head of Counter Terrorism Police North West.

"We still do not know how or why the device exploded when it did, but we are not discounting it being completely unintentional, and it is a possibility that the movement of the vehicle or its stopping caused the ignition," he said.

Earlier, the police had revealed that Al Swealmee had been purchasing items for his homemade explosive for months.

"We are spending considerable time seeking to understand the way the purchases for the ingredients to make the device were made. This is complicated because purchases have spanned many months and Al Swealmee has used many aliases," said Jackson.

China has denied that it carried out a hypersonic missile test, saying it was testing a reusable spacecraft.

Though the Chinese weapon missed its target by several kilometers, according to the Financial Times, the test marked the first time any country had sent a hypersonic weapon fully around the Earth.

Hypersonic weapons travel at more than five times the speed of sound, making it difficult for radars to detect.

Combined with hundreds of new missile silos China is building, Hyten believes China could one day have the capability to launch a surprise nuclear attack on the US.

"They look like a first-use weapon," Hyten told CBS News. "That's what those weapons look like to me."

Hyten said that in the last five years, China has carried out hundreds of hypersonic

tests, while the US has conducted just nine. China has already deployed one medium-range hypersonic weapon, while the US is still a few years from fielding its first one, according to Hyten.

China, which confirmed the test on October 18, tried to downplay it, saying it was "routine test" and emphasised that "it's not missile, but a spacecraft."

"As we understand, this was a routine test of spacecraft to verify technology of spacecraft's reusability. It is of great significance to reducing the cost of using spacecraft and providing a convenient and cheap way for mankind's two-way transportation in the peaceful use of space. Several companies around the world have conducted similar tests," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said in response to questions last month.

Pak eases norms for Sikh pilgrims visiting Kartarpur till Nov 30

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has temporarily relaxed its mutually agreed limit with India of 10 days advance intimation before the arrival of Sikh pilgrims to the revered Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan for the 552nd birth anniversary celebrations of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev, according to a media report on Friday.

Geo News reported quoting sources that the decision has been taken by Pakistan as a sign of respect for the religious sentiments of the Sikh pilgrims due to India's recent decision to reopen the Kartarpur Corridor ahead of the celebrations at Gurdwara Darbar Sahib.

Pakistan has given a relaxation till November 30 and expects the Indian government will follow the agreed process for visitors from

December 1 onwards, the news channel reported on its website.

India and Pakistan are both required to process lists of Sikh pilgrims 10 days before their visit to Kartarpur to allow for necessary procedural clearances. The over four km-long Kartarpur Corridor, which links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan, the final resting place of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev, to Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Gurdaspur district, reopened on Wednesday.

The pilgrimage to the Kartarpur Sahib gurdwara was suspended in March last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sikh pilgrims have been crossing the border into Pakistan from India and the rest of the world since Wednesday to celebrate the 552nd birth anniversary of their religion's founder.

Facing surge, Austria will mandate Covid shots, lockdown

AP ■ VIENNA

Austria announced a new national lockdown and a plan to mandate vaccinations as coronavirus infections hit a record high Friday, forcing the government to walk back promises that such blanket shutdowns were a thing of the past.

Imposing a mandate would give Austria one of the world's most stringent vaccine requirements. Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg said those who didn't comply would likely be fined but gave no other details.

The moves come as vaccinations in Austria have plateaued at one of the lowest rates in Western Europe and as hospitals in heavily hit states have warned that their intensive care units are reaching capacity.

But earlier this month, Schallenberg indicated a full lockdown would not be needed and instead imposed the restrictions only on those not vaccinated.

The lockdown will start

Jaishankar dismisses as ‘ridiculous’ notion that US has been strategically contracting

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday dismissed as "ridiculous" the notion that the United States has been strategically contracting and yielding space to others amidst a global rebalancing of power.

Addressing a panel discussion here on "Greater Power Competition: The Emerging World Order" at the Bloomberg New Economic Forum, Jaishankar also said that the US is today, a much more flexible partner, much more open to ideas, suggestions, and working arrangements than in the past.

"Don't confuse it with the decline of the United States. I think that's ridiculous," he said in response to a question from the moderator at the session, also attended by former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

"It's clear China has been expanding. But the nature of China, the manner of its grow-

ing influence is very different. And we don't have a situation where China necessarily replaces the United States. Well, it's natural to think of China, US (and) China as the overarching happening. The fact is, there are also a lot of other countries including India, which have come much more into play. There's been a rebalancing in the world," he said.

He said the United States is today, a much more flexible partner, much more open to ideas, suggestions, and working arrangements than in the past. "I think this reflects a very different kind of world. We are moving into a world in a sense, you could say, the real transitions after 1992 are now occurring."

"The world is changing. It's suddenly not unipolar. It's not really bipolar, and many more players (are there). So a lot of what we are doing in terms of repositioning working with countries," he said.

Noting that the COVID has called into question the old model of globalisation, he said,

"we are actually at multiple levels in a very, very complex transition."

"The transition some of it is with the rise and fall and the rebalancing of powers. Some of it is many more players. Some of it is that our concept of what is national security has changed. We think much more of economic security, much more of health security, much more of digital security," he said.

"Today, issues of trust and transparency are much more relevant in a data driven world. So it does matter to me what the character of my partner is, who they are partners with. So these are all new factors, which I would suggest is really taking the world in a very, very different direction," he said.

Obviously, India would like to see how its interests are best served and those interests today are definitely served with a much closer relationship with the United States, with a much stronger relationship with Europe, and the UK, he said.

US expands Covid boosters to all adults

AP ■ WASHINGTON

U.S. regulators on Friday moved to open up COVID-19 booster shots to all adults, expanding the government's campaign to shore up protection and get ahead of rising coronavirus cases that may worsen with the holidays.

Pfizer and Moderna announced the Food and Drug Administration's decision after at least 10 states already had started offering boosters to all adults. The latest action stands to simplify what until now has been a confusing list of who's eligible by allowing anyone 18 or older to choose either company's booster six months after their last dose — regardless of which vaccine they had first.

But there's one more step: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must agree to expand Pfizer and Moderna boosters to even healthy young adults. Its scientific advisers were set to debate later Friday.

If the CDC agrees, tens of

millions more Americans could have three doses of protection ahead of the new year. Anyone who got the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine can already get a booster.

All three COVID-19 vaccines used in the U.S. offer strong protection against severe illness including hospitalization and death without boosters, but protection against infection can wane with time. Previously, the government had cleared boosters of Pfizer and BioNTech's vaccine, as well as the similar Moderna vaccine, only for vulnerable groups including older Americans and people with chronic health problems.

But Pfizer last week asked the FDA to expand that decision to everyone, citing new data from a study of 10,000 people. Ultimately, the FDA decided there was enough evidence, from studies and real-world use of boosters, to back the expansion for both Pfizer and Moderna.

"Streamlining the eligibility criteria and making boost-

er doses available to all individuals 18 years of age and older will also help to eliminate confusion about who may receive a booster dose and ensure booster doses are available to all who may need one," FDA vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks said.

The move to expand comes as new COVID-19 cases have climbed steadily over the last two weeks, especially in states where colder weather is driving people indoors.

Sparked by those worrying trends, some states didn't wait for federal officials to act. Utah and Massachusetts were the latest states to announce in the past week that they're opening boosters to all adults.

Boosters for everyone was the Biden administration's original goal. But in September, a panel of FDA advisers voted overwhelmingly against that idea based on the vaccines' continued effectiveness in most age groups. Instead they endorsed an extra Pfizer dose only for the most vulnerable.

39 Palestinian refugees seek asylum at Barcelona's airport

AP ■ MADRID

A group of 39 Palestinian refugees has sought asylum in Spain after refusing to get back on a plane during a Barcelona stopover on their flight from Cairo, Spanish authorities said Friday.

Police are investigating the charter flight that flew the group into Spain's second-largest city on Monday, a spokesman with Spain's Interior Ministry told The Associated Press.

The flight's final destination was the Ecuadorian capital, Quito, with scheduled stops in Barcelona and Bogotá, in Colombia.

When the plane landed at El Prat airport on Monday, the

group left the aircraft and later refused to get back on, a spokeswoman with the Spanish government's delegation in Catalonia said.

They remained at police facilities in the airport for five days and were provided with food and assistance, the spokeswoman said.

She said that by midday Friday, 29 of them had been allowed to formally enter Spain and were being cared for by social services. The asylum requests of the 10 remaining at the airport terminal were still being processed, the official said. She spoke on condition of anonymity, because press officials in Spain are not normally authorized to be identified by name in media reports.

China threatens Lithuania over Taiwan office opening

Beijing: China on Friday threatened to retaliate against Lithuania after the Baltic nation allowed Taiwan to open a representative office in its capital, Vilnius. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Lithuania would "reap what it sows," but gave no details.

Zhao described Lithuania's move as an "egregious act" that "grossly interferes" in China's internal affairs.

The office, which opened Thursday, bears the name Taiwan rather than "Chinese Taipei," which is used by the International Olympic Committee and many foreign nations to avoid offending China, which claims the self-governing island democracy as

its own territory.

Taiwan has just 15 formal diplomatic allies, but maintains informal ties with all major nations through trade offices that act as de facto embassies, including in the United States and Japan.

It wasn't clear what actions China plans to take in response to the opening of the office.

Beijing has already recalled its ambassador from Vilnius and expelled the Lithuanian ambassador. Lithuania plans to open a representative office in Taipei by the end of the year and has withdrawn from the "17 plus one" arrangement launched by China to bind it closer to countries in Eastern Europe. **AP**

UK says it will make Hamas a banned terrorist organisation

AP ■ LONDON

The British government said Friday that it intends to ban the Palestinian militant group Hamas as a terrorist organisation, saying it will no longer differentiate between the group's political and military wings.

The military arm of Hamas has been outlawed in the UK since 2001 but the organisation as a whole is not proscribed.

Home Secretary Priti Patel, who is in charge of law and order issues, said on Twitter that she had "acted to proscribe Hamas in its entirety."

She said the group "has significant terrorist capability, includ-

ing access to extensive and sophisticated weaponry, as well as terrorist training facilities." Foreign Secretary Liz Truss tweeted that the move "will help tackle the scourge of antisemitism."

A ban, which must be approved by Parliament, would make it illegal in Britain to be a member of Hamas or to express support for the group, with a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison. The government said it hoped the banning order would be approved by Parliament within the week and take effect Nov. 26.

Hamas, a Palestinian group that opposes Israel's existence, has governed the Gaza Strip

since taking over the area in 2007, a year after it won a Palestinian election. Hamas is considered a terrorist group by Israel, the US and the European Union.

Israel welcomed the British announcement. Defense Minister Benny Gantz said it "sends a strong message of zero tolerance toward terrorist activities aimed at harming the State of Israel and Jewish communities."

In Gaza, Hamas expressed "shock and dismay" at the British government's decision and accused the U.K. of continuing "with its aggression against the Palestinian people."

Biden to have routine colonoscopy, transfer power to Harris

AP ■ BETHESDA, MD.

President Joe Biden will briefly transfer power to Vice President Kamala Harris on Friday when he undergoes a "routine colonoscopy" at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the White House said.

Biden drove early Friday to the medical center in the Washington suburbs for his first routine physical exam as president. Press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden would be under anesthesia during the procedure and would transfer power to Harris.

"As was the case when President George W. Bush had the same procedure in 2002 and 2007, and following the process set out in the Constitution, President Biden will transfer power to the Vice

President for the brief period of time when he is under anesthesia," she said. "The Vice President will work from her office in the West Wing during this time."

Biden, 78, had his last full exam in December 2019, when doctors found the former vice president to be "healthy, vigorous" and "fit to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency," according to a doctor's report at the time. Biden, who turns 79 on Saturday, is the oldest person to serve as president, and interest in his health has been high since he declared his candidacy for the White House in 2019.

Dr. Kevin O'Connor, who has been Biden's primary care physician since 2009, wrote in a three-page note that the then-presidential candidate was in overall good shape.

Jadhav Bill not ‘person-specific’, it’s Pak’s ‘red-line’: Law Minister

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Law Minister Farogh Nasim on Friday rejected the Opposition's criticism that a new law providing right of review to Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav against his conviction was "person-specific", asserting that the issue was a matter of "national security" and the country's "red-line".

Jadhav, a 51-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017. India approached the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.

After hearing both sides, the Hague-based ICJ issued a verdict in July, 2019, asking

Pakistan to give India consular access to Jadhav and also ensure review of his conviction.

Nasim was addressing a press conference in Islamabad after the government faced a barrage of criticism from the opposition parties for enacting the law to facilitate Jadhav to file a review appeal against his death sentence by a military court on the charges of sabotage and espionage.

"The International Court of Justice (Review and Reconsideration) Bill is not person-specific and will be applicable to anyone coming under the ambit of the law," the minister said. India on Thursday said the law "simply codifies" the "shortcomings" of a previous ordinance and that Pakistan has "failed" to create an atmosphere to ensure a fair trial in the case.

Spokesperson in the

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Arindam Bagchi said in New Delhi that Pakistan continues to deny unimpeded and unhindered consular access to Jadhav as mandated by the ICJ.

"We have seen reports of Pakistan enacting into law the earlier ordinance that was ostensibly enacted to bring into effect the judgement of the ICJ in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case," he said.

"Nothing could have been further from the truth. As stated earlier, the ordinance did not create the machinery for an effective review and reconsideration of Shri Jadhav's case as mandated by the judgement of the ICJ," he said.

The law was among 33 others passed during the joint sitting of Parliament on Wednesday despite objections and protests by the opposition parties.

Thousands of Afghans seek temporary US entry, few approved

AP ■ LOWELL, MASS.

More than 28,000 Afghans have applied for temporary admission into the U.S. for humanitarian reasons since shortly before the Taliban recaptured Afghanistan and sparked a chaotic U.S. withdrawal, but only about 100 of them have been approved, according to federal officials.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has struggled to keep up with the surge in applicants to a little-used program known as humanitarian parole but promises it's ramping up staff to address the growing backlog.

Afghan families in the U.S. and the immigrant groups supporting them say the slow pace of approvals threatens the safety of their loved ones, who face

an uncertain future under the hard-line Islamic government because of their ties to the West.

"We're worried for their lives," says Safi, a Massachusetts resident whose family is sponsoring 21 relatives seeking humanitarian parole. "Sometimes, I think there will be a day when I wake up and receive a call saying that they're no more."

The 38-year-old U.S. permanent resident, who asked that her last name not be used for fear of retribution against her relatives, is hoping to bring over her sister, her uncle and their families. She says the families have been in hiding and their house was destroyed in a recent bombing because her uncle had been a prominent local official before the Taliban took over.

Philippine church leader charged with child sex trafficking

Los Angeles: The leader of a Philippines-based church was charged with having sex with women and underage girls who faced threats of abuse and "eternal damnation" unless they catered to Apollo Carreon Quiboloy, federal prosecutors announced Thursday.

Quiboloy and two of his top administrators are among nine people named in a superseding indictment returned by a federal grand jury last week and unsealed Thursday. The indictment includes three Los Angeles-based administrators of Quiboloy's church who were charged last year. The new indictment also names a church administrator in Hawaii.

The church claims to have 6 million members in about 200 countries. Its United States headquarters is in the Van Nuys area of Los Angeles. **AP**

TRAVELBUG



FIVE-FOLD PATH

From secluded spots on mountains to a boho corner for learning pottery and modern kitchens, KHUSHBU KIRTI has unique suggestions in and around Dharamshala that should feature in your must-visit places



Kharota Point

I am sure you would be tired of hearing songs in praise of nature and the mountains as well as stories of every city-dweller running away to higher climes at the first chance they get. This was evident from the overcrowding and stampede-like situations after the lockdown opened and desperate city-dwellers, needing a break, made news. Thankfully, we are way past the second wave and we can journey to the hills without risking our health while following the proper Covid protocols. Moreover, there is a completely justifiable reason why we wish to escape from reality and take shelter behind the clouds.

After studying for straight five years, I had jumped at the first opportunity of a job instead of spending some time chilling. So, I absolutely needed a break from the chaos and the monotony. Like Wordsworth had once said, "Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher. Nature never did betray the heart that loved her"

That is how I found myself in Dharamshala and Palampur. McLeodganj, a suburb of Dharamshala, is the most remarkable place in the vicinity.

While my sister and I explored a lot of places in and near Dharamshala, including the mainstream areas like the lush tea gardens, numerous historical temples, the Dalai Lama Temple (which has been closed for visitors), HPCA-Cricket Stadium (any cricket/sports lover should venture out only in the evenings as the scorching heat can play spoilsport). Certain places were not only sequestered and unique but had not registered on the consciousness of tourists.

Here is a list of five places that are worthy of praise:
KHAROTA POINT: Even though



Dharamkot Studio

Kharota point is fairly secluded, it is still easily accessible. The view-point has no other attribute but a breath-taking view of the highest peaks of Dharamshala — the Dhauladhar range.

The day we undertook a short one km trek to the view-point, it was raining cats and dogs and that is what made it indelible. It will forever be imprinted in my mind for a different kind of adventure. With our umbrellas and raincoats flying, we somehow managed to reach our destination. The local dogs had accompanied us and reminded me of the myth where a canine had shown Yudhishtira the correct path up the hill. There were several ways to reach the top, even though we took the long and rather unnecessary climb, the view still was, in every bit, worth it. At one point a cascading waterfall materialised in front of our sight as the snow-clad mountains engendered the musical winds. At that moment, it felt that we were a part of this unending natural saga as one whole. Though drenched, the cold didn't feel bitter. It was, in a sense, tranquil and soothing.

We were told that camping was very much a norm near the place, though not in the rainy season.



Jimmy's Italian Cafe



Naddi Point

DHARAMKOT STUDIO: The Dharamkot Studio, located in a small eponymously named hill station in the Kangra district of Dharamshala, is an aberration... or maybe not. For what better place could there be to find inspiration and pursue the art? Near the Tibetan market, and on a hill above McLeodGanj, it was akin to pottery paradise. We were exhausted from the day's activities as we had visited several places in McLeodGanj, and this quiet and peaceful place proffered us nothing but love and comfort. On a cloistered hill, the studio is a cosy corner for all art enthusiasts. The place had lilting indie music and was decorated with countless pots made by both the teachers and the students. The raw interiors and contemporary designs on the wooden walls exuded a bohemian vibe. We were told that the studio held regular pottery classes, as we saw some happy students, with clay smudged hands, trying to figure out pertinent life questions. Vivek, one of the teachers, explained the entire process to us patiently. We had a hands-on session on the wheel, with his help. It felt uncanny in the beginning but soon became a mixture of relaxation and excitement. By the end, we had managed to execute some designs on the pottery. It is another story that the pots looked dilapidated but it was a feel-good two hours spent there. We were also told that our humble creation (feels proud) would be delivered to us at our home.

NADDI POINT: This is a point where clouds envelop you as if you were a delightful ghost. You'd, of course, as a result, be slightly soaked, but how many can claim to be racing with the clouds for company? What a great flex, no? Find your inner chi as you venture into this place and literally walk in the peaceful terrain as the clouds descend on you. Not only does the Naddi point provide a perfect place to view the Dhauladhar ranges but you can also find pleasant eateries — to stop in between and eat while — on your way to the Tibetan market and so on. You could stop at cafes and chill.



Shiva Cafe



SHIVA CAFE: It summons youth with an almost hypnotic beat that is inaudible. On the outskirts of the Tibetan market, the Bhagsunag waterfall gushes. Walk another two kilometres uphill and you will spot the Shiva cafe.

The excellent craftsmanship of the locals ensured that we had splurged on clothes and bags. But the side effect was that we reached the mystical cafe named after the deity Shiva a little late. But it was for the best. The scintillating starry sky stretched out as far as the eye could see as we swigged our chilled breezers to the background score of the waterfall cascading down.

JIMMY'S ITALIAN CAFE: Even before we started from Delhi, the echoes about the aforementioned cafe — which is one of the most happening eateries of the Tibetan market — were growing stronger. Everyone and their aunt has been to the cafe if they have ventured to McLeodganj. We were surprised to see the owners working in the kitchen despite having help.

And the food too was delectable. The hand-rolled Margharita's white sauce mingled with cheese fermented overnight. From the taste, it was evident that it needed a lot of slaving over. We also tucked in a sumptuous Chicken Garlic Bread and a decadent Chocolate Mousse.

The rooftop dining area beckoned with its panoramic view. The experience was further personalised as the owners — Tsering and her husband, Jampa — celebrated their anniversary with us while making us laugh heartily at their stories.

Tsering told us that Jimmy's was started in 1983 by Jampa's mother, Sonam Lhamo, in Shillong and is named after his sister. Lhamo had come from Tibet and supported her family by starting a woollens business. When things became tougher, she started a small Tibetan restaurant as she was a great cook. She had written all the names of her eight children on chits and picked one. Jimmy (jigne) got lucky. The Italian kitchen was set up in 2001.

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De Villiers announces retirement from all forms of cricket

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

One of contemporary cricket's greatest batters, South African legend AB de Villiers on Friday announced his retirement from all forms of the game, which he dominated for 17 years with his 360 degree batting.

The 37-year-old versatile cricketer's decision has effectively ended his association with his IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore.

He made the announcement on Twitter, ending an illustrious career, which saw him play in 114 Tests, 228 ODIs and 78 T20Is for the Proteas.

In a statement released, De Villiers said: "It has been an incredible journey, but I have decided to retire from all cricket.

"Ever since the backyard matches with my older brothers, I have played the game with pure enjoyment and unbridled enthusiasm. Now, at the age of 37, that flame no longer burns so brightly.

"Last, I am aware that nothing would have been possible without the sacrifices made by my family – my parents, my brothers, my wife Danielle and my children. I look forward to the next chapter of our lives when I can truly put them first."

The former South Africa captain and batting mainstay had retired from international cricket in 2018.

"I would like to thank every teammate, every opponent, every coach, every

physio and every staff member who has travelled the same path, and I am humbled by the support I have received in South Africa, in India, wherever I have played.

"Cricket has been exceptionally kind to me. Whether playing for the Titans, or the Proteas, or RCB, or around the world, the game has given me unimaginable experiences and opportunities, and I will always be grateful.

"That's the reality I must accept – and, even if it may seem sudden, that is why I am making this announcement today. I've had my time," de Villiers added.

Since starting his association with RCB in 2011, he has enjoyed 11 fruitful seasons with the franchise and was its batting mainstay alongside Virat Kohli.

De Villiers has played 156 matches for RCB and scored 4,491 runs.

He is the second all-time leading run scorer behind Kohli and holds the second and third-highest individual run total in RCB history with 133 not out against Mumbai Indians (in 2015) and 129 not out against Gujarat Lions (in 2016).

Speaking about his association with the Indian club, de Villiers said, "I have had a long



PTI ■ RANCHI

Skipper Rohit Sharma and his deputy KL Rahul stitched an enterprising century-plus opening stand to power India to a comfortable seven-wicket win over New Zealand in the second T20 International and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series here on Friday.

Chasing a modest 154 under heavy dew condition, the Indian captain and vice-captain started off in contrasting styles en route to their respective half-centuries.

Quiet at start, Rohit stepped up in the middle overs smashing five sixes and one four en route to his 36-ball 55.

Rahul started off in a brisk fashion, and post-scored with 65 from 49 balls with two sixes and six fours in an 117-run opening stand that virtually sealed the chase.

The Indian skipper is now involved in the most century-plus stands (13), overtaking 12 by Babar Azam and Martin Guptill.

The duo got out in the space

and fruitful time playing for RCB. Eleven years have just whizzed by and leaving the boys is extremely bitter-sweet.

"Of course, arriving at this decision took a lot of time, but after a lot of contemplation, I've decided to hang up my boots and spend quality time with my family. I would like to thank the RCB management, my friend Virat Kohli, teammates, coaches, support staff, fans, and the entire RCB family for showing faith and supporting me all through these years.

"It has been a memorable journey with RCB. Have so many memories on the personal front to cherish for the lifetime. RCB will always be very close to me and my family and will continue to support this amazing team. I am a RCBian forever."

India beat New Zealand by 7 wickets



Take unassailable 2-0 lead in three-match series

of 13 balls but by then India needed just 19 off 27 balls and Rishabh Pant sealed the issue with a straight six over Jimmy Neesham's head in the 18th over to take India home with 16 balls to spare.

The third and final T20I is scheduled to be played at the iconic Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Sunday.

Rahul made his aggressive intent clear from the onset and raced to 15 off

12 balls before his captain could face a delivery.

Rahul was middling the ball beautifully and played the role of the aggressor, while Rohit was happy to bide his time in the middle giving India a sedate and sensible start.

There was a brief lull in the middle with 23 balls without a boundary before Rohit suddenly switched gears

just before the halfway mark.

Scoring just 16 off 18 balls, Rohit decided to take on left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner and hit him for two sixes in the mid-wicket and long-on region in an over that yielded 16 runs. Suddenly the equation looked at par with 75 needed in the back-10 and Rahul, meanwhile, brought up his 16th T20I fifty in 40 balls with a flat six off pacer Adam Milne.

Earlier, India rode on a tight bowling display by the spin duo of Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel to stymie New Zealand's explosive start and restrict the visitors to a modest 153 for six.

In a must-win match for the Kiwis, who are trailing 0-1 in the three-match series, Martin Guptill (31 off 15 balls) and Daryl Mitchell (31 off 28 balls) took the Indian pacers to the cleaners after being put into bat.

Cruising at 64 for one in the powerplay, the Kiwis suddenly hit a roadblock in the crucial middle overs and managed just 64 runs from 7 to 16 overs with Ashwin (1/19) and Axar (1/26) dominating the New Zealand batters in the dew-laden condition.

Skipper Rohit cleverly used Ashwin and Axar in the middle overs to restrict the run flow.

Tim Paine resigns as Australia captain

PTI ■ HOBART

Australian Test captain Tim Paine on Friday stepped down from the post after being investigated by Cricket Australia for sending explicit messages to a female co-worker.

The messages date back to 2017, months before Paine was recalled to the Test team after a seven-year absence and a joint Cricket Australia and Cricket Tasmania investigation cleared Paine at the time.

The development comes weeks ahead of the five-Test Ashes series against traditional rivals England. The first Test begins in Brisbane on December 8.

"Today I am announcing my decision to stand down as captain of the Australian men's cricket team. It's an incredibly difficult decision but the right one for me, my family and cricket," Paine said during a press conference.

"Nearly four years ago, I was involved in a text exchange with a then-colleague.

"Although exonerated I deeply regretted in incident at a time and I do so today.

I spoke to my wife and family at a time and enormously grateful for their forgiveness and support," he added.

Paine will, however, continue to be a part of the Australian team.

Reports claimed a Cricket Tasmania employee was offended by "Mr Paine's sexually explicit, unwelcome and unsolicited photograph of his genitals in addition to the graphic sexual comments."

The 36-year-old was promoted as captain following the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa in 2018.

The board accepted Paine's resignation and has started the process of identifying and appointing the next Test captain.

"We thought this incident was behind us. And that I could focus entirely on the team as I have done for the last three or four years.

"However, I recently became aware that this private text exchange was going to become public. On reflection, my actions in 2017 do not meet the standard of an Australian cricket captain or the wider community," Paine admitted.



Sindhu, Srikanth sail into Indonesia Masters semifinals

PTI ■ BALI



Premier Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth continued their impressive run and registered dominant victories to enter the semifinals of their respective events at the Indonesia Masters Super 750 badminton tournament here on Friday.

While reigning world champion Sindhu, seeded third, scripted a convincing 21-13 21-10 win over Turkey's Neslihan Yigit in 35 minutes in the women's singles quarterfinals, Srikanth made short work of compatriot HS Prannoy 21-7 21-18 in the men's last eight fixture.

With the win the two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu extended her dominating head-to-head record against the Turkish shuttler to 4-0.

The 26-year-old from Hyderabad, ranked seven, had beaten Yigit last month as well in the Denmark Open.

In the men's event, former world No. 1 Srikanth was at his vintage best and gave away just 7 points in a lop-sided first game.

The second game was more evenly matched as Prannoy, who claimed an upset win over Tokyo Olympics gold medallist Victor Axelsen earlier, made a strong recovery.

Prannoy started the proceedings aggressively, racing to a 5-2 lead but Srikanth came from behind to snatch

the lead at the mid-game interval.

Having gained momentum, the former world No. 1 then extended his lead to 15-12 and despite Prannoy levelling the proceedings once again, Srikanth sealed the match to reach his second consecutive semifinals.

He will now take on either Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn or Denmark's Anders Antonsen, who is seeded third, in the semifinals.

Sindhu, who has got relatively easy opponents until now, has a tough match ahead as she will face top seed Akane Yamaguchi of Japan.

Although Yamaguchi is currently ranked third in the world and is the top seed, Sindhu has a superior 12-7 head-to-head record against the Japanese shuttler and has won both the meetings between the two this year.

Pakistan beat Bangladesh in 1st T20

AP N DHAKA

Pakistan recovered from a precarious 24-4 to beat Bangladesh by four wickets on Friday in the first of their three Twenty20s.

The match was in the balance with three overs to go, then Shadab Khan and Mohammad Nawaz hit two sixes each and Pakistan reached 132-6 in 19.2 overs, knocking off Bangladesh's 127-7.

Fakhar Zaman and Khushdil Shah launched Pakistan's recovery with a 56-run partnership for the fifth wicket. They scored 34 each, removed in quick succession when Fakhar chased a wide delivery of fast bowler Taskin Ahmed to edge to wicket-keeper Nurul Hasan, and Khushdil was undone by a slower ball outside off by pacer Shoriful Islam.

With the visitors needing 32 runs in the last three overs, Shadab Khan and Mohammad Nawaz pulled off a blitz to break Bangladesh's stranglehold.

Shadab struck an unbeaten 21 off 10, hitting the winning six by slog-sweeping legspinner Aminul Islam over deep midwicket.

Aminul, one of the home team's specialist bowlers, only came to bowl in the last over when Pakistan needed two runs for the victory.



State set for a blast in semifinals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vidarbha face tough ask against resurgent Karnataka Unbeaten so far, Vidarbha would face their toughest challenge when they take on a resurgent Karnataka in the semifinals of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Saturday.

Vidarbha and Karnataka entered the last-four in contrasting fashions. While the Akshay Wakhare-led side decimated favourites Rajasthan by nine wickets, it was Manish Pandey's brilliance that helped Karnataka overcome Bengal via a Super Over in their quarter-final.

Vidarbha's in-form batters Atharva Taide, Ganesh Satish and skipper Wadkar would need to continue their good form to tame a formidable Karnataka attack at the Feroz Shah Kotla.

After the failure of Siddesh Wath, the Pritam Gandhi-coached Vidarbha opted to open with Ganesh Satish in the quarters and the move worked wonders.

F1 leader Verstappen tops first practice at Qatar GP

AP ■ LOSAIL



for the lead on lap 48.

Hamilton made a pass 11 laps later to win, and Verstappen finished second.

Stewards decided on Friday to reject the admissibility of the review, thus clearing any wrongdoing on Verstappen's part. Otherwise he could

potentially have been hit with a grid penalty for that race or a five-second time penalty.

"It's obviously the right decision," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said. "Otherwise, it would have opened a Pandora's box."

Mercedes head of motor-sport Toto Wolff said he was

not surprised by the decision and had not been optimistic of a decision in his team's favor.

Verstappen looked comfortable and appeared to have better grip than Mercedes on the 5.4-kilometer (3.5-mile) circuit in Losail, north of Doha. It has hosted MotoGP races since 2004.

Hamilton went back to the team garage with 10 minutes left and mechanics worked on his car, although it was not immediately clear if there was an issue with the front wing. He came back out briefly at the end. There was a second practice late Friday. Verstappen leads Hamilton by 14 points in the standings with two races left after this one.

Verstappen leads Hamilton 9-6 for wins after 19 races.

Zverev joins Djokovic, Medvedev in semifinals at ATP Finals

AP ■ TURIN

The top three players have advanced to the semifinals at the ATP Finals.

Third-ranked Alexander Zverev joined No. 1 Novak Djokovic and No. 2 Daniil Medvedev in the last four at the season-ending event for the top eight players by beating Hubert Hurkacz 6-2, 6-4 on Thursday.

Having qualified second in his group behind Medvedev, Zverev's semifinal opponent will be Djokovic, who won the other group.

Medvedev's semifinal opponent will be determined on Friday when Andrey Rublev meets Casper Ruud on the final day of round-robin play.

Zverev lost to Djokovic at the Australian Open and U.S. Open this year but beat the Serb at the Tokyo Olympics



en route to the gold medal.

"We played basically every single big event this year on hard court against each other," Zverev said.

"So it's only right that we play each other here as well. ... It's always close when we play each other, so I'm looking forward to hopefully another tough one."



Savita to lead Indian team

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Skipper Rani Rampal has been rested for next month's Women's Asian Champions Trophy and in her absence vice-captain Savita will lead an 18-strong Indian hockey team.

The tournament is scheduled to be played in Donghae, South Korea from December 5-12.

India begin their campaign on the opening day and will battle it out against China, Korea, Japan, Thailand and Malaysia in the single-pool tournament for top honours.

Savita, who was named the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year, will captain the side as regular skipper Rani has been rested and is in rehabilitation in Bengaluru.

Experienced defender Deep Grace Ekka will be supporting Savita as the vice-captain.

Forwards Lalremisiami and Sharmila Devi and midfielder Salima Tete, who were part of the Indian team that finished fourth at the Tokyo Olympics, miss out. The three are part of the junior squad, which will vie for the top honours at the FIH World Cup,

starting in South Africa from December 5.

Namita Toppo, who was the alternate player at the Tokyo Olympics, as well as her teammate from Odisha Lilima Minz, are also part of the team.

The forward line will see two-time Olympian Vandana Katariya lead the charge with Navneet Kaur, who also was part of the Tokyo Olympic squad.

Forwards Rajwinder Kaur,

Mariana Kujur and Sonika too have been named in the team.

The midfield includes Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Nisha, Monika, Neha, Jyoti.

Navjot Kaur and youngster Suman Devi Thoudam have been chosen as alternate players, who will be permitted to play only if there is an injury or someone in the 18-member squad is ruled out of the tournament due to COVID-19.

Zverev, the 2018 champion at the finals, didn't face a single break point against Hurkacz, a first-time qualifier.

Both players served 11 aces amid quick conditions inside the Pala Alpitour.

"There is going to be a lot more long rallies (against Djokovic)," Zverev said. "I think we are going to run a lot more. I think we are going to suffer, in a way, a lot more, as well."

"Every single match that we played we both needed to be at our best. One or two points decided the matches. I expect no different here."

Zverev's victory meant that Medvedev's final group match later against Jannik Sinner — an alternate who replaced the injured Matteo Berrettini — was largely meaningless. Still, Medvedev won 6-0, 6-7 (5), 7-6 (8) — saving two match points in the third-set tiebreaker.