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FIGHT FOR PAKISTAN

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INTRIGUING FINAL DAY

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Covid-19 could again ground global flights

Dec 15 flight plan in danger; Govt to watch world scenario

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In view of the emerging threat from the new variant of the coronavirus, the resumption of scheduled international flights could be delayed. The Centre on Sunday said it would take a decision after reviewing the evolving global scenario as well as the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on testing and surveillance of incoming passengers, especially from countries identified as 'at risk'. The international flight operations were to resume from December 15.

Alert to the looming threat from Omicron, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and Jharkhand Health Minister Banna Gupta urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to allow flights from the countries affected by the new variant.

At the same time, States have begun to tighten curbs



- Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla held a meeting with all stakeholders and it was decided that the Centre would take a decision on the resumption of international flights as per the evolving global scenario
- The Centre asked all States and UTs to focus on intensive containment, active surveillance, enhanced testing, monitoring of hotspots, increased coverage of vaccination and augmentation of health infrastructure
- Delhi CM wrote to PM Modi to stop international flights from countries hit by the new Covid variant Omicron
- Delhi airport started RT-PCR tests of all passengers from affected countries.
- Karnataka and Jharkhand also requested Modi to ban travel from affected countries
- The Uttarakhand Govt, too, has asked authorities to test and isolate people returning from African nations
- BMC introduced new restrictions on arrival from affected countries; started the RT-PCR test at the airport and if a traveller tests positive for Covid-19, they will be sent to institutional quarantine

again and urgently trace people who arrived from abroad especially those coming from 'at-risk' nations. Several countries

have already temporarily suspended flights to southern African nations.

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CAPSULE

ED SUMMONS AMAZON, FUTURE GROUP OFFICIALS
New Delhi: The ED has summoned senior executives of Amazon India, including its country head Amit Agarwal, and that of the Future group for questioning in a foreign exchange violation probe linked to the disputed deal between the two conglomerates. P4

FUEL PRICES TO FALL IF CRUDE OIL SLIDES MORE
New Delhi: Petrol and diesel prices will be reduced only if the current drop in international oil prices is sustained for a few more days, as domestic retail prices are fixed on a 15-day rolling average. P9

18 KILLED AS VEHICLE HITS TRUCK IN NADIA
Kolkata: At least 18 people were killed when a vehicle carrying the remains of the deceased rammed into a stationary truck in West Bengal's Nadia district early on Sunday. P5

JIO RAISES PREPAID RATES BY UP TO 21%
New Delhi: After Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, India's largest mobile operator Reliance Jio on Sunday announced up to 21 per cent hike in its prepaid tariffs from next month.

'Omicron spike mutations may hit jab efficacy'

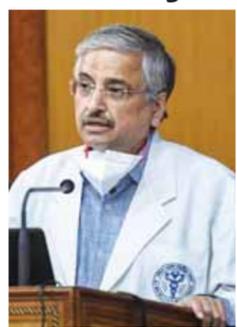
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining the grave threat emerging from the new Omicron variant of the coronavirus, AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria has said the effectiveness of the vaccines against the new mutant will have to be critically examined since the variant has reportedly got over 30 mutations in the spike protein, giving it the potential to develop an immunoevasion mechanism.

The presence of spike protein facilitates a virus' entry into the host cell and is responsible for making it transmissible and causing infection.

"The new variant of the coronavirus reportedly has got more than 30 mutations at the spike protein region and, therefore, has the potential of developing immunoevasion mechanisms. As most vaccines (work by) forming antibodies against the spike protein, so many mutations at the spike protein region may lead to a decreased efficacy of Covid-19 vaccines," Dr Guleria said.

In such a scenario, the efficacy of vaccines, including those in use in India, needs to be evaluated "critically", he said.



The future course of action will depend on what more data on its transmissibility, virulence and immunoevasion shows, he said.

The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia INSACOG is closely tracking the new variant of Covid-19 called B.1.1.529 and its presence has not been detected yet in the country, officials have said.

Dr Guleria emphasised the need to be very vigilant and having an aggressive surveillance both for international travellers and in the region where there is a sudden increase in the number of cases.

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New rules for int'l travellers!

New Delhi: The Government on Sunday said global passengers must submit 14 days' travel history and upload negative Covid test results. Travellers from countries deemed "at-risk" will also undergo a mandatory 7-day home quarantine if they test negative, the Union Health Ministry said

Continued on Page 2

Gangster Act, NSA against UP TET paper leak culprits: Yogi

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW

Asserting that Uttar Pradesh (UP) would maintain 'transparency' and 'fairness' in recruitments, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday announced to invoke the Gangster Act and National Security Act (NSA) against those involved in the UP TET-2021 paper-leak. The paper was cancelled within minutes after it was leaked through WhatsApp on Sunday.

"Those who are involved in this misdeed must know that a case is being registered against them under the Gangster Act and their property will be confiscated along with imposition of the National Security Act," said the CM while addressing a public gathering in Deoria. Sending a warning to all those who tend to vitiate the transparent recruitment process, Yogi asserted: "If someone is

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Opp miffed as PM skips meet

No tradition of PM attending all-party meeting, says BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday skipped an all-party meeting called by his Government, a day before the start of the Winter Session of Parliament. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) staged walk-out and the Congress-led Opposition demanded a law for the Minimum Support Price (MSP), compensation for the families of 'martyred' farmers and a discussion on fuel prices and inflation.

The violence in Tripura, the Pegasus spying controversy and the safeguards to prevent a potential third Covid-19 wave are on the Opposition's agenda for the Winter Session of Parliament. The session comes barely a few months before the crucial Assembly polls to the five States of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur — ruled by the BJP — and Punjab run by the Congress.

The Government is looking for a smooth session of Parliament after it 'bowed-down' to farmers' demands to scrap the controversial farm laws.

In addition to the withdrawal of the three farm laws and the Cryptocurrency Bill on the first day itself, the Government has listed as many as 26 Bills for introduction in Parliament during the Winter Session, which is set to take place from November 29.



Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi holds an all-party meeting ahead of the Winter Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Sunday PTI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal were present from the Government's side in the meeting.

The Opposition leaders present at the meet included Mallikarjun Kharge, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Anand Sharma from the Congress, TR Bалу and Tiruchi Siva from the DMK, Sharad Pawar from the NCP, Vinayak Raut from the Shiv Sena, Ramgopal Yadav from the Samajwadi Party, Satish Mishra from the BSP, Prasanna Acharya from the BJD and National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah.

"We were expecting the Prime Minister to attend the meeting and share something with us. We wanted to ask more about the farm laws as there are some apprehensions that these three farm laws may come back in some other form," said Kharge after the meet.

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TMC to miss Opp meet in Parl called by Cong today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The differences in Opposition ranks, namely between the Congress and the TMC — after the poaching of leaders by the latter from the grand old party — came to the fore on Sunday with the TMC saying it was "disinterested" in coordinating with the Congress during the forthcoming Winter Session of Parliament. The TMC has decided not to attend the meeting of Opposition floor leaders called by the Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge of the Congress on November 29 ahead of Parliament's Winter Session. At the same time, Mamata Banerjee's party maintained that it would cooperate with other Opposition camps on various issues concerning people's interests.

"I think all the Opposition parties should come to the meeting on Monday to create a consensus over the issues to be raised in Parliament. The issues that are on priority shall be discussed in the meeting," Kharge said reacting to the TMC's stand.

The reaction from the grand old party came even as the TMC attended the all-party meeting convened by the Union Government earlier in the day.

The Congress, in its Parliamentary party meeting chaired by party president Sonia Gandhi, had expressed anger over the way the TMC had been poaching Congress leaders, including Sushmita Dev, Kirti Azad Ashok Tanwar, Mukul Sangam and others in the last few months.

"We invite every party in the Opposition for an exchange of views before the start of the Parliament session. But it is up to them (TMC) whether to attend or not," the leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said. Kharge has called for a meeting of the Opposition parties to discuss the issues to be raised in Parliament during the forthcoming session.

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BJP sweeps Tripura civic polls

Routes TMC, CPI(M); wins 329 of 334 seats

PTI ■ AGARTALA/KOLKATA

Tripura's ruling BJP pulverised Mamata Banerjee's TMC and the Left on Sunday, capturing with surprising ease the Agartala Municipal Corporation and 13 other civic bodies where it now has 329 of the 334 seats.

Contesting its first civic polls after it stormed to power in the northeastern State in 2018, the saffron party steam-rollered a feeble challenge from the Opposition after a vitriol-filled campaign marked by communal tension, clashes and court battles that forced the Supreme Court to intervene and order peaceful polls.

Not a single Opposition candidate could win from any ward of the 51-member Agartala Municipal Corporation all of which went to the BJP.



BJP supporters celebrate their victory in municipal corporation elections, in Dharmanagar, Tripura on Sunday PTI

nation was so complete that it secured all the wards in the 15-member Khowai Municipal Council, 17-seat Belonia Municipal Council, 15-member Kumarghat Municipal

Council and nine-member Sabroom Nagar Panchayat, State Election Commission officials said.

The party made a clean sweep in the 25-ward

Dharmanagar Municipal Council, 15-seat Teliamura Municipal Council and 13-member Amarpur Nagar Panchayat, they said.

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BJP-ally NPP seeks repeal of CAA at all-party meeting

New Delhi: The BJP's ally National People's Party leader Agatha Sangma on Sunday demanded the repeal of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) at a meeting of constituents of the ruling NDA as well as at the all-party meeting convened ahead of the Winter Session of Parliament.

Sangma, the MP from Tura in Meghalaya, urged the Government that as it has repealed farm laws keeping in mind the sentiments of the people, the CAA should also be repealed.

Sangma made the demand at the all-party meeting called by the government as well as at a meeting of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Union Ministers Pralhad Joshi and Piyush Goyal.

"Since the farm laws have been repealed and this was done primarily keeping in mind the sentiments of the people, therefore, I requested the government to repeal the CAA keeping in mind the same sort of sentiments of the people from the Northeast," she told PTI after the NDA meeting here.

There was no response from the Government but it has taken detail notes of the demands made by the floor leaders of all parties, Sangma said.

When asked whether other parties

from the Northeast which are part of NDA also share the same sentiments, she said, "I made this demand on behalf of my party and people from the Northeast. I know a few others who also share the same view."

The CAA, which facilitates granting of Indian citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim minorities of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, was passed by Parliament in 2019 and had led to protests in different parts of the country.

The President had given his assent to the legislation on December 12, 2019.

The objective of the CAA is to grant Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities -- Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian -- from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

People from these communities who had come to India till December 31, 2014 due to religious persecution in these countries will not be treated as illegal immigrants but be given Indian citizenship.

After the CAA was passed by Parliament, widespread protests were witnessed in the country. Those opposing the CAA contend that it discriminates on the basis of religion and violates the Constitution. They also allege that the CAA along with the National Register of Citizens is intended to target the Muslim community in India. **PTI**

Obesity is rising among children, adults in India; experts raise concern

New Delhi: There has been a rise in obesity among children under five years of age with 33 states and union territories registering a spike in the number of overweight children, according to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS).

Experts attributed the increase in obesity to lack of physical activity and unhealthy food habits.

The number of overweight children increased from 2.1 per cent in NFHS-4 to 3.4 per cent in NFHS-5.

Not just children, obesity among women and men also increased.

The percentage of overweight women rose from 20.6 per cent to 24 per cent while in men the number increased from 18.9 per cent to 22.9 per cent, according to the NFHS-5.

According to the NFHS-5, several states and union territories, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Mizoram, Tripura, Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Ladakh, have registered increase in the percentage of obesity among children below five years of age in comparison to NFHS-4 conducted between 2015 and 2016.

Only Goa, Tamil Nadu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu registered a drop in the number of overweight children under

five years of age, the data showed.

According to the survey data, 30 states and union territories registered a rise in obesity among women while 33 states and UTs recorded an increase in obesity among men. Men and women were counted as obese whose body mass index was found to be over or equal to 25.0 kg/m² while children's obesity was counted in terms of weight-for-height.

Healthcare experts have attributed the rise in obesity to unhealthy food choices and lack of physical activity among children and even adults. Poonam Mutreja, Executive Director at the Population Foundation of India, said behind the trend of increasing obesity among Indian women, men and children over the past 15 years, confirmed by NFHS-5, are rising incomes, poor dietary habits, and unhealthy life choices.

"Sustained economic growth over the past 15 years has led to a marked increase in people's incomes. We know that obesity among Indians goes up as they become wealthier. In 2015-16, according to NFHS-4, the proportion of overweight or obese men was five per cent among families in the lowest wealth quintile and 33 per cent in the highest wealth quintile," she said.

"Similarly, the proportion of overweight or obese women was six per cent among families in

the lowest wealth quintile and 36 per cent in the highest wealth quintile.

However, blaming rising incomes is not fair. Much has also to do with poor eating habits. The consumption of unhealthy foods (popularly termed junk foods) that are high in calories from sugar or fat and contain little dietary fibre, protein, vitamins, and minerals is known to increase as families become wealthier," Mutreja said.

Besides these problems, a vast majority of Indians do not seem to recognise the importance of leading a healthy and active life. They tend to lead sedentary lives and lack the motivation to do exercise of any kind including going for walks.

Sadly, parents do not seem to realise the adverse consequences of these life choice decisions they make on the health and nutritional well-being of children, she added. Dr Antaryami Dash, Head, Nutrition, Save the Children, India, said every nation is entering into a situation with double burden of malnutrition where there is a co-existence of undernutrition (stunting/wasting/underweight) and overnutrition (overweight/obesity) at the population level.

The prevalence is highest in western and industrialised countries, but gradually catching up in developing countries. **PTI**

Govt panel seeks additional data from SII, says Covovax not yet been approved in country of origin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An expert panel of India's Central Drug Authority, which recently reviewed Serum Institute's application seeking emergency authorisation of Covid-19 vaccine Covovax, has sought additional data from the firm, while noting the job has not yet been approved in the country of origin, official sources said.

The Serum Institute of India (SII) had put in an application to the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) in October for grant of market authorisation of Covovax for restricted use in emergency situations.

The Pune-based firm had submitted interim safety and immunogenicity data of phase 2/3 bridging clinical trials conducted in the country as well as interim clinical trial data of safety and efficacy from phase 3 clinical trials conducted in the UK and the US along with its application, official sources said.

"The Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on COVID-19 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), which deliberated on the application on November 24, noted that the vaccine is

technology transfer of Novavax vaccine and is not yet approved in the country of origin," a source said.

After detailed deliberation, the committee recommended that the firm should submit additional data and information.

It has sought correct status of the phase 3 clinical trials in USA and UK along with up to date on the safety, efficacy and immunogenicity, comparative statement of immunogenicity parameters of the subjects from the US, UK and other overseas phase 3 studies with data from phase 3 study in India, besides review status of the application with regulatory authorities of the US and the UK, the source said.

The government recently permitted the export of two crore doses of Covid-19 vaccine Covovax to Indonesia, produced in India by the SII, as the job has not yet been approved for emergency use in the country, official sources had said.

The DCGI office had granted SII permission to manufacture and stock Covovax on May 17. Based on the DCGI's approval, till now, the Pune-based firm has manufactured and stockpiled vaccine doses, they said.

Children in poorer countries with fewer vehicles more likely to die in road accidents: UNESCO report

New Delhi: Children in poorer countries that have fewer vehicles are more likely to die in traffic accidents, even as children walking to schools are disproportionately affected, according to the new Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report.

The report by UNESCO has highlighted measures taken by several countries to reduce accidents for children travelling to schools and also stressed upon the importance of traffic education for them, taking into account their attention and cognitive style using virtual reality technology.

"Traffic accidents rank at or near the top of the most significant dangers. Children walking to school are disproportionately affected because many schools are located along major highways, and children have more limited impulse control, slower reaction time and poorer risk perception than adults. Traffic is especially dangerous in poorer countries and neighbourhoods.

"Rapid, unplanned growth contributes to poor road conditions and inadequate urban traffic design, putting pedestrians and

other vulnerable road users at risk, especially when combined with lack of stringent vehicle safety standards. Despite having far fewer vehicles, poorer countries have a far higher risk of accidents and fatal accidents," it added.

The report cited an international road assessment programme survey of nearly 2,50,000 km of roads in 60 countries which found that more than 80 per cent of those with a traffic flow of over 40 km/hr and used by pedestrians had no pavements.

"Traffic education is important. The Global Initiative for Child Health and Mobility, coordinated and funded by the FIA foundation, aims to ensure safe and healthy school journeys for all children by 2030. Within the SDG framework, it campaigns for speed limits, viable footpaths and cycle lanes.

"Finding a safe place to cross the road is more difficult for those with intellectual disability, as their ability to focus and ignore irrelevant stimuli is weaker. Road safety education should take into account their attention and cognitive style using virtual reality technology," it added. **PTI**

Govt should bring Bill for providing legal guarantee for MSP: Manoj Jha

New Delhi: Ahead of Parliament's Winter Session, RJD leader Manoj Kumar Jha on Sunday demanded that the government should bring a bill to provide legal guarantee for MSP and give an assurance on the floor of the House that cases filed against farmers will be withdrawn as well as compensation will be paid to the families of those who died during the farm laws agitation.

The Rajya Sabha member, who is an influential voice of the Opposition, also said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should "explain" in Parliament why the farmers' movement was "denigrated" and "demonised" before agreeing to repeal the farm laws.

In an interview with PTI, Jha said the Opposition was committed to the smooth functioning of Parliament and would take "four steps for it, provided the ruling party takes two" in a meaningful direction with an open mind.

Describing the RJD-Congress war of words during the recent bypolls in Bihar as "episodic", he also dismissed reported divisions within the Opposition ranks and asserted that almost the entire Opposition is united in demanding a bill giving legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price (MSP). **PTI**

Asked about the Congress-Trinamool Congress run-ins of late, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader said if a political party is enhancing its footprint then that is a question of their political constituency but in Parliament it was about collectively raising the voice of people of India.

He asserted that the Opposition unity inside Parliament would not be affected.

Noting that the Centre is bringing a bill to repeal the three farm laws which have been at the centre of farmers' protests, Jha said the government should bring a separate bill exclusively for providing legal guarantee for MSP where in all crops be included.

"That has been a consistent demand of the farmers. Interestingly, this was also demanded during Constituent Assembly debates and I hope the government understands now what is the power of the voice of the farming community, they have experienced it," the Rajya Sabha leader said.

Asserting that he was making the demand on behalf of the Opposition, Jha also pointed out that nearly all opposition parties decided not to attend the November 26 Constitution Day programme because they believe that "trampling upon constitutional values and celebrating Constitution Day do not go hand in hand". **PTI**

Nepal census team awaits clearance from MEA

Pithoragarh (U'khand): Permission to a Nepalese census team to visit Nepal's border villages of Tinkar and Changru via India is still awaited from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Nepal had sought the permission for the team for the ongoing census exercise in the neighbouring country. "Whenever the permission reaches us from the government, we will inform MEA," Pithoragarh District Magistrate (DM) Ashish Chauhan said. Chauhan, who was briefing the media after chairing an Indo-Nepal coordination meeting here on Saturday, said the meeting of administrative officers of the border districts of the two countries was concluded with an agreement to maintain the coordination of security agencies on the border and the mutual cooperation.

Omicron spike ...

From Page 1
"Also, we must ask everyone to religiously follow Covid-appropriate behaviour and not let their guards down. Also, it has to be ensured that people get both the doses of the vaccine and those who have not yet taken the jab are encouraged to come forward to take it," he said. The new, and potentially more contagious variant, was first reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) from South Africa on November 24. It has since been identified in Botswana, Belgium, Hong Kong and Israel among other countries.

On Friday, it was designated a Variant of Concern by the WHO, which named it Omicron. A 'Variant of Concern' is the WHO's top category of worrying Covid-19 strain.

New rules for...

From Page 1
in revised travel guidelines for international passengers in view of 'Omicron'.

Passengers will have to submit a self-declaration form on the online Air Suvidha portal and include travel history for the past two weeks. They will also be required to upload a negative Covid-19 RT-PCR test report, which should have been conducted within 72 hours of the journey. A declaration with respect to the authenticity of the Covid test report will also be required, manipulated reports will make the passenger liable for criminal prosecution.

The new guidelines will come into effect from December 1, 2021.

Travellers from 12 at-risk countries will be subjected to testing and extra surveillance. They will need to take the Covid test post-arrival and wait for results at the airport before leaving or taking any connecting flights. If the test is negative, they'll follow home quarantine for 7 days, re-test on the 8th day and if negative again, further self-monitor for the next 7 days.

Covid-19 could again ground global flights

From Page 1
Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Sunday held an urgent meeting with all stakeholders to discuss the spread of the new variant of the Covid-19 strain Omicron. The meeting decided that the Ministry of Home Affairs would take a decision on the date of resumption of scheduled commercial international passenger service.

Dr VK Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, Dr Vijay Raghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to Prime Minister, and senior officers from Health, Civil Aviation and other Ministries were present in the meeting. The meeting was held a day after a high-level review by Modi on the new variant of concern 'Omicron'.

The Centre has asked all States and UTs to focus on intensive containment, active surveillance, enhanced testing, monitoring of hotspots and increased coverage of vaccination and augmentation of health infrastructure. In a letter to Modi, the Delhi Chief Minister urged him to stop international flights from countries affected by the new Corona variant. "Our country has fought a tough fight against Corona for the last one-and-a-half years. We should do everything possible to prevent the new variant of concern, recently recognised by the WHO, from entering India. A number of countries, including the European Union (EU), have suspended travel to the affected regions. I urge you to stop flights from these regions with immediate effect. Any delay in this regard may prove harmful if any affected person enters India," Kejriwal said in the letter. The Karnataka government has requested the Centre to impose a travel ban on passengers coming from South Africa, Hong Kong and Botswana in view of the detection of Omicron, Chief Minister Bommai said.

The BMC has also imposed new restrictions on international passengers travelling from or transiting through South Africa, Hong Kong and Botswana. All air passengers will have to undergo mandatory RT-PCR tests at the Mumbai Airport. If a traveller tests positive for Covid-19, they will be sent to institutional quarantine and the samples will be sent for genome sequencing. Until recently, a passenger testing positive was sent to home quarantine. All passengers arriving at the Mumbai airport will have to get their passport scrutinised at the immigration counter for travel history of the last two weeks.

Earlier this week, the Ministry of Civil Aviation issued an order allowing scheduled international flights to and from all countries considered "not at risk" with effect from December 15. The Ministry said that passengers from countries in "at risk" category would require to follow additional measures following their arrival in India, including testing for coronavirus disease. The countries kept in 'at risk' category are - the UK, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel.

TMC to miss Opp...

From Page 1
When asked about the TMC's decision to not attend the meeting Kharge said, "We will try to convince everyone to join the Opposition meeting," Kharge said. Talking to the media,

Kharge said parties that attended the all-party meet convened by the Government ahead of the Winter Session of Parliament demanded immediate action on a law on minimum support price for farm produce.

He said demands were also raised to extend compensation

to those farmers who died during the protest against the three farm laws.

After the meeting, Kharge mentioned that there were some other big issues that were raised by the parties such as the rising prices of petrol and diesel and the tensions at LAC with China.

Gangster Act, NSA...

From Page 1
trying to play with the life of the youth, then he should be aware of the consequences. Be it a job or any test, utmost transparency must be maintained. The current Government has given jobs to more than 4.5 lakh youths in UP with full transparency and the process will be continued further."

Meanwhile, the CM also assured that the exam will be re-conducted in a transparent manner within a month. No extra fee will be taken from any examinee and the Government will arrange for their free movement through UPSRTC buses. The Government has also made it clear that the examinees will not have to fill any forms and submit application fees.

Taking swift action, the Special Task Force (STF) of the UP Police arrested around 23 suspects from different cities. They nabbed four from Lucknow, three from Meerut, two from Varanasi and Gorakhpur. One person has been arrested from Kausambi and 13 from Prayagraj. "UPTET 2021 examination scheduled to be held today stands cancelled due to paper leak. Dozens of suspects were detained by STF in the paper leak case, the investigation is on. The UP Government will conduct the exam again within a month," Uttar Pradesh Additional Director General of Police (ADG), Law and Order, Prashant Kumar said. The exam, scheduled to be held on Sunday, was cancelled as reports of paper leaks in Mathura, Ghaziabad, Meerut and Bulandshahr came in before the exam started. "A few photocopies of the question papers were found from those arrested. The STF will probe the case and take action against those found guilty," Kumar asserted. The exact date of the fresh UPTET exam will be notified in due course of time by the Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Board (UPBEB), informed ACS UPBEB, Deepak Kumar.

As many as 19,99,418 candidates had registered for the UPTET 2021 exam which was scheduled to be conducted at several exam centres across 75 districts of UP.

Opp miffed as PM...

From Page 1
The Congress demanded that compensation be paid to the families of farmers who passed away during the protest. The fuel price rise and tensions with China at the Line of Actual Control were also raised by the Congress. Several parties also renewed their demands for the early passage of the Women's Reservation Bill.

With many floor leaders pointing out that Bills are not being discussed at the standing committee, Rajnath Singh said that the Government is ready to refer the Bills to the parliamentary committees for detailed discussion. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi denied that the Prime Minister violated a tradition by skipping the all-party meet.

Left parties had raised the issue of the Prime Minister absenting himself from the important meeting. "There was no tradition of the Prime Minister attending the all-party meeting. It was started by Modi. He couldn't attend the today's meeting," said Joshi, adding 31 parties attended the meeting. AAP leader Sanjay Singh walked out of the all-party meeting alleging he was not allowed to speak and alleged "muzzling of the Opposition". Singh wanted to raise the farmers' demand for law on MSP. "They (Government) don't let any member speak during the all-party meeting. I raised the issue of bringing the law on MSP guarantee in this session of the Parliament and other issues including extension of BSF's jurisdiction etc. They don't speak in all-party meet and Parliament," said Singh.

The YSR Congress Party demanded that the Government form a Joint Parliamentary Committee for bringing statutory resolution for the MSP. YSR Congress leader in Rajya Sabha Vijaysai Reddy said the party also demands that marine and poultry products be brought under the MSP regime. Trinamool Congress and YSR Cong also asked the Government not to divest the profit-making public sector companies.

Almost all Opposition parties sought the sacking of Minister of State for Home Ajay Kumar Mishra, whose son is accused of running over farmers in Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh.

Omicron scare: Kejriwal urges PM to ban flights



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to stop flights coming to India from countries affected by a new variant of coronavirus with immediate effect. "Our country has fought a tough fight against corona for the last one and half years. With great difficulty and due to the selfless service of millions of our Covid warriors, our country has recovered from coronavirus," he wrote in the letter.

including the European Union, have suspended travel to the affected regions, he said. "We should do everything possible to prevent the new variant of concern, recently recognised by the WHO, from entering India... I urge you to stop flights from these regions with immediate effect. Any delay in this regard may prove harmful, if any affected person enters India," the letter read. As concerns grow over the new Covid variant, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for a proactive approach and a review of plans for easing of international trav-

el curbs, and urged people to be more cautious while several states moved quickly to take precautionary measures and remain vigilant. Modi, who was briefed by officials about the recently discovered variant Omicron during a comprehensive meeting here to review the public health preparedness and Covid-19 vaccination, also highlighted the need for monitoring all international arrivals, their testing as per guidelines, with a specific focus on countries identified 'at risk'.

The Centre on Thursday had asked all states and Union territories to conduct rigorous screening and testing of all international travellers coming from or transiting through South Africa, Hong Kong and Botswana, where the variant of serious public health implications has been reported. Meanwhile, the Delhi government has called a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority on Monday to discuss steps that need to be taken in view of threat of the new COVID-19 variant, Kejriwal had said on Friday.

All Govt depts on high alert in view of new Covid-19 variant: Sisodia



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday said that all Government departments are on high alert in the wake of a new Covid-19 variant and appealed to people to avoid unnecessary gatherings. Sisodia said that Government departments, especially health, have been instructed to again enhance infrastructure and other necessary facilities to tackle any possible threat of the new variant. "Fear, concern is necessary about the new variant of Covid-19. All Government departments are on high alert. I

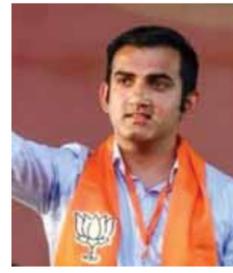
appeal to people to not unnecessarily mingle and to take all precautions," he said in response to a question on the new variant on the sidelines of a press conference. The Deputy Chief Minister appealed to the public to exercise caution about Covid-19 and follow social distancing norms even as the Government is keeping a vigil on any possible case of the new variant. "We are all alert about the new variant. A DDMA meeting has been called (on Monday) on this. If even a single person carrying the new variant comes to Delhi, it will spread fast, so please do not mingle unnecessarily," Sisodia said.

The new variant of Covid-19, feared to have a high amount of spike mutations unseen before, has been detected in South Africa, with authorities there confirming 22 positive cases associated with it on Thursday. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), in its meeting on Monday, is likely to take a call on RT-PCR testing of passengers deboarding from international flights, and quarantining of passengers from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Hong Kong and other countries where the new coronavirus variant has been reported.

Gambhir gets third death threat allegedly from 'ISIS Kashmir'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In the last six days for the third time, former cricketer and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Gautam Gambhir have received another death threat on Sunday allegedly from 'ISIS Kashmir'. The cricketer-turned-politician had received death threats on Tuesday and Wednesday.



A senior police official said police had received the content of the e-mail and police teams are investigating the matter. The email received from isiskashmir@yahoo.com at 1.37 AM read: "Your Delhi Police and IPS Shweta (DCP) cannot uproot anything. Our spies are also present in the police. All the information is being received about you." According to a police complaint filed by Gaurav Arora, Gambhir's personal secretary, the MP received the first death threat on his official e-mail ID at 9.32 PM on Tuesday. The e-mail, allegedly from ISIS Kashmir, read, "We are going to kill you and your family."

"On receiving the complaint, the district police increased (Gambhir's) personal security as well as the security of his residence in Rajinder Nagar area. The police are currently inquiring into the source of the complaint," Shweta Chauhan, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Central district. Soon, the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations unit of the Special Cell wrote to Google seeking information on the account handlers and the registered e-mail ID through which the alleged mails were sent.

AIR POLLUTION

Minister Gopal Rai to hold review meeting today



Former Union Minister Vijay Goel along with supporters holds a demonstration at the ITO Chowk against Kejriwal Government calling its fight against pollution only a drama, in New Delhi on Sunday

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai will hold a high-level meeting on Monday to review the air pollution situation in the Capital, officials said. "The Minister will take stock of the situation with

senior officials of the departments concerned and discuss steps that could be taken in addition to the existing restrictions on construction and truck entry," an official said. The Supreme Court will also conduct a hearing on a public interest litigation per-

taining to high levels of air pollution in Delhi-NCR on Monday. The Delhi Government had on Thursday re-imposed the ban on construction and demolition activities following the Supreme Court order in this regard. Chief Minister Arvind

Kejriwal said the workers affected by the ban on construction activities in the national capital will be provided a financial assistance of ₹5,000 each and his Government will also compensate them for the loss of minimum wages. Physical classes in schools, colleges and other educational institutions will resume and government offices will reopen from Monday. However, the ban on the entry of trucks, barring those engaged in essential services, will continue till December 3. CNG and electric trucks are allowed to enter Delhi. On November 13, the city Government had ordered the closure of all educational institutes, banned construction and demolition activities and asked its employees to work from home to combat air pollution and minimise its health effects. Four days later, it extended the restrictions, besides banning the entry of trucks carrying non-essential items in Delhi.

PICTALK



Residents take part in a protest demanding the opening of the highway that was closed due to farmers' agitation, at Indirapuram, Ghaziabad on Sunday

Sisodia names 250 Delhi Govt schools that 'transformed' in 5 yrs; asks Punjab for similar list



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday released a list of 250 schools that he said were transformed by the AAP Government in five years and urged Punjab to do the same to compare the reforms and developments in the schools run by both the governments. He said Punjab Education Minister Pargat Singh had alleged that no work was done by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi to improve the education system and invited him to visit the 250 schools in the national capital that have witnessed reforms. "I am releasing a list of 250 Delhi government schools that have undergone transformation in the last five years. I call upon the Punjab education minister to release a list of the State's 250 government schools that have seen improvement," Sisodia said at a press conference here. He said Singh can visit these schools anytime and similarly, he will also visit the Punjab government schools for a reality check. "I hope that by Sunday evening, the Punjab education

Minister will release the list. Both of us, with the media, can visit the schools in Delhi and Punjab for a reality check. The public will then decide which government has done better," the AAP leader said. Sisodia, who is also Delhi's education minister, said the city Government has brought in remarkable development in the schools run by it. Students of Delhi government schools are clearing the JEE (Advanced) and the NEET, and the teachers here are trained at IIMs and in foreign countries, he added. Ahead of the 2022 Punjab Assembly polls, Sisodia had called upon Singh on Friday for presenting a list of 250 government schools in the state that have witnessed improvement in the five years of the Congress government for a public comparison of the education models of Delhi and Punjab. Sisodia had invited Singh on Thursday for a public debate on the education models of the two governments. He had also proposed a joint visit to 10 government schools each in Punjab and Delhi.

City's power demand set to rise this winter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Anticipating a harsher winter this year, discoms have estimated that the national Capital's power demand will go up to 5400 MW, surpassing the peak winter demand in the previous two years, officials said. Last year, Delhi's peak power demand in winter had peaked to 5021 MW and in 2019 it was 5343 MW, discom officials said. A BSES spokesperson said the peak winter power demand in BRPL and BYPL areas had reached 2091 MW and 1107 MW respectively during last winter. This year, it is expected to reach 2315 MW and 1140 MW for BRPL and BYPL respectively.



Accurate demand (load) forecasting is critical for reliable power supply. It is done on various parameters like day-ahead, intra-day basis and medium term (from a fortnight to one year). Among other aspects, weather parameters like temperature, rainfall, cloud coverage, wind speed and direction, and humidity play an important role in accurate demand forecast, officials said. Ensuring reliable power supply in any season is as much the function of proper power arrangements as also accurate demand forecast and robust distribution network. On all these aspects, BSES discoms are fully geared to

ensure adequate power availability for its around 46 lakh consumers during the winter months, said the BSES spokesperson. The backbone of BSES' power-supply arrangements during the winter months include long-term agreements from power plants including hydro electric and Delhi-based gas fuelled generating stations, he said. Additionally, BSES is also receiving over 440 MW of solar power from SECI, 250 MW of wind power, around 25 MW from waste-to-energy generation. Besides, it is also being helped by over 118 MW of solar power panels installed on roof tops in South, West, East and Central Delhi, he added.

Man found dead with throat slit in Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The body of a 42-year-old man with his throat slit was found in a room in west Delhi's Ranhola area, police said on Sunday. They identified the deceased as Pawan of Ranhola. His sister Mamta, a resident of Peeragarhi village, called up the police control room on Friday night, saying Pawan's phone had been switched off since morning. She said her brother owned two buildings in Ranhola and that he was staying in one while he had rented out the other to a few families.

Mamta added that all tenants in the second building had locked their rooms from outside but she found a man lying on a bed in one of the rooms on the first floor. The police later escorted Mamta and her husband to the building and found the body of Pawan in the room with his throat slit. All the tenants had fled, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Parvinder Singh said. A case under sections 302 (murder) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code was registered on Saturday. Efforts are on to nab them, the DCP said.

Escape of 5 girls from children's home HC seeks presence of Delhi Govt official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has sought the presence of an official of the city Government in connection with a plea alleging the escape or abduction of five minor girls from a children's home and said it will pass necessary directions to ensure better functioning of the child-care institutions here. Dealing with a petition filed by one of the five girls who claimed to have been kidnapped on March 27, Justice Subramonium Prasad said the matter cannot be confined to only one incident. The petitioner has sought the court's direction for a magisterial enquiry into the affairs

of the institution meant for children who are in need of care and protection. "Let the Joint Director, Child Protection Unit, Department of Women and Child Development, be present in the court for assisting the court in giving directions to ensure better functioning of the various child-care institutions," the judge said. "This petition cannot be confined only to the one incident of March 26-27, 2021 where five minor children escaped from the home. The overall functioning of the institutions has to be assessed to see as to whether adequate measures have been provided in the homes so as to

ensure that the children do not escape from such homes and what facilities have been provided to the children in the homes," he added. In its status report, the Delhi Police informed the court that the institute's building, which was about 40-45 years old, was in such a condition that it was easily possible for the occupants to escape. "Due to the old structure of the building, the condition of the rooms and the windows were also not found good. The iron rods of the windows were found very weak. The backside boundary wall is about eight-foot high and was also found in a deteriorated condition," it said.

12-yr-old boy rescued as he gets lost after cycling 26 km to see Red Fort

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Keen to see Delhi, especially its historic monuments, a 12-year-old boy cycled 26 km from his home in Uttam Nagar to reach the Red Fort, only to later realise that he had forgotten his way back home. Lost in the bustling Old Delhi area, the boy, terrified as the sun set, looked for help and hoped somebody would guide him back to Nawada in Uttam Nagar in the western part of the national Capital. However, even in these moments, the 12-year-old remembered how in such situations only the police could be trusted, and after roaming around the Red Fort area for a while, spotted a mobile Police Control Room (PCR) van. The boy was terrified when he reached the PCR van, police

officials said as they narrated the November 23 incident. Personnel calmed him down and asked him where he lived. Though he gave vague directions, he could not remember the exact route back home, a senior official said, adding that he did mention the Uttam Nagar Metro Station. Police did not reveal the boy's name as he is a minor. The boy left his house after noon and reached the Red Fort in the evening. It was already dark and after being around the monument for some time, officials returning he got lost, the officials said. They said that the Kotwali Station House Officer reached the spot where the PCR van was stationed and took the boy to the Kotwali Police Station. Though the boy had heard about the Red Fort, he never

imagined he would reach it, the officials said. Constable Vinay Vasla was tasked to safely drop the boy back to his home, they said, adding that the boy told police that he could guide them to Nawada from the Uttam Nagar Metro Station. The boy was taken home and reunited with his anxiously waiting family members, the officials said. "He said he can identify the route to his house after reaching Uttam Nagar Metro Station. When we reached there, he said there was a government school beside his house. We followed his instructions and finally reached his house," said Valsa said. His father said that even last month, he just took his cycle and went away, and a missing report was lodged, the police officer said.

Ayushman Bharat boon for poor: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded the 'Ayushman Bharat' scheme which, he said, is "proving to be a boon for the poor", emphasised on innovation and "can do spirit" and praised the armed forces saying the 50th-anniversary celebrations of India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war will take place next month.

Modi also cautioned against being casual about Covid-19 behaviour saying the pandemic has yet not made its exit from the country.

Addressing his 83rd episode of monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' radio programme, Modi said, "The country celebrates Navy Day and Armed Forces Flag Day in December. We all know that on December 16, the country is celebrating the golden jubilee year of the 1971 war."

"On this occasion, I want to remember our armed forces, our soldiers. Especially, the brave mothers who gave birth to these heroes," he said.

He also highlighted the significance of places like Jhansi and Bundelkhand in India's freedom struggle. "Heroes like Rani Laxmibai and Jhalkari Bai



belong from here. These regions have also gifted us Khel Ratna like Major Dhyan Chand," said the Prime Minister.

In his second last radio address of 2021, Modi asked youth to innovate and show determination an "Can Do spirit" to achieve their goals and setting up startups.

"In every country with a large youth population, three aspects matter a lot. Sometimes, it becomes the true identity of the youth. The first aspect is - ideas and innovation. The second is the spirit of taking risks and the third is the 'Can Do' spirit. This is the era of start-ups and it is also true that today India is leading

the way in the world of start-ups", he said.

Modi interacted with people who benefited with the 'Ayushman Bharat' health scheme and heard how they cured themselves of heart and knee ailments without spending any money.

"Ayushman Bharat scheme is the biggest boon to poor and their well-being", Modi said.

He asked people to connect with nature and cited examples as to how people pioneered, resurrected and preserved it in their respective areas.

"There was a river in Jalaun called Noon river. Gradually, the river came to brink of extinction. This created a cri-

sis for farmers in the area. The people of Jalaun this year formed a committee and revived the river. This is an example of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', he said.

The PM said "When we conserve nature, it blesses us with sustenance and protection in return."

BJP president J P Nadda who listened the radio talk, described 'Mann Ki Baat' as a "unique non-political address" by the Prime Minister and said it inspires everybody. In the BJP National Executive this month, Nadda had asked party workers to institutionalise the 'Mann Ki baat' programme at booth levels across the country.

"When we hear about a life having changed due to the efforts of the Government and its schemes, and the experience of that changed life, we too are filled with emotions. It gives satisfaction to the mind and inspiration to take that plan to the people. This is what I seek from life. I don't want to be in power, my goal is to serve the people," the Prime Minister said.

ED summons Amazon India head Over alleged irregularities in deal with Future Group

Senior executives of Future Group also summoned under FEMA

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has summoned Amazon India head Amit Agarwal next week over alleged irregularities in a deal with Future Group. The agency has also summoned the senior executives of the Future Group.

The executives have been summoned along with documents under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), sources said.

Amazon India head Agarwal, some other senior officials of the company and those of the Future Group have been called, the sources said.

The investigation is being conducted under various sections of the FEMA after the federal agency received a communication from the Commerce Ministry early this year seeking "necessary action"



against e-commerce players like Amazon and Flipkart pertaining to certain multi-brand retail businesses and an observation made by the Delhi High Court in relation to Amazon.

The HC had said that the attempt made by the US-based firm to control Future Retail through a conflation of agreements it has with an unlisted unit of the Indian company will be considered as violative of the FEMA and foreign direct investment (FDI) rules.

The executives have been asked to join so that investigation can be taken forward. The agency has gathered details from the documents submitted by the companies earlier and other sources over the last few

months, agency sources said. An Amazon spokesperson said they were examining the ED summons.

"We are in receipt of summons issued by the ED in connection with the Future Group. As we have just received the summons, we are examining it and will respond within the given time frame," the spokesperson said in a statement. The Kishore Biyani-led Future Group did not respond to the queries over the development.

Amazon and Future Group have been battling it out in courts after the Kishore Biyani-led group in August last year agreed to sell its assets to billionaire Mukesh Ambani's

Reliance Retail on a slump sale basis for Rs 24,500 crore.

Earlier this month, a promoter entity of Future Retail Ltd (FRL) had been asked by the ED to provide documents pertaining to the 2019 deal with Amazon. FRL had noted that it has not received any direction to provide any document.

The independent directors of FRL have approached the Competition Commission of India (CCI), urging it to revoke the approval it had given to the Amazon-FCPL deal in 2019, alleging the e-commerce major of making false statements before it.

Amazon has also written to the independent directors of FRL, alleging "significant financial irregularities", and said this warrants a "thorough and independent examination" of relevant facts and related party transactions between FRL and other Future Group entities.

It has also reached out to CCI, requesting it to "act in aid of the binding injunctions operating against FRL, FCPL and the Biyanis, in terms of the EA (emergency arbitrator) Order and the Order on Vacate Application and recall the Observation Letters forthwith".

India to have new tourism policy with Covid-induced norms



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ KOHIMA

India will soon have a new National Tourism Policy in keeping with the Covid-induced new norms that have changed the way people travel within the country and abroad.

"Just when we were ramping up the tourism policy, Covid-19 crisis came bringing many challenges but it has also brought opportunities. We are now again deliberating on how the policy is framed in keeping with the global standards to be followed in the Covid-era," ADG from the Union Tourism Ministry, Rupinder Brar told *The Pioneer* on the sidelines of the second day of the three-day International Tourism Mart being held here at the picturesque capital of Nagaland.

The Mart aims to showcase the Northeast region as a tourist hotspot as

well boost its tourism potential as a part of the government's 'look east policy'.

She explained that focus is now on product, process and promotion where technology including the digital one will play a key role in keeping with people's needs during the Covid era.

"Tourists are looking for contactless facilities, for instance both to drive bookings and to facilitate safe travel."

She also pointed out that Staycations are becoming a way of travel in post-Covid era. Tourists are looking for open spaces and travelling in smaller groups preferably with family or close friends as a safety measure.

During the event, various State Governments from the region made presentations and discussed several aspects of tourism and how they plan to boost the sector which has huge revenue and employment generation potential.

BSF hands over Pak national who entered India by mistake to Pak Rangers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Border Security Force (BSF) has handed over a Pakistani national who inadvertently entered Indian territory in Gurdaspur, Punjab to its Pak counterpart Pakistan Rangers as a goodwill gesture.

"On November 26, 2021, alert Border Security Force troops observed that one Pak National crossed International Boundary, entered inside India and further moved towards Border Security Fencing in the area of responsibility (AOR) of 73 Battalion of BSF, Gurdaspur sector," the BSF said in a statement.

Sensing the threat and to stop the misadventure, troops challenged him. The Pak intruder stopped and subsequently was apprehended by BSF, it said.

During questioning, it came to notice that he had crossed over Indian territory inadvertently. Nothing objectionable was recovered from him, it further said.

The BSF approached Pakistan Rangers and lodged protest on the matter. Thereafter, on request of Pakistan Rangers, the said apprehended Pakistani national was handed over to Pak Rangers at about Saturday.

He was an inadvertent border crosser and on humanitarian grounds, the BSF decided to hand him over to the Pak Rangers.

During this year, 16 Pakistan inadvertent border crossers have been handed over to Pakistan Rangers by Border Security Force.

Punjab Frontier on humanitarian grounds and goodwill gesture, it added.

Ease media restrictions on coverage of Parl sessions, Adhir writes to LS Speaker



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Sunday to ease the restrictions imposed on media to ensure free and fair coverage of proceedings of parliament during the Winter Session commencing Monday.

Raising the issue of restrictions on media, the Congress leader said during the past one and a half years, a majority of the media people were denied access to the Press Gallery and interactions with parliamentarians on the pretext of pandemic guidelines.

While malls, restaurants, cinema halls, marketplace and other public places have been opened due to the withdrawal of the Covid-19 curbs, the restrictions imposed during the pan-

dem are still on for the media persons as far as covering the proceedings of the Parliament is concerned, he pointed out.

"It is definitely against the spirit of parliamentary democracy. I am concerned that there is a dangerous trend emerging to isolate parliament and parliamentarians from media scrutiny."

"In view of the above, I appeal to you to ease the restrictions on the media persons in the Parliament complex and they should be allowed access to Press Gallery and all necessary facilities may be provided to them to cover parliament proceedings in a free and fair manner," he said in his letter to the Speaker.

The winter session of Parliament starts from Monday and will continue till December 23.

Haryana becomes 5th State to reduce VAT on aviation fuel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Haryana has slashed the value added tax on aviation turbine fuel to 1 per cent, making it the fifth State to reduce the levy on the fuel. In a series of tweets, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Sunday expressed his gratitude to Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar for the prompt action on reducing the VAT on jet fuel to 1 per cent and said the move will also set an example for other states to follow.

Scindia also noted that the decision will boost air connectivity and economic development in Haryana. "With this, Haryana becomes the 8th State/UT to slash the tax rate after Andaman & Nicobar Islands, J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, MP & Tripura," he said. Scindia has been requesting states to reduce taxes on jet fuel, which accounts for a major chunk of the operational costs of an airline.

On November 18, the minister had said that seven states and Union Territories have slashed their VAT on ATF and that he was expecting more states to follow suit. With the current tax structure on ATF, "you cannot have a robust civil aviation sector. I am very clear on that," he had said.

CONSTITUTION DAY

WCD Min, UN Women commemorates constitutional history, contribution of women

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the occasion of Constitution Day, Ministry of Women and Child Development and UN Women India commemorated India's constitutional history and contributions of the great women visionaries, with a commitment to uphold the fundamentals of equal and just republic that is enshrined in the country's foundational charter.

In her keynote address Union Minister, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Smriti Irani, said, "We've had the opportunity to honour the excellence and determination of so many women of India, especially those women of history who took part in writing the Indian Constitution. This constitution was not given to us. We gave it to ourselves. Let us remind ourselves on Constitution Day the things the Indian Constitution stands for - justice to all, appeasement to none."

Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Indevar Pandey, Anita Bhatia, Assistant Secretary-General & Deputy Executive Director, UN Coordination, Partnerships, Resources and Sustainability, UN Women, Susan Jane Ferugson, UN Women India Country Representative were present on the occasion.

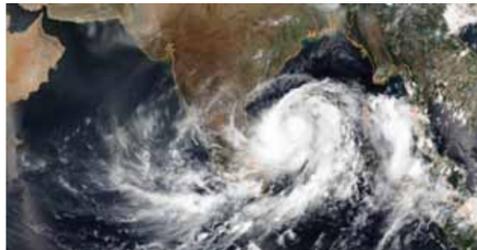
Low pressure area forming over south Andaman Sea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A low pressure system is likely to develop over south Andaman Sea around November 29-30, which might intensify into the current cyclone season's first cyclone over the Bay of Bengal (BoB) in the 2021 post-monsoon season. In its latest weather bulletin, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said that a low pressure area is likely to form over the south Andaman Sea around November 30 and this system is likely to become more marked and move west-northwestwards during subsequent 48 hours. This has the potential to intensify into a cyclonic storm in due course.

"Under its influence, isolated heavy rainfall has been predicted for Andaman and Nicobar Islands on November 30. Rainfall is likely to increase over North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Odisha from the night of December 3," the IMD said.

October to December is among the favourable months for the development of cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. This year, no cyclonic storm formed over the Bay of Bengal in October and November.



The last such storm over the bay was cyclone Gulab in late September when the south-west monsoon was still active over the region. Cyclone Gulab made landfall over north Andhra Pradesh on September 26. Later, the remnants of the storm entered the Arabian Sea and intensified into a severe cyclone, Shaheen.

About 80 cyclones are formed around the world annually, out of which five are formed in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, together known as the North Indian Ocean. India's east and west coasts are prone to cyclones with the maximum associated hazards—rain, heavy winds and storm surge—faced by coastal districts of West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh." Cyclones in the North Indian Ocean are bi-modal in nature,

that is, they occur during two seasons— April to June (pre-monsoon) and October to December (post-monsoon). Of these, May and November remain the most conducive for the development of cyclones," IMD said.

The IMD has also issued an orange alert for coastal districts in south Andhra Pradesh and north Tamil Nadu as the rain continued in the two southern states with the activity expected to reduce over Tamil Nadu by the end of this month. An orange alert usually indicates heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning. The Puducherry government declared holiday for all schools and colleges in Puducherry and Karaikal regions on November 29 and 30 in view of the incessant rains.

Unruly passenger offloaded from plane in Guwahati

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A passenger from SpiceJet flight SG 8169 (Guwahati-Delhi) was offloaded on Sunday (November 28) after he repeatedly got up from his seat and caused a ruckus. Other passengers told the crew that they refuse to fly with the man on board. The passenger was identified as one Ajay Gaur who was flying from Guwahati to Delhi on flight SG 8169.

Reportedly, after the plane took off, Gaur began screaming that this would probably be his "last journey" and that he would die on the flight. The passenger also claimed that his "assassin" was also on the flight and pleaded with the other passengers to "save him".

After creating ruckus and allegedly hitting crew members of the plane, the co-passengers stood up and complained that they were not prepared to fly with Gaur. The passenger was then deplaned from the plane and handed over to the CISF (Central Industrial Security Force) team at Borjhar's Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International

Airport.

According to a SpiceJet spokesperson, "After repeated attempts to pacify him failed and co-passengers told the crew that they were not ready to fly with the said passenger on board. The aircraft was brought back to the bay where airport security officials along with SpiceJet staff deplaned the passenger and handed him over to the CISF (Central Industrial Security Force)."

Earlier in July this year, Air India offloaded a man on board its flight bound to Hyderabad from Muscat at Vijayawada International Airport for allegedly misbehaving with a woman passenger. Identified as K. Lakshman, 45, the person hails from Kamareddy in Telangana state. He boarded the Air India flight in Muscat to reach Hyderabad via Vijayawada. However, as he allegedly started misbehaving with a woman passenger sitting in front of his seat, Lakshman was made to disembark at Vijayawada. Authorities at the airport handed him over to Gannavaram police.

India, Lanka, Maldives carry out maritime exercise in Indian Ocean



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Given the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region, the navies of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives are engaged in an intense multi-lateral maritime exercise named 'Colombo Security Conclave Focused Operation'.

It is the maiden two-day exercise of this nature between the lead Maritime Security Agencies of India, Maldives and Sri Lanka ending on Sunday, navy officials said here on Sunday.

Giving details of the exercise, they said ships and aircraft of Indian Navy, Maldives National Defence Force and Sri Lankan Navy are participating and operating over a vast area in

the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of the three countries in the Southern Arabian Sea. A trilateral Table Top Exercise between the three navies was conducted on July 14 and 15 July this year. The three countries had participated in the 5th Deputy National Security Advisors (NSA) - level meeting of Colombo Security Conclave on August four wherein ways of enhancing maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region were deliberated upon.

The 'CSC Focused Operation' is being conducted with an aim of keeping this vital part of the Indian Ocean Region safe and secure for commercial shipping, interna-

tional trade and conduct of legitimate maritime activities.

The exercise will help build understanding and interoperability between the lead maritime security agencies, and facilitate institution of measures to prevent and suppress transnational crimes in the region. It will further enhance the operational synergy by exchange of information and conduct of coordinated operations to handle maritime incidents and accidents.

The conduct of 'CSC Focused Operation' exemplifies the deep trilateral engagement between India, Maldives and Sri Lanka, and emphasises their commitment to promote peace, and security in the region, officials said.

18 dead in Bengal road mishap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

At least 18 people including six women and a child died and several others were grievously injured in a mid-night mishap that saw a mini truck carrying a dead body and the victims ram into a truck head on in the small hours of Sunday.

The accident happened in Nadia district some 100 km north of Kolkata.

The mangled vehicle was carrying a dead body from Bagda in North 24 Parganas to Nabadwip in Nadia.

The collision occurred near Hanskhali block. Locals said that the accident might have occurred because of dense fog though the police would not rule out the driver having dozed off during the drive.

According to the police the mini truck was carrying about 35 people while it hit a stationary truck laden with stone chips killing 12 people on the spot. Locals said the accident site was terrifying because the mini truck had turned into a mangled metal trapping most of the victims.

Senior leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, consoled the deaths.

"Extremely pained by the loss of lives due to a road accident in Nadia, West Bengal. My



A damaged truck following a road accident at Phulbari area in Nadia district, West Bengal on Sunday

PTI

thoughts are with the bereaved families. May the injured recover at the earliest," the Prime tweeted.

Expressing his condolence the Home Minister said "may God give them (the family members of the victim) the strength to bear this grief. I wish the injured a speedy

recovery."

The Chief Minister, promising all necessary assistance to the family members, wrote that "heartbroken to hear about the road accident in Nadia. I offer my deepest condolences to the bereaved families and pray for the speedy recovery of those who were

injured. May God give them the strength to get past this difficult time."

Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on the other hand questioned the safety norms on highways saying he was "deeply pained at reported death of 18 people and 5 others injured in Nadia District."

If there's no law on MSP, expect tractor morcha in Delhi on Jan 26: Tikait to Govt

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Continuing his aggressive posturing over the various demands of the agitating farmers, Bharat Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait on Sunday warned the Government that if it did not mend ways and bring in a law guaranteeing Minimum Support Price (MSP) to farmers, the farmers' unions would not have any alternative but to organise tractors' morcha in the national Capital on the next Republic Day.

On a day when a Kisan Mahapanchayat called for the defeat of the ruling BJP in the forthcoming State Assembly elections and other local body polls, Tikait said: "Despite having been called traitors, we have raised the farmers' demands... Declare us as traitors and put us behind the bars. Let the Government mend its ways... Let them know that their intimidating tactics will not work with us. Farmers have suffered a great deal during the last one year. Let them bring in a law guaranteeing Minimum Support Price (MSP) to farmers. Otherwise, January 26 is not far away, our four lakh tractors and farmers are very much around."

A day after the Samyukta Kisan Morcha deferred its tractor morcha to Parliament on the first day of the winter session after urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fulfil their six demands, the farmers and workers attending a Kisan Mahapanchayat organised by the Samyukta Shetkari Kamgar Morcha (SSKM) at Azad Maidan in south Mumbai celebrated its year-long agitation which saw the Government announce its decision to repeal the three controversial laws.

The farmer leaders vowed to continue their agitation till the Government settled their remaining demands. Apart from a law guaranteeing MSP for farmers, withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill, removal from the Cabinet and arrest of "butcher of Lakhimpur Kheri" Union Minister Ajay Mishra, repeal of the four Labour Codes, an end to sale of pub-

lic undertakings through privatisation, halving of the price of diesel, petrol, cooking gas and other essential commodities, doubling the days of work and wages under MNREGA and extending it to the urban areas.

In a call given by the farmers' joint body that may be a major cause of concern for the ruling BJP ahead of the crucial Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Punjab, the Mahapanchayat called for the defeat of the BJP in the forthcoming State Assembly elections in three states and local body elections in Maharashtra.

Thousands of farmers, workers, agricultural labourers, women, youth and students had turned out at the Kisan Mazdoor Mahapanchayat held at Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on Sunday on the occasion of the death anniversary of renowned social reformer Mahatma Jotirao Phule. Apart from Tikait, SKM leaders Dr Darshan Pal, Hannan Mollah, Yudhvir Singh, Tajinder Singh Virk, Atul Kumar Anjaan, Rajaram Singh, Yogendra Yadav, Jasbir Kaur Nat, Ashish Mittal, Dr Ashok Dhawale, B Venkat, Medha Patkar, Jayant Patil, Pratibha Shinde, Narasayya Adam, J P Gavit, Dr Ajit Nawale addressed the Kisan Mahapanchayat.

The Shaheed Kalash Yatra of the Lakhimpur Kheri martyrs, which began from Pune on October 27, traversed over 30 districts of Maharashtra in the last one month, visited the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji, the Chaitiya Bhoomi of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, the memorial to Shaheed Babu Genu and the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Mumbai on Saturday On Sunday morning, the Shaheed Kalash Yatra visited Hutatma Chowk, which commemorates the 106 martyrs of the Samyukta Maharashtra Struggle in the 1950s, immersed the ashes of the martyrs in the Arabian Sea off the Gateway of India in a special programme at 4 pm, before descending Azad Maidan in south Mumbai for the Kisan Mahapanchayat.

Mizoram committed to peace along borders with all States, says official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Mizoram Government led by Chief Minister Zoramthanga is committed to maintain peace and tranquillity with all its neighbouring states, a senior official said on Sunday.

K Lalsawmvela, adviser (Tech) to the Mizoram chief minister, also made it clear that Zoramthanga had never said about extending fencing along the Mizoram-Assam interstate border as no fencing exists there.

"The Mizoram government led by Hon'ble Chief Minister Zoramthanga has always been committed to maintain peace and tranquillity with all our neighbouring states and countries," Lalsawmvela said in a statement.

Referring to a report which quoted the chief minister as saying that "we will try to increase our fencing all along...", the adviser to the Chief Minister said Zoramthanga had rather said "we will try to increase the friendship that we have all along", after his meeting with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on November 25 in New Delhi.

"As there is no border fencing to be increased between Mizoram and Assam, there is no question of border fencing. The word friendship was taken as fencing which is a misleading statement," he said. PTI

Anger among Hindus in TN over reports of demolitions of temples

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

There is an all-round resentment and anger among Hindus in Tamil Nadu thanks to the social media that beam views and news stocking religious sentiments. Reports about deliberate demolition of temples across the State since M K Stalin became Chief Minister in May 2021 have reached a peak.

R Ananthanarayanan, an entrepreneur in Chennai specialised in yacht and boat building wears an agitated look when he recounts the haste with which the State administration demolished the Ambal temple in Thiruvallur district on Thursday.

"The proprietor of the temple, who built it from scratch was told at 3 pm that the structure would be demolished since it has been built on Government land. The officials came to the temple in an hour's time and much to the dismay of the devotees the building was razed to the ground," Ananthanarayanan told *The Pioneer*. He said nearly 20 temples have been demolished in the State since the month of May.

Krishnaswamy, the owner and priest of the temple denied that the place of worship was built illegally on government land. "When we were told by the Revenue Division Officer that the temple was being demolished as per Government order, we pleaded with folded hands to grant us a day to furnish the relevant documents. But by 4 pm, everything was over," said the priest.

Gauthaman Ramakrishnan, director, Vedic Science Study Centre, Chennai, described the government action as unilateral and violative of the law of the land. "If the authorities felt that

the temple has been constructed in poramboke land, the trustees should have been asked to vacate the premises within a stipulated time. Whatever has happened is despicable and unfortunate," said Gauthaman.

An intelligence official in Chennai who is privy to the law and order situation in the State said that tension was brewing up in the community. "The State administration should do something to douse the flames before it emerges as a communal flare."

He pointed out that the action of Vasantham Karthikeyan, DMK MLA from Rishivandiyam, paying cash compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the Church in lieu of the Government demolishing an illegally built prayer hall has antagonised the majority community. "They demand the Government should behave in a justifiable manner while demolishing places of worship. There cannot be separate laws for Hindus and Christians," he said.

But Rangarajan Narasimhan, a Tiruchirappalli based Vedic scholar had a different version to tell. "I understand that the temple was built on a waterbody. The social media should report all facts while highlighting the actions of the bureaucrats," said Narasimhan.

Hundreds of cases of Brahmin priests getting bashed up by Dravidian activists are pouring in from across the State. Though the chief minister has warned of stern action against the perpetrators of such crimes, it is yet to make any impact on the pattern of attacks. "The DMK Government should understand that it won the 2021 election because the Hindus too voted for the party," said Gauthaman.

BJP ruined democracy, says TMC post civic polls results

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress which emerged for the first time as the principal Opposition party in Tripura, post civic elections in the north-eastern State on Sunday attacked the ruling BJP for "consigning democracy to fire"

While TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee congratulated his party's "Team Tripura" for doing "exceptionally well" party MP Shantanu Sen said the world had seen how democracy was trampled upon by the BJP in that State.

Banerjee said that it was "exceptional for a party beginning with negligible presence to successfully contest municipal elections and emerge as the Principal Opposition in the state with more than 20% vote share."

This was "despite the fact that we commenced our activities barely 3 months ago and the Tripura wing of the BJP left no stone unturned to Butcher democracy" in that State.

Sen said that the "people of India could see how the BJP ruined and raped democracy in

Tripura and how the hooligans of Biplab Deb Government destroyed democracy in that State ... the BJP has totally ruined and destroyed the democratic structure of this country ... Tripura is a big example."

According to inside sources the Trinamool Congress which polled about 20 percent votes in the Tripura civic polls would "go all out ahead of the Assembly elections next year."

This would start with a pad yatra by Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who would embark on a political walkathon in that State crisscrossing Tripura on foot, sources said.

TMC leader Rajib Banerjee who before the Bengal Assembly elections had joined the BJP but returned to his original party soon after Trinamool's stunning victory in the State said "the way the

BJP Government has destroyed democracy in Tripura would be remembered by the people of this State for ever and "they will have the last laugh ... they will give a befitting reply to the BJP in the first opportunity they get."

RLD 'identifies' 32 Assembly seats to contest in partnership with SP in UP

LUCKNOW: The Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) has identified 32 seats, mostly in western Uttar Pradesh, to contest on as a partner of the Samajwadi Party (SP) in the assembly elections beginning early next year, its state unit chief said on Sunday.

RLD workers want party chief Jayant Chaudhary to contest the elections, the party's Uttar Pradesh unit chief Masood Ahmad told PTI in an interview, adding that if the kin of farmers who died during the farm laws protest are willing to contest on an RLD ticket, the party will take a decision based on their winnability.

Masood, however, categorically stated that if the SP-led alliance is voted to power in Uttar Pradesh, Akhilesh Yadav will be its chief minister and the RLD a partner in the government. "As of now, 32 seats of western Uttar Pradesh have been identified from where the RLD will be fighting. These seats are spread across Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Shamli, Bulandshahr, Hathras, Mathura, Agra, Aligarh, Moradabad and Amroha. The total number of seats on which the party will

contest in the upcoming assembly elections is likely to go up further," he said.

Asked if Jayant Chaudhary will be deputy chief minister if the SP-led alliance wins, Ahmad said, "I don't know whether Jayant ji will contest or not. Almost three months ago, when I asked him if he would contest the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, he had said no. But in politics, things change fast."

The entire party wants him to contest, and there are many seats Chaudhary can choose from, he said, adding, "I am willing to offer him the Tanda assembly seat (in Ambedkarnagar district)."

The RLD and the SP are yet to announce a seat-sharing arrangement for next year's election to the 403-member Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly. The RLD has one MLA in the outgoing assembly — Sahendra Singh Ramala from the Chhaprauli assembly constituency in Baghpat.

Attacking at the BJP over its announcement to repeal the new farm laws, Masood said the party had thought that its heels were dug deep and

nobody could force it to change its stance.

"They (BJP) had a misconception (galatfahmi) and false pride (guroor) about themselves. The party had thought it would crush the farmers' protest, and that the movement would not sustain for long. The farmers, however, were determined," the RLD leader said.

"It was Chaudhary Ajit Singh (former RLD chief) who had extended support to Rakesh Tikait. Without that it would have been difficult for the farmers' protest to last long after the Red Fort violence incident on Republic Day. Ajit Singh had told Rakesh Tikait not to worry," he added.

Thousands of farmers protesting the Centre's new agri laws had clashed with the police during a tractor parade in Delhi on January 26.

Many of the protesters, driving tractors, reached the Red Fort and entered the monument. Some of them even hoisted religious flags on the domes and a flagstaff at the ramparts, where the national flag is unfurled on Independence Day.

Honour killing case: Casteism not annihilated even after 75 yrs of Independence, says SC

New Delhi: Incidents of caste-motivated violence show that casteism has not been annihilated even after 75 years of independence and it is high time civil society reacts and responds with "strong disapproval" about the ghastly crimes committed in the name of caste, the Supreme Court has said.

The apex court, which delivered its verdict on a batch of pleas in a 1991 Uttar Pradesh honour killing case, in which three persons, including a woman were killed, said it had earlier issued several directions to authorities to take strong measures to prevent honour killings.

Those directives should be carried out without any further delay, it said. A bench headed by Justice L Nageswara Rao also said that to avert trial getting tainted and "truth becoming a casualty", the State has a definite role to play in protecting witnesses, to start with, at least in sensitive cases involving those in power who have political patronage and could wield muscle and money power.

It said that "bigotry" perpetuated by caste-based practices, which are prevalent even today, impedes the Constitution's objective of equality for all citizens.

"20 young men and a woman were physically assaulted for nearly 12 hours and killed by the accused for violating caste-ridden societal norms. These episodes of caste-motivated violence in the country demonstrates the fact that casteism has not been annihilated even after 75 years of

independence," the bench, also comprising justices Sanjiv Khanna and B R Gavai, said.

The top court, while upholding the Allahabad High Court verdict with regard to conviction of 23 accused in the case, acquitted three persons in view of ambiguity in their identity. Referring to the aspect of witness protection, the bench noted that 12 prosecution witnesses in the case turned hostile.

"Even if the witnesses have turned hostile, their evidence can be accepted, if they are natural and independent witnesses and have no reason to falsely implicate the accused," it said.

The apex court said the right to testify in courts in a free and fair manner, without any pressure and threat whatsoever, is "under serious attack today", and if one is unable to testify in courts due to threats or other pressures, then it is a clear violation of the rights under articles 19 (1) (a) and 21 of the Constitution.

"Right to life guaranteed to the people of this country also includes in its fold the right to live in a society which is free from crime and fear, and the right of witnesses to testify in courts without fear or pressure," it said.

The bench said one of the main reasons why witnesses turn hostile is that they are not accorded appropriate protection by the State. It is a "harsh reality", particularly, in cases where the accused are influential people and are tried for heinous offences and they make attempts to terrorise or intimidate witnesses, the bench said. PTI

Nearly all terrorists involved in civilian killings in J&K last month neutralised: Sources

New Delhi: Nearly all the terrorists involved in the killings of civilians in Jammu and Kashmir last month have been neutralised and the armed forces are now focussing on intelligence-based "surgical operations" involving smaller teams to deal with terror activities in the Union Territory, sources in the security establishment said on Sunday.

They said a "refined" approach to deal with terrorism has been put in place under a more nuanced framework of better coordination among the Jammu and Kashmir police, the intelligence agencies and the Army with an aim to minimise collateral damage.

After a spell of relative calm, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a spate of killings of innocent civilians last month, triggering apprehensions of an intense cycle of violence and turmoil in the region. The sources said a major focus of the anti-terror drill has been to achieve "zero loss" of innocent lives and all wings of the security forces have been trying to achieve it.

That is why the focus has been on "intelligence-based surgical operations" involving smaller teams, with a focus on drawing support from the local population to such actions, they added.

According to intelligence inputs, Pakistan-based terror handlers have instructed their proxies operating in Kashmir to ensure at least 10 civilian deaths whenever the security forces undertake counter-terror operations, the sources said.

They said 24 civilians were killed

and 49 injured in various counter-terror operations in 2018.

Over the past three years, the security forces undertook a series of measures to ensure minimum collateral damage and as a result of such efforts, only two civilians were killed and two received minor injuries in 2021, the sources said.

Asked about the encounter in Srinagar's Hyderpora, they said a certain section is focussing on it to occupy "lost space". Jammu and Kashmir police chief Dilbag Singh on Thursday said the ongoing investigation into the Hyderpora encounter suggests that the terrorists were supported by a network in carrying out terror activities.

The sources said the security forces have been getting support, including actionable intelligence, from the locals in several parts of Jammu and Kashmir as they have rejected the "false propaganda" unleashed by Pakistan.

"There were instances of terrorists even being allowed to escape when there was a threat of collateral damage or when the lives of innocents were assessed to be at risk," said a source on condition of anonymity.

The sources claimed that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has been under control and pointed out that compared to the 318 terror-related incidents in 2018, only 121 incidents were reported in 2021.

"Similarly, while 202 stone-pelting incidents were reported in 2019, only 39 have been reported in 2021," said another source. PTI

Bengaluru police denies permission to Munawar Faruqui's show, stand-up comedian says 'I'm done'

Bengaluru: The Bengaluru police has denied permission to Munawar Faruqui's stand-up comedy show in the city on Sunday amid protest by the Hindu right wing outfits who alleged that the artist had hurt the Hindu sentiments in one of his shows. "Yes, we have denied him permission. He will not perform any public show today," a senior police officer told PTI on condition of anonymity.

Faruqui also shared a statement on social media confirming that his Bengaluru show that had sold "600 plus" tickets was cancelled Sunday in the wake of the "threats to venue vandalism" and said he was "done".

"My name is Munawar Faruqui. And that's been my time, you guys were (a) wonderful audience. Good bye, I'm done," he said. The proceeds from the show were supposed to be donated to late Kannada star Puneeth Rajkumar's charitable organisation.

In the same statement, the 29-year-old said they initially did not want to reveal that the show was for charity. "Putting me in jail for the joke I never did to cancelling my shows which has nothing problematic in it. This is unfair. This show has gained so much love from people in India irrespective of their religion. This is unfair (sic)" he added in his Twitter statement.

Faruqui claimed that his 12 shows were called off in the last two months because of the threats to the venue and audiences. The comedian also claimed they have a "censor certificate of the show", which proves there was "nothing problematic" in the stand-up act. PTI

Over 30% women from 14 States, UTs justify beating by husbands: NFHS

New Delhi: Over 30 per cent women from 14 of the 18 states and Union Territories that were surveyed justify men beating their wives under certain circumstances, while lesser percentage of men rationalised such behaviour, according to the recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS). According to NFHS-5, over 75 per cent women justified men beating their wives in three states -- Telangana (84 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (84 per cent) and Karnataka (77 per cent).

Manipur (66 per cent), Kerala (52 per cent), Jammu and Kashmir (49 per cent), Maharashtra (44 per cent) and West Bengal (42 per cent) were the other states and Union Territory where a large number of women justified men beating their wives.

To a question by the NFHS, "In your opinion, is a husband justified in hitting or beating his wife...?", over 30 per cent women from as many as 14 states and Union Territories said, "yes".

The survey put forward the probable circumstances under which a husband beats his wife: if he suspects her of being unfaithful; if she disrespects in-laws; if she argues with him; if she refuses to have sex with him; if she goes out without informing him; if

she neglects the house or the children; if she doesn't cook good food.

The most common reasons given by the respondents to justify beating were neglecting the house or children and showing disrespect to in-laws.

Of the 18 states, women respondents in 13 -- Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Gujarat, Nagaland, Goa, Bihar, Karnataka, Assam, Maharashtra, Telangana, Nagaland and West Bengal -- cited 'disrespect to in-laws' as the main reason to justify beating.

The lowest population of women that justified beating by husbands was in Himachal Pradesh (14.8 per cent).

Among men, 81.9 per cent respondents from Karnataka said such behaviour is justified as against 14.2 per cent in Himachal Pradesh.

Ushasree, director of 'Roshni', a Hyderabad-based NGO which provides counselling and other services to those in emotional distress, said her organisation has seen a rise in sexual abuse and domestic violence during COVID-19.

"Some men appear to vent their frustration, caused by loss of income and other reasons due to the pandemic, on their family members," she said. PTI



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Impending crisis?

The new mutation of Coronavirus signals danger and we are not prepared to tackle it, yet again

In India where normalcy has come to by and large mean rejecting COVID-appropriate behaviour and a consensus that the viral pandemic has left Indian shores, the new South African variant gives a serious wake-up call. There are as many people wearing masks as are consciously not wearing them. The fact that the festive season did not lead to any viral surge even though all safety precautions were ignored has led to a false complacency that the worst is past us. Sadly, that is wrong. The WHO has declared the new variant, named Omicron, is a 'variant of concern'. That is to say, do not take any avoidable risk. Here is what the world knows about Omicron, which is not much. Omicron's prevalence is more than noticeable in South Africa. Botswana, Belgium, Hong Kong and Israel have also reported cases. The variant has landed in Europe too, with the UK reporting two cases. Scientists have no idea if it can lead to a surge, but say that it carries a high re-infection risk. Initial research has shown that the variant is associated with mutations that indicate it can be highly transmissible and increasingly infective. Omicrons' risk potential is being tested in a laboratory setting to check the efficacy of existing vaccines in containing its infection. The important question awaiting an answer is whether Omicron can evade the immune response.



The answer should better come from a scientific laboratory than from a population infected through ignorance or complacency. What does this

mean for India which has just announced its phase-wise policy of opening up the skies? Not much if the Government strictly follows the screening of passengers coming in from abroad and decrees automatic quarantine for two weeks without exception. The health ministry has listed the countries reporting the new variant in the high-risk category. The Ministry should now revise its order of allowing resumption of flights to these countries irrespective of bilateral air bubble agreements. India has also to ensure that hesitancy, complacency or logistical problems no longer hamper the vaccination process. Scientists are insisting now, more than ever, that vaccination is critical to protect the aged and those with comorbidities as well as healthy individuals who have fully returned to normal activities. Both groups run a high risk of hospitalisation and death if they are not fully vaccinated. Till Friday, over 120 crore doses were administered of which only a third, 42.62 crore, were second doses. This figure has to pick up and fast. Secondly, the latest studies show that one of the vaccines available in India, the home-made Covaxin, is only 50 per cent effective against symptomatic COVID-19 disease. Many surveys have come out in the past giving different efficacy figures. They range from 81 per cent to 77.8 per cent to 65.2 per cent. There would be scientific explanations for each of the figures no doubt, but that does not help the lay person who may be intimidated by them.

PICTALK



Villagers participate in a rowing competition on the Hooghly river in Nadia

PTI

Tight fight

The need of the hour is to call for reining in our raging urge to heedlessly travel

Amid growing global concerns over the new COVID variant, a lot of heat and dust seems to be gathering intensity over India's political horizon, too. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stressing the need to be proactive in the wake of this scary development, has already directed the Government officials to review the stated plans for easing of international flight restrictions in the light of "emerging new evidence" against Omicron, labelled by the WHO as a "variant of concern", there are others politicians who are also exploiting this opportunity to add to their political muscle, especially ahead of the Assembly elections in five States early next year. While the Prime Minister's directive to the officials came a day after the Ministry of Civil Aviation announced the resumption of scheduled international flights beginning December 15 (after nearly 20 months of the Coronavirus-induced suspension), the Opposition leaders — like Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party's national convener Arvind Kejriwal — have upped the game by urging Modi to stop the flights coming into India, especially from those countries which are in the grip of the new variant of the Coronavirus infection.



In what can only be termed a political statement, Kejriwal sought to pitch the nation's people against the ruling party at the Centre when he said that India had "recovered" "with immediate effect" from the COVID-19 pandemic "with great difficulty". Of course, it must be underlined that the new variant, feared to have a high potential for another spike in mutations as unseen ever before, was detected in a handful of South African nations. In view of this breakout, a number of countries, including the European Union, have already suspended travel to the affected regions. In this light, there's an understated but expedient and dire need for the nation's people to be more cautious in following COVID-appropriate measures like masking up, maintaining personal hygiene and social distancing, besides ditching vaccine hesitancy and going for the double-dose inoculation. It can't be stressed enough that people, especially the young and frequent travellers, need to understand that this is not the time to be complacent or engage in any false sense of security. We, all of us, must understand that we need to stand united in the face of this looming new threat to the world's health and do everything in our control, and a bit more, to defeat this pernicious virus.

Jinnah could never fight for Pakistan



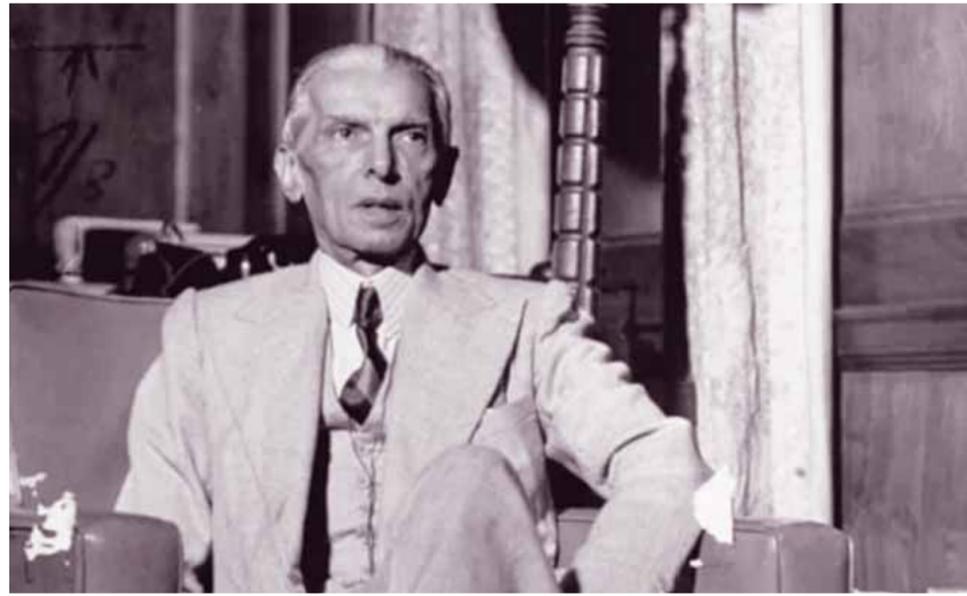
PRAFULL GORADIA

Jinnah would not have enjoyed being the head of Pakistan for long. He delighted himself mixing with the elite, whether Parsee, Hindu or Muslim

What Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party and Rajbhar Singh of SBS Party said about Mohammed Ali Jinnah being offered the first prime ministership of India to avoid Partition is incorrect. The offer was made by Gandhiji and was not supported by Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel or anyone else in the Congress. Jinnah did not even care to reply. He wanted a place in history's hall of fame which he could do best by finding a new country. According to his brother Ahmed Ali, Jinnah was obsessed with becoming the *numero uno*, nothing less or lower. Ahmed had said this to his friend and my grandfather Dharamdas Vora in 1946.

Holding a post can be a fleeting phenomenon as with any ministership while finding a nation is forever. In any case, the atmosphere amongst Muslims was so charged that they would have accused Jinnah of selling out himself to the Hindus. And certainly not followed him into remaining in India. Also, remember, Jinnah's health was generally known to be on its last legs; although everyone might not be aware of him suffering from tuberculosis. Compare prime ministership for one or two years with being the founder of a nation for eternity. Which one would an intelligent person prefer? I would go to the extent of saying that Jinnah would not have enjoyed being the head of Pakistan for long. He delighted himself mixing with the elite, whether Parsee, Hindu or Muslim. Rubbing shoulders with the common folk was not for him, who wore mostly Savile Row (London) hand tailored suits and English or Swiss shoes. His fancy for these items of attire was so great that he had himself buried in a suit and such shoes and not in pyjamas and a shawl.

On his return from England to take over the Muslim League as President for life, he got down to building a magnificent bungalow which is still well known as Marble House on Malabar Hill, Bombay. As Claude Batley, his English archi-



tect told Hector Bolitho, Jinnah's first biographer, "He insisted on choosing the colours of the marble for the terrace, and standing by when the pieces of stone were fitted, much to the annoyance of the Italian stone masons doing the work." Besides the Italian stonemasons, Jinnah also hired a Muslim clerk of works, an English builder and a Hindu plumber."

People including the Muslim League members gossiped that when Jinnah moved in 1940, he was no longer Qaid but Qaid-e-Azam. That was how his admirers were impressed by the talk, if not also the sight, of the Marble House. It was rumoured to be worth ₹20 lakhs in 1941. Sri Prakasa, as Governor of Bombay came away impressed, he said, "I do not wonder that Mr Jinnah's heart even as Governor General of Pakistan, was not in his Government House in Karachi, but in his house in Malabar Hill in Bombay."

Such a person could not fight for Pakistan with his heart in it. Remember, until he returned from London in



ACCORDING TO JINNAH'S BROTHER, THEY WERE CULTURALLY PARSEE AND NOT COMMITTED MUSLIMS. THEY DID NOT PRAY AND DID NOT KNOW HOW TO OFFER NAMAZ. THEY ATE AND DRANK WHAT THEY LIKED

1935, there were no politics in his life. And until 1928, he attended the plenary session at Calcutta and felt insulted; he had been a Congressman. So much so that Sarojini Naidu, the poetess politician had described Jinnah as the best ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. His heart was in his law and its practice. He was reputed to be the highest paid barrister in the British Empire. He had presided over a function in Bombay to welcome Gandhi when he finally returned to India in the year 1915. When Gandhi got up to reply, he began by saying that he was so happy because he was welcomed by a Mahomedan leader. Jinnah publicly showed his irritation, if not also his anger, at reference to his religion for no rhyme or reason.

According to his brother Ahmed, they were culturally Parsee and not committed Muslims. They did not pray and did not know how to offer namaz. They ate and drank what they liked. Mohammed Ali loved pork sandwiches and ate them openly. They enjoyed whisky

soda in the evening before dinner. His wife, Ruttie, was a Parsee until she died; his only child married a distinguished Parsee called Neville Wadia.

Campaigning for the 1945/46 general elections, he had stopped to make a speech at Jalandhar. Pran Chopra, who later became Editor of The Statesman, was then reporting on the election campaign. In the middle of the speech, reported Chopra, the *azan* (call to prayer) was heard. So the crowd retired for *namaz*. Jinnah remained on the stage, sat down, reached out to his *achkan* pocket and pulled out his cigar and smoked until the crowd returned and later resumed his speech in eloquent English (Jinnah knew only English and Gujarati). How much the Jalandhar crowd understood, no one knows.

(This is part of an ongoing series on Indian Partition.)

The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MALNOURISHMENT IS A SAD REALITY

Sir — The percentage of children who are stunted, wasted, underweight, anemic and obese is on a steady rise in India as per the National Family Health Survey released a few days ago. Over the years, India has become home to the largest number of malnourished children. Despite the States with a high burden of malnutrition having Public Distribution System (PDS) in place to ensure that the poor get food grains at subsidised rates, frequent child deaths are reported due to malnutrition. Scientists say the initial 1,000 days of an individual's lifespan, from the day of conception till he or she turns two, is crucial for physical and cognitive development.

According to the Registrar General of India, under-five mortality in India is 59 per 1,000 live births, which is one of the highest in the world. In 2012, the London based non-profit organisation 'Save the Children' reported that 1.83 million Indian children die every year before the age of five and pinned malnutrition as the prime reason for the deaths. These findings indicate that India is dangerously slipping into a vicious cycle of malnutrition and it is high time that we start investing in child welfare schemes.

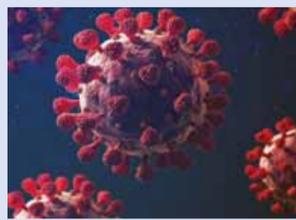
Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

UNFAIR PLAY AGAINST THE CONGRESS

Sir — There lies no doubt that from Indira Gandhi to Rajiv to Sonia to Rahul — all have attained the Post of Prime Minister or Party President smoothly just because they are/were privileged enough to take birth or wedded to the Nehru family. But at the end of the day, the fact also remains that Indira and Rajiv Gandhi had won elections not by brute force; but by winning the hearts or votes of the Indian electorate through the free and fair democratic process. Be it 2004 or 2009, it is the common people who had voted the Sonia Gandhi-led Congress to power in New Delhi.

Still, if the Gandhis are constantly character-assassinated through the hue of "Family rule" or "Dynastic regime", none other than the free will of the

New threat knocks on the door



The WHO has named the newly discovered COVID-19 variant after the 15th letter of the Greek alphabet — Omicron — and designated it a 'variant of concern' (VOC). The worldwide concern over the new variant, initially referred to as B.1.1.529, is explicable in terms of the early indications that it could be more transmissible than the previous variants of the virus including the Delta variant that currently dominates global infections and prove to be resistant to the current vaccines.

The biggest worry is that the multiple mutations in Omicron might blunt the vaccines and reduce immunity. Meanwhile, drug makers have already started to test their vaccines against the new variant to see if they can be tweaked. Now that the new variant has been found in several countries, it could inevitably spread worldwide in the next couple of months despite travel restrictions and border controls imposed after the discovery of the ominous Omicron. A virus has the knack for spreading far and wide. Omicron has shaken the global economy as is evident from global markets tumbling; it has given rise to fears of another slowdown in the global economy. As of now, it is an evolving situation; we need to know more about the composition, characteristics and behaviour of the new variant to know if another surge of the pandemic is imminent for the world to contend with and science to combat.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

Indian electorate gets continuously maligned, mocked and abused as Gandhis did not elect themselves, rather people elected them to power. The BJP should also not forget that it is the people who threw out the saffron regime of "India Shining" to bring in the "Family" in 2004. Do the self-declared guardians of the Constitution mean to say that the electorate are all "bunch of fools" and got "brainwashed" to elect the Congress at the Centre or various States?

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

SUICIDE IS A PREVENTABLE CAUSE OF DEATH

Sir — Suicide is defined as intentionally taking one's own life and comes from the Latin 'suicidium', which literally means "to kill oneself." Now, Suicide is a serious public health problem. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young adults worldwide. There is a growing recognition that prevention strategies need to be tailored to the region-specific demographics of a country and to be implemented in a cultur-

ally-sensitive manner. This review explores the historical, epidemiological and demographic factors of suicide in India and examines the strategies aimed at the prevention of suicide.

A person suffering from the problem of suicidal thoughts starts getting thoughts of destroying his own life, he also starts feeling depression and behavioral changes during this time. Suicidal thoughts are a common problem and most people feel it when they are going through stress or depression. The reasons for suicide are different in different cultures and sections of the society. But we must keep in mind that suicide is the most preventable cause of death. It is preventable. Suicide attempts are often just a call for help and are increasingly being viewed as a psychological emergency. It's our responsibility as humans and as a part of the same society to prevent suicides.

Nripendra Abhishek Nrip | Saran

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

If a Congress Government is formed in Uttar Pradesh, the loan of farmers will be waived.



Congress general secretary — Priyanka Gandhi



The new COVID variant has some mutations that are raising concerns with regards to possible evasion of immune response.

NIAID director — Anthony Fauci



Aditya Dhar is one of those rare directors who believes you don't need to shout on your set to make a point.

Actor — Yami Gautam



Obviously it feels great. The victory is a reward for all the hard work I've put in.

Indian squash player — Saurav Ghosal



The TMC did not have any chance to open its account in Tripura, they only made noises.

BJP national vice-president — Dilip Ghosh



FIRST COLUMN INNOVATING BUSINESSES FOR THE CUSTOMER

With external influences such as the pandemic, the digital ecosystem has had more takers



SHAAN RIZVI

In one of his interactions, the Founder of US e-commerce company Amazon, Jeff Bezos, said, "I do get asked, and quite frequently 'What's going to change in the next 10 years?' I rarely get asked ... what's not going to change?" He essentially went on to explain how the very fundamentals of the business largely remain unchanged. It is around these fundamentals that stable business empires are built. So, what's essentially not going to change is the consumers demanding better quality of products and services which are more easily accessible and at more affordable rates. The consumer wants to be spoilt for choices. These fundamentals have stood the test of time, remaining constant throughout the evolution of human civilization and its economics. The changing models, technologies, and business practices cater to the same fundamentals. Today, most countries in the world have consumer-driven economies. The growth, development, and prosperity of these countries largely depend on public spending. Being one of the largest consumer markets, India too is driven by consumerism. Around 55 per cent of the country's population form the consuming class, with a spending power of over \$11 per day. As per a McKinsey Global Institute study, it is expect-



ed that consumption in India will grow by \$1.8 trillion in the next decade. Simultaneously, the consumer share in the two highest income tiers (those consumers who spend more than \$30 to \$70 per day) could double by 20 per cent by 2030. At the other end of each business, it is the customers who matter the most. The idea of customer-centricity is principally rooted in the fundamentals of businesses. With external influences such as the ongoing pandemic crisis, the digital ecosystem has had more takers. The digitalised consumer class is growing, and the increasing penetration of data connectivity and technologies is powering the next generation to consume content digitally and shop online. Unlike other species on the planet, human beings have always vied for the ability to maximize the utilization of time. Functioning in a fast-paced world, the 21st-century consumers want to utilize their time for more productivity in their field of interest or profession, outsourcing various tasks to service providers. For instance, online food ordering has significantly replaced the number of home-cooked meals in a month from our dining table. Consumers increasingly want to cut down on travel time or chores and get services, ranging from home cleaning to retail shopping, at their doorstep. A major part of the banking system has transferred to their phones. Increasingly, tech-start-ups have observed the gap between products or service owners and the customers, which has made business owners foray into the service delivery segment.

Thus, disruptive hyper-local solutions have entered the market. Many emerging start-ups have also bridged the gap by making local sellers available to their nearby customers digitally. Home-grown businesses have a greater potential of efficiently leveraging the advantages of a digital platform to make businesses more profitable and capitalise on a wider consumer base. Going hyper-local provides more resiliency and agility to these businesses. The pandemic is a direct testimony of how businesses operating with hyper-local models made a quicker comeback in the market. It is high time now for all the independent home-grown businesses to foray into the digitalisation of their businesses. Hyper-local apps for home-grown businesses can aid local businesses to serve customers locally. The longstanding relationship with the nearby store owner or seller adds to the strength of local businesses, as it acts as a major motivation for promoting customer loyalty. A digital platform gives local businesses a competitive edge to capture a wider consumer base by receiving both in-store and off-store orders and achieve trust within hyper-local customers for a shorter delivery time.

(The writer is founder and CEO of ITES company, Plaxonic. The views expressed are personal.)

Why Gwadar protests against the CPEC?

The Pakistan army is now determining the economic and social conditions of the people in Pakistan, which will hurt the geo-political interests of the region



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

Recently, sudden protests erupted in Gwadar against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Project. Slated to be an 'upliftment project' for the people of Pakistan, it has instead become a hallmark of Chinese expansionism resulting in crushing the rights of those very people who have hosted it. Due to Pakistan's fragile governance mechanisms, a weak economy marred with corruption; the situation has turned grave. The protestors were supported by the local political groups and NGOs that had genuine interests against the CPEC Project. The Head of the 'Give rights to Gwadar' rally, Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman, has often been speaking on the rights of the people of Gwadar. Further, the role of the National Party and Baloch Student Organisation also has to be duly recognized in raising their voices against injustice. CPEC goes much beyond the commercial corridor route. It has more penetrative, severe effects on Pakistani society.

First, the CPEC Project has a long belt of 'coastal enjoyment industry', which will supposedly have a vibrant nightlife with luxury hotels, spas, theatres, golf courses. Undoubtedly, the coastal land that would be appropriated for this purpose has nothing to do with Pakistan's small-scale farmers or fishers. Instead, the facilities will ensure 'entertainment' for the Chinese and Pakistani retired Army personnel at the cost of the fishing industry, which has a share of 2 per cent in Islamabad's economy.

The news of the Pakistani government giving licenses to the Chinese fishing trawlers has been around for quite some time now. It is in addition to the Chinese illegal and unregulated fishing in the Arabian Sea even during the critical spawning period. These trawlers possess state of the art technology to fish, process and store fisheries immediately, thereby making the competition with the local fishermen asymmetric in nature. These developments will surely leave behind a trail of unemployment and poverty, resulting in people moving towards drugs and human trafficking.

Second, the CPEC has given immense opportunities to grab huge pieces of fertile agricultural land of the farmers. As the world knows, Pakistan is by and large a praetorian state, i.e., with the Army having the upper hand in most of the government's decisions. CPEC aimed to cover all parts of food production and distribution in the agricultural sector, ranging from seeds and fertilizer manufacturing to storage and transportation. However, the Project is implemented through land acquisitions under the direct supervision of the Army. These acquisitions have been without proper compensations and sometimes even without the consent of their rightful owners. The usurped land is rented out further with 'land rights' to the Chinese enterprises. In other cases, the agricultural projects convert to Chinese private corporations forging joint ventures with



THE CPEC AUTHORITY HAS DECIDED TO CONSTRUCT A FENCED WALL WITH ONLY ONE ENTRY AND EXIT POINT TO ENSURE THAT THE VOICES ARE SUPPRESSED AND GLOBAL MEDIA DOES NOT HIGHLIGHT THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. THE DEVELOPMENT HAS LED TO SOCIAL ALIENATION OF THE PEOPLE OF BALOCHISTAN AND GWADAR AND CAN LEAD TO A FULL-BLOWN CONFLICT AND DEMANDS FOR SECESSION

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



Pakistani companies. Also, when the Pakistan-based private enterprises own the land, the owner turns out to be retired army personnel or someone who holds influence via the armed forces. It is for this reason that the army land grabs has been time and forth been brought to the notice of the international community by the judiciary of Pakistan itself. In April 2021, the Lahore High Court Chief Justice Mohammad Qasim Khan went on record to say that "the Army seems to have become the biggest land grabber in the country and the uniform of the Army is for service and not to rule as a king".

The CPEC Authority has decided to construct a fenced wall with only one entry and exit point to ensure that the voices are suppressed and that international media does not highlight the human rights issue. The city would be guarded fiercely with round-the-clock, AI-enabled CCTV cameras and other high technological types of equipment providing ample surveillance. Sources indicate that this wall is 30 kilometres in length and 10 feet high. Further, Pakistan raised its 34th Light Infantry Division, also known as Special Security Division (SSD), to protect the CPEC. One can hardly come across any other such example where a loan Project of "commercial importance" requires raising a military Division. The development has led to the social alienation of the people of Balochistan, Gwadar in particular and will undoubtedly lead to a full-blown violent conflict and demands for secession.

Agricultural and urban residen-

tial and commercial land appropriation by the Army through concessional purchases in the name of supporting the economy has taken deep inroads into its national character. Various Military subsidies, such as the National Logistics Cell and Fauji Foundation, have at a rapid pace nibbled out the civilian competition in various sectors such as cargo transportation, real estate, fertilizers, oil and gas etc. With each sector dominated by the Military, CPEC only seems to augment a military economy and the lust for land grab. Given the times to come, the farmers would have no legal standing over their land, and in the name of securitizing the Project, it is beyond doubt who will be the actual owner. The Army thus has a nation to itself which is shared with the Chinese Army. On the other hand, in China, the penetrative extent of the Project is that it is often called an 'internal corridor', and hence, it would not be wrong to say that it is a Military Project instead of an economic one.

Last year, Criminal Law [Amendment] Bill 2020 was passed that proscribed ridiculing, bringing into disrepute or defaming Pakistan's armed forces or its members. Of course, given the brewing discontents and recent developments, the role of this Bill is well understood. Usually, the Uniform is accorded much respect, and people worldwide express their gratitude towards their respective forces. The emerging role of the Pakistani Army now seems to encapsulate the idea of defending the Taliban and other extremists apart from the Chinese Project. It is now determining the

economic and social conditions of the people in Pakistan, which will hurt the geopolitical interests of the region.

Further, the military government deepened the Baloch alienation with the murder of Akbar Khan Bugti in 2006, who at the time of his death was 79 years old. The killing of Mufti Hidayatullah in 2018, another Baloch leader, also raised the intent of the Military presence in Balochistan. Early this year, a Pakistani army Major General Ayman Bilal, confessed to China's role in suppressing the Baloch movement and the Sino-Pak intentions against Iran's activities in Balochistan. The CPEC and housing societies predominantly being given to the Pakistan Army personnel probably intend to replace Balochs with the Pakistani Punjabis to contain the Baloch independence movement.

So closely related to this land plunder is a geopolitical question. Where does more land come from to settle the new batch of military officers who retire every year? The answer to this question lies in the current Afghan conundrum. In case the Afghan corridor is integrated with CPEC, then where do the Afghan people go? It seems that the Afghan refugee crisis would be a problem of Europe and Russia and not a Sino-Pak one. The appointment of new ISI Chief Lt. Gen Nadeem Anjum, who was previously the awardee of 'Mohsin-e-Balochistan', sets the agenda for Afghan 'land grabs' and increased suppression of the Baloch and the Afghan people. More mess, it seems, awaits the region.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

MANISH TEWARI SHOULD FOCUS ON CHINA INSTEAD OF CRITICISING THE UPA GOVERNMENT OVER ITS HANDLING OF THE 26/11 ATTACK.

—CONGRESS LEADER
ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY



ADHIR DADA, CHINA'S CONTINUED INCURSIONS AND THE RESPONSE OF THE NDA/BJP GOVERNMENT FORM A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF MY BOOK.

—CONGRESS LEADER
MANISH TEWARI

We must be on guard against 'third wave' of radicalisation

Although the ISIS has experienced territorial defeat, it's been able to confuse the enemy with its continual subterfuges, turning weaknesses into strengths

Radicalisation that is being felt in India of the present can be attributed to the growing persuasion of the Hanbali school in the country by way of the revival of groups such as the Popular Front of India (PFI). Although PFI—whose top leadership are primarily from Kerala—deny the allegation that the organisation has any truck with the Hanbali school (another name for Wahabi and/or Salafi), the fact of the matter is that they have been radicalising Indian Muslims towards the conservative strain of Islam whatever be the denominations.

The Hifazat-e-Islam Bangladesh (HIB) and Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IOB)—Islamist formations that have re-emerged in current times



JAIDEEP SAIKIA

(The writer is a conflict analyst and author of Terror Sans Frontiers: Islamist Militancy in North East India. The views expressed are personal.)

and are becoming increasingly active after the Taliban takeover of Bangladesh—are close associates of PFI. The HIB and IOB are working inside Bangladesh as over-ground activists of al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliated organisations such as Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT). Bowing to immense pressure from the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime apparatus of Bangladesh, both JMB and ABT have curtailed their activity for the present, propping up instead its surrogates by way of HIB and IOB. The stratagem is simple. The methodology is to instill a sense of complacency in the establishment that JMB and ABT has disappeared. The



reality is that they have activated "Op Confusion" in Bangladesh as well as rejuvenated Islamism in Bangladesh. Indeed, the timeline of the Islamist threat is quite simple. The author was able to plot a perceptible timeline during the period of his advanced research in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA. The study unearthed a "progression of wave" in the modus operandi of Islamist action which incidentally would never cease until the end of

time: the "transformative moment in Islam" is going to be never-ending. In fact, the manner in which the United States-led coalition has sought to de-territorialise ISIS from the area that the latter had occupied in order to sustain the neo-caliphate has ascertained that the "war against the infidels" would now not only be a ceaseless one but an accelerated course of action.

The point that is being made is that although ISIS has experienced territorial defeat it has been able to confuse the enemy with its continual subterfuges, turning disadvantages into advantages. A clear-eyed analysis would, therefore, bring to the fore the simplicity with which the Islamists are readying themselves for the next onslaught.

Therefore, whereas there was exhibition of massive violent movement and radicalisation throughout between 1999 and 2005 which the author describes as the "First Wave", the "Second Wave" began with the "oath of allegiance" or Bay'ah by groups such as JMB and ABT to ISIS in the wake of the formation of the neo-caliphate of Abu Bakr-al-Baghdadi. The territorial setbacks witnessed persistent "lone-wolf" attacks throughout the world including places such as Orlando and Nice and observers of Islamist action in Bangladesh would recall the "hostage situation" in Dhaka on July 1, 2016 and the machete killings and suicide bombings of the years following the event. The new "call to arms" was to decimate the infidel wherever found as the

hijrah was no longer an undemanding affair. However, relentless action by the Bangladesh security forces against the Islamists have quietened the radicals momentarily and the "battle" has been—temporarily—handed over to the good offices of HIB and IOB who are keeping the movement alive by demanding aspects such as the enactment of "Blasphemy Laws".

However, with the almost total territorial ouster of ISIS from the areas that it had occupied in Iraq and Syria the strategy is about to witness a sea change. Egged on by al-Qaeda and ISIS which is already inside India, its affiliates (including PFI) would throw open the gates of radicalism and don a form that would be hitherto the most menacing. It

would be a combination of a) mass recruitment b) protests against acts, laws and ministrations that a combined grouping of radicals considers un-Islamic—bringing thereby into their fold fence-sitters and moderates among the minority community and c) let loose sophisticated forms of violence that most agencies would not be able to even imagine.

Memories of Shakira, wife of Rashedur Rahman Sumon, a hardcore pro-ISIS, Neo-JMB cadre blowing herself up with her infant in her lap on 26 December 2016, 2016 should be sufficient proof about the manner in which an "aping-exercise" would be engendered by Indian counterparts in what the author presages as the dawn of the "Third wave" of Radicalisation.

Omicron spreads to more countries; world on alert

AP ■ LONDON

The new potentially more contagious omicron variant of the coronavirus popped up in more European countries on Saturday, just days after being identified in South Africa, leaving governments around the world scrambling to stop the spread.

The UK on Saturday tightened its rules on mask-wearing and on testing of international arrivals after finding two cases. New cases were confirmed Saturday in Germany and Italy, with Belgium, Israel and Hong Kong also reporting that the variant has been found in travelers.

In the US, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious diseases expert, said he would not be surprised if the omicron variant was already in the United States, too.

"We have not detected it yet, but when you have a virus that is showing this degree of transmissibility ... it almost invariably is ultimately going to go essentially all over," Fauci said on NBC television.

Because of fears that the new variant has the potential to be more resistant to the protection offered by vaccines, there are growing concerns around the world that the pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions will persist for far longer than hoped.

Nearly two years since the start of the pandemic that has claimed more than 5 million lives around the world, countries are on high alert. Many have already imposed travel restrictions on flights from southern Africa as they seek to buy time to assess whether the omicron variant is more transmissible than the current dominant delta variant.

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said it was necessary to take "targeted and precautionary measures" after two people tested positive for the new variant in England.

"Right now this is the responsible course of action to slow down the seeding and the spread of this new variant and to maximize our defenses," he told a news conference.

Among the measures



People queue to get on the Air France flight to Paris at OR Tambo's airport in Johannesburg, South Africa on Saturday AP

announced, Johnson said anyone arriving in England must take a PCR test for COVID-19 on the second day after their arrival and self-isolate until they provide a negative test. And if someone tests positive for the omicron variant, then he said their close contacts will have to self-isolate for 10 days

regardless of their vaccination status — currently close contacts are exempt from quarantine rules if they are fully vaccinated.

He also said mask-wearing in shops and on public transport will be required and said the independent group of scientists that advises the British

government on the rollout of coronavirus vaccines has been asked to accelerate the vaccination program.

This could involve widening the booster program to younger age groups, reducing the time period between a second dose and a booster and allowing older children to get

New Covid variant casts pall, shocks experts in South Africa

Pretoria: The overcast, drizzly skies match the somber mood at the Tshwane University of Technology, a hot spot in South Africa's latest surge of Covid-19 cases, apparently driven by the new Omicron variant that is leading countries around the world to impose new restrictions. After several students tested positive, the university postponed some exams, and officials in the larger metropolitan area of Tshwane, which includes the capital of Pretoria, are pushing vaccinations, especially

among younger adults who have been slow to get the shots.

At TUT, as the university is known, few students wanted to speak about the new variant that has cast a pall. Many were not vaccinated — only 22% of 18- to 34-year-olds in South Africa are — and some seemed to be rethinking that, though notably the university's vaccination center was closed for the weekend.

Manqoba Zitha, a student who has gotten the shot, said he will be pushing fellow classmates to do the same.

"I'm trying to encourage them so that they can vaccinate, so they can stay away from coronavirus because it's there, it's killing people, and now numbers are rising," said Zitha. "Now when we are watching TV we can see that people are getting coronavirus. So they must vaccinate!"

Nearly two years into the pandemic, the world is racing to contain the latest variant, first identified in southern Africa but popping up around the globe. AP

Study warns China of 'colossal outbreak' of Covid-19 if it opens up like US, France

PTI ■ BEIJING

China is expected to continue its much-criticised Zero Covid policy, shutting the country to most of the world as a new study has warned of a "colossal outbreak" with over 6.30 lakh patients per day if it opens up.

According to a report by the Peking University mathematicians, China could face more than 6,30,000 coronavirus infections a day if it dropped its zero-tolerance approach and followed other countries by lifting travel bans.

"The estimates revealed the real possibility of a colossal outbreak which would almost certainly put an unbearable burden on the medical system," the report said.

China on Saturday reported 23 new COVID-19 cases, including 20 imported ones as the country appears to have contained a recent spike of infections in Beijing and other cities.

China, where the coronavirus first surfaced in Wuhan in late 2019 before it turned into a pandemic, has so far reported 98,631 cases and 4,636 deaths, the National Health



A woman and a child, both wearing face masks to protect themselves from Covid-19 in Beijing on Sunday AP

Commission said on Sunday. This included 785 patients still receiving treatment.

On Saturday, Chinese top respiratory expert Zhong Nanshan warned that the new and more contagious coronavirus variant Omicron, reported in South Africa causing global alarm, may cause more challenges to the work of pre-

venting and controlling the pandemic as the World Health Organization (WHO) said it carries a large number of mutations.

He said that about 76.8 per cent of China's population have been vaccinated, laying a good basis for the country to reach the target of 80 per cent vaccination to build herd immuni-

ty by year end.

One of China's major vaccine producers, Sinovac Biotech, told state-run Global Times that the company is paying close attention to Omicron and has tapped into a global partner network to collect and obtain information and samples specific to the mutant virus.

Netherlands, Oz find variant as curbs spread

Israel bans foreign travellers

AP ■ THE HAGUE

The Netherlands confirmed 13 cases of the new omicron variant of the coronavirus on Sunday and Australia found two as the countries half a world apart became the latest to detect it in travelers arriving from southern Africa.

A raft of curbs being imposed by nations around the world as they scramble to slow the variant's spread also grew, with Israel deciding Sunday to bar entry to foreign nationals in the toughest move so far.

Confirmed or suspected cases of the new variant have already emerged in several European countries, in Israel and in Hong Kong, just days after it was identified by researchers in South Africa.

The "act first, ask questions later" approach reflected growing alarm about the emergence of a potentially more contagious variant nearly two years into a pandemic that has killed more

than 5 million people, upended lives and disrupted economies across the globe.

While much remains to be learned about the new variant, researchers are concerned that it may be more resistant to the protection provided by vaccines and could mean that the pandemic lasts for longer than anticipated.

The Dutch public health authority confirmed that 13 people who arrived from South Africa Friday have so far tested positive for omicron. They were among 61 people who tested positive for the virus after arriving on the last two flights to Amsterdam's Schiphol airport before a flight ban was implemented. They were immediately put into isolation, most at a nearby hotel, while sequencing was carried out.

Authorities in Australia said two overseas travelers who arrived in Sydney from Africa became the first in the country to test positive for the omicron variant.

SA slams 18 countries imposing travel bans on fears of Omicron

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa's top health federation on Sunday slammed the 18 nations which have imposed travel bans on the country on fears of the new potentially highly-transmissible variant of Covid-19, Omicron, saying the world must avoid such "knee-jerk reaction" if it wants "transparency" in the sharing of critical medical data.

The new Covid-19 variant B.1.1.529, first detected in South Africa, was on Friday designated as a "Variant of Concern" by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which named it "Omicron".

The decision by 18 countries to ban flights to and from South Africa was premature, as there is still not enough information on how dangerous the variant might be, Angelique Coetzee, Chairman of South African Medical Association (SAMA) said. Coetzee also defended the decision to announce the findings, pointing out that South Africa should be lauded and not vilified for this.

"My suspicion is that because our scientists are very alert and doing a lot of sequenc-

ing in the background, maybe those European countries missed it because of the symptoms," Coetzee told the TV news channel *Newzroom Afrika*.

The UK announced on Thursday that all flights to and from South Africa and five neighbouring countries would be banned from Friday following an announcement that the new Omicron variant of Covid-19 had been detected in South Africa. Many other European countries followed suit, most of them indicating that only their own citizens would be allowed back, subject to a quarantine period. Many other countries have now started to severely regulate or ban flights completely from the African nation.

ISIS roadside bomb in Iraq leaves 5 peshmerga dead

AP ■ BAGHDAD

A roadside bomb attack by Islamic State group fighters in northern Iraq killed five Kurdish forces and wounded four others, Kurdish state news agency Rudaw reported Sunday.

The peshmerga fighters were killed in the Garman district in Iraq's Kurdish-run north late Saturday. IS militants then attacked a peshmerga post, wounding four, according to the report.

Attacks targeting Iraqi security forces, including Kurdish peshmerga fighters, are common and have been on the rise since IS was defeated on the battlefield in 2017.

The peshmerga fighters were killed in the Garman district in Iraq's Kurdish-run north late Saturday. Militants then attacked a peshmerga post

Militants remain active through sleeper cells in many areas, especially across a band of territory in the north under dispute between federal Iraq and the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government.

Militants from IS, a Sunni Muslim extremist group, still conduct operations, often targeting security forces, power stations and other infrastructure.

Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani offered condolences to the families of the dead Sunday.

"The increase in the (IS) attacks sends a dangerous and serious message and brings forth a serious threat in the region. Therefore, further cooperation between the Peshmerga forces and the Iraqi security forces with support from the global coalition is an urgent need," he said in a statement.

The US-led coalition to defeat IS announced the end of its combat mission and said troops will withdraw from Iraq by the end of December. Advisers will remain to continue to train Iraqi forces.

8 dead in gunbattles in central Mexico

AP ■ MEXICO CITY

A pair of gunbattles in the central Mexico state of Zacatecas has left eight men dead. State prosecutors said Saturday that vehicles and guns were found at the scene of the shootouts near the town of Valparaiso, which is located near the border with Jalisco state. The gunmen may have been killed in turf battles between the Jalisco and Sinaloa cartels.

National Guard and army troops responded to the shootings, but the dead have not yet been identified.

The shootings late Friday came three days after police discovered three more bodies hung from a highway overpass in Zacatecas, where 10 other bodies were found the previous

week, nine of them hanging from an overpass.

On Wednesday, the Mexican army announced that it will send three helicopter gunships to Zacatecas, a weapon that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has expressly said he no longer wants to use or accept from the United States. The Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels have been battling for control in the state, which is a key transit point for drugs, especially the powerful synthetic pain killer fentanyl, moving north to the US border.

In the first nine months of the year, Mexico had more than 25,000 murders, a number 3.4% less than the same period a year earlier, according to federal data.

Taiwan sends jets after 27 Chinese planes enter buffer zone

AP ■ TAIPEI

Taiwan said 27 Chinese aircraft entered its air defense buffer zone on Sunday, the latest in a long series of incursions as part of Beijing's pressure on the self-ruled island.

The Defense Ministry said Taiwan scrambled combat aircraft to "warn" the Chinese planes to leave. It also deployed missile systems to monitor them.

Sunday's incursion included 18 fighter jets and five H-6 bombers, as well as a Y-20 aerial refueling aircraft, according to Taiwan's Defense Ministry.

The Chinese aircraft flew into Taiwan's air defense iden-

tification zone near the southern part of the island and out into the Pacific Ocean before returning to China, according to a map by Taiwan authorities.

Over the past year, the frequency of Chinese incursions has increased, with about 150 aircraft over a period of four days.

China's air force mission toward Taiwan came as Chinese President Xi Jinping met with officers at a military conference, where he called for military talent cultivation to support and strengthen the armed forces, according to state-owned news agency Xinhua.

Cambodian prince Ranariddh dies at 77

AP ■ PHNOM PENH

Cambodia's Prince Norodom Ranariddh, former prime minister and the son of the late King Norodom Sihanouk, died Sunday in France, Information Minister Khieu Kanharith announced on his Facebook page. He was 77.

Khieu Kanharith, who said he learned of the death from Um Daravuth, a minor member of Cambodia's royal family, did not give the cause of death.

Ranariddh had been in ill-health since an auto accident in Cambodia in 2018.

Magnitude 7.5 quake strikes northern Peru

AP ■ LIMA, PERU

An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 7.5 struck northern Peru early Sunday, damaging some buildings and blocking several roads with rubble. While the quake was extremely strong, it was relatively deep — measured at 112 kilometers (70 miles) — which usually reduces the possibility of damage and casualties.

The quake occurred at 5:52 am (1052 GMT) and its epicenter was in the Amazon region, 42 kilometers (26 miles) north northwest of the city of Barranca. It had a magnitude of

7.5, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Part of a 16th century church in La Jalca district in the Amazon region collapsed and three people were lightly injured, Mayor Walter Culqui told Peru's RPP radio.

Falling stones blocked several highways in the Amazonas and Cajamarca regions in Peru, and the tremor was felt nearly 800 kilometers (500 miles) away in the capital of Lima, where some people rushed out of their homes in alarm.

A church in the Loja municipality in neighboring Ecuador was also partly damaged.

Researchers try producing potato resistant to climate change

AP ■ BANGOR

University of Maine researchers are trying to produce potatoes that can better withstand warming temperatures as the climate changes.

Warming temperatures and an extended growing season can lead to quality problems and disease, Gregory Porter, a professor of crop ecology and management, told the Bangor Daily News.

"The predictions for climate change are heavier rainfall events, and potatoes don't



tolerate flooding or wet conditions for long without having other quality problems," Porter said. "If we want potatoes to be continued to be produced successfully in Maine, we need to be able to produce varieties that can be resistant to change."

Cramped in Calais, migrants renew resolve to try for England

AP ■ CALAIS, FRANCE

At the makeshift camps in France near Calais and Dunkirk, migrants are digging in, waiting for their chance to make a dash across the English Channel despite the deaths of at least 27 people this week when their boat sank a few miles (kilometers) from the French coast.

Police have stepped up patrols in recent days and the weather has worsened, making this a bad time to attempt a crossing. But most migrants say the tragedy won't prevent them from



climbing into a flimsy inflatable boat packed with up to 50 people in hopes of reaching Britain. "I don't afraid of anything," a 22-year-old from Iran who identified himself only as Kawa

said in halting English. "Water? If we die ... sorry to say this but we already died. Nobody accepts us anywhere. We're useful. Useless, sorry," he said, correcting himself. "Just look at these people."

Kawa and his father spent the past six years in the Denmark, where they say they never felt free because they constantly had to report to police and other authorities. Now they want to reach England, and eventually Canada, because "they are good to Iranians."

RBI to aid of depositors

CUSTOMERS OF 16 STRESSED COOP BANKS TO GET INSURANCE COVER

New Delhi: The customers of 16 stressed cooperative banks will get up to ₹ 5 lakh deposit insurance cover on Monday from the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) subsidiary DICGC as part of its mandate under a new law.

The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) had earlier prepared a list of 21 banks but five, including Punjab & Maharashtra Co-Operative Bank (PMC Bank), are out of the list as they are either in merger process or out of the moratorium.

The Parliament in August passed the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2021 ensuring that account holders get up to ₹ 5 lakh within 90 days of the RBI imposing a moratorium on the banks. Following the enactment, the Government has notified September 1, 2021 as the date on which the provisions of the Act would come into force.

The mandated 90 days from the notified date comes to an end on November 29, 2021.

The depositors of these banks, who have not yet submitted their claims, are advised to contact the respective banks, a public notice from DICGC said.

"The claims should be supported by officially valid documents of identity and written consent to receive the amount lying in credit of their deposit account (willingness declaration) subject to a maximum of ₹ 5 lakh along with alternate bank account details into which the said amount may be credited," it said.

Depositors submitting valid documents, as mentioned above, will be paid by credit to the alternate bank account specified by depositors or on their consent, to their Aadhaar linked bank account, it said.

For the second phase, the last date for submission of documents is December 10, 2021 while date of payment is December 31, 2021, it added. Besides PMC Bank, depositors of Hindu Co-Op Bank Ltd, Pathankot of Punjab, Rupee Co-Operative Bank Ltd and Needs Of Life

Co-Operative Bank Ltd from Maharashtra and Bidar Mahila Urban Co-Op Bank Ltd of Karnataka are out of this. It is to be noted that the RBI had in June given in-principle approval to a consortium of Centrum Financial Services and fintech startup BharatPe to acquire the stressed PMC Bank.

Clearing decks for the takeover, the RBI in October gave licence for small finance bank to the consortium. Recently, the DICGC said there may be a need to invoke the provisions of Section 18 A (7) (a) of the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2021.

As per the Section 18 A (7) (a) of the Act, if a stressed bank is under the resolution process, the period for disbursement of ₹ 5 lakh can be further extended by 90 days.

Last year, the Government increased the insurance cover on deposits by five times to ₹ 5 lakh. The enhanced deposit insurance cover of ₹ 5 lakh came into effect from February 4, 2020. (PTI)

COAI asks Govt to reduce 5G spectrum base price by more than half

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom industry body COAI is learnt to have asked the government to cut the base price of spectrum by more than half, for the proposed auction especially for 5G services, according to industry sources.

In the first auction of radio airwaves in five years in March 2021, the government offered 2,308.80 MHz of spectrum in seven bands, at a reserve price of nearly ₹ 4 lakh crore.

However, airwaves in the premium 700 MHz and 2,500 MHz bands went unsold mainly due to high base price.

The Government could not put 3.3-3.6 Ghz frequency range for auction as it could not get it vacated in time and the base price of the radio waves in the spectrum band was termed to be very expensive for 5G services.

"COAI has asked the Government for a drastic cut in spectrum price for the proliferation of digital connectivity and specially for ushering 5G



services. It has requested the government to reduce the base price by more than half in the proposed spectrum auction," a telecom operator representative told PTI.

The proposed spectrum auction is likely to be held in the April-June quarter of 2022.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) declined to comment on the matter.

Representatives of two separate telecom operators quoted different figures on the scale of reduction demanded by the industry body, but concurred on the view that the COAI has sought to slash spectrum price by more than half.

One representative said it is to the tune of 50-60 per cent and the other senior official of another telecom operator mentioned 60-70 per cent.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) had recommended a base price fixed at ₹492 crore per megahertz for spectrum in 3.3-3.6 Ghz.

Telecom operators interested in buying radio waves for 5G will have to shell out a minimum of ₹9,840 crore on pan-India basis to buy spectrum in 3,300-3,600 Mhz band as Trai has suggested that it "should be put to auction in the block size of 20 MHz".

In May, the Government allocated spectrum to the telecom companies for trials across various locations for six months in the 700 Mhz band, 3.3-3.6 Gigahertz (Ghz) band and 24.25-28.5 Ghz band.

At present 5G trials are going on in the country. The Department of Telecom has extended the trial period to May 2022, or till the time spectrum auction results are out, whichever is earlier.

Petrol, diesel price to fall only on sustained drop in international oil prices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol and diesel prices will be reduced only if the current drop in international oil prices is sustained for a few more days, as domestic retail prices are fixed on a 15-day rolling average, official sources said.

Global benchmark Brent crude oil prices remained largely range bound at around USD 80 to 82 per barrel, levels during November (till November 25). On Friday, November 26, prices fell by around USD 4 per barrel till Asian timestamp.

However, subsequently after the opening of the US market, with the drastic sell off in Brent Futures, prices fell further by around USD 6 to close at USD 72.91 a barrel at ICE London. Sources said, this seems like a knee jerk reaction from fears that the new Covid-19 variant discovered in Southern Africa might dampen economic growth and trigger another demand slump.

State-owned fuel retailers Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) revise petrol and diesel prices on a daily basis.

But this revision is based on the average benchmark international fuel rate in the previous fortnight. So, the price on Sunday is decided by the average in the previous 15-days.

"Natural expectation from the drop in rates on Friday is that retail pump rates will also go down. But that is not how retail rates move. Since the international oil prices have been range bound in most of November, the drop on Friday when averaged out with the previous fortnight does not translate into any significant change."

"Only when the fall in rates is sustained for a few more days will we see a reduction in retail petrol and diesel prices," a source said.

438 infra projects show cost overrun of ₹4.34 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 438 infrastructure projects, each worth ₹150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns totalling more than ₹4.34 lakh crore, according to a report.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects worth ₹ 150 crore and above. Of the 1,680 such projects, 438 reported cost overruns and 539 were delayed.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,680 projects was ₹21,74,182.86 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹26,08,330.02 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,34,147.16 crore (19.97 per cent of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for October 2021 said.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till October 2021 is ₹12,64,545.31 crore, which is 48.48 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects. However, the report said that the number of delayed projects decreases to 377 if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion.

Further, for 837 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

Out of the 539 delayed projects, 98 have overall delay in the range of 1-12 months, 109 have been delayed for 13-24 months, 211 for 25-60 months and 121 projects have delays of 61 months and above.

The average time overrun in these 539 delayed projects is 47.16 months.

PNB puts up National Steel & Agro Industries for sale to recover ₹200 cr dues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) has put up a Madhya Pradesh-based steel and agriculture company for sale to recover its outstanding of nearly ₹200 crore.

The National Steel and Agro Industries Ltd has a balance outstanding of ₹199.90 crore to the bank.

"We intend to place the account for sale to ARCs/NBFCs/other banks/FIs, on the terms and conditions stipulated in the bank's policy, in line with the regulatory guidelines," PNB said in an auction notification.

The lender has set the reserve price (on cash basis) at ₹ 95 crore for the sale process.

For the prospective bidder to expedite the process of due diligence exercise and for verification purposes of the



buyer, the bank said it will make all possible efforts to bring copies of documents at one place.

However, the bank at its sole discretion may withdraw the account offered for sale, without assigning any reasons, it PNB has set December 8 as the last date for completion of due diligence exercise. The last date of submission of binding bids is December 9, while the date for opening of bids is fixed as December 10, 2021.

FPIs net buyers in Nov; invest ₹5,319 crore

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) were pumped in a net sum of ₹5,319 crore in Indian capital markets despite a massive correction seen in equities over the last fortnight. In October, they were net sellers to the tune of ₹12,437 crore. As per depositories data, overseas investors put in a net ₹ 1,400 crore into equities and ₹3,919 crore into the debt segment between November 1-26. This translated into total net investment of ₹ 5,319 crore. "Since FPIs have been holding large quantity of banking stocks, they have been major sellers in this segment. Sustained selling has made banking stocks attractive from the valuation perspective," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services. He further noted that sharp correction in the market on 26th November has been mainly triggered by concerns arising out of the new strain of the virus spotted in South Africa, Botswana and Hong Kong.

IT Ministry to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Digital Mahotsav' event from today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The IT ministry will celebrate 'Azadi Ka Digital Mahotsav' from November 29 to December 5, marking a week-long series of events and activities to showcase India's achievements in the digital space and outline road map for future, an official release said on Sunday.

The event would highlight how digital technologies are transforming all sectors of the economy, impacting the socio-cultural, political and economic landscape, and underline the spirit of self-reliance in the digital sector. The event will be attend-

The events during the week-long conference will include plenary sessions, panel discussions, and exhibitions

ed by Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister for Electronics and IT, Railways and Communications, and Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Minister of State for Electronics and IT and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

It will also be attended by senior officials from the Central Ministries and Departments, States and UTs

and industry representatives. "MEITY to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Digital Mahotsav' from 29 November to 5 December, 2021," the statement said.

The key themes of events scheduled during the week are Digital India, making India Aatmanirbhar in Electronics System Design and Manufacturing, empowering common service centres, making India Aatmanirbhar in Swadeshi Computer Designs, citizen engagement by MyGov and Digital Payments Utsav.

The events during week-long conference will include plenary sessions, panel discussions, and exhibitions.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurates the 150 metric ton per day Milk Powder Plant and Automatic Robotic Storage and Retrieval System of Amul Dairy, in Gandhinagar on Sunday

RBI's recent norms may spike NPAs for NBFCs, says ICRA

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) recent notification on income recognition, asset classification, and provisioning norms for banks, non-banking financial institutions (NBFCs) and all-India financial institutions may lead to a sharp spike in the non-performing assets (NPAs) for non-banking

finance companies, ICRA said on Sunday.

On November 12, the central bank had said that classification of special mention accounts and non-performing accounts should be done on a day-end position basis and upgraded from an NPA to standard category only after clearance of all outstanding overdues.

BRIEFS

92ND IRAS DAY CELEBRATED IN CLW

Chittaranjan: 92nd IRAS Day was celebrated by CLW Chapter on 27.11.2021 in Chittaranjan Locomotive Works. Sri T Ramalingam, Additional Commissioner, Income Tax, Asansol graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The event was attended by Shri Pradipta Kumar Das, PFA/CLW; Shri Tariq Ahmed, IG/RPF/CLW; Shri S D Patidar, PCPO/CLW; Shri Sudhir Kumar, FA&CAO(P); Shri Anurag Gaurav, Dy.FA&CAO-I; Shri Abhijit Ray, Dy.FA&CAO-II; Shri Sudarshan Pramanik, Dy.FA&CAO-III along with officers of Accounts and Personnel department. The session was focussed mainly on the theme "Change in IT Return Process to make it user-friendly".



DIRECTORATE OF TOURISM, JAMMU ORGANISES ONE DAY BASOHLI YOUTH FESTIVAL

The festival being one of its kind was organised by Directorate of Tourism, Jammu to bring Purthu Beach on the tourism Map and to showcase the diversity of tourism products of Jammu Division particularly of Basohli region which it offers to its visitors. Speaking during the Flag off ceremony at Kala Kendra, Jammu Mayor, Municipal Corporation, Jammu Sh. Chandermohan Gupta said that the festival is being organized to showcase potential in recreational tourism and sports, Basohli region has. He appreciated the role played by UT Administration and Tourism Department for organizing such type of events. At Purthu Beach no. of activities like Tug of War, Kite Flying competition, Musical Chair, Painting Competition were held. A total no. of 130 participants were registered for different activities.



FMCG market to taper down further due to high base effect: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) market will see further tapering down and decline in volumes, especially in the in-home consumption category due to a higher base effect, but there are some "silver linings" as some categories are maintaining higher penetration than a pre-pandemic level, data analytics and market insight firm Kantar said.

The December quarter of 2020, was one of the fastest-growing quarters, with a 5.5 per cent growth and these high baseline numbers are likely to cause another steep drop in growth rates in the next quarter as well.

"As a result, by the end of 2021, the MAT (Moving Annual Total) growth will see further tapering down, and a decline in FMCG volumes, in-home is very much possible," said Kantar in its FMCG Pulse for November 2021.

However, it also added: "Despite this, we maintain that it is not a scary situation to be in, but rather a fact that

mirrors the strong consumption trend the country has been witnessing for quite some time now." The September quarter retreated marginally by 0.5 per cent against last year's same period, primarily led by urban India, which shrank by 2.6 per cent.

"Rural is maintaining growth, but at just 1.5 per cent," Kantar said, adding "as a result, the MAT September FMCG growth stood at 1.9 per cent, slower than the population growth." The average quarterly growth in the pre-pandemic 2019 was 2.1 per cent.

MAT is the total sales figures, over the course of the previous 12 months. This is a rolling yearly sum, so changes at the end of each month with data from the new month added to the total and data from the first month of the period taken away.

In FMCG, some categories took as soon as the pandemic struck, and then there were other categories that struggled during lockdowns but emerged as fast winners after lockdowns.

Categories like dish wash,

spices and salty snacks witnessed step-growth, without losing their penetration in any quarter since the onset of the pandemic.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of ICICI Bank Ltd. that M/s. Battery.com a partnership firm through partners: Mr. Vipul Gupta and Mr. Sudhir Jindal is owner of Industrial Plot Bearing No. 80 & 81, in Block-B, each having area measuring 114 sq. mts, situated at Sector-10, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, UP. The said property by virtue of two separate Transfer deeds both dated 15.02.2018; Registration No. 3914, & 3913, has been/misplaced Original allotment letter, Original possession Letter, Original Lease deed 23.06.1982, & 29.06.1982, with respect of the both plots/property mentioned above, all persons are hereby informed not to deal or carry out any transaction with anyone on the basis of missing document, if anyone has already carried out or being carried out kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 10 days of the present. (Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants) 201, 1st Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Meeri Nagar, N. Delhi-110 015. Ph: 011-41112827-28 kumarassociatesadvocates@gmail.com)

NOTICE
I, Inder Sen Singla, holding R.C. M/s. RL Travels Private Limited R.C. No. 3836/DEL/COM/3003/16/195/2003 Dated: 09/09/2003. Office at 118, Ansal Bhawan, 16 K.G.Marg, New Delhi-110001 under the Emigration Act 1983 for export of Man power, I intend to close my business with immediate effect in the event, there is any complaint against me, the same may be referred to within 30 days of Publication of this notice. Copies of the complaint may also be sent to Protector General of Emi grants, Ministry of External Affairs, Akbar Bhawan, 10 Floor, Saitya Marg, Chana Khaspur, New Delhi-110021. Sd/- Inder Sen Singla (Managing Director) PLACE: Delhi Date: 25/11/2021

कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, केन्द्रीय भण्डार, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, हल्द्वानी
सिकोलिया, नैनीताल रोड, हल्द्वानी बुद्रमाग कार्यालय/केक्स : 05946-220776 ई-मेल : eehal-ujs-uk@nic.in

पत्रांक : 305 / ई-निविदा / 02 / 2021-22 ई-निविदा सूचना दिनांक : 27.11.2021

उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान की ओर से केन्द्रीय भण्डार, हल्द्वानी द्वारा निम्न कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा, टू-बिड सिस्टम (तकनीकी बिड एवं कॉमिशियल बिड) के आधार पर निम्नानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है।

निविदा सं.	कार्य विवरण	घनराशि रु.	निविदा प्रपत्र डाउनलोड करने की तिथि व समय	ई-निविदा द्वारा निविदा प्रपत्र जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	तकनीकी बिड खोले जाने की तिथि एवं समय	निविदा की वैधता	प्री-बिड मीटिंग की तिथि एवं समय
1		108000.00	30.11.2021 from 11:00 a.m.	14.12.2021 upto 05:00 p.m.	15.12.2021 at 11:00 a.m.	90 Days	07.12.2021 at 11:00 a.m.

अर्हता:- Only manufacturers / Authorized Dealer's of ISI Marked Plain Ended M.S. ERW Line Pipe having supply experience 250-350 mm dia having BIS license for IS: 1978/1982 Grade YST-210 (Replaced by BIS as IS/ISO 3183/2007 GRADE-L-210, PSL-1) who are Manufacturer & Authorised Dealer's before the last date of submission of this tender i.e. 14-12-2021 are allowed to take part in this tender.

ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित समस्त जानकारियां, शर्तें उत्तराखण्ड की वेबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in एवं विभागीय वेबसाइट <http://ujs.uk.gov.in> पर ऑन लाइन देखी / प्राप्त की जा सकती है। (एसओ केओ श्रीवास्तव)

"जल संचय-जीवन संचय" अधिशासी अभियन्ता

Office of the Superintending Engineer 1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora
Phone/Fax: 05962-230295 Email: sepwdalm@rediffmail.com

Letter No. : 8266/ Nivida-01/2021 Dated : 27/11/2021

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering)
E-TENDER NOTICE

The superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated 30/11/2021 & onwards on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in lakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration for tendering
1	Construction of 18Mt. Span Single Lane Motor bridge at Km. 2 in Basgaon Darman Motor Road from Jyoti Basar - Khunt Motor Road Distt-Almora.	Rs. 5000 + 18% GST	3.22 Lakh	120 Days	15 Months	Category "B" & above (Bridge works)
2	Improvement and Damarikaran work of Shitlakhet- Kakrighat (Matela) Motor Road under Someshwar Constituency in Distt. Almora Under C.M. Ghoshana No. 200/2021. Length 5.00 Km.	Rs. 5000 + 18% GST	5.77 Lakh	60 Days	15 Months	Category "B" & above (Road Works)
3	Construction of Chitaipant Tiraha to Haridatt Peshali Link Road in District Almora under State Sector (Part- I & II work). Length Km. 1 to 3 = 3.00 Km.	Rs. 5000 + 18% GST	3.20 Lakh	120 Days	15 Months	Category "B" & above (Road Works)
4	Improvement and Damrikaran work in Chabisa-Bagwalipokhar Motor Road in Constituency Dwarahat Under State Sector in Distt-Almora (Length 6.20 Km.).	Rs. 5000 + 18% GST	6.75 Lakh	60 Days	18 Months	Category "A" & above (Road Works)



Bollywood
 'Aishwarya Rai is the best. She is very sweet and grounded, and loves our Indian values.'
 —Abhishek Bachchan

https://www.dailypioneer.com/vivacity/

WISDOM TO SURVIVE IN A HOPELESS WORLD

The absence of empathy is a far more dangerous thing than Covid-19 virus, author and mythologist DEVDUTT PATTANAİK tells KHUSHBU KIRTI

And just when you begin to lose all hope, shines on you that feeble and fading light ray. It seems like it is trying to show you something while it directs its very meager light, blinking on and off, on an unknown path. You squint your eyes to concentrate on what you are seeing. You are surprised because when you were in complete darkness, you thought all that there could be around you was emptiness, loneliness, and hopelessness and suddenly this thin, meek ray has, as if, resurrected you. A strange feeling is rising inside you like a little plant that grows above the ground through its invisible, yet strongly embedded roots. This feeling gives you power that you had lost a long time back. The light becomes stronger while you take more steps forward and you start feeling safer and more sure of yourself.

That's how hope works. It changes the way you see the world and instills into you a new kind of enthusiasm to not only survive but succeed. And when, recently, I received the opportunity to converse with one of the most renowned modern writers, Devdutt Pattanaik, about his new book, *Hope: Wisdom to Survive in a Hopeless World*, I was beyond excited. While mythology is extremely engrossing, Pattanaik has time and again shown to the world that it could be even more lucid and much more interesting. He has, often, made it a medium to render modern solutions.

He writes, Do you want to run away? Are you anxious about money, your family, and your future? In this book, the author helps you to unravel your emotions and find a way to move from darkness into light.

Read on for excerpts from an exclusive interview with one of the leading mythologists in India:

◆ Many congratulations on your recent release, *Hope: Wisdom to Survive in a Hopeless World*.

Tell us everything about it. How did the book come into existence?

So the book, *Hope*, came into existence in the latter part of the Covid lockdown. I think we all had gone through a lot, and had seen our lives change dramatically. The lockdown had put a lot of stress on many people. Many people lost jobs, lost family. We, ourselves, went



through trauma. Social media was full of nasty news and trolls, too. Even in these horrible times, people were misbehaving on Whatsapp groups. We felt a sense of doom and despair.

The publisher, Chiki Sarkar, of Juggernaut Books, spoke to me. We are friends and she asked me if I would consider writing a book on hope. She basically began with conversations about hope. I told her stories from mythology and she felt that, maybe, we should put it together and get it published. That's how *Hope* came into existence.

◆ Was *Hope* inspired by real incidents/events?

Well, yes, it is an outcome of all the things that we went through — the migrant crisis, the large number of deaths, people losing jobs. I heard sta-

tics there were more people who died of suicide than who died of Covid-19.

All these things created a sense of despair and hopelessness. Besides, the news coming on the political and economic front was all very, very sad and depressing. And people, instead of working together with each other in bad times, seemed to be snarling at each other. And that was all causing a lot of sense of hopelessness. I felt the book *Hope* was the need of the hour.

◆ While almost all ancient religions and faiths agree on hopelessness being tackled by the self or getting resolved from outside, what do you have to say about the thought process of the absurdists?

◆ Existentialism, as a philosophy, accepts that life is meaningless and we

have to suffer from angst and despair as its consequences.

Care to weigh in?

But, what is hope? Hope is about trusting that there are opportunities for you out there in this world. And you feel hopeless when those opportunities are just going away from you. Now, I feel you create a world full of hope when you yourself give hope to people around you. Western philosophy, with words, is very self absorbed, it doesn't talk about the other so much. It talks about self-realisation, self actualisation, but never talks about our relationship with others.

Only when we create an ecosystem of hope, give others hope, will others reciprocate and give hope to us. I think that is missing in today's conversation. We are so self absorbed. We expect life to give meaning to us and we expect others to take care of us. We don't realise that life is a give and take relationship — that every self exists in an ecosystem of others. We cannot exist without each other.

◆ You mentioned that Covid-19 is not our enemy, and I second you. However, whenever a catastrophe occurs, do you think hope is what gets us, as a collective entity, out of it?

You know, Covid is not the problem. It is how humans react to Covid, which is the problem.

You know, in the *Bible*, we talked about the great flood and how all the animals huddled together on a boat, which is managed by Noah. And I think that the catastrophe is when we are on that boat and we, rather than supporting each other through this crisis, keep fighting with each other. That was the crisis, where politicians are not willing to admit that they had to take tough decisions. Where politicians were playing politics at a time of need, instead of making tools available. We created shutdowns without realising the consequences to the poor. You know, the rich have resources to survive, but the poor don't have those.

I think, empathy was missing. Those are far more dangerous things than the virus itself — the absence of empathy, the absence of support to people — and the absence of support not just of the state, but humans with each other. And, I think, that is the great catastrophe. There's humungous burden on doctors and nurses, and no one seems

to realise that they are human beings, too, and need our support. So, I think those are questions that we should ask ourselves.

◆ If *aham brahmasmi* or *shivo hum* hold true, does Sunahshepa save himself?

Well, everybody asked me what happens to Sunahshepa. And yes, we would like to believe the gods came down and helped him, or he managed to help himself. But the problem of the story is about being abandoned, where he realises that the people who are supposed to protect him — his parents, the king, that is the state, — have abandoned him. And the God, instead of helping him, wants him as a sacrifice. In a world where everybody sees you, seeks to consume you and uses you for their benefit, you feel used and lost.

Instead of being taken care of, Sunahshepa realises he's being abandoned. I believe his story is to remind that there are people in this world who feel abandoned by us. Hence, it is not that we are Sunahshepa. Maybe, we are his father, mother, teacher, or, maybe, we are the God who's asking his sacrifice. So, we have to always be careful. Do we see ourselves as the victim in the story, the hero in the story or the villain in the story? And, not all stories have happy endings.

◆ As a mythologist, what part of Indian culture do you feel needs utmost intervention on saving and preserving it?

As a mythologist, I don't believe cultures need preservation. Cultures evolve and transform over time. Everybody believes that the world is coming to an end, that culture is going to collapse. But, as I speak in my book, these are the good times and bad times we go through. We pass through heaven and hell constantly. Heaven is created when we help each other and hell is created when we hurt each other. And, therefore, what we need to focus on is our humanity. It is that which needs to be remembered, because that is the most precious thing about culture.

'We try to establish *Swarga*, full of opportunities, but ignore *Naraka*, full of threats that the children may have to deal with again and again in future.'

WEBBED



BOB BISWAS

The Indian crime thriller, directed by Diya Annapurna Ghosh, stars Abhishek Bachchan and Chitragada Singh. It is a spin-off of the 2012 thriller *Kahaani*. The protagonist is inspired by the character of the private contract killer, Biswas, in *Kahaani*. *Bob Biswas* will focus on his life as a paid contactor. It will premiere on December 3 on ZEE5.



DIARY OF A WIMPY KID

The American computer-animated comedy film is directed by Swinton Scott, on a script by Jeff Kinney and based on the 2007 book of the same name. Serving as a reboot and the fifth installment in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series, the film marks the first animated entry. It starts premiering on December 3 on Disney+Hotstar.



INSIDE EDGE 3

Bigger and more ambitious than the first two seasons, the third season sets the stakes higher, with more mind games, money laundering and an overview into the vicious circle of betting that'll have a huge impact on the ongoing plot. It starts premiering on Amazon Prime Video from December 3.

Starting his career as a child actor with the film *Mr India*, he has appeared in other films like *Awwal Number*, *Shahenshah* and *ChaalBaaz*. After making his debut in Bollywood as a lead actor with *Mast*, Aftab was mostly seen in comedy films like *Awara Paagal Deewana* and *Hungama*, to name a few.

However, with a character like Aditya Singh Rathore in *Poision 2* last year and now his portrayal of Vijay Kumar in the espionage thriller *Special Ops 1.5: The Himmat Story*, the audience has got a chance to see a new side of Aftab.

Asked about if he made any strategy on choosing certain kinds of projects henceforth, he shared, "I would say that I am still the same actor who is trying to be the better version of himself with each passing day, it is all about the opportunity. I have always looked for an opportunity and made the most out of it. I have been working for the last 22 years and most of my life, I am being stereotyped until these two web series happened to me. I think it is just that I had to wait longer to get these chances."

He added, "Having said that, I am a big believer of destiny and timing. For all these years, if I did not get a chance to act a character like Vijay Kumar that I did in *Special Ops 1.5*, it was meant to happen that way. I have no problem with the past and I made my peace with it. Now, I know how I am preparing myself for greater opportunities. And that has nothing to do with genres, tomorrow again if I am offered a good comedy, I will show my interest as much as that for action or thriller."

In the show, the actor played Himmat Singh's best friend, who is also an intelligent agent.

As he was working with the cast and crew for the first time Aftab shares how

A new avatar

While *Special Ops 1.5: The Himmat Story* has given actor AFTAB SHIVDASANI a chance to showcase his skill as an actor, he says that for the longest time he did not get a chance to do so as he was typecast



his friendship with Kay Kay reflected on their on-screen equation.

"I met Kay Kay first time when we were heading for the shoot. You know, we shot post the first unlock process started. So, after we reached Ukraine, for 15 days, we had to stay in quarantine in our hotel. Every day, all of us including Neeraj (creator of the show) will do calls from the landline and endlessly chat about everything... cinema, things happening around the world, or life in gen-

eral. We bond over a lot of things and that somewhere reflected in the on-screen friendship between Vijay and Himmat."

The show *Special Ops 1.5: The Himmat Story* is a prequel to the main espionage thriller that was released last year. The show, also features Gautami Kapoor, Parmeet Sethi, Kali Prasad Mukherjee, Vijay Vikram Singh, Aadil Khan and it streams on Disney+ Hotstar. —IANS

I aspire to be like MADHURI DIXIT, says SHARVARI. By TEAM VIVA

Debutant Sharvari has won praise for her acting skills in her big-screen debut *Bunty Aur Babli 2*. A rank outsider to Bollywood, Sharvari has her eyes set on the prize to become a star who is known for her performances. Being a Marathi, she naturally aspires to follow the footsteps of the Maharashtrian icon, Madhuri Dixit, who became a pan Indian sensation and was considered as big, if not bigger, than her male counterparts during her prime.

Sharvari says, "Being a Maharashtrian, I have grown up idolising Madhuri Dixit. My family and everyone I know, is a huge fan of her. Hailing from our state, she became a pan-Indian superstar who ruled the hearts of innumerable people. Artists, like me, who are from Maharashtra aspire to be like Madhuri Dixit and achieve fame and have the brilliance of craft that she possessed. She is an inspiration to us all. I have danced on her songs, performed on her scenes since childhood."

She adds, "Even before my debut, she has been a huge reference point for me as I have tried to take notes from her performances. I hope to make her proud one day and the people of

Idolising a fellow Maharashtrian



About being praised for her acting performance in *Bunty Aur Babli 2*, she says, "I'm truly humbled with the way people have appreciated my performance. For someone who doesn't belong to the industry, I have had my share of struggle and heartbreaks before I got this film as my debut and I cherish every bit of it. I know that I have poured my heart and soul into the film and I'm happy with the way people have appreciated me. It truly means a lot."

Sharvari is happy to have been able to showcase her skills well in her debut because she feels as an outsider one has to deliver with their first film to get attention.

She says, "I think for artists who are outsiders, we have to prove our mettle with our first film and I liked that pressure on me because it only made me strive to deliver the best performance that I could have and I'm thrilled with the response towards my craft."

Sharvari adds, "I have miles to go and I am determined to work really hard to better myself every day and constantly prove myself with every film. I can't wait for people to see my second film and every film that I do from here on. I'm looking to do challenging work and I'm grateful to the start that I have had in the industry so far."

my state and my country. I know I need their love and support to get the projects that

I aspire to be in. My journey has just started and I know I have a really long way to go."

TRENDBLAZER



JOURNEY TOWARDS INCLUSIVITY

Actor **BHUMI PEDNEKAR** came out in support of the move of the Brit Awards management to do away with gender-specific awards, saying that it is time human beings started celebrating artistes, irrespective of the gender they belong to.

She added a note of caution, "We should also keep in mind that while we try to be more inclusive, it should not lead to less representation or less inclusion of genders in a world that is governed by the binary lens. That would be counterproductive to equality."

fairtalk

GULSHAN GROVER



'After shooting, I am calmer and relaxed. Many actors claim that when they play negative roles, they carry it even after the shoot. I don't understand that; it's the opposite for me. My motive is to make things tricky and unpleasant for other characters. From industry to industry, my connection and brand image as a villain are still strong and *Your Honor 2* feels like the right show to enter the OTT sector as the bad man.'

dailytalk

ROHIT SHETTY



'We have a basic idea for the story, but I can understand because of the rage created by *Sooryavanshi*, so everyone is talking about *Singham*. However, there's a lot of time for it. If you see, there's at least one year left for *Singham (3)* to begin. It won't start before a year from now. As far as other rumours are concerned, *Golmaal* is something that can never end.'

EILISH ASKS PEOPLE NOT TO EAT TURKEY

Bad Guy hitmaker **BILLIE EILISH** has urged people not to eat turkey this Thanksgiving, as she would rather people try out a vegetarian alternative. She wrote on Instagram, "Turkeys are some of the most gentle creatures in the world. And 46 million of them are killed every Thanksgiving. I know it's hard to change traditions but just keep it in mind." Eilish had also joined celebrities like Joaquin Phoenix, Ricky Gervais, Dave Bautista, and Margaret Cho in signing a petition requesting President Joe Biden allow this year's turkey to stay at Farm Sanctuary.





other 'institutions of belonging'. Even though democratic systems are the most conducive to all forms of expressions of identity, some womanhood ideals gain more visibility. But they lack followers and so don't impact policy. That is why it is even more important to identify the commonalities in women's dreams and goals in a fast-changing Indian context.

The most important aspect of this common cause search in policy must begin within the functionality of women. It must be the exercise of rights and responsibilities by women in urban, rural, or in between spaces, keeping the context within which they operate daily. This context is impacted by women's perceived sense of freedom, mobility, social support and utility. The first cause for policy advocacy is therefore access to public spaces. Women expect and need to feel safe and have zero restrictions on their mobility while out of the house whether it is to go to school, to till the land early in the morning at a farm or to sit behind a desk at a call centre at night...or to visit places of worship or entertainment, to run chores like buying household essentials at the kirana shop or to window shop at the mall. Whether it is mobility by train, or bus or their two-wheelers — women should be able to go wherever at whatever time. This mobility is a function of perceived safety and freedom as well as safety from violence and freedom from judgement.

The take-home from Nirbhaya event in Delhi was that women had experienced the lack of safety in Delhi across classes — women labourers, college students, older women, little girls in swanky homes or slums — were unsafe and at risk of sexual violence. While the perpetrators of violence could be men of any class — poor immigrant workers riding a bus at night or sleek imported car-owning sons of rich elites. Rates of violence against women are increasing, underreported and prosecution of perpetrators remains unpredictable. The complexity here is again that of status. The affiliation of perpetrators and criminals to a higher class or political parties or power centres (police, advocates, judges) in criminal justice systems modifies the process of justice and slows their conviction. Breaking this nexus of privilege is essential to women's very existence. Women can impact their locational reality or everyday life if they become a force on the local structure, local process, and national policy.

(The author is a policy analyst, author and coach.)



RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS

Everyone deserves a life of self-respect and dignity, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

A recent article in an international magazine said that India is on the verge of becoming a developed nation. This might sound positive as it appears that we are at par with other developed countries of the world. However, on the other hand, we wonder as to how should we react to the news about frequent crimes against women like rapes and dowry deaths? Do incidents like these match up with the pace at which we are developing? A recent incident — that made headlines across the country was about a 24-year-old pregnant woman, whose husband burnt her when she objected to his extra-marital affair — has revived the issue of bride burning again and has led to indignation, protests and condemnation. But hardly do people realise that the roots of this problem lie in defective social and moral values which give faulty outlook and wrong attitudes to the people regarding the place of women in society and that unless right values are inculcated in the people leading to rectification in their outlook and attitudes, the problem is unlikely to be resolved for years to come.

Presently, we find that a strong conflict is rife between two different value systems. On the one hand, some people justify the existing set of values, justifying it in the name of tradition. These are the people who do not care if a value has higher moral content and realistically a better potential for leading society to higher social good. They consider a value mainly in terms of its having been observed by a religious or cultural community over a long period even though it might have led to inequality, injustice and cruelty of one group towards another.

This conflict in value systems can be better illustrated by citing how different stands were taken on the question of the place and role of women in society when the request for allowing women rickshaw drivers and taxi drivers were made to the authorities. A similar thing happened when the makers of a women-oriented movie requested a film certificate from the Film Board. A news report in this connection, says that the examining committee of the Board, the revising committee, and the appellate tribunal, one after the other, recommended that the film be refused a certificate because it glorified woman's (the heroine's) servility to man as a praiseworthy quality and thus had an objectionable impact on society. They thought that the woman in the film was projected as a good woman because she was prepared to do anything and even to swear to be a servant while her husband openly pursued another woman. The Censor Board thought that this was a wrong thing even though the film showed that, ultimately, the husband repented. When the matter was taken to Court, the judgement took a different stand, based on a different set of values, wherein the learned judge opined that, "The heroine of the film, follows the hallowed traditions of a particular society." Thus, he gave more weight to tradition. On the other hand, the tribunal had held that the film, "tries to promote ideas which are not in keeping with values of the present-day society." What was up for consideration was not whether it was promoting justice and social good but whether it was upholding tradition or modernity. This despite the fact that the incidents of dowry deaths, such as the one mentioned above, illustrate only too starkly the insults and tortures a woman has to suffer today. The consideration of this aspect was rejected in the name of modernity or stressed in the name of modernity. This conflict regarding values is a barrier in taking effective steps towards the solution of the problem. The real solution, therefore, lies in moral and social reform which cannot be accomplished in isolation. It can form only a part of a comprehensive scheme for the outlook and the belief that fundamentally, men and women are souls and, that, each has a role complementary to the others. The society must also realise that there is a moral law in the world, which none — however high and influential — can violate with impunity. A person, who can go to the extent of extracting dowry from his wife and can indulge in wife-beating or wife-burning, is a mere degenerate who, in his daily dealings, can throw all moral norms to the winds. The first thing, therefore, is to reform this potential criminal rather than give him a girl in marriage. So, let us all make a strong resolve to educate our girls and sensitise our boys to burn this evil system from its roots and make a society where each soul has a right to live with dignity and self-respect.



CREATING PUBLIC SPACES

Breaking the nexus of male privilege is essential to women's existence, says DR SHWETA SINGH



Insured through resource consumption or categorising the social systems within which they are embedded. The stereotyping alienates, drawing an odd, unrelatable picture of women and their communities. In comparison, local writing using local languages represents women and their concerns — violence, drudgery, and aspirations for self and family — starkly, without



theorising much. So, they also don't lend themselves to the policy drafting board, too well.

Womanhood practise is a grouped norm. The so-called 'modern' norms are circulated by activism and feminism and social organising but remain confined to women in colleges or women in social work type of fields. But by their very nature, the activist, or the feminist, or the socially organised woman is different from the women living a life embedded in relationships. The so-called 'traditional' women are spread within families and communities and

The recent spate of violence against women being reported in the news makes it sound like a new occurrence. In media, the ideas of womanhood and empowerment are unrealistic and likely to create an unrealistic assessment of women's access to public space. Whereas, womanhood is not much of contested space in Indian small towns, cities and villages. Unlike metropolitan areas, like Mumbai and Delhi, where at least intellectually, the disparate identities and contentious spaces are hallmarks of 'modernising' societies. Yet in both, class continues to determine parameters of womanhood; more so than caste or religion. Class, though, is complex to decipher (like any other sociological construct). Education and employment interact with family resources to predict class as a status for women but not the quality of life.

The quality of life varies for women who are working and earning a wage. In the same way, women who work inside the household see differential returns and recognition of their labour ranging from being taken for granted, to appreciation and applause. Unfortunately, these nuances of distinction in women's lives have been subjected more to an outsider-gaze than an inward-looking exercise, at least in social policy. The 'western' sensitivity and sensibility has focused mostly on the inequity in gender relation mea-

In 2018, an article was published reflecting how the villagers of Doda district were deprived of basic amenities. Three years later, the situation remains unchanged as there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel.

The three districts — Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban in the Chenab Valley in Jammu and Kashmir — are known for their unique culture, tradition and topography. The tough geography and extreme weather conditions demand holistic development of the regions. However, 70 per cent of Chenab Valley's population still faces challenges related to access to basic services like electricity, roads and water, informed Meraj Malik, Doda's District Development Councillor. In this context, people have to face several difficulties which have been further complicated by the Covid-19 lockdown. For example, hand-washing — deemed to be an effective tool to fight Covid-19 — appears to be a difficult task here. Due to lack of adequate water supply, how are the people supposed to maintain proper hygiene? People from several areas of Chenab valley, including Doda and Kishtwar, find it hard to wash their hands or bathe each time they return home. During winters — the problem is only going to aggravate — like every year. Locals from the Valley have to walk around six kilometres on twisted and unmotorable roads to fetch potable water.

Not only water, but the

The long road to development

BABER NAFICE documents how the problems of people from the Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban regions have become even more acute during the pandemic



condition of healthcare infrastructure is also quite worrying especially in the isolated villages. In such areas, patients are carried on cots during medical emergencies on precarious, hilly roads. One can only imagine the plight of the rural communities here during the peak Covid-19 outbreak. "Along with basic facilities, the Valley should have a strong healthcare and road infrastructure. The Chenab Valley is known for its resourceful forest. Although the admin-

istration does not hesitate to use the resources of the forest, in return, even basic services are not provided to the people of the region," rued Ishtiyaque Dev, a veteran journalist from Doda.

Recently, it was announced that the road infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir is all set to get a major boost as Union Minister of Roads Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari will lay the foundation stones of 25 National Highway projects worth ₹11,721 crore. But con-



necting highways is not going to help the problem of people residing in areas tucked away in difficult geographic locations. Their ordeals are real and require real, immediate solutions at the local level.

Somi Raj, a local social activist, stressed that the administration should accelerate the development work in the valley. "Clean water, schools, employment and other fundamentals should be made available so that in the next few years there

would be no difference between other developed areas and Chenab valley," said Somi. According to him, schools and universities should be built within the region so that students do not have to migrate to Jammu, Srinagar or Delhi to pursue higher studies. The poor condition of schools is one of the topmost concerns for the locals. Nishat Qazi, a social worker from the region, said, "We had heard that the concerned authorities were going to

take the required action to improve the condition of schools. For a brief time, locals had developed hope in their otherwise hopeless lives. But to our dismay, it never turned into reality." He explained how multiple requests have been lodged with the administration but to no avail.

He also pointed out that although there are several power projects in the region, households still struggle to access electricity. As per a report published last year, several villages in the valley do not receive electricity at all, despite the fact that there are at least four power projects that have been commissioned while two more are under construction.

"Over the years, different administrations have served their tenure, but the people here never received access to basic facilities. The villagers are used as a mere vote bank. Once elections are over, they stop existing," said Meraj. In such a situation, these social advocates and workers wonder who is going to find solutions to the problems faced by the people of Chenab valley. Or if there is a solution at all.

—Charkha Features

Step out of the circle of time, and into the circle of love. —Rumi

PARENTAL DEPRESSION IS A BIG RISK FACTOR

Children who live with a parent who has depression are more likely to develop depression and to not achieve educational milestones, according to a new study published in the open-access journal PLOS ONE.

Maternal depression is a known risk factor for depression in children and is associated with a range of adverse child health and educational outcomes including poorer academic attainment. To date, however, risk factors associated with paternal depression have been less well examined. Understanding the effects of timing of both maternal and paternal depression of offspring outcomes has implications for prevention and early intervention.

Overall, 34.5 per cent of mothers and 18 per cent of fathers/stable men had a diagnosis of depression. In offspring, 4.34 per cent of all children, 2.85 per cent of boys, and 5.89 per cent of girls were diagnosed with depression.



EXTREME HEAT JEOPARDISES HEART HEALTH

A consequence of global warming is a greater frequency and intensity of extreme heat events. This extreme heat is associated with a greater risk of adverse cardiovascular incidents, especially for adults with pre-existing cardiovascular diseases.

Experts writing in the *Canadian Journal of Cardiology*, discuss how extreme heat affects cardiovascular health, why health professionals should care and what recommendations they can make to minimize consequences.

Extreme heat events, such as heatwaves, are predicted to increase in frequency, severity and duration. Extreme heat poses a risk to human health, increasing the risk of morbidity and mortality. Examples include 70,000 deaths attributed to the European heatwave in 2003, and 55,000 deaths attributed to the 2010 Russian heatwave.



AIR POLLUTION IS A THREAT TO CHILDREN

Newborns and children are more susceptible to the air pollution inside and outside homes which may have adverse impact on their cognitive development.

"The polluted air affects unborn children in mothers' womb which may lead to premature birth affecting brain and cognitive development of the baby," said Dr Chandra Mohan Kumar, additional professor, Pediatrics, AIIMS Patna.

He said that air pollution is one of the major killers of under five children accounting for one:10 deaths indirectly as an underlying cause. More than 90 per cent children below 15 years of age are breathing toxic air and the figure goes to as high as 98 per cent in low and middle income countries as compared to 50 odd per cent in developed nations.

Citing the reason for children being disproportionately more susceptible to the effects of air pollution, he explained, "They breathe more rapidly as well as they also live closer to the ground, where some pollutants reach peak concentrations and absorb more pollutants".



TREES TO MANAGE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

As the global climate change conversation intensifies and nations look to minimise environmental impacts in their own backyards, nature-based solutions are garnering new levels of interest.

Trees are widely recognised for their role in sequestering carbon, and capturing and storing rainfall in their canopy to manage stormwater runoff, but there has been minimal research and clarity around how urban forests can be used as practical stormwater management tools.

To address this gap, University of Maryland researchers have conducted a study and concluded that single urban trees, such as street trees, function differently than trees grown in clusters featuring significantly greater transpiration rates. This result offers a new understanding of how to manage the landscape in urban settings to reduce the harmful effects of stormwater runoff.



MECHANICAL TOOLS IMPROVES OUR LANGUAGE

Language has long been considered a very complex skill, mobilising specific brain networks. However, in recent years, scientists have revisited this idea.

Our ability to understand the syntax of complex sentences is one of the most difficult language skills to acquire. In 2019, research had revealed a correlation between being particularly proficient in tool use and having good syntactic ability.

A new study, published in *Science*, has shown that both skills rely on the same neurological resources, which are located in the same brain region. Furthermore, motor training using a tool improves our ability to understand the syntax of complex sentences and vice-versa. Syntactic training improves our proficiency in using tools. These findings could be applied clinically to support the rehabilitation of patients having lost some of their language skills.



IYER, SAHA SET UP INTRIGUING FINAL DAY

PTI ■ KANPUR

Debutant Shreyas Iyer showed his ice-cool temperament under pressure to stand tall with a fine half-century which placed India in a commanding position as they set up a stiff victory target of 284 for New Zealand on the fourth day of the opening Test here on Sunday.

India declared at 234 for 7 for an overall lead of 283 and gave the Black Caps four tricky overs to face under fading light during which they managed four runs and lost opener Will Young to Ravichandran Ashwin.

With that scalp, Ashwin became the joint third highest wicket-taker in Indian cricket with Harbhajan Singh (417 wickets).

The highest ever fourth innings chase by a visiting team in India is 276 by Viv Richards' West Indies against the Dilip Vengsarkar-led India in 1987 at the Feroz Shah Kotla, which placed statistics on the home team's side.

The honours for India on the day were shared by Iyer (65 off 125 balls), who became the first Indian to score a hundred and fifty on debut and the plucky Wriddhiman Saha

(61 not out, 126 balls), who battled stiff neck to make an invaluable contribution which will certainly count a lot in the final context of the match.

Axar Patel (28 not out) then conjured another 67-run eighth-wicket stand with Saha to slowly take the match out of the Black Caps' grasp.

If New Zealand are still in the match, credit must go to their tireless seam bowling duo of Tim Southee (22-2-75-3) and Kyle Jamieson (17-6-40-3), who showed an exhibition of top class bowling on an unresponsive track.

However, it will now depend on how much time it takes for India's spin troika to roll over New Zealand, whose openers showed a lot of gumption on the second afternoon and third morning.

Also if skipper Williamson can do something mind-blowing with the willow, there might just be a great contest on the cards.

If the morning belonged to New Zealand's bowlers, who decided to prolong Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane's bad patch, the afternoon was Iyer's time under the sun while Saha did his bit, reaching his sixth half-century in the final ses-



sion of the day.

This is certainly an innings which will give Saha's Test career a new lease of life.

This was after stand-in captain Rahane and his temporary deputy Pujara's saga of failures continued leaving India tottering at 51 for 5 in the first 75 minutes of the morning session.

But credit to Iyer, who once again displayed steely temperament on the way to his second 50-plus score in the match, hitting eight fours and a huge six over long off against Will Somerville.

His best shot, however, was an inside out lofted drive off left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel. It was a difficult shot that was perfectly executed.

It was followed by a square cut in the same over as Williamson erred by bowling his spinners for way too long.

That was proved when Southee removed Iyer at the stroke of tea when he tried to pull one that was drifting down leg side.

Credit should also be given to Saha as he batted with an open-chested stance compared to his usual side-on which reduces the pronounced neck movement.

He played his customary game of dabs and flicks and also produced an occasional slog pull for six as his innings had four fours and a six.

However, on the fourth morning, Southee, a practitioner of conventional swing bowling, took a master-class on how to bowl on an unresponsive Indian track, classically setting up the batters.

But before Southee got into the act, Kyle Jamieson (13-6-26-3) targeted Pujara's (22 off 33 balls) ribcage, getting one to rear up on this dead track and it brushed the India No. 3's gloves into the hands of keeper Tom Blundell.

Rahane (4 off 15 balls) is out of form and the world knows about that. However, Ajaz Patel (17-3-60-1), who has looked way below Test class, then produced his best delivery of the match.

An arm ball that was fired in with the angle caught Rahane plumb in-front while he tried to play a forward defensive prod.

Mayank Agarwal (17) did all the hardwork in the first hour but Southee (15.2-3-48-3) set him up with deliveries that came into him from good length spot as he played with a closed bat-face.

Batting coach Rathour 'understands' Pujara-Rahane lean patch

PTI ■ KANPUR

Batting coach Vikram Rathour "understands" fully that Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane are now India players living on borrowed time.

But the former opener on Sunday couldn't give a definitive answer as to who would sit out in order to accommodate skipper Virat Kohli's comeback in the next Test against New Zealand.

With Shreyas Iyer scoring 105 and 65 on debut, it would be almost criminal to drop the stylish Mumbaier, and understandably, Rathour had to fend questions on Pujara and Rahane's form going into the Mumbai Test, starting on December 3.

"Of course, you want the top-order to contribute but cricketers (Pujara and Rahane) you mentioned



they have played 80 (79 for Rahane) and 90 Tests (91 Test for Pujara). "Of course, to play that many games, they must have done well for us," Rathour tried his

best to defend the 2021 Test average of below 20 by the stand-in captain (19.57) and 30.42 by his deputy.

"We understand that both of them are going through a lean phase but we understand that they have both played very, very important knocks for us in the past. We are pretty sure that they are going to come back and play important knocks for us," Rathour's statement lacked conviction.

But what's the kind of long rope that one gives a senior player, who has been a past performer? Is it 15 or 20 Tests? The former Punjab opener, who played six Tests during the 1996-97 season, felt that it can't be quantified. "I don't think you can put a number to that. It really depends on situation the team is in and what the team is required to do," he sidestepped the question.

Bangladesh leads Pakistan by 83 runs after day 3 of 1st test

AP ■ CHATTOGRAM

Pakistan's fast bowlers reduced Bangladesh to 39-4 in its second innings at the end of day three on Sunday to leave the first cricket test evenly poised.

Bangladesh had secured a 44-run lead after bowling out Pakistan for 286, thanks largely to left-arm spinner Tajjul Islam, who returned figures of 7-116.

Instead, the home side ended the day by extending its lead to 83 runs but has just six wickets remaining. Mushfiqur Rahim, who made 91 in the first innings, was batting on 12 and Yasir Ali on 8 after surviving several close calls.

Despite the first-innings deficit, Pakistan fought back through its fast bowlers — Shaheen Shah Afridi and Hasan Ali — who used the short ball to precision, leaving Bangladesh



in a potentially precarious position.

Afridi cracked the game open, striking twice in his third over.

He trapped Shadman leg-before for 1 with a ball that swung sharply and then two balls later had Najmul Hossain caught at first slip for a duck with a short ball.

His short ball again worked for him when opener Saif Hasan gave the return catch and was dismissed for 14.

Ali also got into the act, dis-

missing captain Mominul Haque for a duck with a leading edge, leaving Bangladesh on 25-4.

Earlier, Tajjul pegged back the Pakistan innings after the visitors began the day on 145 for no loss.

Opener Abid Ali top-scored with 133 off 282, hitting 12 fours and two sixes.

Tajjul struck in the first over of the day, dismissing Abdullah Shafique and Azhar Ali via review with consecutive deliveries.

Shafique couldn't add any runs to his overnight total of 52. Abid, who started the day on 93, flicked Tajjul past square leg for a couple to reach his fourth century off 209 balls.

Skipper Babar Azam appeared to be in control before offspinner Mehidy Hasan's (1-68) quicker delivery rattled his stump for 10.

Unfortunate but 'ideal' team man Saha's role is to do 'tough job' when Pant is not available: Rathour

PTI ■ KANPUR

Wriddhiman Saha is an "ideal team man" who can always be relied to do the "tough job" but unfortunately he will have to play the second fiddle when India's number one keeper-batter Rishabh Pant gets back from break, batting coach Vikra Rathour said on Sunday.

Saha, the oldest member of the current Indian set-up at 37, is playing his 39th Test in 11 years since his debut.

His first five years after debut went as legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni's understudy and even if it sounds crude, he is now a back-up for 24-year-old Pant. On Sunday, with his Test career on line, Saha battled hard with a stiff-neck for his gutsy 61 not out after Shreyas Iyer laid the platform with an attractive 65.

"He had a really, really stiff neck and know-

ing Saha who is an ideal team man, he is going to do whatever is required," batting coach Rathour waxed eloquent about the veteran keeper, who shared two fifty-plus stands with Iyer and Axar Patel.

"He would do the tough things for the team and he played an extremely important knock at the stage the team was at that point," Saha is a quiet

person, someone who is not known to be too expressive but the teams knows that the 'plod and grind effort' will come from the gritty man, who hails from North Bengal city of Siliguri.

"That is what we always expect from Wriddhi. He has always been that kind of a person, whom we can count on and today he showed why," Rathour said.

However, he made it clear that even at this juncture of his career, the Bengal stumper is nothing more than a stop-gap option for Team India as Pant has pushed him far back during away series in Australia where the senior man was given a first go.

"As far as Wriddhi is concerned, unfortunately for him, we have an extremely special player Rishabh, who is number one keeper for us and has done extremely well in past few years."



Kedar Devdhar to captain Baroda in Hazare Trophy

PTI ■ VADODARA

Experienced batter Kedar Devdhar will lead Baroda in the upcoming Vijay Hazare Trophy while Bhargav Bhatt will be his deputy, a top official said on Sunday.

The development was confirmed to PTI by Baroda Cricket Association (BCA) secretary Ajit Lele. He said the decision was taken the selection committee.

The 31-year-old Devdhar, a right-handed batter, has so far played 73 List A games from which he has scored 2,402 runs with 148 as his highest score.

The development comes a day after Mumbai Indians and India all-rounder Krunal Pandya stepped down as Baroda captain, following the team's underwhelming campaign in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

PTI had on Saturday reported that Kedar Devdhar is



among the frontrunners to succeed Krunal, starting with the Vijay Hazare Trophy national ODI championships next month.

Baroda finished with the least points -- 4 -- from Group B, alongside Services, with one win and four losses in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy.

The 31-year-old Bhargav Bhatt is a left-arm orthodox spinner and a left-handed batter, and has taken 50 wickets from 42 list A matches.

For the Hazare Trophy, which begins on December 8, Baroda are placed in Elite Group B, along with Tamil Nadu, Mumbai, Bengal, Karnataka and Pondicherry.

Chennaiyin FC eye second straight win

Fatorda (Goa): A rejuvenated Chennaiyin FC will aim for a second straight victory when they take on a winless Northeast United FC in an Indian Super League match here on Monday.

CFC started their campaign in ISL 2021-22 with a 1-0 win over Hyderabad FC while the Highlanders have lost one and drawn the other in the two games they have played so far.

However, in a blow to the two-time champions, they will be without the services of influential mid-fielder Rafael Crivallero, who will be out of action for four weeks owing to an injury.

"Rafael Crivellaro has incurred a muscle injury. The Brazilian will be out for four weeks while he continues with his rehabilitation with the medical team," the club said on its website.

CFC head coach Bozidar Bandovic will hope Vladimir Koman, who plays a role similar to that of Crivallero, can keep doing the job for the

team. About the absence of Crivallero, the coach said, "Rafa is an important player, a good player. Now that he is injured. We have to look at others who are playing...We need to keep working without him."

"We cannot depend on one player. Koman's role is important. Each and every player has an important role. We will try our best during rehab to get Rafa back as soon as possible."

CFC, who have struggled to score in the previous season, have started the new one on a positive note and will hope the team can keep up the good work. Koman, who scored the all-important goal in the win over Hyderabad, said, "I am always confident. With the first win, I hope that the other players also become more confident. Scoring in the first game is always nice. And when the team wins, there is double satisfaction."

PTI

Chelsea hosts slumping Man U, Madrid vs Sevilla



AP ■ WASHINGTON

For what could be his final game in temporary charge of Manchester United, Michael Carrick takes his team to Premier League leader Chelsea in the headline match of the 13th round.

Carrick's only match as interim manager was a 2-0 win at Villarreal in the Champions League. He could soon be replaced by German coach Ralf Rangnick, who has been in talks with United.

Manchester City came into the weekend three points behind Chelsea and plays before the leader, at home to West Ham. Having criticized the standard of the Tottenham squad he has inherited following an embarrassing loss in the Europa Conference League, Antonio Conte takes his team north for an away match at Burnley. Also, Watford manager Claudio Ranieri returns to Leicester, the team he surprisingly led to the title in 2016, and Brentford hosts Everton.

Sevilla's visit to leader Real Madrid is the high-light match on a day when the league's top four teams are all in action. Sevilla enters the match at Santiago Bernabéu Stadium in third place at two points back.

Carlo Ancelotti will once again entrust Madrid's attack to Karim Benzema and Vinicius Junior with Eden Hazard still out recovering from a stomach virus and Gareth Bale still injured. Sevilla will likely also be without several injured players, including midfielder Suso and striker Youssef En-Nesyri.

Second-place Real Sociedad is just a point behind Madrid and will play earlier at Espanyol hoping to move to the top of the table. Atlético Madrid is in fourth before it visits Cádiz looking to bounce back from its home loss to AC Milan in the Champions League this week.

Sixth-place Real Betis has won two straight by a combined score of 5-0 — it hosts last-place Levante, the only winless side.

ITALY After enduring their first league losses last weekend, Napoli and AC Milan will endeavor to get back on track in Serie A. The teams share the lead, one point ahead of third-placed Inter Milan.

Napoli hosts Lazio, shortly after Milan welcomes Sassuolo. Roma will be looking to close the gap on the top four with a win over Torino. At the other end of the table Udinese hosts fellow struggler Genoa, while Spezia welcomes Bologna.

GERMANY

Leipzig hosts Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga's first game without fans for months due to spiraling coronavirus infections in the state of Saxony. The home team will be without a host of players due to infections, too. The club says it had six more positive test results for COVID-19, adding to the three previous cases it reported in midweek. Coach Jesse Marsch is among those infected, though it didn't stop the team routing Belgian club Brugge 5-0 in the Champions League on Wednesday.



Parmjeet Kumar wins bronze in World Para-Powerlifting C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Parmjeet Kumar on Sunday became the first Indian para-powerlifter to win a medal in World Championships as he claimed a bronze at the ongoing edition in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Kumar, who trains at Sports Authority of India Centre in Gandhinagar, won the bronze in men's 49kg category with an effort of 158kg.

"History created for India in Para @Powerlifting by Parmjit Kumar of Punjab as he wins #bronze at the on-going World Para Powerlifting Championship in Tbilisi, Georgia," Paralympics Committee of India President Deepa Malik tweeted.

"Parmjit's 158kg Lift has created history!" SAI congratulated Kumar for the historic feat.

"Many Congratulations to our NCOE athlete, Shri Parmjeet Kumar (M-49kg) for winning the BRONZE medal IN WORLD PARA POWERLIFTING SR CHAMPIONSHIP 2021 — TBILISI," SAI said in a tweet.

Manika Batra fails to create history for India in World TT

PTI ■ HOUSTON

Star India paddler Manika Batra failed to bag a medal at the World Table Tennis Championships after crashing out in the quarterfinals of the mixed and women's doubles events here.

Just one win away from a historic medal, Batra and G Sathiyam lost to Japan's Tomakazu Harimoto and Hina Hayata 1-3 (5-11 2-11 11-7 9-11) in the last eight round of the mixed doubles competition.

Batra had another opportunity to create history but she faltered yet

again, losing the women's doubles quarterfinals with her partner Archana Kamath in straight games.

Batra and Kamath were no match for Luxembourg duo of Sarah De Nutte and Ni Xia Lian, losing 0-3 (1-11 6-11 8-11) in a lop-sided contest.

Germany beats Djokovic's Serbia at Davis Cup



AP ■ WASHINGTON

Not even Novak Djokovic playing back-to-back could help Serbia avoid losing to Germany in the Davis Cup finals group phase.

After Djokovic helped Serbia pull even at 1-1 by beating Jan-Lennard Struff, the world's top-ranked male player immediately joined Nikola Petic in doubles.

But German pair Tim Puetz and Kevin Krawietz showed more mettle in a tight 7-6, 3-6, 7-6 victory to take the decider and the tie victory 2-1.

"It's a great performance to beat the team who have the world No. 1," Germany captain Michael Kohlmann said. "Before the tie, we all thought that we had a good chance. We really believed it and it paid off."

Serbia could still go through to the quarterfinals,

which will include two runners-up to go with the six group winners. But Germany can seal its spot as the Group F winner with a victory over Austria, which Serbia has already beaten.

Playing without a public in Innsbruck due to virus restrictions by Austrian authorities, Germany took the lead when Dominik Koepfer downed Filip Krajinovic 7-6, 6-4.

Djokovic defeated Struff 6-2, 6-4 in the Serb's 50th Davis Cup match.

After a short break, he was back out there for the doubles that lasted more than two hours.

"We will have to wait until tomorrow and see (if we advance)," Serbia captain Viktor Troicki said.

"Filip had a tough one, and in doubles, what can I say after this match? A 7-6 loss in the third (set), and we had a lot of chances."

I am still proud of my team. It wasn't our day in the end. I hope we still have a chance."

Italy became the first team to book its spot in the final eight after it beat Colombia to take two points from Group E, which it also shares with the United States.

Lorenzo Sonego beat Nicolas Mejia 6-7, 6-4, 6-2, and Jannik Sinner followed with a 7-5, 6-0 win over Daniel Elahi Galan, in the matches in Turin.

Second-ranked Daniil Medvedev helped Russia beat Ecuador, setting up a clash with Spain to decide which will go through as group winner.

Medvedev eased past Emilio Gomez 6-0, 6-2 after breaking his serve five times to give Russia an insurmountable 2-0 lead.