

**OPINION 6**  
EVOLVING PARADIGMS  
OF THE BATTLEGROUND

**WORLD 8**  
SUDAN MILITARY LEADERS  
REINSTATE DEPOSED PM

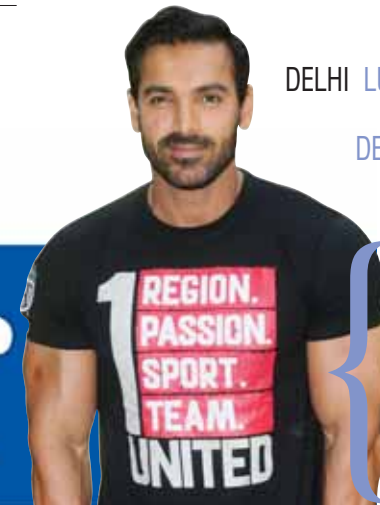
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## CAPSULE

### THREE GIVEN BAIL IN SUB INFO LEAK CASE

**New Delhi:** The CBI had to cut a sorry figure after a special court granted bail to retired Navy officers Randeep Singh, SJ Singh and TP Sastry, executive director of Allen Reinforced Plastics Limited in a case of alleged leak of confidential information on submarine projects for pecuniary gains, terming the agency's chargesheets as "incomplete" as the documents do not mention anything about a probe under the OSA, officials said.

### CONG ASKS PM TO END 'SILENCE' ON CHINA

**New Delhi:** The Congress on Sunday accused the BJP Government of deception and deliberate distortion over alleged Chinese intrusions in Arunachal Pradesh and questioned PM Narendra Modi's "silence". **P4**

### BSF ALONG LOC TO GET STEEL INFRA

**New Delhi:** Border Security Force locations along the Line of Control will be getting a steel makeover as the paramilitary force embarks on a major project to fortify defences and enhance living facilities for troops along this sensitive high-altitude frontier with Pakistan.

### RENOWNED SINGER GURMEET BAWA DIES

**Amritsar:** Renowned Punjabi folk singer Gurmeet Bawa, 77, passed away on Sunday. The folk artist breathed her last at a city hospital, said family friend BS Sandhu. "She was taken to the hospital on Saturday evening after she complained of difficulty in breathing," Sandhu said.

# Farmers to wait & watch; no word on ending stir

Union Cabinet may discuss repeal of 3 farm laws on Nov 24

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The core committee of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Sunday decided to wait and watch till November 27 before making any announcement on ending the year-long farmers' protest. It also decided to send an open letter to Prime Minister Modi, raising the pending demands of the farmers' movement, including central legislation to guarantee a remunerative MSP, cancellation of criminal cases against farmer leaders and their supporters.

The Union Cabinet is likely to discuss the withdrawal of the three farm laws on Wednesday, November 24. The proposal to repeal will then be taken up by Parliament after it convenes for the Winter Session on November 29.

"The repeal of the three farm laws will be taken up for approval in the Union Cabinet meeting to be held on Wednesday," said the source. After the Cabinet



Farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal addresses the media on the repeal of the three farm laws, at Singhu Border in New Delhi on Sunday  
Ranjan Dimri / Pioneer

approval, the same would be brought before the Parliament for further approval during the Winter Session.

The three farm laws are: The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act,

2020. The agitation programmes of the farmers will continue as per the original plan until their meeting on November 27. The Kisan Mahapanchayat to be held in Lucknow on November 22, is a show of strength days after Modi's announcement.

Balbir Singh Rajewal, who is part of the core committee of the SKM, said that the joint front would decide its next course of action at a meeting on November

27. "We discussed the repeal of farm laws. After this, some decisions were taken. The SKM's pre-decided agitations will continue as it is. The Kisan Mahapanchayat will be held in Lucknow on November 22, gatherings at all borders on November 26 and march to Parliament on November 29," Rajewal said at a press conference soon after the meeting at the Singhu Border.

*Continued on Page 2*

# 5 of Pilot's men in new Gehlot Govt

12 new faces in the 15 member Cabinet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress in Rajasthan took a major step on Sunday to rehabilitate former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot and end the protracted infighting within the party when five Pilot supporters found a place in the Ashok Gehlot Cabinet in a long-overdue reshuffle.

As many as 15 MLAs took oath as Ministers, out of which 12 of them were new faces, while three Ministers of State were promoted to Cabinet positions. Five of the Ministers are from the Sachin Pilot camp.

This is the first Cabinet reshuffle of the Gehlot Government which came to power in December 2018.

After the reshuffle, the Congress leadership is expected to bestow organisational responsibility on Pilot at the national level. There are reports that he could be the chief ministerial face of the party in the 2023 Assembly polls in Rajasthan.

The new Ministers are Ram Lal Jat, Mahesh Joshi, Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya,



Shakuntala Rawat takes oath as Cabinet Minister in the presence of Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Governor Kalraj Mishra during a swearing-in-ceremony, at Raj Bhawan in Jaipur on Sunday  
PTI

Vishvendra Singh, Ramesh Meena, Mamta Bhupesh Bairwa, Bhajan Lal Jatav, Teekaram Juli, Govind Ram Meghwal, Shakuntala Rawat, Brijendra Singh Ola and Murari Lal Meena. Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra administered the oaths.

While Pilot has expressed satisfaction over the nature of the Cabinet reshuffle, voices of dissent have already surfaced in the party over denial of Cabinet berths.

Congress MLA and ministerial aspirant Shafia Zubair played the spoilsport by alleging that those with a bad reputation have been promoted.

"The Cabinet's structure couldn't have been better. Those with a bad reputation have been promoted. Overall, the Cabinet is not sending a good message. Women (MLAs) didn't get 33 per cent reservation (in the Cabinet)," Zubair said.

Another MLA, Johari Lal Meena levelled corruption allegations at Minister Teekaram Juli. "In our district (Alwar), it is well known that Tikaram Juli is a corrupt man and that his family is involved in collection. I asked the party leadership to remove him but instead, he has been made a Minister. I am against it," Meena said.

*Continued on Page 2*

# 'PNB customer data exposed for 7 months'

Glitch hit 180 m people, says CyberX9; bank denies data breach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



A vulnerability in the server of the Punjab National Bank (PNB) allegedly exposed the personal and financial information of its about 180 million customers for about seven months.

According to the cyber security firm CyberX9, the vulnerability provided access to the entire digital banking system of the PNB with administrative control. Meanwhile, the bank has confirmed the glitch but denied any exposure of critical data due to it.

PNB said: "Customer data/applications are not affected due to this and the server has been shut down as a precautionary measure."

"Punjab National Bank

kept severely compromising the security of funds, personal and financial information of over 180 million (all) its customers for about the last seven months. PNB only woke up and fixed the vulnerability when CyberX9 discovered the vulnerability and notified PNB through CERT-In and NCI-IPC," CyberX9 founder and MD Himanshu Pathak said.

He said CyberX9 research team discovered a very critical security issue in PNB which was leading to admin access to internal servers, hence exposing a massive number of the banks' systems nationwide open for cyber-attacks for the last about seven months.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Schools, colleges in Delhi to remain shut due to pollution

Online mode of classes, exams to be held as per norms: DoE

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



The Directorate of Education (DoE), Delhi Government, on Sunday announced that schools and colleges in the national Capital will remain closed until further orders. However, online mode of classes and the examination would be conducted as per the guidelines issued in the earlier circular.

The DoE's circular came in view of the noxious air quality as Government run agencies — the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) tagged the Capital's air as very poor.

"The Directorate has directed to close all schools with immediate effect till further orders of the Commission

for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and adjoining areas," read the official circular by the DoE.

All the Government, Government-aided, unaided recognised, NDMC, MCDs and Delhi Cantonment Board Schools will remain closed till further orders.

On November 13, the Delhi Government had ordered the closure of schools till November 20 in view of the severe air pollution. Delhi's air quality remained "very poor" on Sunday morning and strong surface winds are likely to bring some relief from high pollution levels during the day, SAFAR — a pollution monitoring agency said.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Mullaperiyar dam's 999-yr lease a mystery to experts!

150-yr-old lease for 999 years a scam, Maharaja forced to sign deal: Historians

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI



experts and historians have expressed reservations and doubts over the 999-year-long lease agreement signed on October 29, 1886 between the British-ruled Madras Presidency to build the Mullaperiyar dam, a controversy has erupted over the tenancy and lease terms. Legal

behind the drafting and signing of the Mullaperiyar dam agreement," P Sujathan, a seasoned scribe-turned-historian told *The Pioneer*. There are no lease and tenancy agreements anywhere in the world that hold valid for 999 years.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Amarinder to contest poll from Patiala

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Virtually relegated to the position of a "General without an Army", Punjab's former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder, after recently launching a one-man party, on Sunday declared that he would fight Punjab's great electoral battle from his family bastion — Patiala. Amarinder, whose Punjab Lok Congress is awaiting approval from the Election Commission, declared that he would not leave Patiala to contest polls against Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, who has made it clear that he would seek re-election from the Amritsar East Assembly segment.

*Continued on Page 2*

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# Keep rail tracks free of defecation: NGT

**New Delhi:** The National Green Tribunal has directed the Railway to ensure that tracks are not used for defecation and waste water disposal from habitation nearby.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said private agencies hired for catering or for sanitary management should not dispose waste other than at designated places.

"It needs to be ensured that Railway tracks are not abused for defecation and waste water disposal from habitation nearby," the bench said.

"In the interest of hygiene, public health and clean environment, it is necessary that the Railway Board ensures development of a model design plan/SoP to enable individual stations to

evolve a suitable Environment Management plan covering all aspects of waste management," the bench said in its November 18 order.

The NGT said the locomotive maintenance working area generating hazardous waste, oils, scrap, etc may have waste processing or treatment facility duly authorised by state pollution control board under waste management rules.

The green panel noted that out of the 720 major railway stations across the country, only 11 have applied for "consent" in terms of the Water Act and Air Act and only three have applied for "authorisation" under statutory rules under the Environment Protection Act.

The NGT had earlier directed the Railways to identify and develop at least 36 sta-

tions as "eco-smart stations" and to submit an action plan for maintaining cleanliness on platforms and tracks.

The green panel had asked the Comptroller and Auditor General to conduct a performance audit at regular intervals.

The NGT had said there was an urgent need for the railways to put in place an effective implementation and monitoring mechanism with provisions of fixing accountability of individuals in respect of solid waste disposal, littering of solid and plastic wastes, defecation, etc.

The NGT was hearing a petition filed by lawyers Saloni Singh and Arush Pathania seeking steps to check pollution on railway properties, particularly on tracks. **PTI**

# MP: Poachers kill collared tigress by electrocution

**Sidhi (MP):** A radio-collared adult tigress from the Sanjay Tiger Reserve was allegedly killed by poachers through electrocution in Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli district, an official said on Sunday.

The burnt skin, hairs and collar ID (tracking system) of the tigress, identified as T-30, were found near Banjari village (outside the reserve area) in the Sarai western range of forest in the Singrauli district on Saturday, said YP Singh, Director, Sanjay Tiger Reserve.

The rest of the carcass is also being retrieved. The tracking signal showed T-30's previous location in the Mohan range (Kusmi) in the Sidhi district and later at Banjari village in the Singrauli district till 6.30 pm on November 5 before the contact was lost around 11.30 pm that day, he said, adding a forest team had been trying to trace this tigress since then.

"During the search, which was carried out with the help of sniffer dogs, the remains of the tigress, including the burnt skin, hairs and collar ID, were found in a pit along with two blood-stained jute bags near Banjari village on Saturday," Mr Singh said. He said electricity wires were found laid from transformers located about two km away from the spot.

"A search is on with the help of police to trace and nab poachers involved in the incident," he added. **PTI**

# Child abuse is prevalent in prosperous families too, says Smriti Irani

**New Delhi:** There is a presumption among many that child abuse is limited to families that are poor, but in reality it is as much evident in prosperous families too, Union minister Smriti Irani said on Sunday.

Addressing the National Workshop on Child Rights with Emphasis on Preventive Aspects of Child Protection Issues, Irani urged the participants to look into abuse that happens in prosperous families, that happens in powerful organisations and in childcare institutions.

There is a presumption among many that abuse is limited to families that are poor and that the abused child is restricted to poverty, but in reality such abuse is as much evident in prosperous families, she said.

And how can we not as administrators, but as citizens

find solutions," the Union women and child development minister told the participants that consisted of NGOs, government officials among others. She said the best test of a democracy is if, "we as citizens, we as a nation can deliver justice to all children".

"This is a workshop conducted under the aegis of 75 years of Independence and until such time that every child is afforded protection can we truly be free.

So on your shoulders rests the freedom of a future generation so that they grow without fear, so that they may grow with the confidence that if they seek justice, that justice will be delivered, so that they grow with the belief that what you do today in protection of children is the flag that they will bear for their future generation," she said. **PTI**

# Renowned Punjabi singer Gurmeet Bawa dies at 77

**Amritsar:** Renowned Punjabi folk singer Gurmeet Bawa passed away on Sunday following prolonged illness. She was 77. The folk artist breathed her last at a city hospital here, said family friend Bhupinder Singh Sandhu.

"She was taken to the hospital on Saturday evening after she complained of difficulty in breathing," Sandhu told PTI.

Gurmeet Bawa, wife of Punjabi folk singer Kirpal Bawa, was best known for her long 'hek' (opening of a song while singing to create a melodious voice with an unbreakable wave) for about 45 seconds. She came to limelight when she started performing on Doordarshan. She was the first Punjabi female singer to appear on the national television channel. **PTI**

# Gadchiroli: Ex-women Naxals turn entrepreneurs, launch floor cleaner

**Nagpur:** Surrendered women Naxals in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district have turned entrepreneurs by launching a floor cleaner phenyl thanks to the welfare initiatives of the local police.

According to the Gadchiroli Police, 11 former Maoists, including ten female and one male, were trained in manufacturing phenyl and they have started their own business now. This phenyl is sold under the brand name 'clean 101'.

A Self Help Group (SHG) called 'Navjeevan Utpadak Sangh' was started for surrendered women Naxals on the initiative taken by Gadchiroli superintendent of police Ankit Goyal.

The police said the 'clean 101' phenyl is of very good quality and priced much below the market rates for other brands.

Gadchiroli police department will help this SHG to market their product. Besides, the SHG has received orders from various government and non-government departments, police said.

Dr Panjabrao Deshmukh

Krishi Vidyapeeth in Maharashtra's Akola has ordered 200 litres of 'clean 101' phenyl from the SHG, officials said.

"The surrendered Naxal women were organised into a Self Help Group and trained at the MGIRI in Wardha. Their first product 'CLEAN 101' floor cleaner was launched recently. We will do their hand-holding for the first few months. The initial sale orders are encouraging," Goyal told PTI.

He said 41 farmers from remote, Naxal-affected villages of Ettapalli, Hedri and Dhanora teshils are sent for a free tour of agricultural universities and innovation centres across Maharashtra from November 19 to 28 under a special initiative aimed at boosting their income.

On November 13, 26 ultras, including senior cadre Milind Teltumbde, were killed in the Gadchiroli district in an encounter with C-60 commandos of police. The toll rose to 27 after the body of one more ultra was found at the spot in a forest. **PTI**

# With concessions still suspended, almost 4 cr elderly forced to travel on full fare since Mar '20

**New Delhi:** Almost four crore senior citizens have been forced to pay full fare for their travel since the railways suspended their concessions due to the coronavirus outbreak in March 2020, a RTI has revealed.

In a reply to a query filed by Madhya Pradesh-based Chandra Shekhar Gaur, the railways has stated that between March 22, 2020 and September 2021, 37,850,668 senior citizens have undertaken journeys on trains. During this period, train services remained suspended for several months due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown. The concessions, which were suspended from March 2020, have remained suspended to this day.

In the case of senior citizens, while women are eligible for 50 per cent concession, men can avail 40 per cent in all classes. The minimum age limit for a woman is 58 and a man is 60.

Over the last two decades, railway concessions have been a much-discussed topic with multiple committees recommending their withdrawal. As a result of this in July 2016, the railways made elderly concession

optional while booking tickets.

In July 2017, the railways enabled the elderly to even give up their partial or full concession through the "give it up" scheme.

"The thing is that the concession given to us was significant and is a huge help for those that cannot afford it. Senior citizens in many homes are treated as an extra, with no income of their own. These concessions helped them to get around.

"Those who can have given up their concessions also. With regular train services running, at least the senior citizen concessions should be restored. Most elderly cannot afford to pay full fares," said Tapas Bhattacharya, a retired private sector employee, who is travelling to Kolkata with his wife, also a senior citizen, next week said.

In a letter last month, Madurai MP Su Venkatesan appealed to the Union railway minister to restore passenger concessions for their railway journeys stating that it was necessary for the elderly in a country where 20 per cent live below the poverty line.

"My parents haven't seen their grandchildren for more than two

years. This year also they didn't come as they cannot afford the tickets without concessions. It is also too much for me to pay. They used to come every year to Delhi and spent six months here," said Subhash Singh, a security guard working in a high-rise in Noida, whose parents are both senior citizens and stay in Bihar.

In fact, according to a CAG report of 2019, the response to the 'give it up' scheme from the senior citizen passengers was not very encouraging. The report said that out of total 4.41 crore senior citizen passengers, 7.53 lakh (1.7 per cent) passengers opted to give up 50 per cent concession and 10.9 lakh (2.47 per cent) passengers gave up 100 per cent concession.

The railways, over the past ten days, have restored some of its services that it suspended in the wake of the coronavirus crisis. This includes the removal of the "special" tag from trains which brought down the prices of tickets and restarted the service of serving hot cooked meals. However, the decision on restoring concessions and providing bedrolls is still pending. **PTI**

# ‘PNB customer data exposed for 7 months’

**From Page 1**  
Pathak said that the vulnerability was found in an exchange server which is interconnected with other exchanges and shares all access - including access to all email addresses which results in access to all email addresses.

"The vulnerability which we discovered was leading to the highest level of admin privilege in PNB's exchange servers. If you gain access to Domain Controller through an exchange server then the doors very easily open to make any computer accessible in the network. These computers even include those that are being used in their branches and other departments," Pathak said.

When contacted, the PNB said the server in which the vulnerability was found had no sensitive or critical data. "The server wherein the vulnerability was reported was being used as one

of the multiple Exchange Hybrid servers used to route emails from On-prim to Office 365 Cloud. There is no sensitive/critical data in this server," it said.

PNB denied CyberX9's claim on impact of the vulnerability on customer's data.

"The server is in a separate VLAN segment and customer data/applications are not affected due to this. Vulnerability assessments and penetration testing is done periodically by external Cert-in empanelled Information Security Auditors and the observations are complied with. Now this server has been shut down as a precautionary measure," PNB said. According to CyberX9, the vulnerability was mitigated on November 19, and it reported the incident to Indian cyber security watchdog Cert-In and National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC).

# Farmers to wait & watch; no word on...

**From Page 1**  
Farmer leaders said that they are waiting for the Union Cabinet's decision before making any formal announcement on their course of action now and whether they will be formally ending their protest. The meeting decided to send an open letter to Prime Minister Modi, raising the pending demands of the farmers' movement, including central legislation to guarantee a remunerative MSP, cancellation of criminal cases against farmer leaders and their supporters.

The SKM held a meeting on Sunday at the Singhu Border where it discussed the future course of action on the farmers' protests including on the MSP issue and the proposed daily tractor march to Parliament during the upcoming Winter Session.

This was the second meeting of farmer leaders in the backdrop of Modi's surprise announcement on the controversial agriculture laws that prompted year-long protests from tens of thousands of farmers and posed a

significant political challenge to the administration.

The SKM appealed to the farmers to take part in all the events planned by it. The farmers are also demanding compensation for those who lost their lives during the protests and the withdrawal of cases registered against some of them and removal of Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra. The SKM also hailed the Telangana Government for supporting the kin of the late farmers by announcing a support of Rs 3 lakh each.

Meanwhile, in a tweet in Hindi on Sunday, the Bharatiya Kisan Union national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said: "Chalo Lucknow, Chalo Lucknow (let's go to Lucknow) for MSP Adhikaar Kisaan Mahapanchayat. The agriculture reforms being talked about are fake and cosmetic. The farm reforms are not going to stop the plight of the farmers. The biggest reform for the farmers and agriculture will be to make a law pertaining to the MSP"

According to the vice-president of Uttar Pradesh unit of BKU Harnam Singh Verma, though the PM has announced the repeal of the three farm laws, he did not say when the MSP law will be made. Until a law is made on the MSP, and Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra is removed, the agitation will continue". Verma also said a number of other issues will also be discussed at the farmers' Mahapanchayat.

"The BJP had said (during the previous Assembly elections in UP) that once it forms the Government in the State, payment will be made to the sugarcane farmers within 14 days, but this mechanism could not be implemented in UP. In a span of four-and-a-half years, the increase in sugarcane price was barely Rs 25," he said.

Meanwhile, in Haryana, when State Agriculture Minister JP Dalal reached Tosham for an inauguration event of a court complex, farmers gathered in large numbers for a black flag protest.

# IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI

(ORDINARY ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION)

Citation: U/S 283, INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925  
In the matter of TEST CASE No. 38/2021  
GEETA RANKA ..... PETITIONER

VS

THE STATE (GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI) & ORS ..... RESPONDENTS

To, All Concerned.

In the matter of estate of Late.Tejsingh Khimesra S/o Late.LeharSingh Khimesra, R/o 2671-North/EN.Rd Apt, no.4117, Dallas-75390, Texas.

Whereas Geeta Ranka W/o Sh. Sajjan Kumar Ranka D/o Lt. Sh. Tejsingh Khimesra R/o UGA, Sagar Apartments 6, Tilak Marg, New Delhi-110001 has filed a petition under 276/278 of Indian Succession Act, 1925 for grant of Letters of Administration/Probate of the Will Dated 15.07.2018 of Sh. Tejsingh Khimesra, deceased.

And Whereas the aforesaid case is fixed for hearing on 20.12.2021 at 11.00 A.M. before Joint Registrar (Judicial) of this Hon'ble Court. The citation is issued in terms of section 283 of the said Act to all persons claiming to have any interest in the properties of the said deceased to come to this court, file objection, if any and take part in the proceedings on the date specified for the above for grant of Letters of Administration/Probate.

# Amarinder to contest poll...

**From Page 1**  
Notably, Amarinder, when he was the Chief Minister, had challenged Sidhu to contest polls against him from Patiala. Singh has said Sidhu would be defeated just like SAD's General (retd) JJ Singh, who forfeited his security deposit against Amarinder in 2017 Assembly polls.

"I will not leave Patiala seat...it has been with us for 400 years...and I will not leave it for the sake of Sidhu", Amarinder was quoted in a post shared in social media.

Amarinder hails from Royal family of Patiala and is commonly addressed as "Maharaja ji" by the locals. He has been elected MLA from Patiala four times.

At the same time, Preneet Kaur, Congress MP from Patiala, also gave enough indications that she would soon be part of Punjab Lok Congress.

Preneet, who has not yet resigned from the Congress party to join her husband's new political outfit, said, "Amarinder has always stood by the

commitment he makes. Main apne parivaar de naal haan (I am with my family)."

The development assumes significance as Amarinder is currently working on his party and, at the same time, warming up to the BJP. As of now, Amarinder is the lone soldier in his new outfit.

His staunch supporters and loyalists in the Congress have adopted a wait and watch policy.

The former Chief Minister had announced that his Punjab Lok Congress would contest all 117 Assembly seats in the State. At the same time, Amarinder has repeatedly made it clear that he is "looking forward" to arrive at a seat-sharing arrangement with the BJP, after the Prime Minister announced to repeal the controversial farm laws.

Sources informed The Pioneer that the former Chief Minister is in the process of identifying the potential leaders, especially in the ruling Congress, who could shift their loyalties to his party.

# Mullaperiyar dam's 999-yr lease a...

**From Page 1**  
"The Mullaperiyar agreement is for 999 years and this itself is shrouded in mystery and secrecy. The then Maharaja is on record telling his Diwan that he was forced to sign the dotted line with his own blood," said Sujathan, who studied the comprehensive history of the Mullaperiyar dam.

Thiruvanchur Radhakrishnan, former Kerala Minister for Water Resources and Forests, who had led the State in many of the discussions held with his Tamil Nadu counterparts, said that then Maharaja Sree Mulam Thirunal Rama Varma was forced to sign the agreement at gunpoint by the British rulers.

"The signatory for Travancore was KKV Rama Aiyangar who would have hoodwinked the Maharaja by tampering the figure of 99 years with 999 years. You should understand that Aiyangar was from Madras and it was natural that his loyalty was more towards his native State," said Sujathan.

John Peruvanthanam, environmentalist who has dedicated his life to be with the people staying on the banks of Periyar, too, has his own doubts over the authenticity of the agreement. "Nowhere in the world have we come across any such agreement. There are many missing links in this agreement. EMS Namoodirippad and VR Krishna Iyer were from outside Travancore. Their loyalty was elsewhere," said John. Both Namboodirippad and Iyer were from British Malabar which was part of Madras Presidency.

The dam which was constructed with a mixture of surky and lime has outlived its utility and it should have been decommissioned long back, according to Sujathan and John. Even KT Thomas, a highly respected former judge of the Supreme Court, who is highly critical of persons skeptical about the safety of Mullaperiyar dam, too expressed his apprehensions. "The water level should be brought to a safe level, may be 130 ft or even less. This dam is not

going to stay safe for another 100 years. In the eventuality of the bursting of the dam, it is the population of Kerala that is going to be affected," said Thomas. He said that the 2018 deluge in Kerala as a result of the opening of the Idukki reservoir was just a warning signal," he said.

Tamil Nadu would lose nothing if the Mullaperiyar dam caves in, but it is Kerala which would literally disappear from the face of the earth, said John. The cost of construction of the dam which was built in Kerala's territory was borne by the Government of Travancore. "More than 8,500 acres of reserve forest was slaughtered to build the dam and the entire woods were exported to Britain from the ports of Madras and Thoothukudi," said Sujathan.

Radhakrishnan and John said the only option to save Kerala from a "water bomb" that is ticking live is to bring down the water level below the 130 feet and dig a tunnel through which Tamil Nadu could draw water as per its requirement.

# Schools, colleges in Delhi to remain...

**From Page 1**  
The city recorded its air quality index (AQI) at 382 at 9 am. The 24-hour average AQI was 374 on Saturday. Neighbouring Faridabad (347), Ghaziabad (344), Greater Noida (322), Gurugram (345) and Noida (356) also recorded their air quality in the "very poor" category.

From November 21 to November 23, surface winds are likely to be strong resulting in effective dispersion that improves air quality, said the Ministry of Earth Sciences' air quality monitor SAFAR.



# Capital has new pollution hotspots

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality on Sunday recorded very poor on the National Ambient Air Quality Index (NAAQI) with overall air quality index settled at 352 micrograms per cubic at 21:00hrs.

According to SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research), Delhi has new hotspots – Jahangirpuri, Narela, Bawana, Alipur and Aashram road. These places have been marked as red zone due to high pollution.

In its short range forecast, SAFAR said, the transport level winds are likely to become strong from tonight till 23rd noon and coming from the favourable northwest direction. As farm fire counts are reducing rapidly, the percentage share of stubble burning related pollutants to Delhi's PM2.5 may remain low in spite of high wind speeds."

"Relatively high surface winds and moderate mixing layer height results in efficient ventilation of near surface pollutants. Net effect of drastic reduction in fire counts and increase of surface wind speed



tend to improve the air quality to the lower end of 'very poor' category for the next 2to days. From November 24 onwards, likely drop in air temperature as well as surface wind speed leads

to less dispersion of pollutants. However, transport level winds speed is likely to reduce keeping the air quality in the upper end of 'poor' to lower end of 'very poor' category. The impact

of farm fires (count 181) on Delhi's PM2.5 recorded eight percent," it said.

Meanwhile concentration of PM 10 and 2.5 were recorded at 301 and 188 µgm-3.

## Gusty winds bring visible improvement in city's air quality

### Rai to review curbs on Monday

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Strong surface winds swept through Delhi on Sunday, bringing about a visible improvement in the air quality, even as the authorities announced that schools will remain closed for physical classes till further orders in view of air pollution.

Officials said Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai will on Monday hold a high-level meeting to review the curbs imposed to contain high pollution levels in the city.

Following orders from the Commission for Air Quality Management, the Delhi government had on Wednesday issued 10 directions, including a ban on the entry of trucks carrying non-essential items into the city and closure of schools and colleges till further orders.

It had also banned construction and demolition activities in the city and had ordered its employees to work from home till Sunday (November 21).

"The environment department has directed to close all schools till further orders of the Commission for Air Quality Management in the NCR and adjoining areas. Therefore, all government and private schools will remain closed till further orders," Additional Director of Education Rita Sharma said on Sunday.

Winds gusting up to 20 kilometres per hour swept through the city, dispersing pollutants partially and improving visibility. The city recorded its 24-hour average air quality index at 349, down from 374 on Saturday.

## City records 29 Covid cases, 0 death in a day

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital reported 29 cases of Covid-19 and zero death in a day while the positivity rate stood at 0.06 per cent, according to data shared by the health department here on Sunday.

Delhi has recorded four deaths due to the infection in November so far. Four had succumbed to the viral disease in October and five in September.

With the new cases, the coronavirus infection tally in the city climbed to 14,40,666. Of this, over 14.15 lakh patients have recovered. The death toll stands at 25,095.

According to the health bulletin, authorities conducted 49,139 tests, including 41,107 RT-PCR ones, the previous day. There are 309 active Covid cases in Delhi, of which 133 are in home isolation. The number of containment zones stands at 124.

Delhi reported 32 COVID-19 cases on Saturday and 30 on

Friday.

In April and May, Delhi battled a brutal second wave of the pandemic that claimed a massive number of lives and led to a shortage of oxygen and essential drugs at hospitals.

On April 20, Delhi had reported 28,395 cases, the highest in the city since the beginning of the pandemic. On April 22 the case positivity rate was 36.2 per cent, the highest so far.

The highest number of 448 deaths was reported on May 3. According to the sixth serosurvey, 97 per cent of the population in Delhi have developed antibodies against coronavirus as a result of a large number of people getting exposed to the virus during the second wave and robust vaccination in the city.

All districts in Delhi have a seroprevalence of more than 93 per cent. Four districts -- South, Central, Northeast and East -- have recorded a seropositivity rate of 99 per cent, 99.5 per cent, 99.7 per cent and 99.8 per cent, respectively.

## Students from Delhi institutions to raise voter awareness

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Students from more than 200 institutions on Saturday took a joint pledge to raise voter awareness and participate responsibly in the electoral process.

The students took the pledge as part of an online event organised by the Delhi CEO Office in collaboration with the directorate of education of the city Government as part of a special summary revision exercise of electoral roll, officials said.

The pledge taken in Hindi said the person taking it shall exhort their family members to check their names in voters' list and if they are eligible, get their names added.

Youth are the most important and dynamic segment of the population and their influence can significantly increase electoral awareness, said Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ranbir Singh, who took part in the event. Students from several colleges, schools and institutions in Delhi took the pledge to raise voter awareness and participate responsibly in the electoral process, he said.

The Office of the CEO Delhi is encouraging young people to register as voter with

the theme, "Chalo Voter Bane Hum", as part of the campaign, "Delhi ka Voter Utsav".

The special summary revision of Delhi's electoral roll with January 1, 2022 as the qualifying date, began on November 1, Singh had earlier said and asserted that the poll authorities will carry out the exercise as a month-long festival for the electorate.

During this exercise, any person who would be 18 or more on or before January 1, 2022 will be eligible to enrol as a voter. The final roll will be published on January 5.

"Voter participation in the electoral process is vital for a democracy's effective functioning. We are committed not to leave even one voter behind," Singh said on Saturday.

He also said his office is encouraging students to follow official handles of @ceodelhi on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube and share content among their peers, as youth are the most dynamic section of the population.

As per the draft roll published on November 1, 2021, the total number of electors stand at 1,47,95,949, according to data shared by the CEO's office.

## Four held for hoarding, selling Covid medicines at exorbitant rates get bail

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has granted bail to four men, who were arrested for allegedly hoarding and selling at exorbitant rates life-saving medicines to treat Covid-19 patients during the second wave of the pandemic.

The High Court said though the men are accused of a nefarious and depraved offence, taking into account the fact that the evidence is primarily documentary in nature and is already in the custody of police, it was of the opinion that no useful purpose would be served in prolonging their incarceration.

"It is settled law that the magnitude of the offence cannot be the only criterion for denying bail. The object of bail is to secure the presence of the accused at the trial. The object of bail is neither punitive nor preventative and the person who has not been convicted should be held in custody pending trial only to ensure his attendance at trial; and to ensure that the evidence is not tampered with and the witnesses are not threatened," Justice Subramonium Prasad said.

The high court granted bail to Mohan Kumar Jha, Mohd Shoiab Khan, Pushkar Chandrakant Pakhale and Aditya Gautam, who are in cus-



tody for last seven months, on furnishing a personal band of Rs one lakh each with two sureties of the like amount and directed them not to leave the national capital without prior court permission.

It further directed the four accused to report to the police station concerned thrice a week and not to tamper with the evidence or contact any witnesses.

According to the prosecution, during the second wave of COVID-19 in April, the crime branch police officials received inputs of illegal hoarding and supply of life-saving medicines, including Remdesivir, to treat coronavirus patients.

Police officials got the information that two of the accused are going to supply Remdesivir injections near Batra Hospital and they were apprehended along with the medicines but they were unable to give any prescription of doctor or bills or satisfactory

answers, it said, adding that similarly, other accused were also arrested from other places.

The police said that at the time of arrest of one of the accused persons, empty vials, vial caps and a batch coding machine which was apparently used for the production of fake Remdesivir injection labels were also recovered.

The accused sought bail on the grounds that they were lodged in judicial custody for the last seven months and a charge sheet has been filed and that no useful purpose would be served by keeping them in jail.

The bail pleas were opposed by prosecutor Amit Chadha, who contended that a coordinated nexus of these individuals was operating to dupe innocent and desperate people whose family members were ill and these persons exploited the gullibility of innocent persons by selling fake Remdesivir injections at exorbitant prices.

## Four associates of Tillu gang involved in Rohini's extortion case arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested four associates of infamous Tillu Tajpuria gang who were involved in an extortion case of Delhi's Rohini

The accused have been identified as Aakash Khatri and Ravi Parasar (30), residents of Narela, Jayant Mann (26), a resident of New Colony Naya Bans, and Rahul (31), a resident of Bakhatawarpur.

Three sophisticated weapons with eleven live cartridges and one country made pistol with two live cartridges were recovered from them. Sim card used in extortion has been recovered from their possession, police said

According to Pranav Tayal, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Rohini, on April 8, a businessman received a WhatsApp call and later a recorded message on his mobile phone regarding extortion.

"The caller introduced himself as Chiku from Tillu Tapuria gang. He demanded Rs one crore as extortion money and threatened to kill the complainant by firing 100 rounds on him," said the DCP.

Accused Himmat alias Chiku was interrogated in jail and later arrested in the case. The alleged mobile phone was recovered from his cell, police said.

Later, on August 23, when the complainant was at his home, some unidentified persons fired five rounds on his car. A written slip was left on the vehicle with a message that 'you have three days, be ready with cash otherwise we will fire 100 bullets and would kill you. You will receive a call where place and time will be informed,' said the DCP.

Police identified the registration number of the motorcycle used in the crime through CCTV. The motorcycle was also found stolen from Begumpur area, police said.

Chiku, who is the cousin of gangster Sunil alias Tillu, was interrogated who disclosed the name of one of the shooters. Thereafter, police arrested the four accused persons

## Gang selling illegal firearms through social media busted, 1 held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the arrest of a 38-year-old man, the Delhi Police has busted a module involved in selling illegal firearms through Facebook and other social media platforms.

The accused has been identified as Hitesh Rajput, a resident of Jodhpur in Rajasthan. He was previously involved in more than 11 criminal cases.

According to K P S Malhotra, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations, during social media monitoring, it came to notice that some Facebook profiles had shared the posts in which they were offering sale of illegal arms.

"They had also displayed the photographs and videos of weapons and ammunition on their pages. The most prominent group out of these was a group in the name of Lawrence Bishnoi group. Since, the matter was of utmost importance after the alleged killing of gangster Jitender Gogi in Rohini Court shootout, a case under appropriate sections of law was registered," said the DCP.

During investigation, Facebook profiles related to Lawrence Bishnoi were searched and it was found that Rajput has a separate profile and was also offering the illegal firearms for sale, said the DCP.

Through technical surveillance, the active profiles of Rajput were identified. Police finalized a deal with the accused over Facebook and the communication was made on WhatsApp. The accused shared the weapon videos and the advance money was deposited in the bank account provided by him, said the DCP.

## PROTEST USING STRINGS

## Elderly man returns to Singhu with his *iktara* to inspire farmers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

He plays iktara at the Singhu border, where he has been camping at regular intervals since the start of the protest against the three agri laws. With his songs of victory, Jagar Singh, 75, is back at the site, motivating the protesters to continue their struggle.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced a rollback of the three agri laws at the centre of protests by farmers for the past year.

On his fourth visit to the Singhu border, the epicentre of farmers' protest, Singh, a resident of Patiala district in Punjab, seems happy and in a celebratory mood.

"We have won half the battle but there is still some time for us to return home triumphant. We want the government to bring in a legislation to guarantee the minimum support price (MSP)," he said.

He said he has stayed at the Singhu border for a week each on his three earlier visits. A day after the Centre's announcement of the three contentious laws, Singh reached the site on Saturday to sing songs of victory and to motivate the protesters to continue their struggle.

"Playing iktara is my hobby and from the past few years, I



Nihangs and farmers take part in a procession (Nagar Kirtan) at the Singhu border  
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

have gradually started singing as well. This is the fourth time I have come to the Singhu border since the protest started. I have family responsibilities back home," he said.

Singh said he has also performed at the main stage at the Singhu border protest site.

Malkit Singh (58), a resident of Ropar, said 'nagar kirtan' was organised at the border on Sunday morning.

"Today, nagar kirtan was organised two days after the Gurupurab. It was started from the main stage, we did 'sewa' in the kirtan and sweets were distributed during the procession. We want Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fulfil our other demands also so that we

would go back to our respective homes," he said. The protesters are refusing to move from the site till their demands are met.

Chad Singh (70), a resident of Patiala, said the protesters have achieved one demand, however, "there are others which have to be accepted by the government".

"Repealing of the three farm laws is one step. There are other demands of MSP guarantee etc. The government should also compensate the family members of the protesters who died here and give jobs to their kin. The farmers have spent a lot of money in the protest and the government should also waive loans of all farmers," Chad said.

## City BJP plans to open Namo centres in slums

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP plans to open 'Namo Sewa Kendras' in slum pockets of around 32 Assembly constituencies in the city, strengthening its outreach campaign "Jhuggi Samman Yatra" ahead of the crucial municipal corporation polls early next year, party leaders said.

The BJP, which is ruling the three municipal corporations since 2007, launched "Jhuggi Samman Yatra" on Vijaya Dashmi (October 15), seeking to aware slum inhabitants about various welfare schemes of the Modi government and expose "failures" of the Kejriwal government in the city.

"The NaMo Sewa Kendras will serve as centres to directly help slum dwellers get benefited by Modi government schemes like Ujjwala Yojna, Jahan Jhuggi Wahan Makan among others " said a senior functionary of the Delhi BJP.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta and other leaders have so far traversed the slum pockets in 17 Assembly constituencies across the city under its "Jhuggi Samman Yatra". The party has identified 32 such

constituencies with a high density of slum clusters.

"During these visits, it was felt that many people were unable to reap the benefits of Modi government's schemes although they faced major problem of water supply, electricity, sewer and other such amenities that come under the domain of Kejriwal government," the party functionary said.

The concept of 'NaMo Sewa Kendra' was inspired by the thought to at least help people get those within their reach, he said.

"It is planned to employ local skilled youth to run these centres for maximum benefit to the locals," he said.

Party leaders claimed the "Jhuggi Samman Yatra" is getting an "excellent response" in the slum clusters of the city. "We have already started helping people get Ujjwala Yojna gas connections and register them from other benefits of schemes like Jan Dhan Yojna. The needy people are also being provided immediate help through the distribution of sarees to women and ration kits," said Delhi BJP vice president Aditya Jha.

## AFTER COVID

## Delay in exam fee payment holds up recruitment of 211 forest guards

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The coronavirus pandemic and procedural delays in the payment of exam fee amounting to around ₹50 crore has impeded the recruitment of 211 forest guards by the severely short-staffed Delhi forest department, according to officials.

Hearing a plea moved by lawyer Aditya Prasad, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had in July 2019 ordered the department to fill up vacant posts at the earliest. In November that year, it again directed authorities to complete the recruitment process within four months.

According to officials, the Delhi Government outsourced online testing and assessment services to EdCIL India Limited in November 2019, taking them out of the purview of the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board, and issued an advertisement in December to fill up 226 vacant sanctioned posts – four forest rangers, 211 forest guards and 11 wildlife guards.

EdCIL, a miniratna public sector enterprise under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, conducted the exam for forest rangers and wildlife guards in March last year. The final results were



declared in January 2021.

"The wildlife guards have joined duty and they are looking after wildlife rescue operations across the city. The rangers are undergoing an 18-month-long training. However, the pandemic and procedural delays in releasing the exam fee amounting to more than Rs 50 crore to the testing agency has impeded the recruitment of forest guards," an official told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

According to another official, the online examination for forest guards was to be held in April last year but was postponed due to the pandemic. It was later conducted in March.

"There was a delay in the payment (of exam fee) due to some procedural issues and the budget allocated for this purpose lapsed after March 31. It has been taken up again. The file is pending with the finance department," he said.

A third official said, "EdCIL has prepared the results and we have made sincere

efforts to expedite the payment of exam fee, but it is expected only after December 31."

The recruitment process also involves physical test and document verification which will be conducted after the results of the written exam are announced. After the exam fee is paid, it can take up to six months to complete the remaining process, the officials said.

They also acknowledged that it is difficult to ensure enforcement of forest laws on the ground due to the debilitating shortage of staff.

"It is difficult for the department to take proper care of nurseries, map and remove encroachment on forest land and take action against tree offences due to the staff crunch," an official said.

The department has been struggling to keep a record of saplings planted to compensate for trees cut or transplanted as part of developmental projects, and their survival rate due to the staff scarcity, he said.



# FARM LAWS' WITHDRAWAL Cabinet to hold meet to approve repeal on Wed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet is likely to discuss the withdrawal of the three farm laws on Wednesday as the farmer groups are adamant that the Government should repeal the acts in the same manner it was passed by the Parliament. This is a follow-up to the Prime Minister's announcement regarding the intention to withdraw the laws. The proposal to repeal will then be taken up by Parliament after it convenes for the winter session on November 29.

"The repeal of the three farm laws will be taken up for approval in the Union Cabinet meeting to be held on Wednesday," said the source. After the cabinet approval, the same would be brought before the Parliament for further approval during the winter session.

The three farm laws are - The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020,



The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

During his address to the nation on the occasion of Guru Parab on Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken a U-turn and announced his government's decision to withdraw the three farm bills.

However farmers are sticking to their position on ending the on-going protest, linking it

to fulfillment of their pending demands.

They have also not relented on holding their programs scheduled over the next few days.

On the other hand, the Opposition had pointed out that the announcement to withdraw the laws came ahead of the Assembly elections in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh scheduled for early next year. Farmers from the two states have been at the forefront of the agitation.

# India to have norms for cooperatives soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Soon cooperatives across the country will have guidelines on good practices to help them function in a transparent and effective manner. The Government has kicked off the process in this direction by holding discussions with experts to prepare a blueprint to help cooperatives counter illegal practices and instead contribute in country's economy.

To begin with, the first brainstorming session on 'International Good Practices Platform for Cooperatives', coined as SAHAKAR PRAGYA by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) was held recently to explore technologies, best practices, and pressing issues throughout the Cooperative sector.

Speaking on the occasion, National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) President Dileep Sanghani emphasized that Cooperatives would play a big role in enhancing one's own income and thereby India becoming self-reliant (Atmanirbhar) as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Hence every Government scheme should be prepared in

the context of these entities", he asserted.

The NCUI President who was the Chief Guest at the session also opined that the dream of 'sabka saath sabka vikas' was possible only through the Cooperatives which has engaged around 95 per cent of the farmers in the country in around 8.50 lakh cooperatives in various sectors.

Sahakar Pragya launched last year, is a platform aimed to ease the mutual sharing of knowledge and also help new cooperatives, involving youth and women in particular, to benefit from understanding the opportunities and scope of the cooperative sector.

The knowledge exchange would also assist in understanding and infusing 21st century technological aids, which can lead to a quantum jump in efficiency and productivity of the cooperatives and consequently in the value and supply chain across sectors, said SundEEP Nayak, MD NCDC.

In his speech, V Srinivas, Spl Secy, DAR & PG & DG, NCGG suggested a one stop portal for all the cooperatives having individual IDs even as he gave a ringside view of digital transformation of various e-initiatives taken by the

❑ **Sahakar Pragya launched last year, is a platform aimed to ease the mutual sharing of knowledge and also help new cooperatives**



❑ **Ramesh Vaidya, National President, Sahakar Bharati too felt that Cooperatives were "invisible agents of change" and can help make the country self-reliant and position India number one on the world map**

Government such as DBT, GEM, Aadhar card, Digital Health Mission and MyGov platforms.

Ramesh Vaidya, National President, Sahakar Bharati too felt that Cooperatives were "Invisible Agents of Change" and can help make the country self-reliant and position India number one in the world map. He also praised NCDC MD Nayak for his commitment and spearheading various innovative schemes to help boost income of the Coops.

During the interactive session, experts like Satish Marathe, Member Central Board of RBI and Jyotindra Mehta among others also talked about practices devised and deployed across geogra-

phies, recommended models and practices that are proposed by multilateral bodies like the ICA, the FAO, the NEDAC, the World Bank, the UNDP, the ILO, the UNESCAP, the OECD etc.

The experts pointed out that the Indian Cooperative sector is beset by multitude challenges, such as, non-uniform cooperative legislations, insufficient recognition of cooperatives as economic institutions among policy makers and public, associated lack of development resources, political interference and improper application of credit resulting in loan defaults that limit the recycling of credit among a few others.

Later Nayak said that the

stakeholders have been requested to submit their suggestions by November-end to be compiled for due consideration. "Based on their inputs, we will prepare a set of best practices that the cooperatives can adopt as per their requirement and ease," he said.

During the session, best practices by successful entities in the sector were also showcased. These included Primary Coop namely ULCCS represented by Kishore, ULCCS, Kerala.

Multi State Coop NAFED by Sanjeev Chaddha, MD, NAFED and Uttarakhand Cooperative Department by Dr. R. Meenakshi Sundaram, Secretary in Uttarakhand Government.

# IAF to start upgrading Rafale fighter fleet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Having already received around 30 Rafale combat aircraft from France, the Indian Air Force would start upgrading its fleet of French-origin fighters from January 2022, with India specific enhancements.

"A high-level team of Indian Air Force officers is in France to evaluate the performance of the testbed aircraft with tail number RB-008 at the Istres airbase there. The aircraft has been equipped with all the India Specific Enhancements agreed upon between the two sides in the 2016 contract," government sources told ANI here.

Once the enhancements are approved and accepted by the IAF, the upgrade is planned to be started from January next year onwards making the Indian planes more capable," they said. The India specific enhancements would include integration of highly capable missiles, low band jammers and satellite communication



systems as per Indian requirements.

India has already received around 30 of these planes and three more of them would be arriving in the country on December 7-8.

As per the contract schedule, sources in the Air Force said kits would be brought to India from France and every

month, three to four Indian rafales would be upgraded to the ISE standards.

The last aircraft to arrive in India from France would be the RB-008 named after the former air force chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria (retd) who played a crucial role as the Deputy Chief to sign the contract worth over ₹60,000 crore

with France under a government to Government deal with France.

The upgrade of the aircraft would be carried out at the Ambala Air Force Station which is the first base of the plane in the country.

The Indian Air Force has also started the training of its pilots on the aircraft within the country itself after training its personnel in France. Once inducted fully, the fleet would have eight twin-seater trainer planes with tail numbers in the RB series while 28 single-seaters with BS tail number series.

The BS tail numbers are in honour of the former air force chief Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa who retired in 2019 after leading the Balakot airstrikes of February 26 2019.

India is now planning to go ahead with the case for acquiring 114 multirole fighter aircraft for which a case is to be moved to the Defence Ministry by the IAF in near future.

# Cong questions PM's 'silence' on Chinese intrusion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping up the pressure on the Government, the Congress on Sunday accused the BJP-led dispensation of deception and deliberate distortion over alleged Chinese intrusions in Arunachal Pradesh and questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on the issue.

The Opposition party also accused the BJP of giving lessons on national security to the entire country while digressing from addressing the serious issue that affected India's integrity and sovereignty.

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi shared satellite images to claim that China has built another village six to seven kilometres inside Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh with over 60 structures.

He also claimed that the Chinese president had visited a few kilometres north of this spot a few days ago.

The Congress leader



demanding that Prime Minister Modi address the issue and tell the nation about steps he is taking in this regard.

"We condemn the Prime Minister's silence. It is culpable. It is a negative eloquence which we can do without. It is inexcusable," he told reporters.

There was no response from the government on the issue.

The Congress has been attacking the government consistently over its handling of border tensions with China.

"We don't understand this

definition is national security, where you berate, browbeat, intimidate the whole country on national security issues and keep silent on this kind of things," Singhvi said, claiming the prime minister never said a word "on the January 2019 and September- October 2021 intrusions".

"It is a sad case of deliberate distortion, digression and diversion on an issue affecting India's integrity and sovereignty," he alleged, hitting out at the BJP government.

The satellite images shared

by Singhvi, sourced from some professional websites, purportedly show images of the same spot in Arunachal Pradesh in April 2019 and then in September 2021 with around 60 structures or habitats built up.

He also cited a statement of BJP MP Tapir Gao from Arunachal Pradesh made in Parliament over a year ago where he alleged that the second Doklam will be in Arunachal. He said the BJP should at least listen to its MP, if not the opposition party.



A 76 ft tall National Flag at 15,000 ft hoisted by the Indian Army and Flag Foundation of India, overlooking the Hanle Valley in Ladakh by the Fire and Fury Corps, Indian Army

# Singapore, India to resume daily flights from Nov 29

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Indian travellers would now be able to visit Singapore through a vaccinated travel lane (VTL). From November 29, India will resume daily flights from Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi to Singapore.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) and the Ministry of Civil Aviation have reached an agreement on the resumption of scheduled commercial passenger flights. Airlines will now announce their schedule for these flights. The Pioneer has earlier reported that discussions are ongoing between authorities from Singapore and India for resumption of commercial flights via VTL.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of

Singapore (CAAS), the airlines can also operate non-VTL flights between India and Singapore and this will facilitate quarantine-free travel with six designated VTL flights daily from Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai.

"Travellers on non-VTL flights to Singapore will be subject to the prevailing public health requirements based on the Singapore Ministry of Health (MOH)'s Country/Region Classification for Border Measures. The short-term visitors and long-term pass holders will need to apply for a Vaccinated Travel Pass (VTP) to enter Singapore under the VTL from November 22. Fully vaccinated Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents, and children aged 12 and below do not

need to apply for a VTP to enter Singapore under the VTL," it said.

The announcement comes after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's recent visit to Singapore. Resumption of connectivity between the two countries also came up during the talks. Currently, vaccinated travellers can now enjoy quarantine-free access to Singapore from the following countries: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

CAAS said VTP applications for short-term visitors and long-term pass holders from India, Finland, and Sweden will open on November 22 at 1800 hours

(Singapore time). All short-term visitors and long-term pass holders who meet the requirements of the VTL, will receive a VTP.

The VTP applications will open for intended dates of entry from November 29, 2021 to January 21, 2022. "Those who intend to enter Singapore after December 1 are strongly encouraged to apply after November 24," it said.

To facilitate the application process, VTP applicants should have their passport and digital proof of vaccination on hand. They should also know the address of the place they intend to self-isolate while waiting for the results of their on-arrival COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, CAAS said. Travellers who require a visa for travel to

Singapore should apply for their visa separately and only after their VTP is approved, CAAS said.

"They must also purchase travel insurance, with a minimum coverage of Singapore USD 30,000 for COVID-19-related medical treatment and hospitalisation costs, prior to travel to Singapore. In Singapore, these visitors must also use the TraceTogether app to facilitate contact tracing," it said. The CAAS has made it clear that the VTP applicants should have information on their passport, digital proof of vaccination and address in Singapore for self-isolation pending the results of their on-arrival Covid-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test while starting the application process.

# Unborn babies may contract Covid-19, finds study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An unborn baby could become infected with Covid-19 if their gut is exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, according to a study.

Led by University College London researchers, the study found that certain foetal organs, such as the intestine, are more susceptible to infection than others. However, researchers said that opportunities for the Covid-19 virus infecting the foetus are extremely limited, as the placenta acts as a highly effective and protective shield, and evidence suggests foetal infection, known as vertical transmission, is extremely uncommon.

"Our findings explain that clinical infection of the foetus during pregnancy is possible but uncommon and that is reassuring for parents-to-be," said Dr Mattia Gerli, from UCL's Division of Surgery

and Interventional Science and the Royal Free Hospital.

For the study, published in BJOG - An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, researchers set out to understand how newborn babies could have developed Covid-19 antibodies, as has been reported in a small number of cases and how the virus could be passed from an infected mother to the unborn foetus.

To find out, researchers examined various foetal organs and placenta tissue, made available via the Human Developmental Biology Resource (HDBR) biobank, which assists embryonic/fetal research.

The team examined the presence of protein receptors, ACE2 and TMPRSS2 - needed for the SARS-Cov-2 virus to infect and spread.

Researchers found that the intestines (gut) and the kidney were the only foetal organs to



feature both the ACE2 and TMPRSS2.

Since the foetal kidney is anatomically protected from exposure to the virus and therefore less at risk of infection, the team concluded that the Covid virus could infect the foetus via the gut and through foetal swallowing of amniotic fluid, which the unborn baby does naturally for nutrients.

After birth ACE2 and TMPRSS2 receptors are known to be present in combination on the surface of cells in the human intestine as well as the

lung -- also suspected to be the main routes for Covid infection. But in younger children, the intestine appears to be most important for virus infection.

"The foetus is known to begin swallowing the amniotic fluid in the second half of pregnancy. To cause infection, the SARS-CoV-2 virus would need to be present in significant quantities in the amniotic fluid around the foetus," Gerli explained.

"However, many studies in maternity care have found

that the amniotic fluid around the foetus does not usually contain the SARS-CoV2 virus, even if the mother is infected with Covid-19," she noted.

The researchers highlighted that the biggest risk to the foetus during pregnancy is if the mother becomes very unwell with Covid-19 infection. In this instance, the virus may be present in high concentrations in the amniotic fluid. In addition, it could damage the placenta, which can lead to preterm birth.

"Vaccination against Covid-19 is known to be safe in pregnancy and reduces the chance of SARS-CoV-2 infection to very low levels. The results of this study provide definitive information regarding the susceptibility of the human foetus to Covid-19 infection," said co-author Professor Anna David from UCL Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Institute for Women's Health.

# BJP elevates Vinod Tawde to party's general secretary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday made several new appointments in its national team, including elevating Vinod Tawde to the post of general secretary and appointing two national secretaries from Bihar and Jharkhand.

The appointments come ahead of Assembly elections in five States, including politically crucial Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand, and sources in the party said that this will further strengthen the organisation before these polls.

BJP president JP Nadda made the appointments and these were announced by party general secretary Arun Singh in an official statement.

Tawde, who was the national secretary of the BJP,



Vinod Tawde

was elevated to the post of general secretary to fill up a vacancy created after Bhupendra Yadav became Union Minister. Similarly, the BJP appointed two new national secretaries — Rituraj Sinha from Bihar and Asha Lakhra from

Jharkhand. The party also appointed two new spokespersons Bharti Ghosh, a former IPS officer from West Bengal, and Shehzad Poonawalla, who has been unofficially speaking for the party on news channels.



# SP fears BJP will bring back 3 farm laws after UP polls

**Lucknow:** The Samajwadi Party on Sunday expressed apprehension that the three contentious farm laws will be brought again after the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, citing the statements made by Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra and BJP MP from Unnao Sakshi Maharaj on them.

The State Congress too slammed the BJP, saying the Centre is on the "backfoot" and that its "intention is malaafide".

Both Mishra and Maharaj told reporters on Saturday that the laws could be brought again, if needed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Friday announced that the Centre would repeal the farm laws after the nearly year-long agitation by a section of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Farmer leaders said the protesters will stay put at border areas of Delhi until the Centre formally repeals the laws in parliament, and indicated that their stir for a statutory guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) and withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill will continue.

In a tweet in Hindi, the Samajwadi Party charged, "It is absolutely clear that their heart is not clean, and after the elections, the bills will be brought again. Occupying the constitutional

posts, Governor of Rajasthan Kalraj Mishra and BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj have said that the BJP government may bring the bill for farm laws."

"This is the truth of those tendering false apologies to farmers. The farmers will bring a change in 2022," the SP said in the tweet.

Upping the ante against the BJP, general secretary of UP Congress Committee Sharad Misra told PTI, "I am of the view that the Centre is on backfoot, and owing to the strength of the opposition and pressure of the farmers' protest, the government announced the repealing of the three farm laws.

"It was done unwillingly and the intention is malaafide. There is every possibility that something will be done by the government to bring back the farm laws, may be in other forms. But, that will also be strongly opposed," he said. Mishra on Saturday said in Bhadohi that efforts were made to make the farmers understand the provisions of the farm laws, and positive aspects, but the farmers were demanding the withdrawal of the three farm laws and were protesting against them.

Eventually, the Government felt that the laws be withdrawn, and if there was a need to make the laws

again, it would be done, he said.

"The farmers were continuously demanding that the farm laws be withdrawn, and it was done in a very civilised manner. It is a good step and appropriate decision," Mishra said.

Speaking to reporters in Unnao on Saturday, BJP MP Maharaj said, "Bills are made and repealed. They will come again, and will be made again. It hardly takes any time (bills to bante rehte hai, bigarhte rehte hai...Vaapas aajaayenge, dobaaraa ban jaayenge...Koi der nahi lagtee hai).

"But, I would thank Modiji that he displayed a big heart, and he chose the nation over the laws. And those whose intentions were wrong, those who had raised slogans of Pakistan zindaabaad and Khalistan zindabad, they have got a befitting reply," he said. He also categorically stated that there is no connection between the announcement of repealing of the farm laws with the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections 2022.

"In the UP 2022 Assembly elections, the BJP will cross the 300 mark in the (403-member) UP Legislative Assembly. In India, there is no substitute of (Prime Minister) Modi and (UP Chief Minister) Yogi Adityanath. Their magic will stay," he said. **PTI**

# BSF forward defence locations along LoC to get steel infra

**New Delhi:** Border Security Force locations along the Line of Control (LoC) will be getting a steel makeover as the paramilitary force embarks on a major project to fortify defences and enhance living facilities for troops along this sensitive high-altitude frontier with Pakistan.

These deployments are called forward defence locations (FDLs), and the border force guards, either jointly with the Army or independently, over 430 kilometres of the total 772-km-long LoC that falls in Jammu and Kashmir.

The FDLs are located in extreme forward snow-bound or dense jungle areas of the LoC and are part of India's anti-infiltration grid to thwart terrorist activities being conducted from across this un-demarcated frontier.

Behind the FDLs on the Indian side are multiple rings of the Army's counter-infiltration deployments. Troops at these icy locations, having altitudes in the range of 8,000-16,000 feet, at present live in CGI (corrugated galvanised iron) sheet-made hutments along with their rations and weapons, exposing them to the



vagaries of sub-zero temperatures.

Official sources in the security establishment told PTI that the BSF will convert about 115 of its FDLs to large steel (alloy of iron and carbon) compartments with an overall layout of around Rs 35 crore.

The decision was taken after BSF Director General (DG) Pankaj Kumar Singh recently visited the FDLs in Kashmir and reviewed their operational preparedness.

The BSF head interacted with his troops and later directed officials of the Kashmir frontier to prepare an action plan for converting those FDLs to steel so that work can be initiated quickly.

The DG, they said, later also met senior officials of the

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy in Delhi to get solar power projects sanctioned for these FDLs which have been approved in-principle.

All activities at these locations, including cooking and daily ablutions by BSF troops, are carried out using power sourced from kerosene and diesel, they said.

"The new steel dwelling units will be procured after a tender process. Steel has been thought as the replacement to the present infrastructure as it has better strength and fracture resistance in sub-zero temperatures.

"A bathroom, toilet, kitchen and living unit will be prepared from steel and installed at about 115 FDLs each," a senior officer said. He said more locations would be covered after the first phase is implemented successfully. Another officer said while the Union Home Ministry has approved the decision, the solar power panels that will be installed by the New and Renewable Energy Ministry will help reduce carbon footprint and pollution in these ecologically fragile high-altitude regions.

Moreover, an officer deployed in the Kashmir anti-infiltration grid said BSF troops will get better facilities than what they have at present.

"No doubt it is very hard to survive and protect the borders in these FDL areas as weather is a strong enemy and there is no absolute solution that can ease all the troubles.

"We are trying to provide our men in uniform what is best available for them in these extreme hard area deployments," the officer said.

As FDLs cannot have permanent dwelling infrastructure, temporary structures are created to deploy troops, lay ambushes and mount weapons in these areas.

A number of BSF FDLs are named in the memory of troops who were killed in action in this area, while some are identified with the names of Hollywood actresses. Apart from the LoC, the BSF is entrusted to guard about 2,289 kilometres of the India-Pakistan International Border that runs from Jammu to Punjab, Rajasthan and up to Gujarat on the country's western flank. **PTI**

# Irresponsible nations twisting definition of UNCLOS: Min

**Mumbai:** Taking a veiled dig at China, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said "some irresponsible nations" for the sake of their narrow partisan interests and hegemonic tendencies are coming up with inappropriate interpretations of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It is a matter of concern that UNCLOS is being repeatedly weakened by arbitrary interpretation of its definition by some nations, Singh said, after commissioning of Indian Navy's destroyer Visakhapatnam here.

As a responsible maritime stakeholder, India supports consensus-based principles and a peaceful, open, rule-based stable maritime order, Singh said. India envisions a rule-based Indo-Pacific, with freedom of navigation, free trade and universal values, in which the interests of all the participating countries are protected, he added. Singh underscored the importance of a rule-based freedom of navigation and security of sea lanes in the present era of globalisation to ensure stability, economic progress and development of the world. The UNCLOS 1982 specifies about any country's territorial waters, exclusive economic zone and good order at sea, he said. "The arbitrary interpretations create obstacles in the path of a rule-based maritime order," he said. "There are some nations - I would like to say irresponsible nations - (who) for the sake of their narrow partisan interests, keep on giving new and inappropriate interpretations to these international laws from hegemonic tendencies," Singh said without naming China. China has been militarizing islands in South China, a move that has attracted global criticism.

The area has overlapping claims of several East and Southeast Asian nations. In 2016,



an international tribunal rejected China's argument that it enjoys historic rights over most of the South China Sea -- a region known to be rich in hydrocarbons and also hosting an important Sea Lane of Communication. Following the order, China said the award is "null and void and has no binding force" and it neither accepts nor recognises it. Noting that the Indo-Pacific is important for the whole world, Singh said the region sees passage of two-third oil shipments of the world, one-third of the bulk cargo and more than half of container traffic. Singh said as an important country in the region, the Indian Navy's role assumes a more crucial role for the region's security.

"It becomes the primary objective of the Indian Navy to keep the Indo-Pacific open, safe and secure," he said. Singh asserted that India's interests are directly linked with the Indian Ocean and the region is crucial for the world economy. "Challenges such as piracy, terrorism, illegal smuggling of arms and narcotics, human trafficking, illegal fishing and damage to the environment are equally responsible for affecting the maritime domain. Therefore, the role of the Indian Navy becomes very important in the entire Indo-Pacific region," he added. Countries world over are working towards making their military power strong and modern due to global security reasons, border disputes and importance to maintain maritime dominance, he said.

# TMC leader Saayoni arrested on attempt to murder charge in Tripura

**Agartala:** Tripura Police, on Sunday, arrested West Bengal Trinamool Congress leader Saayoni Ghosh, who allegedly threatened Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb during a meeting in Agartala on Saturday night, on the charge of attempting to murder, a police official said.

Ghosh, the youth unit secretary of TMC West Bengal, was arrested after being called in for questioning in a police station in the state capital Agartala.

The development took place a day before a planned visit by the TMC's national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee to the Northeastern state.

Sub-divisional police officer Ramesh Yadav said Ghosh was arrested under IPC Sections 307 (attempt to murder) and 153A (promoting disharmony between two groups) for her comments against the chief minister.

Yadav said some persons who were with her allegedly threw stones at a street corner meeting which was being addressed by the chief minister.

A police official, who did not want to be named, said a BJP worker lodged a complaint alleging that Ghosh had reached the spot where the meeting was being held and shouted "Khela hobey" (game will happen) and claimed that there were not even 50 people in the gathering.

"Khela hobey" is a slogan used by the TMC during the assembly election in West Bengal held in March-April this year.

Ghosh was earlier detained for questioning in a police station and arrested later.

TMC leaders alleged that their workers were also roughed up by BJP supporters outside the East Agartala women's police station, a charge denied by the saffron party.

Abhishek Banerjee in a tweet accused the BJP government in the Northeastern state of disregarding Supreme Court orders on the rights of political parties to hold peaceful programmes. @BjpBiplab has become so UNABASHEDLY BRAZEN that now even SUPREME COURT ORDERS DOESN'T SEEM TO BOTHER HIM. He has repeatedly sent goons to attack our supporters & our female candidates instead of ensuring

their safety! DEMOCRACY BEING MOCKED under @BJP4Tripura," Banerjee said in a tweet, attaching a video of the alleged attack.

The Supreme Court recently directed Tripura Police to ensure that no political party is prevented from exercising their rights in accordance with the law for campaigning in a peaceful manner.

Police said some unidentified miscreants attacked a group of people who gathered near the police station during the questioning of Ghosh, but no one was injured.

The TMC is contesting the Tripura civic polls to be held on November 25. The ruling BJP has already won 112 out of 334 seats uncontested across 20 urban local bodies including Agartala municipal corporation. This will be the first civic election that the BJP will face after coming to power in 2018.

The Mamata Banerjee-led party is trying to gain a foothold in the state ahead of the 2023 assembly elections.

TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sushmita Dev claimed that BJP sheltered goons attacked the leaders and workers of the party on the premises of the police station after Ghosh reached there.

"Our candidates were beaten up; their houses vandalised and though complaints were filed, no action was taken. Police here are acting in a one-sided manner," she told reports.

The TMC has repeatedly alleged that its candidates were being prevented from campaigning by the ruling BJP supporters there.

TMC West Bengal secretary Kunal Ghosh said if this is what is democracy in Tripura, "we would recommend to our leaders to do the same thing (to the BJP) in West Bengal".

Tripura BJP spokesperson Nabendu Bhattacharya denied the allegation, saying the saffron party workers did not ever attack anyone of the TMC as the party does not consider it as a political opponent to reckon with.

The alleged attack created ripples in West Bengal where the TMC and the BJP were engaged in a war of words.

# Serum Institute urges Modi Govt to fast-track movement of increasing Covishield stock

**New Delhi:** Serum Institute of India (SII) has urged the Government to fast-track Covishield movement citing the difficulties being faced in production and cold chain space planning for other vaccines because of the increasing stock of its COVID-19 jab, official sources said on Sunday.

Prakash Kumar Singh, Director, Government and Regulatory Affairs at SII, is learnt to have recently communicated to the Union Health Ministry that it has a manufactured stock of 24,89,15,000 Covishield doses and it is increasing every day.

In addition to the Covishield vaccine, the Pune-based firm also manufactures and supplies various life-saving vaccines to EPI, UNICEF and different countries, Singh is learnt to have told the ministry.

"To fulfil our domestic and global supply commitments, we have to plan our production/cold chain space/human resource well in advance. In view of continuous increase in the stock of Covishield, we are facing a lot of difficulties in production/cold chain space/human

resource planning for other life-saving vaccines," an official source quoted Singh as having stated in the letter.

"In view of these facts, genuine difficulties and as this matter is directly concerned with the availability of various other life-saving vaccines in our country and the world at large, we request for your kind intervention for fast-track movement of our Covishield vaccine domestically and globally," Singh is learnt to have stated.

The Centre has allowed SII to export 50 Lakh doses of Covishield under the UN-backed COVAX global vaccine sharing programme to Nepal, Tajikistan and Mozambique. SII will also export Covishield to Bangladesh under COVAX, an official source said.

The Serum Institute will commence its Covid vaccine export under the COVAX programme from November 23 and Nepal will receive the first lot of Covishield on November 24. The government had in October permitted SII to export 10 lakh Covishield doses, each to Nepal, Myanmar and Bangladesh under the 'Vaccine Maitri' programme. **PTI**

# Didi to visit Delhi, Mumbai in close succession

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was likely to visit Delhi on a three-day trip from November 22, party sources said adding in Delhi she would meet leaders from all the opposition parties to stitch up a grand opposition unity ahead of the next year's Assembly elections in five states.

The Chief Minister is also likely to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi to press for a number of demands for her State including the release of funds.

Banerjee who is also like-

ly to visit Congress president Sonia Gandhi TMC sources said. The party insiders however would not comment on her likely talks with BJP MP Varun Gandhi and her mother Maneka Gandhi who were recently dropped from the saffron outfit's national executive.

"As Mamata Banerjee is a national leader who is respected by all the parties ... many leaders from many parties may come and see her in Delhi," a senior leader and MP said circumventing questions whether there had been any preliminary talks with Varun Gandhi or his mother.

The Chief Minister is also likely to visit Mumbai in the first week of December, party insiders said adding the purpose of her Mumbai visit was drawing investment for Bengal. Banerjee was likely to invite industry captains to the next year's Bengal Global Summit in Kolkata, sources said.

The Chief Minister is also likely to speak to some politicians like Maharashtra Chief Minister Udhav Thakarey and minister Nawab Malik in Mumbai sources said. On whether any Maharashtra politician would join the TMC the Bengal ruling party leaders would not dwell much on.

# Navy commissions stealth-guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that will further strengthen the country's maritime security, the Indian Navy on Sunday inducted into fold a P15B stealth guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam, thus marking the commissioning of the first of the four such destroyers, designed indigenously by its in-house organisation Directorate of Naval Design.

Launched in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the Naval Dockyard here, INS Visakhapatnam has enhanced stealth features and it is packed with sophisticated state-of-the-art weapons and sensors such as Surface-to-Surface missile and Surface-to-Air missiles.

Constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai, INS Visakhapatnam is fitted with modern surveillance radar that provides target data to the gunnery weapon systems of the ship. It has anti-submarine warfare capabilities in the form of indigenously developed rocket launchers, torpedo launchers and ASW helicopters. In effect, the ship



is equipped to fight under Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) warfare conditions.

Terming INS Visakhapatnam as a symbol of the growing maritime prowess of the country and a major milestone in achieving Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Make in India, Make for the World', Singh said that the ship was a reminder of ancient and medieval India's maritime power, shipbuilding skills and glorious history.

Lauding the Indian Navy's self-reliance efforts, Singh said that the placement of orders for 39 out of the 41 ships and sub-

marines from Indian shipyards was a testament to its commitment towards achieving 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. He said the development of Indigenous Aircraft Carrier 'INS Vikrant' as an important milestone in their path to achieve 'Aatmanirbharta'. He exhorted the public and private sector to take advantage of Government's policies, work together and make India an indigenous shipbuilding hub.

Describing INS Visakhapatnam as one of the most technologically advanced guided missile destroyers in the world that will cater to the present and future requirements of



the Armed Forces, the Defence Minister said: "This carrier will increase our reach from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean. Its commissioning is a golden moment in the history of the Indian Defence. This is the best occasion to celebrate the 75th anniversary of India's independence and the 50th anniversary of India's victory in 1971 war".

Considered as one of the most potent warships to have been constructed in the coun-

try so far, NS Visakhapatnam measures 163 meter in length, 17 meter in breadth with a displacement of 7,400 tonnes and can rightfully be regarded as one of the most potent warships to have been constructed in India.

Propelled by four powerful Gas Turbines, in a Combined Gas and Gas (COGAG) configuration, the ship is capable of achieving speeds in excess of 30 knots. It has enhanced stealth features resulting in a reduced Radar Cross Section (RCS)



achieved through efficient shaping of hull, full beam superstructure design, plated masts and use of radar transparent materials on exposed decks.

Some of the major indigenous equipment/system onboard INS Visakhapatnam include Combat Management System, Rocket Launcher, Torpedo Tube Launcher, Integrated Platform Management System, Automated Power Management System, Foldable Hangar Doors, Helo Traversing system, Close-in Weapon System and the Bow mounted SONAR.

Maintaining that keeping

the Indo-Pacific region open, safe and secure as the primary objective of the Indian Navy, Singh said that India's interests were linked directly with the Indian Ocean and the region is crucial for the world economy. "Challenges such as piracy, terrorism, illegal smuggling of arms and narcotics, human trafficking, illegal fishing and damage to the environment are equally responsible for affecting the maritime domain. Therefore, the role of the Indian Navy becomes very important in the entire Indo-Pacific region," he said.

Calling for a peaceful, open, rule-based and stable maritime order, Singh said that

"some irresponsible nations" - for the sake of their narrow partisan interests - kept on giving new and inappropriate interpretations to the territorial waters of nations, exclusive economic zones and the principle of 'Good order at sea' propounded at the 'United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea' (UNCLOS) of 1982.

"The arbitrary interpretations create obstacles in the path of a rule-based maritime order. We envision a rule-based Indo-Pacific, with freedom of navigation, free trade and universal values, in which the interests of all the participating countries are protected," he said.

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh, MP Arvind Sawant, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chairman & Managing Director, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited Vice Admiral Narayan Prasad (Retd) and other senior civil & military officials of Ministry of Defence were present at the commissioning ceremony of INS Visakhapatnam.







FIRST COLUMN

FARM LAWS REPEALED:  
CONCERNS UNRESOLVED

Ensuring the financial well-being of marginal farmers would have won accolades for the Govt



The decision to repeal the three farm laws is a sudden about-turn by the government which had a stern, "no negotiation" attitude towards the protesting farmers. Though the news could not have come at a better time than on Gurupurab for the protesting farmers, the jury is still out regarding the timing and purpose of the sudden decision. Many economic and agricultural analysts are estimating the far-reaching impacts of this u-turn on the state of agriculture and economy. In fact, a member of the farm panel appointed by the Supreme Court opined that the repeal of the farm laws was regressive and that the government chose politics over farmer's betterment. As the raging debates continue over the decision, agriculture sadly remains in a state of despair with marginal farmers plagued by debts and climate change impact besides inadequate resources. Even when the farm laws were initially announced they covered mainly the pricing mechanisms but did not concern themselves with climate change, environment and food security. Now that the same laws stand repealed the government again did not take the opportunity to take care of the environmental concerns in addition to caring for the farmer's demands. The result is



an ignored environment that is still at the receiving end thanks to India's archaic agricultural practices. These outdated farming methodologies are not only resource-intensive for the financially beleaguered farmers but also have a telling adverse impact on the environment in the form of plunging ground water tables, eroding topsoil, rising rate of farm fires and deforestation. The environment is already fighting a losing battle against climate change and man-made pollution issues. The relentless onslaught of the backward agricultural practices is proving to be the proverbial death-knell for the environment and delicate ecology of the nation. The government that beat a hasty retreat in face of the farmer protests could have at least salvaged some pride by standing up for the environment by announcing a slew of measures aimed to reduce the adverse impact of agriculture on ecology.

While repealing the farm laws the government could have introduced Agro-Environment laws that aimed to promote healthy practices such as biotech crops that utilize reduced or no tillage practices which in turn brings down fuel consumption and aids in dialling down emissions. The increased stress on biotechnology driven agriculture at grass root level, especially for marginal debt-ridden farmers would have not only helped extract the poor farmer from the vicious cycle of debt but also rescued the environment. If implemented effectively, this measure would have brought down per acre greenhouse gas emissions drastically besides making the farmer environmentally conscious. Through the agro-environment laws the government could have also launched special initiatives to promote the usage of cover crops typically legumes and grains after the main crop is harvested. This would help retain nitrogen levels in the soil and prevent nutrient run-off. Also, adding conservation buffers in the form of plants and shrubs along the farm boundaries can absorb the runaway nutrients from the farmland and keep the soil rich. In addition to these steps, an effective manure management plan coupled with nutrient management techniques can script a turnaround for the environment and start a new era of cohesive co-existence of agriculture and environment. Disengaging from farm laws and refocusing on environment with the objective of ensuring the financial well-being of the marginal farmer would have won accolades for the government. It is still possible to achieve this provided the government can see the writing on the wall.

*(The writer is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Another expansionist move by the Dragon

If Pakistan gets more opportunities to play the Taliban card, it will project itself as a victim and a representative of Islam and carry forward the agenda of Jihad

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with its Karakoram (land) and Gwadar (sea) projects, has a military significance to serve as important choke-points vis-à-vis India. However, as the Taliban has requested China to include Afghanistan in its project, the tip of the Wakhan corridor located at the China-Tajikistan-Afghanistan tri-junction is all set to become the epicentre of terror and expansionism of China.

In the emerging scenario, the recently concluded Delhi Dialogue brought India along with the five Central Asian Republics (CAR), Iran and Russia on the same level playing field concerning the threats faced from the Taliban and Pakistan's rapid Talibanisation. These countries are in the geographical vicinity of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are now set to become the terror-exporting hotspots of South and Central Asia. Russian and Iranian 'moment of victory' has passed, and the realities now seem to be setting in. The same is the case with CAR, except for Tajikistan. Immediately after the Delhi Dialogue, the Troika Plus meeting was held in Islamabad, bringing the US and Russia together on the negotiating table with the Taliban, China, and Pakistan.

On the other hand, three months have passed since the Taliban's takeover, and Pakistan has been unable to 'get' international recognition for it. However, an added dimension is Pakistan threatening the international community, particularly Europe, with consequences if the terrorists are not duly recognized.

Pakistan and the Taliban have already shed their camouflage and openly declared their intentions towards an Islamic emirate. The recent face-off between its army and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, the right to contest elections given to Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), and a truce with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) speak volumes of it. Parallel developments such as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan being wary of the Taliban and tightening security at their borders, Turkey and Iran agreeing to cooperate to restrict the refugees from Afghanistan and the refugee debate in Eastern Europe hint at the future political-institutional challenges stemming out of Taliban-Pakistan partnership.

The question is why the Taliban and Pakistan are desperate for CPEC to be extended to Afghanistan? Why, despite setting the narratives of a US decline, the region's countries are not feeling secure? The possible Chinese control of the Bagram airbase and the exploitation of the natural resources in Afghanistan has already been emphasized by many. However, the Pak-Taliban game-plan is perhaps much more than what the world community, including China, can comprehend.

The world community is hesitant to accommodate fundamentalism which is why despite Russia and China reacting 'favourably' to the Taliban, they have not yet rushed to recognize the fundamental-



IT IS BEYOND DOUBT THAT AFGHANS WILL NOT BE GETTING ANY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CORRIDOR PROJECTS, AND THE LAND AVAILABLE TO THEM FOR FARMING AND OTHER SMALL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES WOULD BE TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM AS THE CASE HAS BEEN IN PAKISTAN

*(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)*



ist regime. Previously, the Ayanak and Jiangsu-Hairatan railway Projects failed to yield the expected results. Pakistan and the Taliban henceforth want to bank on the countries of Europe so that they can assert themselves aggressively. The more the stakeholders in Afghanistan, the better it is for them as the situation would get entangled even further, ultimately benefiting the two. The extension of OBOR will generate the following security implications:

First, it will expose the future vulnerabilities of international trade to ensure a smooth passage. The Taliban and Pakistan would have to be strategically, financially, and diplomatically appeased, irrespective of the countries' interests. If Pakistan gets more opportunities to play the 'Taliban card', it will project itself as a 'victim' and a representative of Islam and would make no hesitations to carry forward the agenda of Jihad by whatever means possible. There are many chances that the terror spillover effect would be seen in China's Xinjiang region, the CAR, Iran, and Europe. Imran Khan's UN speech is an important precedent that signals that terror groups being used as foreign policy instruments. Likewise, the nation-states of Eastern Europe and Central Asia will soon find themselves entrapped in a Stockholm Syndrome wherein supplying aid to Pakistan for 'controlling' the fundamentalist elements would increasingly be seen as a viable option by many. This would be similar to the strategic trap in which the US too fell. It has to be recalled that from 2013 to 2018, Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally was given \$34,183 million out of

which \$257 million was for Migration and Refugee Assistance and \$4,075 million was for Foreign Military Financing. Probably officials at Rawalpindi can better explain where the aid was utilized. Such a vicious circle does not yield results, and by the time Europe realizes the same, it again might be too late.

Secondly, it is beyond doubt that the Afghans will not be getting any employment opportunities in the Corridor projects, and the land available to them for farming and other small economic activities would be taken away from them as the case has been in Pakistan. In such a scenario, the macro ethnic communities of Afghanistan such as Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Baluchs will continue to suffer and create refugee problems for the region, the implications of which would be felt by Europe too. The projects would only reinforce the existing illegal supply routes of drugs, illegal child and women trafficking apart from exporting terror.

The export of refugees and migrants through the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkans routes to bring about deliberate demographic changes and creating rifts among the EU member-states on the issue of human rights cannot be ruled out. The oppressive policies adopted for the corridor could also perhaps be utilized by the fundamentalists to interfere in the domestic issues of the European countries, especially France. The refugee issue being used as a geopolitical tool has been recently highlighted during the Poland-Belarus face off.

Thirdly, to ensure the safety and the security of the Afghan corridor, the armies of Pakistan and

China would further consolidate their stronghold not only in Afghanistan but also in Pakistan. For instance, Islamabad saw the formation of the National Action Plan (a 20-point action crackdown against terrorists), which gave the army a wide range of powers. With 'business as usual' and the territory of Afghanistan used as a transit passage, the route will be a bargaining chip in the hands of the fundamentalists.

Fourthly, through their preferential access to Afghanistan's Western and Northern borders, Pakistan and China would pose a considerable tactical threat to India and Tajikistan and definitely would adversely affect the Russian influence in the region. What remains to be seen is whether Russia would be further willing to play a 'junior partner' to China and elevate Pakistan on the same level playing field as it is in terms of strategic utility?

Finally, the Taliban has mastered a communication strategy with crisp English and mannerism to deceive the countries in the region and beyond with its propaganda warfare. From giving statements of its 'change of heart' to strategizing its 'foreign policy agenda', the narratives that are being set to portray the Taliban as the rightful heir of Afghanistan set a precedent that various terrorist and extremist groups would emulate throughout the world. If China goes ahead with its Afghan corridor given the above factors, it would be seen as another expansionist move of the Dragon. Thus, it becomes essential that Asia, Europe, and the U.S. come together to convey their displeasure by not letting the Afghan corridor be used for trade even if OBOR is extended to it.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN IS MY ELDER BROTHER. I AM GREATLY HONOURED. HE GAVE US A LOT OF LOVE.  
—PUNJAB CONGRESS PRESIDENT  
NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU



SEND YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER TO THE BORDER AND THEN CALL A TERRORIST STATE HEAD YOUR BIG BROTHER.  
—BJP LEADER  
GAUTAM GAMBHIR

# Crop residue management: A collaborative approach

The government and research institutions' initiatives need to be complemented with efforts by civil society to address social barriers and information gaps

Crop residue management is a major issue in India's agriculture sector, which is related to not just farm economy and farmers' welfare but also to environmental quality and health of the people.

The Nature Conservancy Centre (TNC), along with several partners, undertook a systematic review of ten available options for managing rice crop residue, which was published in Science in 2019. The study identified Happy Seeder (HS) — a conservation agriculture technology — as the most suitable alternative for farmers.

HS cuts and lifts straw, sows wheat and returns the rice straw onto the sown areas as mulch. In the short term, it reduces the number of operations and inputs needed, saving time and money for the



*(Saigal is Director of Programs and Singh, Project Head — Crop Residue Management, TNC (The Nature Conservancy Centre. The views expressed are personal.)*

farmers, and reducing air pollution. In the long term, HS improves soil quality, increases crop yield, and reduces the environmental footprint of farming. TNC and its partners (Borlaug Institute for South Asia and International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center), with support from the Tata Trusts, are implementing project HARIT in Punjab and Haryana. The project has shown that HS could increase farmers' profit by 15 per cent, while providing many other long-term benefits. However, farmers need support to transition to such technologies.

The central and state governments have undertaken several initiatives to address the crop residue management issue. The central government has formulated a National



Policy for Management of Crop Residue, which promotes in-situ management through the direct incorporation of crop residue into soils as mulch. It has released around Rs 2,500 crores between 2018-19 and 2021-22 (up to June 2021) to support Punjab, Haryana, UP and NCT of Delhi for subsidising CRM machines. The farmers of these states have availed subsidies on CRM machines (including HS) — 50 per cent for individual farmers and 80

per cent for cooperatives and farmers' groups through custom hiring centres. Nearly 1,15,000 machines have been subsidized in Punjab and Haryana alone, and approximately 12,500 and 3,000 CHCs have been set up in both the states, respectively.

However, there is a need for innovative and targeted communication to create awareness about the advantages of HS. First, the farmers need to be convinced that using HS will enhance their net profit. Second, farmers need to be technically equipped to adopt the recommended practices. They need to be trained on the machine operation and maintenance as well changes required in agronomical practices. Third, appropriate monitoring mechanisms need to be

set up to effectively match the demand and supply of CRM machines in different regions. Fourth, high intensity burn areas as well as learning sites need to be identified (where there is substantial reduction in residue burning over a period of time) using remote sensing and geographic information system (GIS) technologies and this information needs to be shared with CRM stakeholders. Fifth, CHCs need to be made fully functional as viable rental business units, capable of delivering all CRM services to the farmers in a timely and cost-effective manner, including availability of equipment and operators in the peak season as well as proper maintenance of machines for optimal results. Sixth, primary agricultural

cooperative societies (PACS) need to be supported to improve their utilization of CRM machines. Finally, performance-based incentive mechanisms need to be developed, considering factors such as number of acres covered per CRM machine.

The government and other research institutions' initiatives need to be complemented with efforts by civil society to address social barriers and information gaps, so that adoption and use of HS could be accelerated. The HARIT and the Tata Trusts' Reviving Green Revolution initiative to support farmers in selected villages across 16 districts of Punjab and Haryana are good models to build on, where farmers are equipped with appropriate information and

skills to adopt HS machines and align their agricultural practices for optimal results.

With help from the government, scientists and civil society organizations, farmers of northwest India can rapidly adopt technologies that can benefit them and the larger society. It is high time to initiate discussions and collaborations among key stakeholders to address the CRM issue. Any investment in CRM is likely to yield several fold returns that include better returns for the farmers, improved soil health as well health of the communities. Remunerative crop diversification initiatives with proper procurement and market linkages need to be launched to rationalize the area under rice and other crops.



GLOBE TROTTING

BULGARIANS VOTE FOR PREZ IN RUNOFF POLL

**Sofia (Bulgaria):** Bulgarians went to the polls on Sunday to choose a new president in a hotly contested runoff amid a Covid-19 surge and a political crisis that has gripped the European Union's poorest country. The choice is between incumbent Rumen Radev, 58, who is seeking a second five-year term in the largely ceremonial post, and Sofia University rector, Anastas Gerdzhikov, 58, who is backed by the centre right GERB party of former Prime Minister Boyko Borissov.

IRAN'S MAHAN AIR HIT WITH CYBER ATTACK

**Tehran:** A cyberattack on Sunday disrupted access to Iran's privately owned Mahan Air, state TV reported, marking the latest in a series of cyberattacks on Iranian infrastructure that has put the country on edge. Mahan Air's website displayed an error message saying the site couldn't be reached. The carrier said in a statement that it had "thwarted" the attack and that its flight schedule was not affected, adding it has faced similar breaches in the past. Many customers of Mahan Air across Iran received strange text messages on Sunday. A group calling itself Hoosyarane-Vatan, or Observants of Fatherland, claimed in the mass texts to have carried out the attack, citing the airline's cooperation with Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

UKRAINE'S DOCTORS PUSHED TO THE LIMIT

**Kakhovka:** As coronavirus infections hit Ukraine, a single shift for Dr. Oleksandr Molchanov now stretches to 42 hours — 24 of them in Kakhovka's hospital, followed by another 18 hours spent visiting tents set up to care for 120 Covid-19 patients. While vaccination rates in Eastern Europe have generally lagged, Ukraine has one of the lowest in the region. But because of its underfunded and struggling health care system, the situation has turned dire nearly two years since the virus swept into Europe.

OSCAR-WINNING COSTUME DESIGNER WADA DIES

**Tokyo:** Emi Wada, the Japanese costume designer who won an Oscar for her work in Akira Kurosawa's "Ran," has died, Japanese media reports said Sunday. She was 84. Wada died November 13, the reports said, citing unidentified family sources and not giving the cause of death.

3 COAL MINERS SHOT DEAD IN BALOCHISTAN

**Quetta:** Three coal mine workers were killed on Sunday when unidentified armed men opened fire at them near a remote coal mine in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, a Government official said.

# Protests erupt in Gwadar amid growing backlash against CPEC

PTI ■ KARACHI

Massive protests have erupted in Pakistan's port city of Gwadar against unnecessary checkpoints, a severe shortage of water and electricity and threats to livelihoods from illegal fishing, part of a growing backlash in the country against China's multibillion-dollar belt and road projects.

The protests organised by workers of some political parties, civil rights activists, fishermen and concerned citizens have been going on for a week at Y Chowk on Port Road in Gwadar, a coastal town in the restive Southwest Balochistan province of Pakistan.

The protesters demand the removal of unnecessary security check posts, availability of drinking water and electricity, eviction of big fishing trawlers from Makran coast and opening of the border with Iran from Panjgur to Gwadar, Jang newspaper reported on Sunday.

Head of the 'Give rights to Gwadar' rally Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman said the protests would continue until their demands are met, asserting that the government has not

been sincere in resolving the problems of the local people living in the region.

Rehman has strongly criticised the government in the past for failing to resolve the basic problems of the people of Gwadar.

"We are demanding the rights of Gwadar, which were usurped by the rulers and the people were even deprived of basic needs. The fishermen were not able to earn their livelihood as big trawlers were allowed for fishing at Makran Coast," he said at a public meeting last month.

Rehman said despite building the Gwadar Deep Sea Port, the people of the city were still jobless and the government has done nothing about it.

"It is an insult for the sons of soil when they are stopped at checkpoints and inquired about their whereabouts," he was quoted as saying by *The Express Tribune*.

The protests are part of growing discontent with China's presence in Gwadar, whose port is an integral part of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project (CPEC), the flagship

project of China's multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

India has protested to China over the CPEC as it traverses through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The massive infrastructure project connects China's Xinjiang province with Gwadar port in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

Gwadar port has long been portrayed as the jewel in the CPEC crown, but in the process, the city has become the very embodiment of a security state.

The authorities' priorities are geared towards securing the port and its ancillary interests; the welfare of those for whom the area is home counts for little. Far from the port being a harbinger of an economic boom, the opposite has happened, *The Dawn* newspaper reported on Friday.

Existing privations have deepened; people's mobility is restricted by security forces and there is unwarranted questioning of their activities. Many say they are made to feel like strangers in their own land, it said.

Adding to the miseries of

a large number of fishermen among the populace, the government, they complain, has issued licences to Chinese trawlers to fish in the waters off the coast. Their small boats cannot possibly compete, as a result of which their livelihoods are being squeezed. This is the petri dish of discontent from which have sprung the recent protests, it added.

Balochistan is home to a long-running violent insurgency, and China's presence in Gwadar has been the cause of much social unrest and led to anti-Chinese sentiment.

It has also given a fillip to Baloch militant insurgent groups, who have carried out terrorist attacks in protest at CPEC projects.

This year in August, a suicide bomber attacked a motorcade carrying Chinese personnel on the Gwadar East Bay Expressway project in which one Chinese was injured and two local children were killed.

The Chinese embassy after the incident asked the Pakistan government to beef up security for the CPEC projects and the Chinese personnel working on them.

# Sudan military leaders reinstate deposed PM

AP ■ CAIRO

Sudan's deposed prime minister signed a deal with the military on Sunday that will see him reinstated, almost a month after a military coup put him under house arrest. According to the deal, the military will also release government officials and politicians arrested since the Oct. 25 coup.

The country's top general, Abdel Fattah Burhan, said in televised statements that Abdalla Hamdok will lead an independent technocratic Cabinet until elections can be held. It remains unclear how much power the government would hold. It would still remain under military oversight.

It also remains unclear whether all political parties and pro-democracy groups have signed off on the agreement.

The coup, more than two years after a popular uprising forced the removal of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir and his Islamist government, has drawn international criticism.

"The signing of this deal opens the door wide enough to



Protesters burn tyres as they rally on a street in Khartoum on Sunday

address all the challenges of the transitional period," said Hamdok, speaking at the signing ceremony broadcast on state TV.

Sudanese have been taking to the streets in masses since the military takeover, which upended the country's fragile transition to democracy. The agreement comes just days after doctors said at least 15 people were killed by live fire during anti-coup demonstrations. Hamdok has been held under house arrest by military leaders for weeks.

The deal also stipulates that an investigation shall be conducted to identify those

responsible for the killing and injuring of civilians and troops that marred protests following the coup.

"By signing this declaration, we could lay a genuine foundation to the transitional period," said Burhan.

The 14-clause deal also stressed that power should be handed over to an elected civilian government after the end of the transitional period.

Earlier, the Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change, the group that spearheaded the uprising that culminated in Bashir's ouster, objected to any deals with the military.

## Imran says his Govt will support Chinese businesses in Pakistan

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that his government will support Chinese businesses in Pakistan on a priority basis as he directed the authorities to immediately resolve the issues related to road connectivity and provision of utilities being faced by investors from China.

Khan made the remarks during his meeting with a Chinese business delegation led by Chen Yan from Challenge Fashion (Pvt) Ltd on Saturday.

"We will support Chinese businesses in Pakistan on a priority basis and are grateful to them for their keen interest in accelerating their investment in special economic zones," Prime Minister Khan was quoted as saying by the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan (APP).

Khan was informed that Chinese businessmen were ready to start operations in the glass, ceramics and IT sectors as OPPO, a leading Chinese consumer electronics and mobile company, is going to set up a mobile sets manufacturing unit and a research and



development centre in Pakistan.

Its decision to manufacture mobile sets in Pakistan would help the country save a lot of foreign exchange reserves on the import of smartphones and create jobs for tech graduates.

The meeting was attended by Energy Minister Mohammad Hammad Azhar, Adviser on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong and other officials.

In his remarks, Nong acknowledged that many issues had been resolved and great progress had been achieved since the prime minister's previous meeting with Chinese businessmen on September 13.

## Bajwa may not resort to coup!

Likely to be accommodated as commander of CPEC or TAPI

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Outgoing Pakistan Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa may not resort to coup as he is likely to be accommodated post-retirement as commander of the proposed joint task force for protection of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) or Turkmenistan — Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline for which India is yet to accord approval.

The likely accommodation of Bajwa seems apparent as the government there has lifted the ban on ISI-propped terror outfit Tahreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in its bid for a truce. The TLP had orchestrated mass protests over the last few weeks seeking ouster of the French diplomat there over some alleged blasphemous caricature of the Prophet in France. Bajwa is set to retire on November 30 after completion of his three years' extension of

service. Another possibility of his accommodation after retirement is an appointment as chief of Afghanistan Peace Council that is also in the works.

The TLP had earlier carried out similar protests before the retirement of then Army chief Gen Raheel Sharif in 2016 who was then accommodated as commander-in-chief of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition that secures the Mecca Masjid in Saudi Arabia.

Experts tracking the politico-military manoeuvres in Pakistan said Bajwa is reluctant to leave power but is fully aware he cannot afford a coup at this juncture as such a bid can attract heightened scrutiny of the international community post-withdrawal of the allied forces from Afghanistan.

"For his post-retirement project, Bajwa put the TLP on the front to fuel mass protests which could be used as an alibi for takeover of power from the elected government in Islamabad for its projected failure in controlling the internal security situation. The TLP has been floated by the ISI for the rehabilitation of the retiring Army chief," an expert said.

## Poland: Belarus eyes using Afghan migrants as border pawns

Vilnius: Poland's leader on Sunday warned against more possible migrant pressures on the European Union's border with Belarus, this time coming from Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki spoke in Vilnius following talks with Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte about ways of solving the "very difficult situation" at the borders of EU members with Belarus. He was on a one-day tour of meetings with the prime ministers of EU members Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which have also been hit by the migrant pressures.

The EU says the new surge of migrants on its eastern borders has been orchestrated by the leader of Belarus, President Alexander Lukashenko, in retaliation for EU sanctions placed on Belarus after a government crackdown on peaceful democracy protesters. It calls the move "a hybrid attack" on the bloc. Belarus denies the charge.

Morawiecki said he expected the migrant pressures on Poland and the EU to continue, but now from a different region, claiming knowledge of "diplomatic" contacts that Belarus and Russia had with Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. AP

## Covid protests in Netherlands turn violent

AP ■ EDE, NETHERLANDS

Dutch police have arrested more than 30 people during unrest in The Hague and other towns in the Netherlands that followed an "orgy of violence" the previous night at a protest against coronavirus restrictions. The violence by groups of youths in The Hague and elsewhere Saturday night wasn't as serious as Friday night in Rotterdam, where police opened fire on rampaging rioters and arrested 51 people.

Police said Sunday that they arrested 19 people in The Hague and used a water cannon to extinguish a fire on a street. Two soccer matches in the country's top professional league were briefly halted when fans — banned from matches under a partial lockdown in force in the Netherlands for a week — broke into stadiums in the towns of Alkmaar and Almelo. In The Hague, police said five officers were injured as they tried to break up unrest by a group of youths who set at least two fires on streets and threw fireworks. Police said in a tweet that one

## Dutch police arrest more than 30 amid ongoing unrest

rioter threw a rock at an ambulance carrying a patient to a hospital. In the southern towns of Roermond and Stein, police said they arrested a total of 13 people for setting fires and throwing fireworks, and in the fishing village of Urk police arrested eight people for public order offenses, Dutch broadcaster NOS reported.

Earlier Saturday, two protests against COVID-19 measures proceeded peacefully in Amsterdam and the southern city of Breda. Thousands of people marched through Amsterdam to protest Covid-19 restrictions.

Tens of thousands of protesters also took to the streets of Vienna on Saturday after the Austrian government announced a nationwide lockdown beginning Monday to contain skyrocketing coronavirus infections.

## Biden's political standing fuels Democratic worry about 2024

AP ■ COLUMBUS, OHIO

It was supposed to be a moment of triumph for Joe Biden.

The Democratic president had just signed into law the most significant infrastructure package in generations. And he had done it by bringing Democrats and Republicans together, just as he promised during last year's campaign. But when Biden arrived in New Hampshire last week to promote the \$1 trillion package at the foot of a crumbling bridge, not all of his VIP guests were in the mood to celebrate.



"Democrats are concerned," former state House Speaker Steve Shurtleff, a longtime Biden supporter who attended the ceremony, told *The Associated Press* when asked about Biden's political standing. "I'm concerned about where we may be in another couple of years when people

really start to gear up and start making trips to New Hampshire."

Shurtleff was openly saying what a growing number of Democrats have been whispering for months: Biden's political standing is so weak less than a year into his presidency that he may not be able to win reelection in 2024 if he were to run again. Such anxiety-fueled parlor games are common among Washington's political class, but this one has spread to the states and constituencies that will play a central role in the next presidential election.

## TTP demands political office in third country, Pakistan Govt says 'not acceptable'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has asked the Pakistan government to allow it to open a political office in a third country, a demand rejected by Islamabad as unacceptable, according to a media report.

In a series of meetings with the Pakistani authorities during negotiations for a peace agreement, the TTP made three demands, which include allowing the opening of a political office in a third country, rever-

sal of the Federal Administered Tribal Areas merger with the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and the introduction of Islamic system in Pakistan, the *Express Tribune* newspaper reported on Saturday.

"But Pakistani authorities told the TTP directly and through Taliban interlocutors that these demands were not acceptable," the paper said.

"The TTP was particularly told in categorical terms that there was no question of introducing an Islamic system based on their interpretation.

## China downgrades ties with Lithuania after Taiwan opens de facto embassy

PTI ■ BEIJING

Furious over Lithuania for permitting Taiwan to open a representative office, China on Sunday downgraded diplomatic ties with it to the level of charge d'affaires, a move that could further damage Beijing's relations with the European Union, as the tiny Baltic nation with less than three million population is an influential member of the bloc.

"There is only one China in the world and the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China," the foreign ministry

said in a statement.

The one-China principle is an overwhelming consensus of the international community, a widely-recognised norm governing international relations, and the political foundation for China and Lithuania to develop bilateral ties, it said.

"Regrettably, Lithuania has chosen to ignore China's solemn position and to disregard the broader interests of bilateral ties and the basic norms governing international relations. It has allowed the establishment in Lithuania of the 'Representative Office' bearing the name of Taiwan, thus creating an egregious precedent

in the world," the statement said.

"The Chinese government, out of the need to safeguard national sovereignty and basic norms governing international relations, has no choice but to downgrade its diplomatic relations with Lithuania to the charge d'affaires level. The Lithuanian government must bear all the ensuing consequences," it said.

Charge d'affaires in diplomatic parlance means the embassy will be headed by the chief of mission in the absence of the ambassador. China has already recalled its envoy from Lithuania's capital Vilnius.

## France vows to keep battling in fishing dispute with UK

AP ■ PARIS

France's Minister of the sea vowed Sunday to "continue the fight" in the country's dispute with Britain over fishing rights.

Minister Annick Girardin met with fishermen in northern France on Sunday.

"We fight every day for these ships, for these licenses, and we will not give up," she told reporters, criticizing the British interpretation of post-Brexit rules over fishing rights as "inadmissible."



Fishing is a tiny industry economically, but one that looms large symbolically for both Britain and France, which have long and cherished maritime traditions.

The U.K. licenses are at the center of the dispute following Britain's split with the European Union earlier this year. Before Brexit, French fishermen could fish deep

inside British waters. Now they need to be granted a special license from the British government or the self-governing British Crown dependencies of Jersey and Guernsey to fish in certain areas.

Those authorities have already granted 961 fishing licenses to French boats, according to French authorities, but France wants about 150 more licenses. Girardin said France set a deadline for the fishing talks, led by the European Union, to end in December.

## Palestinian kills 1, injures 4 before police shoot him dead

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A Palestinian assailant killed one Israeli and injured four others before being fatally shot by Israeli police near the entrance to a flashpoint Jerusalem holy site Sunday, police said.

Police said the attack took place near an entrance to a contested flashpoint shrine known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary. Violence surrounding the site, which is considered holy by both faiths, has triggered previous rounds of fighting between Israel and the Palestinians, most recently in May.



Israeli security personnel and members of Zaka Rescue and Recovery team carry the body of a Palestinian man who was fatally shot by Israeli police in Jerusalem's Old City on Sunday

Paramedics said one person suffered critical injuries, one suffered serious wounds, and three others were lightly

injured. The paramedics said the Palestinian attacker was confirmed dead at the scene. Jerusalem's Hadassah hos-

pital later said the critically injured person died; he was later identified as 26-year-old Eliyahu Kay, a South African-born immigrant to Israel who worked at the Western Wall.

Rabbi Zevi Katznelbogen, a resident of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, said he was walking home from morning prayers at the Western Wall, turned a corner and heard gunfire. Moments later he was struck in the arm by a bullet, he told reporters from his hospital bed.

Police said two of those lightly injured were officers and identified the attacker as a 42-year-old east Jerusalem resident.



JAN DHAN A/C HOLDERS

# SBI yet to refund ₹164 cr undue fee charged

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India (SBI) is yet to return ₹164 crore of undue fee charged from the account holders of Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) towards digital payments during April 2017 and December 2019, a report said. "On directions from the government, SBI has returned just about ₹90 crore, thereby withholding the bigger chunk of at least ₹164 crore with itself," said the report prepared by IIT-Mumbai.

It said that during April 2017 to September 2020, SBI had collected over ₹254 crore towards at least 14 crore UPI/ RuPay transactions by charging ₹17.70 per transactions on BSBDA (Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account) customers under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY).

Queries sent to the country's largest lender on return of charges levied on debit transactions done by such account holders during the said period of 33 months did not elicit any

response.

Since June 1, 2017, unlike any other bank in India, the report said, SBI charged ₹17.70 for every debit transaction beyond four a month.

Debit transaction means any withdrawal transaction that includes cash withdrawal, Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT), Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) pre-authorised standing instruction, cheque, etc.

This has adversely impacted the BSBDA customers of SBI who, on the call of the government and RBI, embraced digital means of financial transactions.

"Due to this attitude of SBI and subsequent to RBI remaining noncommittal, in mid-August 2020, the Finance Ministry was approached for addressing the concern.

"The Ministry was prompt in their actions and the CBDT by end-August 2020, advised SBI to refund the charges col-

lected since January 1, 2020 on transactions carried out using the prescribed digital payment modes," it said.

On August 30, 2020, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) advised banks to refund the charges collected since January 1, 2020 on transactions carried out using the prescribed digital payment modes that include the UPI and the RuPay debit card, and not to impose charges on future transactions carried out through such modes.

In adherence to the CBDT directive, as late as February 17, 2021, SBI initiated refund of ₹17.70 for the UPI and RuPay debit card digital transactions to the BSBDA customers, the report prepared by Ashish Das, Professor of Statistics said.

Levying of charges on BSBDA is guided by September 2013 RBI guidelines. As per the direction these account holders are 'allowed more than four withdrawals' in a month, at the bank's discretion provided the bank does not charge for the same.

# ONGC union resists selling of Mumbai High field

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Petroleum Ministry's proposal to give away ONGC's biggest oil and gas fields to foreign companies has met with strong resistance from the officers union of the company, which has said that the Government should empower and give the company a level-playing field rather than giving away its prime assets to the private sector on a platter.

The Association of Scientific & Technical Offices of ONGC petitioned Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri against a proposal put by Amar Nath, additional secretary (exploration) in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, for giving away 60 per cent stake and operatorship of Mumbai High and Bassein & Satellite (B&S) offshore assets to international partners for raising output.

The union, which represents ONGC's 17,000 officers, said the company and its employees are completely aligned with the government objective of raising domestic production to cut imports, and for this to happen ONGC should be given the same fiscal and regulatory regime as the private sector enjoys for exploring and producing oil and gas.

The government-dictated below market price gas price fixation for ONGC fields should be reviewed to make production from smaller and remote fields viable, it wrote to Puri on November 11. Also, ONGC should be given freedom to market small pools of natural gas which in present price regime are unviable.

Statutory clearances and authorities for ONGC need to be optimised and procedural aspects rejigged to help the firm take faster decisions.



be optimised and procedural aspects rejigged to help the firm take faster decisions.

Farming out stake in "existing fields shall not yield the desired results of enhancing domestic production, instead it will provide a level playing field and empower ONGC to further enhance productivity," the union wrote.

"We would therefore request you that handing over producing fields on a platter to the private operator will not be successful and therefore, in our opinion, should not be pursued," it added.

It said exploration of oil and gas is a highly risky endeavour where very few like to participate. "This is evident from the tepid response to the bids invited under OALP (bid rounds), where only ONGC and to some extent OIL are the only bidders."

Private and foreign operators are unwilling to take the risk of investing millions of dollars in surveying and drilling wells to establish reserves. They instead want to enter into established fields.

"The private operators most probably are giving priority to commercial aspects, the prevailing business climate and therefore may not be taking the risk that ONGC is willing to take," the union wrote.

The data of the last 3 years

कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, निर्माण शाखा,  
उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल संसाधन विकास एवं निर्माण निगम, भिकियासैण (अल्मोड़ा)

ई-मेल :- eecd.bksain@gmail.com

पत्रांक : 1913 /विषय-5/ 400

दिनांक : 20.11.2021

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

अध्यक्ष, उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल संसाधन विकास एवं निर्माण निगम की ओर से अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम अथवा उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान में पाईप लाईन कार्य हेतु पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु एकल निविदा प्रणाली के अन्तर्गत अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

क्र० सं०	कार्य का नाम	विकास खण्ड	बिड सिक्योरिटी (धरोहर धनराशि) (रु०)	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य	कार्य की अवधि	पंजीकृत ठेकेदार की श्रेणी
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम रामपुर, पटियाचीरा एवं कोलाचीतरा पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	सल्ट	रु० 100 के नोटरी किये हुए स्टाम्प पेपर में घोषणा कर जमा की जानी है	3000.00 + GST	04 माह	विभाग में 'सी' व उच्चतर
2	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम चनोली तल्ली, मल्ली पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		3000.00 + GST	04 माह	विभाग में 'सी' व उच्चतर
3	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम भवानी देवी जोन-5 पेयजल योजना में रेट्रोफिटिंग कार्य।	भिकियासैण		4000.00 + GST	04 माह	विभाग में 'सी' व उच्चतर
4	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम इण्डा पेयजल योजना में रेट्रोफिटिंग कार्य।	भिकियासैण		2000.00 + GST	03 माह	विभाग में 'डी' व उच्चतर
5	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम धारुड पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	भिकियासैण		2500.00 + GST	03 माह	विभाग में 'डी' व उच्चतर
6	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम डोब पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	भिकियासैण		2000.00 + GST	03 माह	विभाग में 'डी' व उच्चतर
7	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम जालीखान पेयजल योजना में रेट्रोफिटिंग कार्य।	स्याल्दे		2000.00 + GST	03 माह	विभाग में 'डी' व उच्चतर
8	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम ग्वालवीना फेज-2, पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		2500.00 + GST	03 माह	विभाग में 'डी' व उच्चतर
9	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम बसनालगवां फेज-2, पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		2500.00 + GST	03 माह	विभाग में 'डी' व उच्चतर
10	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम खडकू भनेरिया, पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		2000.00 + GST	03 माह	विभाग में 'डी' व उच्चतर
11	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम भेलीपार पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		2500.00 + GST	03 माह	विभाग में 'डी' व उच्चतर
12	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम कुमालेश्वर पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		4000.00 + GST	04 माह	विभाग में 'सी' व उच्चतर
13	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम कलियालिगुड पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		4000.00 + GST	04 माह	विभाग में 'सी' व उच्चतर
14	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम लम्बाडी पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		3000.00 + GST	04 माह	विभाग में 'सी' व उच्चतर
15	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम महगारी एवं विरोट पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		4000.00 + GST	04 माह	विभाग में 'सी' व उच्चतर
16	जल जीवन मिशन के अन्तर्गत ग्राम सीरा, हंसा भनेरिया एवं केलानी पेयजल योजना में श्रोत, जलाशय, पाईप लाईन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	स्याल्दे		2500.00 + GST	03 माह	विभाग में 'डी' व उच्चतर

नोट :- निविदा से सम्बन्धित Key-Dates नियम शर्तें, शुद्धिपत्र एवं निरस्तीकरण आदि [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in) पर अथवा किसी भी कार्य दिवस में कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, निर्माण शाखा, उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम, भिकियासैण में देखी जा सकती हैं।

Key Dates

1	Date of Calling of Tender	20-11-2021
2	Date of Online Publication	24.11.2021 at 10.00 hrs.
3	Document download : Start Date	24.11.2021 at 10.00 hrs.
4	Document download : End Date	08.12.2021 at 17.00 hrs.
5	Bid Submission : Start Date	24.11.2021 at 10.00 hrs.
6	Bid Submission : End Date	08.12.2021 at 17.00 hrs.
7	Offline submission of documents (Cost of bidding document, Bid Security, Original Affidavits & all the Supporting Documents in Support of Qualification)	09.12.2021 at 17.00 hrs.
8	Date of Tender Opening	10.12.2021 at 12.00 hrs.

(सुनील जोशी)

अधिशासी अभियन्ता

"जल संघय - जीवन संघय"

"क्षुपया जल स्रोतों को प्रदूषित होने से बचाइये"

"जल स्रोत बताइये-पेयजल योजना पाइये"

"जल स्रोतों को प्रदूषित करना दण्डनीय अपराध है"

# 9 of top-10 firms lose ₹1.47L cr in M-cap

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of nine of 10 most valued companies declined by ₹1,47,360.93 crore last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest laggard.

Infosys was the only gainer from the top-10 list.

During the holiday-truncated week, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled 1,050.68 points or 1.73 per cent. Markets were closed on Friday on account of 'Guru Nanak Jayanti'.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries Limited tumbled ₹75,961.53 crore to reach ₹15,68,550.17 crore.

The market capitalisation (m-cap) of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tanked ₹18,069.87 crore to ₹12,85,660.79 crore.

HDFC's valuation eroded by ₹12,321.11 crore to stand at ₹5,29,236.66 crore and that of Kotak Mahindra Bank declined by ₹ 9,816.28 crore to ₹4,01,367.04 crore.

The valuation of ICICI Bank plunged ₹9,409.46 crore to ₹5,29,606.94 crore and that of HDFC Bank went lower by Rs 7,904.08 crore to ₹8,52,532.36 crore.

The market valuation of State Bank of India (SBI) dipped ₹6,514.96 crore to ₹4,49,755.80 crore and that of Bajaj Finance declined by ₹5,166.77 crore to ₹4,52,188.74 crore.

# Enrolment rising steadily on e-Shram portal

**8.43 CR REGISTERED TILL NOV 20**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 8.43 crore unorganised sector workers have registered on the e-Shram portal till November 20 and enrolments are rising steadily, the Labour Ministry said on Sunday.

"As per the recent data on the number of Unorganised Sector workers registration at the e-Shram portal since it was operational on 26th August 2021, the number of such registrations has been rising steadily over the 12 weeks," the ministry said in a statement.

As on November 20, 2021, which is more than 12 weeks since registrations started, 8,43,89,193 unorganised sector workers have registered on the portal.

As per week-wise data, the 10th week (November 2 - 8) saw the maximum increase at 1,15,66,985 registrations, followed by the seventh week (October 12 - 18) at 86,83,881.

In the past four days, (from November 17 to 20), around 57,24,286 registrations have been recorded, it added.

In the previous six weeks since October 5, a spike in registration of unorganised sector workers through State Seva Kendras has been recorded.

The largest such increase occurred in the preceding week (November 9 to 16), almost doubling from 24,842 to 53,970 registrations. As on November

20, the number of such registrations stands at 86,067, it stated.

Over the past 12 weeks, the states of West Bengal, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar posted the highest average growth rates of more than 15 per cent in registration of workers on the e-Shram portal, the statement said.

In the 12th week (November 9 to 16), registrations were particularly high for Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and moderately high in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab, Odisha and Bihar.

As of November 20, the top five occupational categories for workers registered on the portal are -- agriculture (53.2 per cent, 4,48,76,425 registrations), construction (12.1 per cent, 1,02,58,713), domestic and household workers (8.8 per cent, 74,22,236), apparel (6.3 per cent, 52,89,110) and capital goods and manufacturing (3.3 per cent, 27,60,050 registrations).

Further, two important sub-categories of agriculture workers are 'crop farm labourers' and 'field crop and vegetable growers' (with nearly 20 lakh registrations), it added.

The top five occupational categories of women unorganised sector workers are -- agriculture (2.1 crore), domestic and household workers (71 lakh), apparel (46 lakh), construction (23 lakh) and miscellaneous (17.98 lakh).

# Over 70k Indian exporters gear up for Black Friday, Cyber Mon sale via Amazon

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amazon India on Sunday said over 70,000 Indian exporters, who are part of its Global Selling programme, will offer millions of 'Made in India' products to global customers during the annual Black Friday and Cyber Monday (BFCM) sale.

The Black Friday and Cyber Monday sale starts on November 25 and ends on November 29.

Indian exporters are launching over 52,000 new products on Amazon's global websites for the upcoming holiday season, according to a statement.

Amazon customers globally will be able to discover and enjoy a range of products across categories, including Home and Kitchen, STEM Toys, Apparel, Health and Personal Care, Office Products, Jewellery, Beauty and Furniture by exporters across India, it added.

Black Friday and Cyber Monday are significant events marking the beginning of the holiday season in the US with



large-scale shopping from customers for gifts for friends and family.

Black Friday is celebrated a day after Thanksgiving with retailers wooing potential shoppers with special deals and discounts. Online retailers had started offering special promotions on the Monday that followed Thanksgiving weekend (similar to Black Friday sale by brick-and-mortar stores), hence the name Cyber Monday.

Amazon said it works with Indian exporters to help them identify key holiday shopping trends to bring in relevant product assortment; supports them with logistics solutions to get their inventory ready, and guides them to market their products through a range of deals and advertising options.

"The BFCM sale marks the

beginning of the global holiday season. Coming right after the festive season in India, it has traditionally been a key growth period for our selling partners and with more and more people relying on e-commerce for products globally, we believe that the 2021 BFCM sale period will help accelerate the exports business for our sellers," Amazon India Director of Global Trade Abhijit Kamra said.

He added that e-commerce exports help lower the entry barrier for Indian MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) to build and scale their exports business.

"Through Amazon Global Selling, we will continue to make exports easy and accessible for MSMEs across India and contribute to the government's vision of boosting exports," he said.

Some of the globally popular Indian brands from Amazon Global Selling who would be offering their unique products and creations this holiday season include Skillmates (toys); clothing brands like Virgin Crafts and Stylore; and Vahdam (tea brand).

# Govt to exceed FY22 tax collection target: Revenue Secy

**DIRECT TAX MOP-UP AT ₹6L CR TILL OCT**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With the net direct tax collection till October closing in on ₹6 lakh crore and average monthly GST mop-up likely around ₹1.15 lakh crore this fiscal, the Government's tax collection kitty will surpass budget estimates this financial year, Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj said.

In an interview with PTI, Bajaj said the relief in excise duty on petrol and diesel and customs duty on edible oil will cost the exchequer about ₹80,000 crore this financial year, and the revenue department will start calculating the tax mop-up position vis-a-vis budget estimates for this fiscal after the December advance tax number.

"After refunds also, we have touched almost ₹6 lakh crore till October in direct taxes... It is looking good. Hopefully, we should exceed it.

"Though we have given a lot of relief in indirect taxes in petrol, diesel and edible oil, also there are some sunset that have come in customs duty where the total benefit would be about ₹75,000-80,000 crore, but still I think we should exceed the budgeted estimates on both direct and indirect taxes," Bajaj said.

The government has budgeted a 9.5 per cent growth in

tax collections at ₹22.2 lakh crore for 2021-22 fiscal (April-March). In the last fiscal, the mop-up was ₹20.2 lakh crore.

Of this, revenues from direct taxes are estimated to be around Rs 11 lakh, including ₹5.47 lakh crore from corporate tax and ₹5.61 lakh crore from income tax.

With regard to the goods and services tax (GST) revenues, Bajaj said the collections in November will also be good numbers but December mop-up will be little lukewarm. The pick-up in collections will be visible again in the March quarter.

"The revenues are looking good, GST revenues are also good. We crossed ₹1.30 lakh crore (in October). This month, I think we should get a good GST number. This was Diwali, our GST revenue will keep charging.

"But, I think the run rate should not go below ₹1.15 lakh crore. Overall, we should do well in GST, excise duty and customs duty, also we will achieve our budgeted estimates. So, overall, we will exceed," Bajaj said.

Customs collection in the current fiscal is budgeted at ₹1.36 lakh crore, excise duty at ₹3.35 lakh crore. Besides, Centre's GST revenues, including compensation cess, are pegged at ₹6.30 lakh crore.

कार्यालय कलेक्टर, (महिला एवं बाल विकास विभाग) कोरबा छ.ग.

निविदा आमंत्रण-पत्र

क्रमांक/ 1910 / म.ब.वि.विभाग / क्रम/ 2021 कोरबा, दिनांक 15 / 11 / 2021

जिले के आंगनवाडी केन्द्रों में वित्तीय वर्ष 2021-22 में ज्ञानवर्धक पुस्तक सेट व अन्य अध्यापन सामग्री उपलब्ध कराने हेतु निर्माताओं तथा उनके अधिकृत विक्रेताओं से मुहरबंद निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

निविदा हेतु प्रस्तावित कार्य विवरण, निविदा प्रपत्र एवं निविदा शर्तें अधोहस्तसक्षरकर्ता के कार्यालय में आवेदन प्रस्तुत कर 1000.00 नगद भुगतान कर कार्यालय दिवस में प्राप्त किया जा सकता है।

1. निविदा हेतु आवेदन की अंतिम तिथि

22 / 11 / 2021

2. निविदा प्रपत्र विक्रय की अंतिम तिथि

24 / 11 / 2021

3. निविदाकार से निविदा प्रपत्र प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि

29 / 11 / 2021

शाम 5:00 बजे तक

4. निविदा खोलने की तिथि।

04 / 12 / 2021

दोपहर 12:00 बजे

हस्ता /—

जिला कार्यक्रम अधिकारी

R.o.No.- 65213/6

महिला एवं बाल विकास विभाग कोरबा

R.o.Date- 20/11/2021

जिला-कोरबा (छ.ग.)

MODI INDUSTRIES LIMITED

CIN - U15429UP1932PLC000469

Regd. Office : Modinagar - 201204, (U.P.) Tel : 01232- 243115, 9084786567

E-mail : modindustrieslimited@gmail.com Website : www.modindustries.net

NOTICE OF 87TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, BOOK CLOSURE AND REMOTE E-VOTING INFORMATION

NOTICE is hereby given that the 87th Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the members of Modi Industries Limited will be held on Wednesday, the 15th December, 2021, at 12:30 P.M., at Auditorium, Dayawati Modi Public School, Modinagar-201204, District Ghazialbad (U.P.), to transact the Ordinary and Special Business, as set out in the Notice of AGM. The physical copy of the Notice of the Meeting, Annual Report for the financial year ended March 31, 2021 and remote e-voting details have been sent to all members individually at their registered addresses. The date of completion of dispatch of the notices to the shareholders is 21st November, 2021. These documents are also available on Company's website [www.modindustries.net](http://www.modindustries.net) for download by the members and kept at the Registered Office of the Company for inspection by Members.

Notice is hereby given in compliance with the provisions of Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 as amended that the Company is pleased to provide remote e-voting facility to its members for transacting all the business through National Securities Depository Ltd. (NSDL) through their portal [www.evoting.nsdl.com](http://www.evoting.nsdl.com) to enable the members to cast their votes electronically.

The remote e-voting period commences on **Sunday, the 12th December, 2021 (09:00 am) and ends on Tuesday, the 14th December, 2021 (05:00 pm)**. No e-voting shall be allowed beyond the said date and time. During this period members of the Company, holding shares, as on the cut-off date of 8th December, 2021, may cast their vote by remote e-voting. Any person, who acquires shares and becomes member of the Company after dispatch of the notice and holding shares as on the cut-off date i.e. 8th December, 2021, will be provided the notice through e-mail or by post after the cut-off date and such members may also obtain the login ID and password by sending a request at [evoting@nsdl.co.in](mailto:evoting@nsdl.co.in) or RTA, MAS Services Limited.

However, if the members are already registered with NSDL for remote e-voting then they can use their existing user ID and password for casting their vote. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by NSDL for voting thereafter. Once the vote on a resolution is cast by the member, the member shall not be allowed to change it subsequently. The facility for voting through ballot paper shall be made available at the AGM and the members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the AGM may also attend the AGM but shall not be entitled to cast their vote again. The Company has appointed Shri Amar Nath Jaiswal, the Proprietor on behalf of M/s. A.N. Jaiswal & Co., (Membership No. ACS-19000 & CP No. 14629) of New Delhi as Scrutinizer to scrutinize the e-voting process in a fair and transparent manner.

In view of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, Ministry of Corporate Affairs dated May 5, 2020 read with General Circulars dated April 8, 2020 and April 13, 2020 (collectively referred to as "MCA Circulars"), have permitted the holding of AGM through Video Conferencing ("VC")/Other Audio Video Means ("OAVM"). The Company is providing this facility also to the shareholders to participate in the AGM from their homes. The detailed instructions for attending the AGM through VC/OAVM are provided in the AGM notice.

In case of any grievances connected to e-voting process, the members may please contact Ms. Pallavi Mhatre (Manager), NSDL, 4th Floor, 'A' Wing, Trade World, Kamlia Mills Compound, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400013. Email [evoting@nsdl.co.in](mailto:evoting@nsdl.co.in), Tel 18002224430 and 18001020990.

The detailed procedure for remote e-voting are contained in the Notice of the AGM. If you require any additional information or have any enquiries, please contact to the under signed at above mentioned address.

NOTICE is also hereby given pursuant to Section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013, Rule 10 of the Companies (Management & Administration) Rules, 2014 that the Register of the Members and Share Transfer Books of the Equity Shareholders of the Company will remain closed from Thursday, the 9th December, 2021 to Wednesday, the 15th December, 2021 (both days inclusive) for the purpose of taking record of the shareholders at the Annual General Meeting.

For Modi Industries Limited, Sd/-

Shobhit Nehra

Company Secretary

Date: 21.11.2021

Place: Modinagar (U.P.) 201204







# THE GUTSY HILL WOMEN

From saving forests to banning liquor in the villages, the women of the region have never backed down from taking the lead, says MAHANAND BISHT, highlighting their potential

Women from Uttarakhand's Chamoli district have always played a major role in leading various movements. Be it the revolutionary Chipko Movement or the fight against alcohol, these hill women have been at the forefront of protesting against the wrong and demanding what is right for their environment and society.

The world-renowned Chipko Andolan originated in 1973 started from Raini and Mandal Ghati in Chamoli district, setting an example and direction for many more environmental movements. Reminiscing the memories of the movement, Ganga Devi, a fifty-five-year-old resident of Koteshwar village located in Mandal Ghati in Dasholi block, said, "We have immense love for forests and treat them as our maternal homes." According to her, while arranging a girl's marriage, the parents enquire about the presence of forests nearby as they believe that a forest in close vicinity will reduce the burden of their daughter. Forests always become a topic of discussion as the parents don't want their daughters to walk for miles to gather fodder from the jungle.

While another resident, Parvati Devi, 58, of Bamiyala village in Dasholi block, mentioned her role in protecting forests. "I became a member of 'Mahila Mandal' a few years after getting married in Bamiyala village. We used to protect our forests by continuously planting trees with the help of a self-help group. As a result, in a few years, we started getting fodder and firewood from the nearby forests. This saved our efforts and time," explained Parvati.

However, reflecting on the increasing threat due to development, she mentioned how their old forests have been cleared to make roads. In addition, the old source of water is increasingly drying up due to deforestation, ultimately leading to a



drought like condition in many villages. Although the building of roads has opened the avenue to better facilities, it has also increased the burden of women as the forest is no longer close by and they have to walk long distances to gather fodder.

"We are not against development, but definitely against destruction in the name of development. It is against this destruction that we fought through the 'Chipko' movement," emphasised Parvati.

With the learnings from their experience in 'Chipko' movement,



these women started a protest against production of alcohol. Women and children were particularly troubled by the increasing consumption of alcohol. The raw liquor was made locally around villages, towns, and cities and was sold at a cheaper rate, making it easier for people to access. This led to an uprising by women who united to stop the production of raw liquor in Dewaldhar village in Mandal Ghati.

Hundreds of litres of raw alcohol along with its ingredients in Naron Dhar was destroyed under the supervision of Suman Devi, the head of Dewaldhar village. The movement received full support from the people of the area, and plans were made to increase the pace of the movement. Women from Gwaad, Dewaldhar, Dhogarikandai, Bairagana, Kunkuli, Makroli, Bhadakoti, Khalla, Mandal, Bandwara, Siroli and Koteshwar participated in the movement and decided to protest against the production of raw alcohol in the area. They asserted that production of raw liquor is affecting youth, children and families negatively, destroying many families. Hence, it is necessary to cease such businesses.

Dr Ranjeet Singh, the current District Magistrate of Chamoli, regarded this movement as a commendable one. "Production of alcohol can be stopped only through the union of people. The movement was so successful that during social events, families serving alcohol were penalised, which led to the banning of alcohol to some extent in the rural areas of the district," informed the DM.

From saving forests to banning liquor in the villages, the women of this region have never backed down from taking the lead. Given the right direction and access to resources, women can change the course of social reality, leading to a harmonious future.

—Charkha Features



## Whom does the world belong to?

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI finds the solution to the question of belongingness in the spirit of understanding, accommodation and spiritual love which is without any bias, partiality or discrimination towards anyone

Most of us have read and heard about the three important lessons taught by Alexander the Great through his last three wishes. Of the three wishes he made on his deathbed, the last one is most talked about, which says that, 'I want my both hands to keep dangling out of my coffin because I want people to know that we came empty-handed in this world and we will go empty-handed.'

In spite of knowing about these kinds of moral lessons, one of the questions which cost millions their head, even though most of them were not the people who had raised it, is the question of belongingness. The Old Testament testifies that, ever since the time of Abraham, when the question of belongingness was first raised, this question brought about the emotional separation of man from man as of Abraham from Lot, his nephew, and has unsettled many communities or nations and yet the question itself has ever remained unsettled. A deep study of the history of civilizations, would show that there is hardly any territory on the globe which has not been claimed by one or the other nation to belong to. Even though this territory be a barren tract of dry and parched land, a coral or reef island or the part of the vast desert as the Sahara. The question of a small peaceful princely state, which has been the subject of a dispute between three Asian nations, where less people lived than those who directly or indirectly fought for it, was and is mainly a question of belongingness.

"To whom does it actually belong" has been the burning question since many decades. Likewise, the question of racial discrimination in many developed and developing countries was mainly, 'Whom does the country belong to? — the majority or minority or both?' Again in the recent past, the question of belongingness is being asked by a neighbouring nation about a part of land in the Himalayan region which falls near the border between the two nations.

It is a well-known fact that in 1946-47, it was this question which led to the political division of the great subcontinent of India and to the heinous massacre of innocent masses that uprooted millions from their soil. The question that agitated the mind of political leaders, then, was, "To whom does India belong, or which part of India belongs to whom?" Almost the same type of question, though in a changed context and in a different situation or circumstances in each case, is being asked again here, there or elsewhere, 'To whom does so and so state belong, or who belongs to so and so state?'

History is a witness to the truth that this question of belongingness cannot be settled the way; attempts were made to tackle it over the centuries. Such questions, as these, are not settled by bullets or bombs or by deployment of large posse of policemen or by ruthless application of hurtful law. The solution has to be found only in the spirit of understanding, accommodation and spiritual love which is without any bias, partiality or discrimination towards anyone. But how can such a love emerge? Only if each one of us asks ourselves the question, 'Whom do our bodies belong to?' The answer to this would be, 'To our respective souls.'

Let us ask further, 'To which abode on-high do our souls belong?' The answer now would be that, originally, we all belong to the Soul world, also called Highest Heaven, Param Dhām or Alam al Arwah and that this whole planet earth, belongs to only one supreme and has been given to us all to live happily over here in unity and in the spirit of one family of mankind under the Fatherhood of Supreme. Further, if we remember the answer to the spiritual question, 'To whom do we, as souls, belong?', we will certainly settle this question of belongingness amicably.



It feels great to do in the morning and also in the evening after a long day. *Gomukh* asana arms or infinity arms are also effective in relaxing the shoulder joint, however, it may not be suitable for everyone. Other great options to stretch the shoulders are extended child pose and reverse namaste or *pashchima* namaskar.

### Strengthen the body

While stretching is very helpful, it is also important to strengthen the underactive or weak muscles in the body. Certain muscles tend to become weak due to long hours of sitting. These are your glutes, hamstrings, traps, abs, cervical flexors, and so on. These can be strengthened with postures like bridge, plank, chin tuck, and YT shoulder exercises.

Try to hold the stretches for 15 to 30 seconds and you can repeat them up to twice on the same day. Try to stretch at least thrice a week, but you can stretch daily as well. Make sure you give the body at least one day of complete rest during the week. It's also important that you don't stretch to the point of pain — you should hold a stretch at 90 per cent of your capacity.

Lastly, remember consistency matters, not intensity. Even if you give yourself just seven-10 minutes of stretching but you do it regularly, it can make a world of difference to your physical and mental health.

(The author is the founder of *Yoganama* and a *Yoga and Ayurveda lifestyle specialist*.)

Therefore, hip flexor stretches like *anjaneya* asana (low lunge) are very helpful. For even better results, you can add a side bend when in your lunge position.

### Stretch the upper back

The muscles in the upper back tend to stiffen up due to long periods of inactivity. These can be released with twisting movements such as supine belly twist. You can even add a twist to the previous lunge position by converting it into a twisted low lunge, also called Spiderman Stretch. Backbends like *bhujang* asana are also very helpful for activating the spine.

### Stretch the shoulders

To find even more relief go deeper into your shoulders with Shoulder Flossing that really helps to open up the shoulders.

Our modern-day lifestyle has taken a significant toll on our posture. Sitting or slouching in front of a screen can create muscular imbalances which result in aches and pains across the neck, shoulders, or lower back. Not only does our posture impact our body, but it also impacts our mind. A slouched posture can negatively influence our mood making us more prone to fatigue and anxiety. It can also impact our confidence levels.

Here are a few ways we can balance out our sedentary lifestyle to minimise the ill effects on our health.

### Get up often

Sitting is so bad for us because we do a lot of it. If someone was spending their days standing for hours, then

## Work out the tension

NAMITA PIPARAIYA lists a few ways to balance out the sedentary lifestyle, thus, minimising its ill effects on our health

that would also have negative health effects. Essentially, if you're not changing your position often, you're at high risk of postural issues. Therefore, add variability, shift around on your chair, get up often and take a stroll around. The best and most effective way to reduce the ill effects of sitting is to keep changing your position from time to time.

### Stretch the hip flexors

Hip flexors are a group of muscles at the front of the hip



and they tend to become tight from long hours of sitting. The

body starts to adapt to the posture we stay in most often.

When you arise in the morning, think of what a privilege it is to be alive, to think, to enjoy, to love.  
—Marcus Aurelius

### DIET TRUMPS DRUGS FOR ANTI-AGING

A study, published in *Cell Metabolism*, comparing the impact of diet versus drugs on the inner workings of our cells has found nutrition has a much stronger impact.

The pre-clinical study by the University of Sydney's Charles Perkins Centre suggests the makeup of our diet could be more powerful than drugs in keeping conditions like diabetes, stroke and heart disease at bay.

Conducted in mice, the research showed nutrition (including overall calories and macronutrient balance) had a greater impact on ageing and metabolic health than three drugs commonly used to treat diabetes and slow down ageing.

"Diet is a powerful medicine. However, presently drugs are administered without consideration of whether and how they might interact with our diet composition. We discovered dietary composition had a far more powerful effect than drugs," explained Professor Simpson.

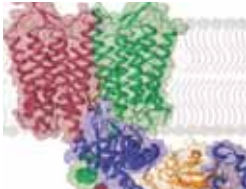


### SCIENTISTS REVEAL THE STRUCTURE OF GPR158

Scientists at Scripps Research, Florida have determined the near-atomic-scale structure of an unusual brain-cell receptor called GPR158, which has been linked to depression and anxiety. The structural study reveals both the receptor and its regulating complex, advancing understanding of basic cell receptor biology. It also enables work on potential therapeutics designed to block GPR158 as a strategy for treating depression, anxiety and possibly other mood disorders.

In the study, published in the journal *Science*, the researchers used ultracold, single-particle electron microscopy, or cryo-EM, to map, at a resolution of about a third of a billionth of a meter, the atomic structure of GPR158, both on its own and when bound to a group of proteins that mediate its activity.

"We've been studying this receptor for more than 10 years, so it's really gratifying to see for the first time how it's organised," says lead author Kirill Martemyanov.



### STUDY FINDS BATS HAVE A SOCIAL BRAIN

Whether chatting with friends at a dinner party or managing a high-stakes meeting at work, communicating with others in a group requires a complex set of mental tasks. Our brains must track who is speaking and what is being said, as well as what our relationship to that person may be.

A study, published in the journal *Science*, provides the first glimpse into how the brains of social mammals process these types of complex group interactions.

The neuroscientists at the University of California, Berkeley, used wireless neural recording devices to track the brain activity of Egyptian fruit bats as they freely interacted in groups and occasionally vocalised to each other through high-pitched screeches and grunts.

"Most studies of communication are typically performed with single animals or with pairs of animals. However, many social mammals, including humans, typically interact in groups. Egyptian fruit bats, specifically, like to interact within large colonies," said study co-first author, Maimon Rose.



### BABY TEETH CAN SIGNIFY MENTAL HEALTH RISKS

The thickness of growth marks in primary, or 'baby', teeth may help identify children at risk for depression and other mental health disorders later in life, according to a ground-breaking investigation.

The team analysed

70 primary teeth collected from 70 children enrolled in the Children of the 90s study (also known as the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children) based at the University of Bristol.

Parents donated primary teeth that naturally fell out of the mouths of children aged five to seven.

The results of this study could one day lead to the development of a much-needed tool for identifying children who have been exposed to early-life adversity, which is a risk factor for psychological problems, allowing them to be monitored and guided towards preventive treatments, if necessary.



### SITTING MORE COULD INCREASE DEPRESSION

During the initial COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, a lot of people suddenly became more sedentary as they adhered to stay-at-home orders or opted to self-isolate. Recently published research found people who continued to spend a higher amount of time sitting in the weeks following were likely to have higher symptoms of depression. A closer investigation into this association could play a role in helping people improve their mental health.

In short, a lot of people suddenly became more sedentary during the onset of the pandemic. Recently published research found people who continued to spend a higher amount of time sitting between April and June 2020 were likely to have higher symptoms of depression.

"Sitting is a sneaky behaviour. It's something we do all the time without thinking," noted Jacob Meyer.





# INDIA BEAT NZ, SEAL SERIES 3-0

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Rohit Sharma batted in style and led with panache to script a near perfect tale on his full-time captaincy debut as India handed T20 World Cup runners-up New Zealand the ignominy of a 3-0 series defeat after a 73-run win in the third T20 International here on Sunday.

The Indian skipper first made a statement scoring 56 off 31 balls in India's 184 for 7 and then made some immaculate captaincy calls which witnessed New Zealand's surrender for a paltry 111 runs in 17.2 overs.

It was a second back-to-back bilateral T20I series triumph with a clean sweep for India after beating the Black Caps 5-0 in their own den in 2020.

Axar Patel (3/9) bowled accurately and also got one to turn as his three wickets in Powerplay literally ended New Zealand's resistance and the rest was a mere formality.

The New Zealand team looked bone tired after a gru-



elling T20 World Cup campaign and the result won't be a fair reflection of the team's capabilities as they went through the motions for the better part of the three games.

For India, who were aiming to reset the button, the series win will certainly give them a few

pointers going forward.

For Rohit and head coach Rahul Dravid, this series was about checking what kind of ammunition they have going forward.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Ravichandran Ashwin's return to form in white ball cricket augurs

well as there is no substitute for experience.

Venkatesh Iyer has shown potential and needs to be persisted with. He bowled steadily and needs more game time to become a middle-order enforcer having been a top-order player.

Harshal Patel is a welcome addition with his sincere efforts but the middle order still remains a bit iffy as it didn't perform up to expectation in any of the games.

A few like Rituraj Gaikwad and Avesh Khan went untested but the skipper will surely use all his options going forward.

But what he has shown like his predecessor Virat Kohli is ability to walk the talk with performances that his mates will look up to.

When India batted, Rohit's imperious form was on full display as he laid the platform for an above par score.

In his bid to test the team's character by batting first, the skipper led the way with five fours and three sixes in his sub-

lime knock but despite a blazing start, the Indians stuttered in the middle overs before Harshal Patel (18 off 11 balls) and Deepak Chahar (21 not out off 8 balls) used their long handles which fetched 50 runs in last five overs.

Ishan Kishan (29 off 21 balls), Shreyas Iyer (25 off 20 balls) and Venkatesh (20 off 15 balls) all got starts but couldn't convert it into a big score.

Having got two flashy back-to-back boundaries off the very first over by Trent Boult, there was no looking back for Rohit.

There was no preferential treatment as all the fast bowlers were treated with equal disdain as he and Kishan made full use of the of the Powerplay overs, which yielded 69 runs.

Rohit pulled Boult behind square for his first six and hit Adam Milne (0/47 in 4 overs) over long-on for the second maximum and the third off Lockie Ferguson was another pull behind the square into the stand below the giant electronic scoreboard.

## Hamilton wins in Qatar

AP ■ LOSAIL

Lewis Hamilton inched closer to the Formula One championship lead with a dominating victory Sunday in the inaugural Qatar Grand Prix to earn back-to-back wins and chip away at Max Verstappen's points advantage.

Hamilton, who also won last week in Brazil, has trimmed 17 points from Verstappen's lead in the title race in a week. Verstappen still holds an eight-point lead with two races remaining in one of the most dramatic F1 title fights in at least a decade.

"I'm really, really grateful for these points. It's been a hell of a year," Hamilton said. "To be at this point in the year and have back-to-back wins is a great feeling."

The seven-time champion started from pole for Mercedes and was never challenged on the Losail International Circuit as Hamilton won his 102nd career race. It was his seventh victory of the season.

Verstappen finished second for Red Bull, nearly 25 seconds behind Hamilton.

"It was pretty lonely at the front," Hamilton said.

Verstappen was hit with a penalty before the race even began when he was dropped five spots on the starting grid for violating a yellow flag in Saturday's qualifying.



The Dutchman had qualified second but the stewards ordered him to drop back on the grid following Sunday hearings for Verstappen, Valtteri Bottas and Carlos Sainz.

All three were accused of not following yellow flag rules near the end of qualifying. Bottas, who had qualified third, was penalized three starting spots. Sainz was not penalized.

Red Bull was mystified by the grid penalty for Verstappen, who lost any chance to challenge Hamilton for the win when he was penalized. Red Bull principal Christian Horner criticized the penalty when it was handed down.

"We're really struggling to understand it," Horner said. "That's a crucial blow in this world championship for us."

## Taylor in no mood to divulge his secrets

PTI ■ KOLKATA

New Zealand batter Ross Taylor believes playing India in their own backyard is one of the toughest challenges for any side but refused to give insights about their plan to tackle premier off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin during the upcoming Test series.

India and inaugural World Test champions New Zealand will square off in a two-Test series beginning on November 25 in Kanpur.

The contest is part of the second WTC cycle. "Definitely looking forward to, definitely going to be a challenge. I think there is no harder assignment than playing India at home or Australia away. They are probably the two toughest challenges in Test



cricket at the moment.

"But as group we are looking forward to that and we know we are the underdogs but we will be looking forward to putting in a good performance," Taylor said on Sunday.

"Any time you play India at home, you will always gonna be the underdogs whether you are world no.1 or not."

The veteran Kiwi batter said tackling Indian spin duo of Ashwin and Axar Patel will be key to New Zealand's success in the Test series.

"I don't want to give my secrets away just here (on being asked what's his plan for Ashwin). I don't know what lineup India decide to go with, Axar Patel played a big role against England," Taylor said in a virtual press conference.

"Now they are going to play three spinners or two spinners, obviously Ashwin will be one of them. They are very good bowlers, especially in these conditions and how we will play them, will play a big part in how the series is gonna go."

## ICC appoints Geoff Allardice as permanent CEO

PTI ■ DUBAI

Australian Geoff Allardice has been appointed as permanent CEO of the International Cricket Council after serving the role on an interim basis for more than eight months, the game's governing body said on Sunday.

Allardice thus replaced Manu Sawhney, who had resigned from his position in July.

"It's a great privilege to be appointed as the CEO of the ICC and I would like to thank Greg and the ICC

Board for the opportunity to lead the sport as we enter an exciting new phase of growth," Allardice said in a release issued by the governing body.

"My continued focus will be on doing the right thing for our sport and working closely with members to deliver long-term success and sustainability."

"I would also like to thank the ICC staff for their commitment and support over the last eight months and I'm looking forward to continuing to



serve cricket with such a talented team," Allardice, a former Australian first-class cricketer and administrator, was the ICC General Manager, Cricket for eight years. He had previously

held a similar role at Cricket Australia.

"I am delighted that Geoff has agreed to take the role of ICC CEO on a permanent basis," Greg Barclay, ICC Chair said.

"He has shown tremendous leadership during an extremely challenging period culminating in the successful delivery of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021.

"Geoff has unrivaled knowledge of the global cricket landscape and its stakeholders and has consistently demonstrated he is the right person to work in partnership with our members to shape the sport for the next decade as we embark on delivering a new strategy and our next commercial rights cycle."

## Defending champion TN faces Karnataka in Southern derby

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An upbeat Karnataka stand on the way of Tamil Nadu's bid to defend their title in the final of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 cricket tournament here on Monday in an exciting Southern derby.

The 2021 final will be a repeat of the 2019 Syed Mushtaq Ali summit clash, which saw Karnataka edge out Tamil Nadu by one run in a thriller.

In the final of the delayed 2020-21 edition earlier this year, Tamil Nadu had defeated Baroda to lay their hands on the coveted trophy.

Come Monday at the Arun

Jaitley stadium, Tamil Nadu will be aiming to exact revenge for their 2019 final loss and defend their title while Karnataka would be hoping to win a third SMA title.

And for that to happen, their opener Rohan Kadam, would need to come up with another big knock, like the one he played in the semi-final against Vidarbha.

He and skipper Manish Pandey would be hoping to tame the strong and varied Tamil Nadu attack and give the side a flying start.

The team would also be hoping that their middle-order clicks, as inconsistency has been an issue. Karun Nair has



not been among the runs and he would like to make his presence felt. The likes of in-form Abhinav Manohar, Aniruddha Joshi and BR Sharath will need to support the top order.

However, Karnataka would worry more about their bowling attack, especially the pace unit comprising Vidyadhar Patil (4 wickets so far), V Vyshak (7 wkts) and M B Darshan (6 wkts).

It is a rather inexperienced trio but they have done well under the circumstances and carried the team into the finale. They will have their role cut out in the summit clash against a formidable TN batting unit.

Though Karnataka will miss the experience and guile of K Gowtham (7 wickets) owing to his selection for the India 'A' team, the spin duo of KC Cariappa (10 wickets) and J Suchith (6 wkts) will be crucial to the team's prospects and their eight overs could have a bearing on the outcome.

Tamil Nadu, on the other hand, have been in good form in the tournament.

It has been a team performance thus far with different players contributing at various stages. Yet, a lot would depend on the start provided by the dynamic duo of N Jagadeesan (163 runs, 1 fifty) and C Hari Nishaanth (177) and how new-

bie B Sai Sudharsan (173 runs) can build on it.

Skipper Vijay Shankar leads the run-scoring charts for TN with 181 (1 fifty, 14 boundaries and 8 sixes from five matches). He can turn a match around with his batting abilities alone and will look to unleash some big ones to help the team defend the title.

Also, the power-hitting of M Shahrulkh Khan has come in handy for the team at times and he will be one to watch out if the top-order fails to fire.

The team will be sweating over the availability of left-arm pacer T Natarajan, who missed the last two matches owing to a nigggle.

## Chahar, Kishan to join India A for red ball series in South Africa

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Fast bowler Deepak Chahar and young wicket-keeper batter Ishan Kishan have been added to India A squad, that will travel to South Africa for three four-day Test matches.

Deepak and Ishan are in Kolkata for the third T20I against New Zealand and will leave with the squad on November 23.

"Yes, Deepak and Ishan have been drafted to the squad. They will finish the match in Kolkata and link up with the A team before they leave for

South Africa," a senior BCCI official confirmed the development to PTI.

It is understood that Ishan is being sent because the Chetan Sharma-led committee, by mistake, had kept only one wicket-keeper for the 'A' tour in Railways' Upendra Yadav.

"They needed a second keeper and who is better than Ishan. He probably now would be first keeper and rightly so," another official said.

Deepak has not played a lot of red ball cricket but with his ability to swing the ball, selectors want to keep him busy.

## Zverev denies Djokovic another chance to earn a big title



AP ■ TURIN

For the second time this year, Alexander Zverev has denied Novak Djokovic the chance to play for a big trophy.

Following up his win over the top-ranked player in the semifinals of the Tokyo Olympics, Zverev beat Djokovic 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-3 at the same stage of the ATP Finals on Saturday.

"Every time we play against each other, it's very high level," Zverev said. "This year we played each other five times. ... Every time we played for multiple hours and it was very physical."

The result means Djokovic can't match Roger Federer's record of six titles at the season-ending event for the top eight players. At least not this year.

Instead, Zverev will play second-ranked Daniil Medvedev in Sunday's final.

"He's the greatest player of all time and I think people forget that sometimes," Zverev said of Djokovic, who shares the record of 20 Grand Slam titles with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

Medvedev, the U.S. Open champion, beat first-time qualifier Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-2 earlier as he seeks to defend his title in the first edition of the tour-

nament in Turin — after 12 years in London.

Medvedev has won his last five meetings with Zverev, including a round-robin match earlier this week that was decided in a third-set tiebreaker.

Zverev won this event in 2018.

Djokovic committed a series of uncharacteristic baseline errors to hand Zverev the decisive break midway through the third set.

Zverev then held his nerve, saving a break point, before serving a slicing ace down the T on his first match point.

"I just had the one very bad game in the third set — three forehand, one backhand unforced errors, really from pretty easy position," Djokovic said.

The tone of the match, though, was set in the first set, after Zverev saved a set point at 4-5.

In the first-set tiebreaker, a challenge from Zverev forced Djokovic to hit a second serve and resulted in a double fault. Then a backhand drop shot from Djokovic clipped the net and hopped over, enabling Zverev time to run it down and reply with a sharply angled forehand cross-court winner.

## Sukant wins gold, Pramod ends up with 3 silver medals

PTI ■ KAMPALA

India's Sukant Kadam claimed a gold after two years at the Uganda Para Badminton International, while compatriot Pramod Bhagat settled for three silvers here on Sunday. World No. 5 Kadam defeated fellow Indian Nilesh Balu Gaikwad 21-16 17-21 21-10 in 38 minutes in men's singles summit clash in the SL4 category.

"It was a good match and it feels good to break the jinx and win a gold medal after 2 years. This will motivate me to work harder," Kadam said. World number one Bhagat had a tough day in office as the Tokyo Paralympics gold medallist lost all his three finals.

In the men's singles SL3 finals, Bhagat was defeated by his doubles partner Manoj Sarkar in a tight game. The game went to the wire and ultimately Bhagat lost 19-21 16-21.

In the men's doubles, Bhagat and Sarkar lost 21-10 20-22 15-21 to their Indian counterparts Mohammad Arwaz Ansari and Deep Ranjan Bisoyee.

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Xavi Hernández needed a penalty to start his return to Camp Nou as Barcelona coach in winning fashion.

Barcelona's 1-0 win against Espanyol on Saturday began the way Xavi wanted, with his team dominating the ball like the Spain great had when he joined Lionel Messi and Andrés Iniesta to forge one of soccer's greatest sides as its midfield maestro.

But the same problems that had led to the demise of his predecessor soon emerged.

Barcelonás attack failed to turn its huge advantage in possession into shots on goal other than Memphis Depay's second-half penal-

ty, while its defense came apart in the final stretch. Only Espanyol's misfiring forwards stopped the Catalan derby from ending in a draw.

"Overall, I am happy, but it is clear that we have to improve," Xavi said. "We are building a new project and these three points in a derby gives us a boost. It was tough because they could have scored. We were in control for 60, 70 minutes, but we should have been more patient and held onto the ball. It is a question of knowing how to interpret the match."

The crowd of 74,000 chanted "Xavi! Xavi!" in the sixth minute in honor of the number Xavi wore for 17 seasons when he helped Barcelona win 25 titles. He

## Dortmund closes gap on Bayern; Union wins Berlin derby 2-0

AP ■ BERLIN

Borussia Dortmund captain Marco Reus scored late to cut the gap on Bundesliga leader Bayern Munich to a point with a 2-1 win at home against Stuttgart.

Dortmund looked set for disappointment as it struggled to take advantage of Bayern's shock 2-1 loss at Augsburg the night before, but Reus grabbed the home team's winner in the 85th minute when he tapped in the rebound after Florian Müller had saved Thorgan Hazard's initial effort.

Dortmund was again without injured star forward Erling Haaland, who watched from the stands.

Dutch striker Donyell Malen scored his first Bundesliga goal



since joining Dortmund in the offseason from PSV Eindhoven, but Stuttgart fought back through Roberto Massimo before Reus had the final say.

"We stayed at it and were rewarded with the goal,"

Dortmund coach Marco Rose said.

**DERBY HONORS FOR UNION**

Basking in the novelty of a sold-out stadium, Union Berlin defeated crosstown rival Hertha Berlin 2-0 in a largely peaceful

derby and climbed to fifth.

First-half goals from Taiwo Awoniyi and captain Christopher Trimmel were enough for Union to claim the unofficial title of "Stadtmeister" (city champion) and leave Hertha floundering in 13th place, far from the European qualification spots it has targeted.

"We could have won 3-0 or even 4-0. A fully deserved derby win," Union defender Marvin Friedrich said.

It was the first time since the coronavirus pandemic began that Union was permitted to sell out its 22,012-capacity stadium, and the first time that fans could attend the Berlin derby since November 2019.

Memories of trouble at that game meant a large police presence around the stadium.

# Xavi starts as Barcelona coach by beating Espanyol

AP ■ BARCELONA

Xavi Hernández needed a penalty to start his return to Camp Nou as Barcelona coach in winning fashion.

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Barcelona's 1-0 win against Espanyol on Saturday began the way Xavi wanted, with his team dominating the ball like the Spain great had when he joined Lionel Messi and Andrés Iniesta to forge one of soccer's greatest sides as its midfield maestro.

But the same problems that had led to the demise of his predecessor soon emerged.



was hired two weeks ago before an international break for club competition when Ronald Koeman was let go after one too many painful defeats.

Barcelona moved into sixth place in the Spanish league, eight points behind leader Sevilla and second-place Real Sociedad.

Ivan Rakitic's stoppage-time goal lifted Sevilla to the top of the table after

fighting back for a 2-2 home draw with Alavés.

Atlético Madrid also needed a late goal by center back Felipe Monteiro to edge Osasuna 1-0 at home.

**XAVI'S CHANGES**

Xavi is back after six years playing and coaching Qatar as the man Barcelona hopes can restore the team to greatness after years of decline.

The former midfielder had said that he would offer a surprise in his starting lineup with so many of his attacking players out with health issues. And he did not disappoint by giving a debut to 17-year-old reserve-team forward Ilias Akhomach, who made the starting lineup to help fill in for the absent Ansu Fati.

Ousmane Dembélé, Sergio Agüero and Martin Braithwaite.

A slick pass by 17-year-old Gavi Pérez to play Depay clear in the 48th minute was one of the few moments of inspiration by a Barcelona player in the opposing area.

Gavi was one of several young players that Koeman brought into the first team. Xavi had said

that he would use the talented teenager as a "wild card," and he played Gavi on the left side of his attack in a new position for the natural midfielder.

Gavi's pass left Depay sizing up goalkeeper Diego López when Espanyol defender Leandro Cabrera slid and took him down. Depay took his league tally to seven goals when he sent his spot kick to his right while López stretched the other way.

After barely touching the ball in the first half, Espanyol had two excellent chances to grab a late equalizer. But substitute Landy Dimata headed wide from point-blank range before Spain striker Raúl de Tomás hit the post.

"A draw would have been a fair result, but soccer is about scoring and we couldn't get the ball in," said De Tomás.

Barcelona hosts Benfica on Tuesday seeking a win that will seal the Catalan club's spot in the knockout rounds.

**SEVILLA WINS**

Alavés was poised to get only its second-ever victory at Sánchez Pizjuán Stadium when Rakitic fired home a ball that fell to him from a poorly defended cross.

The draw left Sevilla ahead of Sociedad on goal difference. Sociedad plays Valencia on Sunday, when Real Madrid can also move ahead of Sevilla if it wins at Granada.