

Convocation ceremony held in SRHU

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A segregated convocation ceremony spreading over four days was organised by the Swami Rama Himalayan University, Jollygrant ended on Wednesday. A total of 869

students were awarded degrees in two phases during the programme.

In the second phase degrees were awarded to 227 doctors and 147 nurses.

Addressing the ceremony on Wednesday, the Vice

Chancellor (VC) of Swami Rama Himalayan University, Vijay Dhasmana said that the institute is working in the direction of removing the shortage of doctors in the mountainous areas of the state. Exhorting the doctors, nurses



and Para medical staff to become sensitive and provide best possible treatment to the patients Dhasmana said that the problems of patients should be listened with empathy.

The registrar of the university Sushila Sharma said that a total of 869 degrees were awarded to the students during the ceremony in which the

protocols of the pandemic of Covid-19 were strictly adhered to.

Dr Alia Tausif, Dr Nishant Setia, Dr Ishika Gandhi, Dr Shivani Mehra, Dr Akshi Singhal, Dr Shivangi Singh, Sejal Singh, Ojasvi Mittal, Ramita Goyal, Milan Arora, Tapan Pandey, Ruchika Puri, Rishika Trivedi, Arjun Sehgal,

Akash Gupta and Mansvi Kalra were given Academic awards while Swami Rama Best Graduate Award was conferred upon Dr Manisvi Kalra (MBBS) and Rakesh Pundir (Nursing).

The Pro Vice Chancellor Dr Vijendra Chauhan, Dr Prakash Keshaviah and others were present on the occasion.

INBRIEFS

LEOPARD CAUGHT IN VILLAGE

Bageshwar: A leopard was trapped in a cage by the Forest department in Matela village of Almora district late on Tuesday evening. District Panchayat member Mahendra Singh Bisht said that though trapping of one leopard comes as a relief, villagers have been spotting leopards at various places. The locals have demanded effective action to tackle the human-wildlife conflict.

PNB HOLDS VARIOUS HINDI COMPETITIONS

Dehradun: Punjab National Bank organised various competitions to mark Hindi month. The bank's Dehradun (west) circle head Rajendra Bhatia and other officials were also present on the occasion. Officials and employees of the bank participated in various events and competitions held on the occasion. The senior manager (Rajbhasha) Aruna Jyoti was also among those present on the occasion.

BOB MARKS HINDI DIWAS

Dehradun: The Bank of Baroda commemorated Hindi Diwas with enthusiasm. At the Dehradun regional office of the bank, the regional manager Anup Sharma exhorted the bank's staff members to do their work in Hindi while also recalling the golden history of the language. He also motivated them to use simple and effective language to further enhance customer service.

Himachal CM presides over all party meeting to review arrangements for proposed visit of President Kovind

PNS ■ SHIMLA

An all-party meeting under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur was held here on Wednesday to review the arrangements for the proposed visit of the President Ram Nath Kovind from September 16 in the state.

The President will be on a four-day visit to the hill state and will address a special session of the State Assembly on Friday to mark the golden jubilee of Himachal Pradesh's statehood.

The Chief Minister said that the State Government had planned to organize year-long celebrations to mark the golden jubilee year of the statehood, but due to the Corona pandemic it was not possible to celebrate it on a large scale.

He said that to commemorate this auspicious occasion, a special session of state Vidhan Sabha will be addressed by the President. Besides the sitting MLAs, all the former MLAs have been invited on this auspicious occasion. This event would be held in a highly dignified and graceful manner so as to make it a memorable event, he said.

Thakur also sought all possible cooperation from the leaders of all the political parties. Speaker of Vidhan Sabha, Vipin Singh Parmar said that all the former MPs and MLAs have been invited to be part of

this mega event. He said that over 73 former MPs and MLAs have been given their consent to be part of this event.

Leader of Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri said that this event is above party politics and assured full cooperation from the Congress party to the State Government. MLA Rakesh Singha said that it is an event of the people of the state who have made immense contributions towards the development of Himachal.

Chief Whip Bikram Jaryal, MLAs Asha Kumari and Ram Lal Thakur also shared their views during the meeting.

According to the schedule, the President will reach Annadale Helipad on September 16 at 12 noon via Chandigarh from Palam Airport, Delhi. Subsequently, he will reach Cecil hotel at Chaura Maidan here at around 12.25 pm.

On September 17, the President will address the State Assembly while in the evening, he will attend a cultural programme at 7.30 pm and banquet at 8 pm hosted by the state Governor. He will be chief guest at the valedictory ceremony of the Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IAAS Officer Trainees of 2018 and 2019 Batches) at the National Academy of Audit and Accounts at Shimla on September 18 and will return to Delhi on September 19.

Deaths of children: Haryana Govt says probable reason of fever could be drinking water contamination

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Government on Wednesday said that the prima facie inquiry into deaths of seven children due to fever outbreak at two villages- Chilli and Chilla- in Palwal district could be due to the unhygienic conditions and illegal drinking water pipe connections that led to contamination of drinking water.

Additional Chief Secretary, Health Department, Rajeev Arora said that Department's survey regarding the suspected fever outbreak at villages Chilli and Chilla, SC-Gohpur PHC Uttawar, CHC-Hathin in district Palwal reveals that out of the seven deaths, two deaths were reported to be of children below 5 years of age and five deaths were of children above 5 years of age.

It came to light during the investigations being conducted that the prima facie, probable cause of outbreak could be the unhygienic conditions and illegal drinking water pipe connections that led to contamination of drinking water. However, the final cause of deaths among these children can only be commented upon after completion of epidemiological investigation, he said.

Arora said that information regarding suspected fever deaths among children in villages Chilli and Chilla was received by the District Health Authorities, Palwal and in order to assess the ground situation, district rapid response team was activated by Civil Surgeon, Palwal and sent to the area affected. An epidemiological investigation was ordered in

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The UJVN Limited managing director Sandeep Singhal has received the Aqua Foundation Dam Safety Award 2021. He was awarded in the Professional Excellence- Individual category for his achievements, commendable performance, dam safety and other noteworthy works. The Aqua Foundation, New Delhi presents this award to persons for



achievements in various during his 34 year service.

Punjab PCC chief Sidhu targets Badals, not Capt Amarinder

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu, addressing his first-ever press conference after his elevation to the party's top post on Wednesday, lashed out at the Badals for being "the main architects" of the Centre's "black" farm laws.

At the same time, Sidhu, who leave no chance to attack his party's Chief Minister, main-

tained a strategic silence over Capt Amarinder Singh's "lift your dharnas from Punjab" remarks for the protesting farmers.

Even as the farmers and the opposition parties, not only from Punjab but also from neighbouring Haryana, are targeting Capt Amarinder for his appeal to the protesting farmers to shift their dharnas to Delhi from Punjab for the sake of sake of Punjab's economy, his bête noire Sidhu refused to comment. "No comments," replied Sidhu to the media's inquisitive queries. Completely focussed on his line of attack aimed at the Badals and making conscious attempts not to attack his own party's Government, Sidhu accused the previous SAD-BJP government in Punjab of laying the foundation of the Centre's farm laws over which the farmers are protesting at Delhi borders for the past 10 months now.

Sidhu minced no word to say that Akali Dal would again join hands with the BJP. The Akalis will once again be "back to Modi" after elections," he alleged.

"The three farm laws are the photocopies of Punjab's Contract Farming Act, 2013, passed by the previous SAD-BJP government in the State...I say this with conviction that the blueprint of the Centre's three farm laws was prepared by the Badals. I will expose them so that everybody knows who the real culprit is," he said. "They (Badals) implemented these laws in Punjab first. The former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal was the niti nirmata (policy-maker) of the farm laws," said Sidhu.

Notably, the then Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal had tabled a bill on contract farming in the Punjab Assembly in 2013 and later it was enacted as the Punjab Contract Farming Act.

Presenting a copy of the Act to the media, Sidhu said that many salient features of the two Acts are similar. "In the Contract Farming Act, there is no provision that says farmers' produce cannot be purchased below MSP. A list of 108 crops was attached saying that these crops could be pro-

duced below the MSP. The list also included wheat and paddy," he pointed.

"In both the laws, the farmers have no right to go to the courts as the complaints have to be disposed of by the bureaucrats. In case of defaults, it would be entered on the 'fard' of the farmers. This law has made Punjab the first state to impose a fine of Rs 5,000 to Rs five lakh if a farmer defaults on the contract," he said adding that the Punjab law is the soul, while the Centre's three black laws are the body.

Sidhu, giving clause-by-clause details of the Punjab Contract Farming law and how the BJP-led Central Government photocopied the clauses with minor changes as new agri laws, said: "BJP and SAD are two sides of the same coin. The breakup of the alliance was a smokescreen. They were one and they will be one once again after the elections."

Also comparing some of the provisions of the Punjab law with the Centre's Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, Sidhu said that it is a "photostat copy" of the state law.

"There is no MSP guarantee in both laws, which mention dispute settlement by bureaucracy, bar on jurisdiction of the civil court, amount recovered as land revenue, period of agreement and registration authority," he said.

Sidhu said that as per these two laws, it was the corporate who would decide farm services and they could also procure crop directly from fields that could kill the APMC mandis. Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) were given protection and no farmer could file any suit under these two laws, he said adding that these laws were framed only to benefit the corporate. He also slammed the Badals for first backing the Centre's three farm laws and then taking a U-turn after criticism from farmers.

Also showing video clips of Badals on a projector, he questioned, "Why were they singing paean of the laws? Why were they saying these laws are good for the farmers if they were not behind these laws?"

IDFC First Bank Limited

(erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited)

CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792

Registered Office:- KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai- 600031.

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Notice under Section 13 (2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

The following borrowers and co-borrowers availed the below mentioned secured loans from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited) The loans of the below-mentioned borrowers and co-borrowers have been secured by the mortgage of their respective properties. As they have failed to adhere to the terms and conditions of the respective loan agreements and had become irregular, their loan were classified as NPA as per the RBI guidelines. Amounts due by them to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited) are mentioned as per respective notices issued more particularly described in the following table and further interest on the said amounts shall also be applicable and the same will be charged as per contractual rate with effect from their respective dates.

Sr No.	Loan Account No.	Type of Loan	Name of borrowers and co-borrowers	Section 13 (2) Notice Date	Outstanding amount as per Section 13 (2) Notice	Property Address
1	34168058, 7551974 & 7548169	LOAN AGAINST PROPERTY	1. M/S SWARGASHRAM GEMS EMPOURIM 2. UMA SHANKAR 3. INDU VERMA	06.09.2021	1,79,19,325.78/-	PROPERTY: 1 ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PROPERTY COMPRISED KHASRA NO. 779 C, KHATA NO. 19, ADMEASURING 235 SQ. MTRS. SITUATED AT ONKARANAND MARG KAILASHGATE, PATTI DHAMAANDSYUN, MUNI KI RETI, TEHSIL: NARANDRA NAGAR, DISTRICT: TIHRI, GARHWAL AND BOUNDED AS: EAST: ROAD 30 FEETWEST: OIL MILL NORTH: MURARI LAL JI SOUTH: 30 FEET ROAD PROPERTY NO.2 ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PROPERTY SITUATED AT KHASRA NO. 187, VILLAGE TAPOWAN, TEHSIL NARENDRA NAGAR, DISTRICT TEHRI GARHWAL, UTTARAKHAND

You are hereby called upon to pay the amounts to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited) as per the details shown in the above table with contracted rate of interest thereupon from their respective dates and other costs, charges etc. within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the undersigned shall be constrained to initiate proceedings, under Section 13 (4) and section 14 of the SARFAESI Act, against the mortgaged properties mentioned hereinabove to realize the amount due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited). Further you are prohibited under Section 13 (13) of the said Act from transferring the said secured assets either by way of sale/lease or otherwise.

Date : 16.09.2021
Place : UTTARAKHAND

Authorized Officer

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited)

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Engagement of "Ayurvedic & Homeopathic Practitioner in Northern Railway, Moradabad Division on contractual basis (Part-time, on honorarium basis) for unreserved candidate SC/ST, OBC candidate can also apply.

Applications are invited for engagement of Part-time Medical Practitioners on contractual basis (honorarium basis) in Northern Railway, Divisional Hospital, Moradabad for one post of Ayurvedic Practitioners & one post of Homeopathic Practitioner in the following system of indigenous Medicine on honorarium basis under the aegis of Divisional Staff Benefit Fund (DSBF) Committee, Moradabad division on the under mentioned terms and conditions:-

BAMS	BHMS
Ayurvedic Practitioner	Homeopathic Practitioner
(i) 04 years Bachelor Degree/diploma in BAMS from recognized university/ statutory state board/council/faculty of Indian Medicine central council Act, 1970 (48 of 1970).	(i) Degree in BMS (Homeopathy)/DHM/DHS/DMS Homeopathy, BMBS/04 years diploma in MHMS/ Degree in GSMS from recognized university/ statutory state board/council/faculty of Indian Medicine central council Act, 1970 (48 of 1970).
(ii) Enrolment on the central Register of Indian Medicine or a state Register of Indian Medicine	(ii) Enrolment on the central Register of Indian Medicine or a state Register of Indian Medicine

- Post - (02)** 01 Ayurvedic & 01 Homeopathy
- Honorarium -** Rs. 22,500/- per month.
- Working Hrs -** 4 hrs daily (13:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs)
- The practitioners will be engaged by the Divisional Staff Benefit Fund committee, Northern Railway/Moradabad division and he/she shall not be considered as Railway employee. His/her engagement shall be on purely temporary basis for a period of ONE YEAR.
- Engagement of the above Practitioners will be only for one year purely temporary on contractual basis. Their engagement can be extended upto the age of 63 year, keeping in view of their satisfactory working report every year.
- During the duty hours, they will not attend any private patient and does not leave the hospital premises without the permission of the competent authority.
- They will be required to work in Northern Railway, Divisional Hospital, Moradabad. 04 Hours a day from 13:00 hrs on 17:00 hrs i.e. from Monday to Saturday on all working days.
- The engaged Practitioners shall be paid a consolidated honorarium indicated above at each Practitioner without any allowances from Divisional Staff Benefit Fund.
- Casual Leave of 08 (Eight) days shall be permissible to them on pro-rata basis and no other kind of leave shall be admissible.
- The selection for the above posts will be held on the basis of Viva Voce.
- Deduction on pro-rata basis shall be made from the consolidated monthly honorarium for absence not covered by Casual Leave.
- No TA/DA shall be admissible to the engaged Practitioner and no expenses to join the new assignment shall be permissible. Candidates shall have to make their own arrangement for stay during the selection, if required.
- No Railway Quarter shall be provided by the Railway Administration to the engaged Practitioner during the period of engagement.
- He/She will not be treated as Railway employee and does not entitle for any privilege, admissible to a Railway employee. No medical treatment from Railway Hospital is admissible to the Practitioner or his/her family members.
- No Railway Passes/PTOs shall be permissible in favour of the engaged Practitioners.
- The engaged Practitioner shall not be allowed to issue any sick and fit certificate in favour of the Railway employees. Private practice shall be permitted but without hampering the normal duty in the Railways.
- Services of engaged Practitioner shall be terminated on reaching the age of 63 years or after the completion of period of engagement, whichever is earlier. Even prior to this, the services can be terminated on 14 days notice on either side. The Divisional Staff Benefit Fund (DSBF) Committee/Moradabad Division shall not be bound to assign any reason for such termination and this power may be exercised by the Chairman/DSBF Committee/MB division and the Practitioner will have no right to challenge the order of DSBF committee to this effect in any court of law.

Last date for receipt of completed application: 12.10.2021.

- Eligible and willing candidates should submit their application to Chair Person/DSBFC & Sr. Divisional Personnel Officer, Divisional Railway Manager Office, Moradabad on the format enclosed. Photostat copies of certificates in support of their claim duly attested by a Gazetted Officer should be enclosed along with their application. Last date of receipt is 12.10.2021.

- No TA/DA would be allowed.

- The details of notification, application form and necessary guidelines are available on www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

No. LW/AHD/DHMB/2021 DATED: .09.2021.

Sr. Divisional Personnel Officer

Northern Railway, Moradabad.

2059/2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Gurmit Singh sworn in as U'khand Governor

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Lieutenant general (ret'd) Gurmit Singh took the oath of office as the new Governor of Uttarakhand on Wednesday. The Uttarakhand High Court chief justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan administered the oath to Singh at a function held in Raj Bhawan.

Later, in an informal interaction with the media persons, the Governor listed his priorities. He said that as the women of Uttarakhand are independent and courageous a new chapter in woman empowerment will be written by motivating the state's daughters for Sainik schools and the National Defence Academy. He said that there is a considerable number of ex-servicemen, families and aged parents of soldiers in the state. Resolving the issues related to their health and pension along with ex-servicemen contributory health scheme



(ECHS) will be among his priorities.

The Governor said that with the Char Dham shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath,

Gangotri and Yamunotri, the maternal places of Ganga and Yamuna along with famous pilgrimages like Nanakmatta Sahib, Reetha Sahib and

Hemkund Sahib, the land of Uttarakhand is sacred and to serve this sacred land is a matter of good fortune for him. He thanked the President Ram

Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for appointing him as the Governor of Uttarakhand. Referring to the natural wealth of the state, he said that there is major scope for employment and entrepreneurship in the mountains by encouraging tourism, tourism-based businesses, organic farming, Yoga-Ayurveda and cottage industries based on food processing. The current government is making good efforts in this direction and will continue to do so in the future. Singh further said that the state has two international borders, considering which connectivity, bridges, roads and tunnels for communication and transport are also important. He also paid his tributes to the gallantry award winners from Uttarakhand. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and his cabinet colleagues were also present on the occasion.

Covid-19: 49 new cases, 33 recoveries in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The state health department reported 49 new cases of the novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) and 33 recoveries from the disease on Wednesday. No death from the disease was reported on the day in the state.

The cumulative count of Covid-19 patients in the state is now at 3,43,310 while a total of 3,29,554 patients have recovered from the disease so far. In the state, 7389 people have lost their lives to Covid-19 till date. The recovery percentage from

the disease is at 95.99 while the sample positivity rate on Wednesday was 0.26 per cent.

The state health department reported 20 new patients of Covid -19 from Pauri, 10 from Dehradun, five from Uttarkashi, four from Pithoragarh, two each from Champawat, Haridwar and Udhampur Singh Nagar and one each from Almora, Bageshwar, Chamoli and Nainital districts on Wednesday. No new cases of the disease were reported from Rudrapur and Tehri districts on the day.

The state now has 296 active cases of Covid-19. Dehradun with 148 cases is at the top of the table of active cases while Pauri has 29 active cases. Tehri has no active case of the disease.

In the ongoing vaccination drive 62,056 people were vaccinated in 969 sessions in the state held on Wednesday. As per the data of the state health department 70,92,429 people in the state have received the first dose of vaccine while 24,72,389 have received both doses of the vaccine.

Uttarakhand police starts Operation Smile

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Uttarakhand police has started a month long Operation Smile to search for missing people across the state from Wednesday. In Dehradun, the senior superintendent of police (SSP) Janmejaya Khanduri has appointed circle officer Shekhar Chandra Sual as the nodal officer of the operation and four teams will work under him.

Sual also conducted a meeting with the officials of various departments like health, labour and child help line among others besides some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to make them aware of the agenda of



the operation. The officials informed that the police will search for children, women and men missing since the year 2000 under this operation.

They said that if anybody goes missing from September 15 to October 14, locals can contact the nodal officer at 9411112759 or anti-human trafficking cell at 7579245420 to provide required details.

More than 6K benefit from ONORC scheme in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

More than 6,000 beneficiaries have so far availed the benefit of One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme since its implementation in Uttarakhand. The secretary of food and civil supplies, B S Manral told The Pioneer that 1,303 migrants from other states have taken the benefit of the scheme while a total of 835 natives of the states who have changed the districts within the state have availed the scheme. He said that the process of digitization and Aadhaar seeding of 99.87 per cent ration cards under the National Food Security scheme has been completed. There are 14.03 Lakh such cards with 61 lakh units in the state. Manral added that under the State Food security scheme the state has 9.65 lakh ration cards. There are more than 23 lakh total ration cards in

Uttarakhand.

The one nation one ration card scheme strives to enable national portability of ration card. The scheme is being implemented under National Food Security Act (NFSA). Under the scheme all the ration card holders can avail the benefit from Fair Price Shops (FPS) anywhere in the country. For availing this benefit the beneficiaries need to make a call on toll free number 14,445 and inform the place they have shifted to. The service would then tell the nearest FPS to which the beneficiary can take the ration. The FPS concerned would then do a simple authentication based on bio-metric system and Aadhaar and provide the ration to the displaced card holder. The One Nation One Ration Card scheme was initially started in four states in August 2019 and it is now implemented in the entire country.

Coordination needed between three pillars of democracy, says Speaker

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Speaker of Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha Prem Chand Agarwal has said that coordination, communication and conviction are needed between legislature, executive and judiciary for strengthening democracy. He was addressing the 81st convention of All India Presiding officers on Wednesday.

In view of the prevailing situation of the pandemic of Covid-19 the programme was organised virtually. He said that the three pillars of the democracy are both complementary and controller of one another. Agarwal opined that instead of engaging in a com-

The theme of this year's convention of the presiding officers was 'use of Information Technology in legislative functions'.

petition to show one another in poor light these pillars should work in strengthening one another. He said that the members of legislature should use the question hour effectively as it is an important tool to ensure the responsibility of the executive.

The Lok Sabha speaker, Om Birla said that deliberations during the convention would help in meeting the challenges facing the democ-

cracy in a better way. The theme of this year's convention of the presiding officers was 'use of Information Technology in legislative functions'. The presiding officers deliberated on the role of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas in strengthening the democracy in the country during the convention.

The deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha, the speakers of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana, Goa, Karnataka, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Nagaland and others attended the convention of the presiding officers.

Rajiv Gandhi complex suffers from poor sanitation

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Despite there being several government offices and shops in the Rajiv Gandhi multipurpose complex at Dispensary Road, the level of sanitation of the premises continues to be pathetic and questionable. Walls and staircases stained with Pan and Gutkha marks, empty sachets of Gutkha and candy wrappers, stubs of cigarettes and beedis, paper cups and polythene bags lying on the staircases inside the complex have become a common view for everyone. There are over 100 shops in the complex besides government offices like Tehsil, district supply office and district consumer forum but the condition of staircases of every establishment is almost the same here. Besides this, the garbage accumulated at the corners of the complex and its entrance points can be observed too. Many shopkeepers even throw the waste generated in their



shops like paper waste, broken glasses or shreds of clothing within the premises or just at the entry points of the complex. At times, many rag pickers can

be observed going through the garbage heaps to collect the items valuable to them. According to the shopkeepers, garbage disposal has become a

big issue in the complex in the last few years but nothing is being done by the authorities. "We have complained to the officials in the Municipal

Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) several times to start a garbage pickup service for the establishments in the complex but they refused saying that Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority (MDDA) is responsible for providing sanitation facilities here. When we approach MDDA, they say that we should approach MCD," stated one of the shopkeepers. The district magistrate R Rajesh Kumar had also expressed his dissatisfaction at poor sanitation facilities in the complex about two months ago during his surprise inspection of Tehsil and directed the officials concerned to keep the place clean. Despite this, the sanitation condition has worsened in the complex. "When the officials are not working to improve the sanitation condition of this place even after DM's orders then how our attempts will make the situation better," questioned a garment shopkeeper in the complex.

Renovation of FRI building begins



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Renovation work is being started in the historic building of the Forest Research Institute (FRI) here. The main building of FRI was constructed during the year 1929 in Dehradun. Its construction was started in the year 1923 by the Central Public Works Department. According to officials, after the earthquake in

Chamoli, Uttarakhand during the year 1999, some parts of this historic building had developed cracks. Apart from this, with the passage of time, problems of leakage, seepage and other issues were also being experienced in it.

To deal with these problems the Central Public Works Department with the help of CBRI, Roorkee is initiating renovation work.

Complacency & inaction cause for serious concern: Activists

SAMRIDHI MALL ■ DEHRADUN

As the United Nations member countries commemorate the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer on Thursday, environmentalists and activists in Uttarakhand expressed their concerns over the government's complacency and awareness about the ozone layer.

Activist and lawyer Reenu Paul said, "The people hardly talk about this. Everything depends on the leadership they don't create the kind of atmosphere where these discussions can be held and dismiss such issues as a hindrance in their development. When we talk about forestation, the government still tries to refer to old data rather than the latest one. We are in denial mode. They are coming up with projects which are not according to the state's identity. They don't see the Himalayas as a fragile mountain range, the significance of the Shivalik range, that's why we see all these disasters happening around us. They have closed their eyes to whatever is happening around us."

Activist Lokesh Ohri said, "The general attitude of the people is very constructive, they are very concerned about what is happening to our tree cover. The government seems to think in the opposite direc-



tion, they are on an infrastructure building spree. All the resources are with the government and there seems to be a huge gap in what the people want and what the government delivers. We should freeze any more road building activity and maintain the existing ones. The Government of India has sanctioned 60 new projects on Ganga and its tributaries, which should be immediately scrapped. We as a state are facing several natural disasters year after year, but we don't seem to be doing anything about it."

The founder of Social Development for Communities (SDC) foundation, Anoop Nautiyal opined, "There is no awareness among people and even if they are aware of the issue, they are not taking suitable actions. The vast majority are indulging in plastic pollution. We cannot look at individual days, the environmental awareness has to be seen in totality by both government and society. The government's framework needs to be strengthened to avoid loopholes and there is a need for further sensitisation and aware-

ness of society, which should lead to some concrete and sustainable action."

It is pertinent to mention that in 1994, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed September 16 the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, commemorating the date of the signing, in 1987, of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal protocol is a global agreement to protect the Earth's ozone layer by phasing out the chemicals that deplete it.

BJP election in-charge and co-incharge to reach Doon today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party election in-charge and Union Minister Pralhad Joshi along with the co-incharge RP Singh and Locket Chatterjee will arrive in Dehradun on Thursday. They will attend 10 programmes including four organisational meetings during their two-day state tour. The BJP state president Madan Kaushik and general secretary Ajey have finalised the schedule of their activities during the two-day stay.

The BJP State media in-charge Manveer Singh Chauhan informed that the party's election in-charge and co-in-charge will arrive at the Dehradun airport at 10:30 AM. Party workers will welcome them at 10 sites between the airport and Dilaram Chowk. The leaders will then garland the statues of BR Ambedkar at Clock Tower, Deen Dayal Upadhyay and pay tributes to statehood movement martyrs.

In the afternoon, Joshi will hold a meeting with state office bearers of the party, district heads and district in-charge. At



4 PM he will attend a meeting with members of the Sikh community, after which he will hold a meeting with the party in-charge of media and social media.

He will then attend a meeting in the night which will also be attended by the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, the party's state president and the general secretary to discuss the future programmes of the party.

Chauhan further informed that on September 17, the leaders will participate in a sanita-

tion campaign as part of the Sewa Samarpan Diwas to mark Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday. They will also attend fruit distribution programme at the Coronation Hospital.

After that, they will attend a meeting at the BJP state office with those made election in-charge of Vidhan Sabha constituencies following which a Press conference will be held.

The meeting of the BJP state core group will also be held in the afternoon, added Chauhan.

AAP launches selfie with temple campaign to make Uttarakhand Hindu spiritual capital

Arvind Kejriwal had said that Uttarakhand will be made a spiritual capital if his party comes to power next year.

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Bringing its Hindu card to play ahead of the coming Assembly elections, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has started a selfie with temple campaign in Uttarakhand. During his last visit to the state, the national convener of AAP and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had stated that Uttarakhand will be made a spiritual capital for Hindus living all around the world if the party comes to power next year. Taking this statement a step ahead, the Chief Ministerial candidate of the party Ajay Kothiyal launched a website last week and said that through this, people can make recommendations to make the state a spiritual capital besides showing their support for the party too.

Claiming that about 24,000 people have shown their support through this website and thousands have suggested several ideas, party leader Naveen Pirshali said that selfie with temple campaign is one such recommendation. While addressing media persons in a Press conference on Wednesday, Pirshali said, "We appeal to the people to click selfies with temples or similar sites in their locality or any nearby areas and share with us through social media platforms."

Through this campaign, more people will get to know about the importance of such temples and places which are quite important traditionally but still unknown to many due to lack of knowledge." He said that this campaign will prove to be a milestone in the direction of making Uttarakhand the spiritual capital of Hindus.

8TH INDIAN ARMY CHIEF’S CONCLAVE

Army top brass to discuss Af, LAC situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Army top brass, including the Chief and former Chiefs, will take stock of security situation in the Indian subcontinent with fast changing scenario in Afghanistan in the three-day conclave here commencing Thursday.

The meet will also focus on the continuing face-off at some points at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh and the ceasefire at the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan.

Giving details here on Wednesday, officials said the eighth edition of Indian Army Chief's Conclave, a gathering of serving and former Chiefs of Army Staff of the Indian Army, will also be the likely participation of former Chiefs of the Nepali Army, who were also Honorary Chiefs of the Indian Army.

The Conclave is a forum for exchange of ideas between the old guard and the current leadership of the Indian Army. It will involve discussions on

the rapid transformation of the Indian Army, self-reliance through 'Atmanirbhar' and 'Make in India' initiatives in defence manufacturing and skilling of the Indian soldier to fight modern wars.

The former Army Chiefs will pay homage to the fallen bravehearts during a wreath-laying ceremony at the National War Memorial on Thursday.

An interactive session with senior officers of the Indian Army is scheduled the next day for exchange of ideas and views on various administrative and human resource aspects of the Indian Army.

The Chiefs will also interact with members of the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers where they will be apprised of the institutional symbiosis between the Indian Army and indigenous private defence manufacturers. The Chiefs are also scheduled to meet the prodigious soldiers who earned laurels for the Nation in the recently concluded Olympic Games at Tokyo. 2017.

Afghanistan to be main focus of PM’s address at SCO meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The current situation in Afghanistan and the scourge of terrorism is likely to figure prominently during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) heads of state summit in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on Friday.

He will participate virtually in the high-profile conclave and underline the dangers of terrorism in the presence of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, Chinese president Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will travel to Dushanbe to represent India at the SCO meet.

Modi's speech comes days before he travels to the US to take part in the first in-person Quad summit hosted by US President Joe Biden there next week. The Prime Minister will also hold bilateral meetings with Biden in Washington and address the annual session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York the next day on September 25.

Jaishankar will take part in meetings of the SCO expected to extensively deliberate on the Afghan crisis and its internal as well as external implica-



tions, people familiar with the matter said.

"The 21st meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State will be held on September 17 in Dushanbe in a hybrid format. The meeting will be chaired by the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the Indian delegation and address the plenary session of the summit via video-link," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Wednesday. "At Dushanbe, India will be represented by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar," it said in a statement.

The MEA said the summit will be attended by the leaders of the SCO member states, observer states, secretary general of the SCO, executive director of the SCO regional anti-terrorist structure, the

president of Turkmenistan and other invited guests.

In Dushanbe, Jaishankar will attend a meeting on Afghanistan of the heads of state of the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation.

It will be the first SCO summit being held in a hybrid format and the fourth summit that India will participate in as a full-fledged member of the bloc.

Jaishankar is also likely to hold a series of bilateral meetings at the Tajik capital city with his counterparts from Iran and Tajikistan among others. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi are expected to be in Dushanbe for the SCO meetings. However, there is little possibility of Jaishankar meeting his Chinese and Pakistani counterparts, sources said.

The SCO, seen as a counterweight to NATO, is an eight-member economic and security bloc and has emerged as one of the largest trans-regional international organisations. India and Pakistan became its permanent members in 2017.

Rajnath urges US def industry to transfer state of technology

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With growing strategic and defence ties between the two countries, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday urged the US defence industry to forge joint ventures here and transfer state of the technology.

Making this pitch while addressing the 18th India-US Economic Summit, he also said the Government is open to new ideas to create business-friendly environment in India.

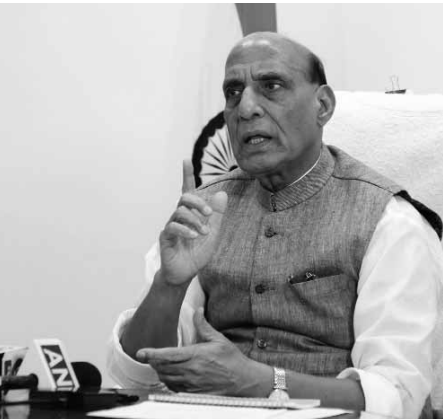
Speaking on the theme 'Bouncing Back – Resilient Recovery Path Post Covid-19', organised by Indo-American Chamber of Commerce through video conferencing, Rajnath said defence sector is an integral part of not just the security but overall growth of the country.

Highlighting some initiatives, the Minister said these have transformed India into a strong and reliable investment destination. He said, India is now home to stable and secure Government which focuses on economic growth through series of reforms.

He called upon the industry leaders to focus on transfer of technology through joint ventures to realise the country's true potential in defence sector. The foreign original equipment manufacturers can set up manufacturing facilities individually or partner with Indian companies through a joint venture or technology agreement to capitalise on the 'Make in India' initiative, he added.

Rajnath exhorted them to begin the process of research and development with the young minds of the country which will increase the linkages among the industries and create an ecosystem through equal contribution from academia and research.

Rajnath emphasised that there is a lot of scope for the American and Indian defence



The Union Minister for Defence, Shri Rajnath Singh virtually delivering the inaugural address at the 18th India-US Economic Summit, organised by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, in New Delhi on September 15

PIB

Industries for co-production and co-development, adding that Indian industry can supply components to American Industries.

Shedding light on the growing ties between India and US, Rajnath said the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, 2+2 Dialogue, Quad Security Dialogue and agreements like Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) and Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) have taken the bilateral relations to greater heights.

He, however, emphasised that the relations are yet to receive its full potential, saying that several progressive policies have been put in place in the last two years that have given the defence sector an unexpected growth trajectory.

77 rapes reported daily in 2020: NCRB

Number of murders record a surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Number of rapes recorded a decline in 2020 that was mostly under Covid-induced lockdown but murders reported a surge during the same period. Nearly 77 rape cases were reported across India on an average every day totalling 28,046 such incidents during 2020, according to the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data.

The country reported an average 80 murders daily in 2020, causing 29,193 fatalities last, with Uttar Pradesh topping the list among the States.

Overall, 3,71,503 cases of crime against women were reported across the country last year, down from 4,05,326 in 2019 and 3,78,236 in 2018, according to the NCRB data.

Of the total cases of crimes against women in 2020, there were 28,046 incidents of rape involving 28,153 victims, according to the NCRB data for 2020.

Out of the total victims, 25,498 were adults, while 2,655 were below the age of 18 years, it stated.

The number of rape cases, as defined in Indian Penal Code section 376, stood at 32,033 in 2019, 33,356 in 2018



, 32,559 in 2017 and 38,947 in 2016, according to NCRB data from corresponding years.

Among states and Union Territories, the maximum 5,310 rape cases were lodged in Rajasthan in 2020 followed by Uttar Pradesh (2,769), Madhya Pradesh (2,339), Maharashtra (2,061) and Assam (1,657). National capital Delhi logged 997 such cases during the year, the data showed.

Of the total crimes against women last year, the maximum 1,11,549 were under the category "cruelty by husband or relatives", while there were 62,300 cases of kidnapping and abduction also, it showed.

Besides rape, there were 85,392 cases of "assault on outrage modesty" and 3,741 cases of "attempt to commit rape",

the NCRB data showed.

There were 105 cases of acid attack logged across the country during 2020, it added.

The NCRB data suggested that on an average 80 murders were reported daily in 2020 in the country. A total of 29,193 fatalities were reported during the year, an increase of one per cent over the total 28,915 murders in 2019, with a daily average of 79 killings during the year, the data revealed.

Cases of kidnapping and abduction, however, went down by over 19 per cent in 2020 as compared to 2019.

There were a total 84,805 lodged cases of kidnapping and abduction in 2020 as against 1,05,036 in 2019, according to the NCRB statistics.

Among the States, the maximum 3,779 murder cases in 2020 were lodged in Uttar Pradesh followed by Bihar (3,150), Maharashtra (2,163), Madhya Pradesh (2,101) and West Bengal (1,948), the data highlighted.

Delhi logged 472 murder cases in 2020.

Of the total murder victims in the country, the maximum 38.5 per cent belonged to the 30-45 years age group followed by 35.9 per cent in the 18-30 years category, the NCRB stated.

According to the figures, 16.4 per cent murder victims were in the 45-60 years age category and four per cent older than 60 years, while the rest were minors.

Among the States, the maximum 12,913 kidnapping and abductions cases in 2020 were lodged in Uttar Pradesh followed by West Bengal (9,309), Maharashtra (8,103), Bihar (7,889) and Madhya Pradesh (7,320), the data suggested.

Delhi registered 4,062 kidnapping and abduction cases during 2020.

The NCRB stated that there were 88,590 total victims in 84,805 cases of kidnapping and abduction in the country last year. Of these, the majority 56,591 victims were children while the remaining were adults, it added.

Cong to raise price rise, unemployment issues through protest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress is chalking out a strategy for conducting regular nationwide agitations to take on the BJP Government ahead of the next Lok Sabha elections and highlight several issues, including price rise and unemployment among others. The party is also mulling over to rope in civil societies and social organisations in the protests.

AICC sources said senior leaders of the party led by Digvijay Singh on Tuesday late night discussed issues to be highlighted during the protests at the meeting of the Congress committee constituted by the party president Sonia Gandhi last early this month. It was also suggested in the meeting that party leader Rahul Gandhi should take over as the Congress president and lead the agitations, sources said.

The panel chaired by Digvijay Singh will prepare the plan for agitations after identifying the issues and will present the report to Sonia Gandhi for approval. Panel members Ripun Bora and Udit Raj also suggested that a senior leader like Rahul Gandhi should take over as party chief and lead protests across the country to make them a success.

Udit Raj also suggested that social organisations and civil society groups should be involved in such agitations and



their support would make the protests a success. AICC source said price rise and unemployment have been identified as the issues to be taken up first, but the timelines will be decided by party chief.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also participated in the meeting that was held at the party's "war room" office at Gurudwara Rakab Ganj road. She also called for raising the issue of plight of MSMEs due to "wrong" economic policies, sources said.

Ahead of elections in several states, Sonia Gandhi on September 3 had set up a nine-member panel of party leaders headed by Rajya Sabha MP

Digvijaya Singh to plan "sustained agitations on national issues". Besides Singh, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, MPs Uttam Reddy and Ripun Bora, dalit leader Udit Raj, who switched over to the party from the BJP last year, party leaders Manish Chhatrapati, Zuber Khan and BK Hariprasad are members of the panel.

The nine-member panel has been mandated to "plan sustained agitations on national issues". The formation of the committee came days after the Congress, along with 18 other Opposition parties, announced to hold nationwide protests from September 20 to 30.

Meanwhile, Rahul on Wednesday attacked the BJP-RSS, alleging that they were "fake Hindus" who use religion for their benefit. Addressing the foundation day of the All India Mahila Congress here, Rahul Gandhi said that the ideology of the Congress was completely opposite of the BJP-RSS and only one of the two ideologies can rule the country.

Asserting that Goddess Lakshmi stands for the power that helps one attain one's goals and Goddess Durga stands for the power that protects, the former Congress chief said while his party had strengthened these powers when in government, the ruling BJP dispensation have diminished these powers..

Record 44 students score 100 percentile in JEE-Main



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A record 44 candidates have scored 100 percentile in the engineering entrance exam JEE-Main this year while 18 candidates have shared the top rank, according to National Testing Agency (NTA). The result for the crucial exam was announced post midnight on Tuesday with the website crashing for several hours after that.

Last year, 24 candidates had scored 100 percentile. On account of using unfair means, a total of 20 candidates have been debarred from appearing in future examinations for a period of three years. Their results have also been withheld.

Starting this year, Joint Entrance Exam (JEE)-Main was conducted four times a year to offer flexibility to students and a chance to improve their scores. The first phase was held in February and the sec-

ond in March.

The next phases were scheduled for April and May but those were postponed in view of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic that raged through the country affecting lakhs. The third edition was held from July 20-25 while the fourth edition was conducted from August 26 to September 2.

The examination was conducted in 13 languages -- English, Hindi, Gujarati, Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

Over 9.34 lakh candidates appeared in four editions of JEE-Main. A total of 2.52 lakh common candidates had appeared for all four editions of the exam. A total of 6.58 lakh male candidates had appeared for the exam while the number of female candidates appearing for the exam was 2.80 lakh.

Sputnik Light gets DCGI nod for conducting of phase III trials in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has granted permission for the conducting of the Phase III bridging trials of Sputnik Light on the Indian population. The Sputnik Light is a single-dose Covid-19 vaccine of the Russian vaccine Sputnik.

The nod comes after a recent study published in the medical journal The Lancet said that Sputnik Light showed 78.6 to 83.7 per cent efficacy against Covid-19, significantly higher than most two-shot vaccines.

The Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of the top drug regulator in July had refused to grant emergency-use authorisation to Sputnik-Light, ruling out the need for the conduct of the phase III trial of the Russian vaccine in the country.

The committee had noted that Sputnik Light was the same as component-1 of Sputnik V and its safety and immunogenicity data in the Indian population was already generated in a trial.

The study was conducted on at least 40,000 elderly people in Argentina. Sputnik Light also reduced hospitalizations among the target population at 82.1-87.6 per cent, the study said.

The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) last year partnered with Dr Reddy's Laboratories to conduct the phase III trials of Sputnik V vaccine in India. In April, Sputnik V received an emergency use authorisation in India. Reddy's administered the first dose of the vaccine in Hyderabad under a limited pilot on May 14.

Antiviral drug Umifenovir can check Covid virus multiplication: CDRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CSIR lab, Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI), has claimed that the clinical trials of antiviral drug, Umifenovir, in treatment of Covid-19, can effectively reduce viral load to zero in mild or moderate symptomatic and asymptomatic patients by checking multiplication of the virus.

The trial of Umifenovir on 132 Covid patients showed that the dose was given twice daily for five days.

Titled 'Phase III, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of efficacy, safety and tolerability of antiviral drug Umifenovir vs standard care of therapy in non-severe Covid-19 patients', the clinical trial was conducted at three institutions.

These were KGMU, Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences (RMLIMS) and Era's Lucknow Medical College and Hospital (ELMCH).

CDRI director Prof Tapas Kundu said, "Since Umifenovir is a broad-spectrum antiviral and is being used as a safe over-the-counter drug for influenza and pneumonia for over 20 years in Russia, China and other countries. The first two trials were not mandatory."

The CDRI, therefore, directly went for phase-III trial, conducted on 132 patients either admitted in hospital or in home quarantine under the supervision of these hospitals," the CDRI director said.

"In a study, double-blind mode

improves reliability of results by preventing bias when doctors evaluate patient outcomes. The results showed that viral load in mild, moderate or asymptomatic patients after being given two doses of Umifenovir (800mg), twice a day, became zero in an average of five days. Patients did not experience any side-effects and their symptoms also did not turn severe," he said.

Studies by CDRI in collaboration with CSIR-IMT, Chandigarh, also showed that Umifenovir exhibits good cell culture inhibition of SARS-CoV-2, which suggests that the drug inhibits the entry of SARS-CoV-2 virus into human cells.

Kundu said the institute was getting the dosage plan patented as it had not been used earlier for Covid-19.

"The DCGI has evaluated the clinical trials report and in view of the highly encouraging results and he has asked the team to continue the studies on more mild, asymptomatic patients for grant of emergency approval of the drug," he added.

CDRI chief scientist Prof R Ravishankar, who led the team, said, "Umifenovir will be economical for treating Covid-19 patients as it is around 54 per cent cheaper compared to current medication. The drug is safe for pregnant women and children. We are also looking into the possibility of Umifenovir syrup for children and also in powder form for puff inhalers."

Members should observe high discipline inside, outside legislatures: Om Birla

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday said that the credibility of legislatures is linked to the conduct and behaviour of their members and so the members are expected to observe the highest standards of discipline and decorum, both inside and outside the legislatures.

Inaugurating the 81st All India Presiding Officers Conference, Birla expressed his anguish that incidents of unparliamentary behavior of public representatives have increased in recent years, which have tarnished the image of the democratic institutions. Birla said that the credibility of legislatures is linked to the conduct and behavior of their members and that is why the members are expected to observe the highest standards of discipline and decorum, both inside and outside the legislatures.

Birla expressed his anguish that incidents of unparliamentary behavior of public representatives have increased in recent years, which have tarnished the image of the democratic institutions.

The Speaker noted that being an elected public representative, a member has certain privileges and these privileges, which come with responsibilities, are meant for performing their duties as parliamentarians in an effective manner and without any hindrance. He urged for introspection by members, individually and collectively, about their conduct, discipline and decorum, as public representatives.

Anil Kumar MD of Patliputra Builders Ltd held under PMLA



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Anil Kumar alias Anil Kumar Singh, Managing Director of Patliputra Builders Limited and other group companies, under Prevention of Money Laundering Act. in a cheating case.

The ED initiated investigation on the basis of FIRs and charge-sheets filed by Patna Police under the sections of Indian Penal Code and Arms Act against Anil Kumar.

"In the FIR, he has been alleged for defalcation of public money and non-allotment of flats to the buyers even after receiving money for allotment of flats. During the investigation by ED, Proceeds of Crime have been identified and quantified at Rs.6 crore," the ED said in a statement.

Throughout the investigation, Anil Kumar has resorted to non-cooperation with the investigation and has not divulged any truth or information.

Kerala logs 17,681 new Covid cases

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Wednesday reported 17,681 fresh Covid-19 cases and 208 deaths, which took the total caseload to 44,24,046 and fatalities to 22,987.

The number of people who recovered from the infection since Tuesday was 25,588 which brought the total recoveries to 42,09,746 and the number of active cases to 1,90,750, a State Government release said. While the release said that 97,070 samples were tested in the last 24 hours, it did not state what the Test Positivity Rate was.

However, 17,681 fresh positive cases, reported in the last 24 hours, out of 97,070 samples tested during the same period,

gives a figure of more than 18 per cent. Among the 14 districts, Thiruvananthapuram recorded the highest with 2,143 fresh cases followed by Kottayam (1,702), Kozhikode (1,680), Ernakulam (1,645), Thrissur (1,567), Palakkad (1,558), Malappuram (1,372), Kollam (1,348), Alappuzha (969) and Kannur (967), the release said. Of the new cases, 97 were health workers, 47 from outside the state and 16,656 infected through contact, with the source of the contact not being clear in 881 cases, it said.

There are currently 5,61,239 people under surveillance in various districts, of whom 5,33,190 are in home or institutional quarantine and 28,049 in hospitals. **PTI**

Bengal extends corona restrictions till Sept 30

Kolkata: The Bengal Government has further extended the pandemic restrictions to September 30 allowing limited relaxations on traffic movement and other facilities.

While night curfew would continue between 11 pm and 5 am only essential services will be allowed to continue during that period.

Besides local trains and all educational institutions shall remain closed. No public or political gathering would be allowed too, save in places where by-elections were on the way. In places like Bhawanipore where by-elections will take place on September 30 campaigning will go on according to prescribed protocol, officials said.

An order released from State administrative headquarter Nabanna said: "All outdoor activities, including the movement of people and vehicles, shall be strictly prohibited between 11pm and 5am except for health services, law and order, essential commodities, including agricultural produce and other emergency services. **PNS**

Didi supports farm stir, asks Centre to withdraw farm bills

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday reiterated her stance against the Farmers' Bill and asked the Centre to withdraw it pledging her support for the Punjab farmers.

The Chief Minister who was visiting the Bhawanipore Gurudwara on a public relations exercise ahead of the September 30 Assembly by-elections for the Bhawanipore seat said reacting to posers from a group of Punjabi ladies "I have always stood by the farmers' cause ... in this case also I have expressed my opinion and have asked for immediate withdrawal of the Farmers' Bill ... I have already told the agitators that I will always remain by their side in their fight against the oppressive laws."

Speaking to a collection of Sikh gentry inside the most revered

Gurudwara in Kolkata Banerjee said amid Khela Hobey slogans from a section of the assemblage that she always expected a close interaction between the Bengalis and Punjabis --- the communities that share a long mutual history.

Even as a section of the people said how the Punjab villagers too wanted Khela Hobey Banerjee said "Our mutual relationship goes back to the date of Azad Hind Fauz and the Indian freedom struggle ... I had a chance of visiting the Andaman Cellular Jail where I saw that the most of the prisoners were from Bengal and Punjab."

Banerjee is seeking election from the Bhawanipore seat after she was defeated at Nandigram by the BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari by 1,900 votes.

Banerjee has been trying to woo the non-Bengali population in Bhawanipore that constitute about a

sizeable 42 per cent. Out of this the constituency has a good 5,000 Punjabi voters.

The Chief Minister is likely to address a meeting of non-Bengalis on Thursday.

Out of 5 seats where by-elections were to be held the Election Commission of India has allowed polls in Bhawanipore seat only. Apart from Bhawanipore elections will be held to Jangipur and Rezinagar seats in Murshidabad district as well. In these seats a Congress and a Left candidate had died of corona well before the polls were conducted.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission is deploying 52 companies of central forces to ensure smooth elections, sources said.

While 15 companies will be deployed in Bhawanipore, 18 and 19 companies will be deployed at Jangipur and Rezinagar respectively.

BJP MP Arjun Singh gets Z category security

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The Union Home Ministry has upgraded Bengal BJP strongman and MP Arjun Singh's armed security cover to Z category.

The TMC-turned-BJP leader who from Barrackpore who had expressed threat to his life after crude bombs were hurled in front of his house the Centre has upgraded his security cover, sources said.

At least two close lieutenants of the saffron MP had been murdered in the past

about two years.

The CISF has been providing 'Y+' security cover to Arjun Singh since March 2019 when he left the Trinamool Congress and switched over to the BJP to win the Barrackpore parliamentary seat defeating then sitting MP Dinesh Trivedi. In fact Trivedi also crossed over to the BJP early this year.

The decision of the Home Ministry comes days after National Investigation Agency was given to investigate the triple blast in front of the MP's house.



A pair of Macaw passing out time inside an enclosure at Alipore Zoological Garden that reopened for the public as it was closed due to a surge in coronavirus cases, in Kolkata on Wednesday **PTI**

2 Kerala Cong leaders quit, join CPI(M)

KOCHI: The ruling CPI(M) is on a mission to decimate the Congress in Kerala, if the latest developments in the State are any indication.

Two high ranking leaders of the Congress quit the parent party and joined the CPI(M) during the last few days. K P Anil Kumar, former general secretary of the party, who has considerable following in the State, resigned from the primary membership of the Congress and joined the CPI(M) on Tuesday. He was welcomed by polit bureau members Kodyeri Balakrishnan and s Ramachandran Pillai at the AKG Centre and was received with red shawls.

Anil Kumar is the second leader of the Congress to join the CPI(M) in the last fortnight. P S Prasanth, another regional satrap from Thiruvananthapuram., who was the

party's candidate from Nedumangadu assembly constituency, too had shocked the Congress leadership by joining the CPI(M).

It is the fall out of the organisational restructuring of the Congress, with the appointment of K Sudhakaran as president of the KPCC and V D Satheeshan as Leader of the Opposition which led to a cascading effect in the party. Interestingly, no senior leaders from the Congress had joined the CPI(M) since T K Hamza, the then DCC president of Malappuram in 1987.

The CPI(M) had never encouraged party hoppers to join them. But the latest trend has come as a surprise to political pundits in the State. "They may be preparing for a clean sweep in the 2024 Lok Sabha election and the 2026 assembly election. The 2021 election results has

enthused the second wrung leadership of the party to go for what the CPI(M) did in Bengal where they remained in power for more than three decades," said a CPI(M) fellow traveller.

A Vijayaraghavan, acting secretary of the CPI(M) said the party was keeping its fingers crossed over the developments in the Congress. "There are chances of more and more leaders from the Congress joining the CPI(M). All those who accept and recognise the policies of the CPI(M) are welcome to join us," said Vijayaraghavan.

Even former chief minister Oommen Chandi and former LoP Ramesh Chennithala who felt let down by the Congress High Command during the reorganisation of the DCCs are upset and are on a warpath with the party leadership. **PNS**

Cong retracts from stance on Love Jihad, calls for truce with Bishop

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Congress in Kerala is on a fire fighting mode as the party's criticism of Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, the Bishop of Pala, for his speech against Love Jihad Narcotics Jihad has led to a consolidation of the Catholic Church behind the former.

Leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan, who had lambasted the Bishop by declaring that persons in responsible positions should not make statements that would communally divide the society, has retracted from his earlier stance and has called a truce. Satheesan wrote a letter to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan with an offer that he was ready to mediate with the spiritual leader of the Christians in Kerala.

The Bishop while addressing a

religious congregation in an ancient Church in Kottayam district had warned the laity of Love Jihad and Narcotics Jihad which had claimed thousands of girls in the last two years in Kerala.

Vijayan said that he was hearing the term Narcotic Terrorism for the first time. But Catholic leaders in both the ruling LDF and the opposition UDF called on the Bishop and expressed solidarity with the latter. P J Joseph, chairman, Kerala Congress (J) and Jose K Mani, chairman, Kerala Congress (M), though do not see eye to eye on any issues were the first ones to call on the Bishop.

The BJP, struggling to get a foothold in the State and the leaders of which are under investigation by the State Police for financial

impropriety, rushed to the Bishop's Palace in Pala and declared their support to him on the issue.

But the activists of SDPI, an extremist outfit representing the Muslim community, undertook a procession to the Bishop's Palace to condemn the latter's statement. On Wednesday, the CPI(M) joined hands with the SDPI to pull down the local self government led by the UDF in Eerattupetta Municipality.

Interestingly, the BJP, which had condemned the Church in the past for its support to religious conversions, has openly extended support to the Bishop for his condemnation of the Love Jihad. Two more Bishops (who are heading Iringalakkuda and Changanassery dioceses) have declared support to their Pala counterpart.

No recce in Mumbai, weapons or explosives not found: Maha ATS chief

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

On Wednesday when a Mumbai link to the busting of an ISI-backed terror module by the Delhi police surfaced, the Maharashtra Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) denied that any reconnaissance had been done in Mumbai by the arrested terrorists and said that the country's commercial capital was "absolutely safe".

After the Special Cell of the Delhi police arrested six persons, the Crime branch sleuths of the Mumbai police and Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) said that one of the six arrested persons -- Jaan Mohammed Shaikh alias Sameer Kalia - who was part of a "Pakistan-based terror module" -- was from the financial capital of Mumbai.

Talking to media persons, State ATS Chief Vineet Agrawal said that

no reconnaissance had been done in Mumbai nor had any weapons or explosives found in the wake of the Delhi Police Special Cell busting a terror module.

"We keep getting terror alerts, but as far as this case is concerned, Mumbai and Maharashtra are safe," Agrwal said.

According to the ATS chief, Shaikh took a train from Mumbai Central for Hazrat Nizamuddin in Delhi on September 13 and he was arrested by a Delhi Police team at Kota in Rajasthan on Tuesday. "It was their case and operation," Agrawal said.

"We are coordinating with Delhi Police in this regard on a regular basis and a team is leaving for the national capital to seek Shaikh's custody for interrogation by the Police here," rhe State ATS chief said

"We have asked for a FIR copy from the Delhi police to know

more about the case. We want to know the exact conspiracy or terror plans and will also share whatever information we have with Delhi Police," Agrawal said.

Meanwhile, the Mumbai crime branch sleuths and State ATS have learned that Jaan Mohammed Shaikh, a resident of Dharavi slum in north-central Mumbai, lived with his family in a small one-room tenement and worked as a driver.

Jaan Mohammed Shaikh's wife and two daughters were taken to the Dharavi police station and questioned. Shaikh is allegedly linked to the family of fugitive underworld don and 1993 Mumbai serial blasts mastermind Dawood Ibrahim, who is a designated global terrorist.

Official sources said that Shaikh was in touch with Anees Ibrahim, the younger brother of Dawood Ibrahim.

"He worked as a driver and was

a quiet fellow...this news comes as a big shock to us," said Fayyaz, who is his friend said. Shaikh was brought up in Dharavi. "His parents stayed here, they have passed away," a lady neighbour said.

In a related development, Maharashtra home minister Dilip Walse-Patil held a high-level meeting with officials including Mumbai Police commissioner Hemant Nagrale and additional director general of police and State ATS chief Vineet Agrawal.

"Some terror suspects have been arrested from Delhi & other parts of the country. A meeting was held in which officials gave me all the necessary information," the State Home Minister said.

"The matter is sensitive in nature and we cannot reveal any more information at this time as it may hamper the investigation," Patil said.

Maha: 65-year-old man rapes minor girl in Jalna, held

Jalna: A elderly man allegedly raped a 12-year-old girl at a village in Maharashtra's Jalna district, police said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on Tuesday following which the 65-year-old accused, who has five children and grandchildren, was arrested late at night, an official from Badnapur police station said.

The victim used to live in the house of her maternal uncle and the accused also resided in the neighbourhood.

While the girl was feeding hens on Tuesday, the man allegedly gagged her and forcefully took her to his house where he raped her, the official said, adding that the accused then fled from the village.

The girl later informed about the incident to her uncle who lodged a police complaint, he said. **PTI**

Govt open for discussion on NEP: Karnataka CM

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Amid Opposition to implementation of the new National Education Policy in the state, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Wednesday said the Government is open for discussion on it, and there is no need for anyone to worry.

"Government is open to discuss the NEP. There is good intention behind NEP, it is aimed at providing education that is in accordance with today's needs for the good future of our youths. There are several revolutionary changes in it, we will make students understand about it," Bommai said in response to a question about lathi-charge on students protesting against NEP.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, there have been several discussions about NEP, even at the University level.

"Regarding primary and secondary education, we will have a committee regarding how to implement it (NEP) there. We have not yet taken any decision on it. We are ready to discuss all this.

There is no need for anyone to worry," he added. Police yesterday resorted to 'mild' lathi charge on students, protesting against the NEP, who had gathered here, under the banner of Campus Front of India, as they tried to march towards Vidhana Soudha, where the legislature session is on, and caused inconvenience to the public. Some student organisations and opposition Congress have opposed the implementation of NEP in the state. Senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly Siddaramaiah had recently urged the state government to withdraw its decision to implement the NEP.

Mumbai cops file supplementary chargesheet against Kundra

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai police on Wednesday filed a comprehensive supplementary charge-sheet against Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty's husband and businessman Raj Kundra in the in the alleged pornography content case.

The Crime Branch-CID of Mumbai Police, which has been investigating the case for the past few months, filed the first supplementary charge-sheet in the case, before a city court. The charge-sheet ran into 1,500 pages.

Kundra, who was arrested on the night of July 19 in connection with a complaint registered by the Crime Branch in 2021, has been booked under Sections 292, 293 (sale of obscene material) under the

Indian Penal Code, Sections 66E, 67, 67A (transmission of sexually explicit material) under the Information Technology Act and provisions of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act.

Kundra, who lives in Mumbai with his wife Shilpa Shetty and two children, had earlier told the court that there was no evidence to link him against the HotShot App and was being made a 'scapegoat'. He had submitted to the court that he had been falsely implicated in the case while the Cyber Cell was making an attempt to connect him with the crime.

Kundra, who is the founder Viaan Industries Ltd, and his United Kingdom-based brother-in-law Pradeep Bakshi, the

Chairman of Kenrin Group, London, have been named masterminds of the porn content racket.

In April this year, the police had filed its first charge-sheet in the case against nine persons originally accused. After subsequent investigations, the police arrested two more accused, including Kundra

Earlier, nine persons had been arrested. They comprised television actress Gehna Vashisht (32) Yasmin Khan (40) Monu Joshi (28) Pratibha Nalavade (33) Atif Ahmed (24), Dipankar Khasnavis (38), Bhanusurya Thakur (26) Tanvir Hashmi (40) and Umesh Kamat (39).

Kundra is the owner of Viaan Industries Ltd, jointly promoted by the couple, while

Bakshi — a British citizen, who is married to Kundra's sister — is the Chairman of Kenrin Ltd., London.

The HotShots app --- described as the "world's first 18+ app" showcasing some of the hottest models and celebs globally in exclusive photos, short films and hot videos (implying soft-to-hard porn) -- was removed from mobile platforms.

Similarly, Apple and Google have removed the app because of the pornographic content in it.

On his part, 46-year-old Kundra has denied any involvement and has claimed that he had sold the "Hotshots" app to Pradip Bakshi. However, the police said Mr Kundra was kept in the loop about the finances of the app.

4 life convicts get 7 years' jail term in 2009 abduction-cum-murder case in UP

Muzaffarnagar (UP): A special court on Wednesday sentenced four life convicts, including a woman, to seven years under sections of the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters Act for the abduction and murder of a cement trader from Muzaffarnagar in 2009.

Special Judge Radhey Shyam Yadav convicted Kajal, Manjit Khokar, Suleman, and Niraj Mishra to seven years each and also imposed a fine of ₹20,000 on each of them.

According to prosecution officer Sandeep Singh, the four convicts were already sentenced to life imprisonment a few years ago for abducting and murdering cement trader Madan Garg, a resident of Muzaffarnagar, over ransom back in 2009.

As the police had also booked the four life convicts under the Gangsters Act, the court pronounced the additional punishment based on the charges. Garg was murdered in Uttarakhnad's Roorkee in 2009 and his body was thrown in the Ganga Canal. **PTI**

Maha: 16-year-old rape victim commits suicide

Nagpur: A 16-year-old girl allegedly committed suicide after the man accused of raping her was recently released from jail on bail in Maharashtra's Nagpur city, police said on Wednesday.

The girl, who lived with her father, stepmother and brother, allegedly hanged herself from the ceiling at her home in Jaripatka area on Monday, senior inspector Nitin Phatangare of Jaripatka police station said.

According to the police, the girl was allegedly raped by a relative of her stepmother in June, following which a police complaint was lodged and the accused was arrested, the official said.

The accused, who was charged for rape, was recently released on bail from the central jail, he said, adding that the girl had been depressed ever since.

The deceased teen's body has been sent for post-mortem and a case of accidental death has been registered, the official said. **PTI**

Kerala school teacher booked over minor student's suicide

Kasaragod (Ker): A case has been registered against a 29-year-old private school teacher in connection with the death of a minor girl student by suicide in this northernmost district of Kerala, police said on Thursday.

The case was registered against Usman, a native of Adhur here, under the Section 12 of POCSO Act and Section 75 of the Juvenile Justice Act, days after the 12-year-old girl died by suicide. He is absconding now and a man hunt is on to trace him. According to police, the accused had sent inappropriate messages to the girl, a class eight student studying in the same school, via social media.

A senior police officer told PTI that the victim's parents had come across the chat messages exchanged by the duo and warned the girl against it. Her father also brought the issue to the notice of the school management who in turn took up the matter with Usman, he said. "The messages were improper for a teacher to send to a 12-year-old student. The girl was suspected to have ended the life out of mental tension as her parents read the chat messages," the officer said adding that these all were assumptions and they could arrive at a conclusion only after a detailed probe. **PTI**



A view of the Pushkar Lake in Ajmer district on Wednesday **PTI**



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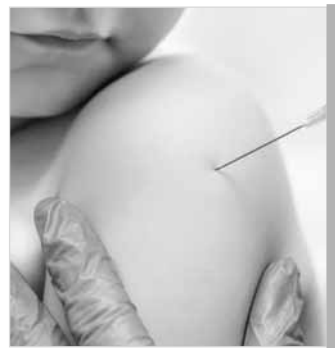
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Get that jab

In the fight against COVID-19, our line of defence must be to vaccinate the kids

As educational institutions re-open tentatively in India, parents are worried that unlike most of them, their children are not yet vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus and they may be vulnerable to infection at school. The concern is natural and understandable but clear-cut answers to their queries are not forthcoming. The States, the Centre, the state task forces, the national task force, and the host of experts need to be on the same page and clarify by when can children be expected to get the jabs, if they would be divided into age groups for the purpose, and whether the healthy among them need immediate vaccination at all. Paediatricians say healthy children are at low risk from the virus but there is no unanimity on whether it is safe for them to attend school unvaccinated. The United Kingdom is still disinclined to vaccinate healthy children in the 12-15 years age group. The doses will only offer



a marginal benefit and the jabs can instead be diverted to vulnerable adults and children with co-morbidities, like chronic heart, lung and liver conditions, it argues. The British committee's hesitation arises from the concern over a rare side effect of heart inflammation from the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. In India, out of 44 crore children, around 12 crore are in the 12-17 age group. The national COVID-19 task force is of the view that children with comorbidities should receive priority jabs, meaning thereby that healthy children are not at high risk. In any case, even though over 19 States have re-opened

schools and the rest will shortly decide on sending children back to classes, there is no indication that the vaccine for children will be available in the coming few weeks.

The ZyCoV-D vaccine has received Emergency Use Authorisation for use in 12-17 years and the field trials are on. Bharat Biotech says its Covaxin for children has tested safe in trials. Biological E's Corbevax has got the approval to conduct trials on children above five years. Covovax vaccine of Serum Institute and Novavax is conducting trials at the moment. Johnson & Johnson has applied for trials in children in the 2017 years age group. Scientists are hedging their bets on child vaccines. They say they are absolutely safe, but add a rider that the risk-benefit ratio needs to be weighed carefully. They say that infections in children are nearly always mild or asymptomatic. However, there is no doubt they still need vaccinations just as they have already been immunised against various diseases. Where do they stand on the priority list, is the question. It is not an easy question to answer as two arguments pull the Government in the other direction. One is the obvious need to prioritise vulnerable adult and children's groups. Two, how far to heed the observation of the World Health Organisation that by vaccinating their children, some countries will deprive frontline workers and high-risk of poor countries of vaccines.

PICTALK



Army personnel during a practice session ahead of the celebration of 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh', at Polo ground in Jaipur PTI

Taking wings

If all goes well, the debt-ridden Air India could have a new owner by December end

The Union Government has finally found bidders for the sought-after Air India disinvestment after Tata Sons and SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh submitted their financial bids to the transaction adviser on Wednesday as the process now moves to its concluding stage. The new owner will be entitled complete stake in Air India and Air India Express and a 50 per cent stake in the ground handling capacity of the Air India



SATS Airport Services (AISATS). Besides, as per Air India's Expression of Interest shared in January, out of the airline's total debt of ₹60,074 crore as on March 2019, the bidder would be required to absorb the "signing debt" of ₹23,286.5 crore. The rest would be transferred to Air India Assets Holding Ltd, a special purpose arrangement. Tata Sons had in 2001 expressed their interest in acquiring the Indian Airlines which JRD Tata had founded in 1932 as Tata Airlines. The proposal was not received well by the Government back then. But times have changed and the Government now views Tata as the frontrunner in the disinvestment bid which

was delayed due to the pandemic. Therefore, Union Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia had made it clear that September 15, 2021 would be the last day for submitting the bid and would not be changed. The Government's previous attempt at the bidding failed badly in 2018 after not even a single bid was received for the airline. It had offered 76 per cent stake but higher crude oil prices, insane debt and, of course, the "involvement of the Centre" were some of the reasons the bid failed. Now after having tweaked the offer, it has managed to attract two bidders. Disinvestment is just a safer alternative to the word privatisation, and the Government's promise to "facilitate air travel even for a person wearing *hawai chappal* (slippers)" seems arguable under this umbrella. Also, Air India has not only been a commercial air travel facility but also holds strategic importance to India. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when Indian citizens were stranded in different parts of the world, only Air India was in operation and evacuated thousands of Indian and foreign nationals. Air India would not remain the same once the private players get hold of it. Air travel can no longer be viewed as a luxury but a common amenity that is intrinsically part of our day-to-day connectivity as the last-mile auto or rickshaw trip.

The national theatre of absurd

The public mood these days borders beyond logic; moodiness and absurdity rather than rationalism is the new norm



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

It is time to sit back and relax. It is time to watch the theatre of the absurd. The country which is now run on the-atics is turning into one. The dictionary meaning of the phrase aptly describes what we are witnessing right now: "A theatre in which conventions of plot and theme are distorted to convey the irrational and fictive nature of reality. It leads to isolation of humanity in a meaningless world." We are all watching it play right here right now!

People are trying hard to create a country where absurdity is the norm rather than the exception; in the zeal to outsmart opponents, stupidities galore. We are turning ourselves into laughing stock. The latest fad — nationalism — is now reaching a feverish pitch. Nothing is sacrosanct; not even your flawless past and it applies to all and sundry — individuals, organisations and now even the home-grown companies. Even the ones touted as the pride of the country are not spared. One posturing against the Hindutva joint family can lead you in trouble. The onus would be on you to prove your innocence.

The latest to fall is Infosys. The company that led India's "make in India" campaign has hit the quagmire. Even before Prime Minister Narendra Modi coined the "local pe vocal" slogan, Infosys was at it and is now being dubbed "anti-national". That is if we are to believe *Panchjanya*, the RSS mouthpiece. This is hilarious as well as a sad commentary of the state we are in. The self-styled nationalists are not only shouting nationalism but also handing out certificates of nationalism. God forbid, if you falter on your promise to deliver a project on time, you join the rank and file of anti-nationals. Reminds one of the scientists in Stalin's Russia who could not deliver on tight deadlines and ended up in Gulag.

Timeline goes — Infosys gets a contract of ₹4242 crores to roll out a new income tax portal. It fails to deliver on time and problems dog the system. The Minister calls Salil Parekh, the CEO, something transpires and the meeting fails in fiasco. Lo and



behold, in a couple of days, *Panchjanya* comes out with the story branding Infosys as anti-national. Please draw your own conclusions and spare the writer.

The nationalists' brigade indeed has come a long way. First, they started small branding anti-Hindutva ideologues as "love jihadis", "urban Naxals" and what have you. Now anti-national is in. The latest is branding corporate which don't bow as anti-national.

But then what is the definition of nationalism or litmus test of one's nationalism? They should praise the dear leader and the ruling party. The singing of the National Anthem or chanting "*Bharat Mata ki Jai*" is the ultimate test of one's nationalist credential. That makes both Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore anti-national. Mahatma Gandhi did not celebrate Independence. There was no flag hoisting in the Sabarmati Ashram on Independence Day. Tagore wanted universal brotherhood. He even warned about the dangers of nationalism. Tagore's fear came alive during the Delhi riots when people were made to sing the anthem while being beaten with sticks by the police.



BUT THEN WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF NATIONALISM OR LITMUS TEST OF ONE'S NATIONALISM? THEY SHOULD PRAISE THE DEAR LEADER AND THE RULING PARTY. THE SINGING OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM IS THE ULTIMATE TEST OF ONE'S NATIONALIST CREDENTIAL

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HEAT OF THE 'MYSTERY FEVER'

Sir — Before people in parts of Uttar Pradesh and several other states could heave a sigh of relief over the subsidence of COVID-19, they have been hit by another tragedy in the form of the outbreak of a 'mystery fever'. Epidemiologists could not clarify if it were really a mystery fever or it was so described for convenience and evasion of responsibility. In most cases it is attributed to dengue — The ICMR has found 2D strain of dengue that impacts platelet count, causes hemorrhaging and proves fatal in many samples — and in others, malaria and leptospirosis.

It is not clear what effective intervention has been made by the health departments to combat and control the infections. It is sad to notice that an air of helplessness has set in on the health front. UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath makes tall claims about his governance in addition to rabidly communal speeches. Perhaps, he has a peculiar idea of governance. Sanitation, fumigation, prevention of waterlogging in the monsoon season, draining out stagnant water, equipping hospitals to provide medical care for all without turning anyone away and food for kids from poor households to reduce vulnerability to diseases are low on his agenda.

G David Milton | Maruthancond

A FUEL FOR THE FUTURE

Sir — The announcement of the National Hydrogen Mission by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a welcome step in justifying India's commitments to the Paris Agreement that would help mitigate the imminent global warming crisis. The last two years have witnessed increased momentum for green hydrogen, with many countries around the world implementing national hydrogen strategies. India is moving ahead with its hydrogen policy. Green hydrogen is being hailed as a potential miracle fuel that could help reduce carbon emissions.

The environmental impact of using green hydrogen is anticipated to be tremendously positive. Hydrogen, a zero-carbon fuel and a promising alternative to fossil fuel,

A vision beyond religion



Kudos to the Chief Justice of India NV Ramana for asking the nation to embrace the sane, tolerant and humanitarian vision of Swami Vivekananda. While the child Narendranath experimented with *hookahs* used by different communities to experience how one "loses" his caste or religion, the matured Swami Vivekananda advocated for universal brotherhood and equality of all human beings. Though Vivekananda was a proud Hindu as well as Indian, that did not deter him from pointing out the vices that had plagued the religion and the nation. Neither

did he paint an imaginary story revolving around 'glory' of ancient India by "discovering" a test-tube baby, Rama's arrows being "missiles" and Kuber's *Pushpak Rath* an "aircraft". Nor he tried to impose his religious belief upon other communities by projecting Hinduism and India superior to others; rather his true love for his own religion and country got translated into love and respect for all religions and humanity as a whole.

It is indeed a disgusting sight when the rabid orthodox pseudo-nationalist merchants of hatred, who have emerged as the self-declared "guardians" of Hindus and "holy cows" and can't hold a candle to the liberalism of the great sage, dare to project the humanitarian harmony-personified Swami Vivekananda as one of their "icons". Let India be guided by the Constitutional spirit of secularism and equality of all along with the humanitarian light of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

is an abundant source that gives off no emissions and can make a real contribution to the fight against climate change. Though we have various renewable energy sources, the perfect one to use for vehicles is hydrogen. Hydrogen, when used in a fuel cell, the only exhaust it emits is mere clean water. A big advantage of hydrogen and fuel cells is that the cycle is fully sustainable. Big changes are needed to utilise green hydrogen in various industrial establishments. A holistic approach is needed to develop infrastructure and formulate policies to encourage the use of hydrogen-based energy sources.

Krishna K Vepakomma | Hyderabad

TOO MANY NAMESAKES

Sir — Only old-timers know that since western part of pre-independent Bengal came to India, the state was named as West Bengal, and East Bengal turned into East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The Central Government should accept the demand of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata

The Infosys case is an eye-opener. It is a \$100 billion company. A reputed company which employs more than two 2.5 lakh people become anti-national overnight. Infosys ranked number 3 on 2019 Forbes' World's Best Regarded Companies list. Surely for argument's sake, it doesn't matter if it is the big company, it can still indulge in anti-national activities. But then it is not an underground company.

Go arrest them all and seal the premises. That is how easy it is. But that is not the idea. The idea is to arm-twist and make it fall in line. Now the onus is on the individual or the company to prove that it is not anti-national.

A couple of weeks back, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal targeted the Tata Group. He said that its business practices went against national interests. Yet another well established corporate paying the price of being not conforming to the Government's dictates.

Recently, the Twitter CEO donated generously to an RSS-supported NGO. To put it in perspective, Jack Dorsey, CEO of Twitter, donated \$2.5 million in his personal capac-

ity to Sewa International, an affiliate of the RSS. Dorsey's announcement sparked off controversy on Twitter itself but that proved nothing more than a storm in a teacup. What is interesting is that the grant came at a time when Twitter had suspended accounts of the right-wingers for hate speech. It included an account of actress Kangana Ranaut's. It was seen as an attempt to stifle right-wing voices; interesting coincidences there.

A couple of days from now is September 18, which happens to be the birthday of Samuel Johnson who once said that patriotism is the last resort of scoundrels. He was so damn right. Was he talking about us? By the rate we are branding people and organisations anti-nationals, the country would soon have more anti-nationals than nationals in the country. And that would be a self-defeating proposition.

The nationalists would become a minority and thus vulnerable so they shouldn't do it. An absurd argument, isn't it? It is, but then what is sane about our times!

(The writer is a columnist and documentary filmmaker. The views expressed are personal.)

Delhi Chief Minister
— Arvind Kejriwal

We have reaped the benefits from the membership of BRICS, most notably in the area of economic cooperation.

South African President
— Cyril Ramaphosa

The role of *Maadi Baa* in *Balika Vadhu* fits the criteria. I have been waiting a long time for something like this to come my way.

Actor
— Ketki Dave

If Chris Gayle is in your playing XI, he has to open the batting because he is not going to waste balls.

Former England cricketer
— Gautam Gambhir

Post the implementation of the new excise policy, Delhi Government will earn an extra revenue of 3,500 crore in a year.

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister
— Manish Sisodia

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

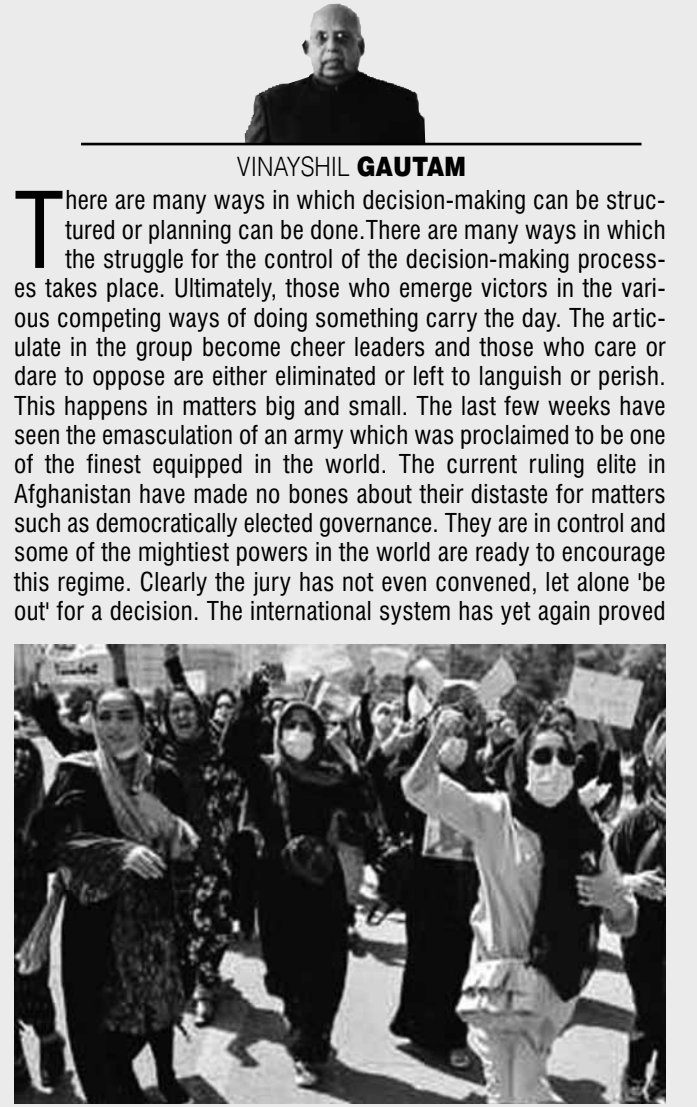
FIRST COLUMN

NOW IS THE NEED FOR A REALITY CHECK



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Almost all of the global women's movements have dried up in the dreary desert sand of disinterest



its ineptness in sufficiently holding out values and making worthwhile moves to push for them. Even the so-called cause of women's rights in Afghanistan has not echoed much in any significant part of the world. Staunch proponents of gender equality can be seen occasionally demonstrating in some city, somewhere. Indeed, counter collectives reportedly have gathered of women in Afghanistan proclaiming, in effect, that the country's establishment's views on the status of women is indeed correct and must prevail. Philosophy has little scope to sort out a seemingly contentious views especially when there are few listeners. The international bodies including the United Nations are observing a thundering silence on this issue. Almost all of the global women's movements have suddenly dried up in the dreary desert sands of abject disinterest.

This is the story not just of women's rights. It is also the story of other human rights. The existence in China of alleged concentration camps, meant for certain religious minorities, is another subject of popular global neglect. Globally, even their co-religionists are rarely raising any attention about this. This is in sharp contrast to other kinds of concerns that are being raised. One wonders whether 'politics' predominantly determines what is flagged for attention and what is not. Like the gender movement, the cause of human rights for all, including minorities, is conspicuously marked by selective outrage. In the meanwhile, the expenditure on armaments amongst the so-called super powers continues to escalate. Some media channels have been showing the might of certain super powers to link power of artificial intelligence and incredible destructive capacity of nuclear devices. The powerful nations write their own rule books. In the last three decades or so, proclaimed aggression has been practiced to eliminate the so-called 'weapons of mass destruction' and more. Reportedly, the armorial dash was for control of oil resources. The sheer ability to cover up crass commerce with lofty principles of progress seems to be the hallmark of many powerful. The time has come to realise some of the underpinning driving the truth of our times. Unless the truth is placed, squarely, on the table, any reversal of this sorry logic — where the powerful grab what they want with or without attempts at camouflage — is likely to continue.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant. The views expressed are personal.)

Import duty cutback on Tesla is no good



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

Lower duties on EVs will incentivise companies to merely import from foreign markets and sell in India, and that does not add value to the Indian economy

Proposed import duty concessions for the import of electric cars manufactured by Tesla, an American electric car manufacturing company, is in public debate, having linkages with the domestic automobile industry. Whereas lobbying efforts are on for this proposal, the domestic automobile industry is vehemently opposing the same.

The American electric car company has sought lowering of import duty to 40 percent from the current 60 percent on fully assembled electric cars priced below \$40,000 and 60 percent from the current 100 percent on vehicles valued above that amount. The interesting part of the story is, there is no tangible offer from the company to begin manufacturing of this car in the country.

From newspaper reports it is being learnt that several ministries of the government have supported Tesla's proposal to lower import tariffs. Today, the Indian automobile industry is worth ₹8.2 lakh crore. Nearly 49 percent of manufacturing GDP comes from this sector, which constitutes 7.1 percent of overall GDP. The sector provides direct and indirect employment to nearly 3.7 crore people. It exports nearly \$27 billion worth of automobile products in different segments. It provides 15 percent of the total GST collected, apart from catering to the needs of the country with regard to vehicles of different types and in different segments. Along with this, a substantial auto components manufacturing sector has simultaneously developed, with significant production, employment and exports.

Today, electric vehicles account for less than one percent of the annual car sales. The Government of India has been giving a big push to the manufacturing of electric vehicles (EVs) in the country aiming to reduce dependence on the imported fossil fuels and to reduce carbon foot prints. To achieve this objective of manufacturing EVs, import duty on EV parts and components, batteries, etc., is kept between 10 and 15 percent, which is much less than import duty on components for conventional automobiles. Using this duty concession, the established Indian companies and start-ups have started creating local value additions in the country. Efforts are also being made towards long-term localisation program.

Looking at the push given by the government to EVs, it seems that India will soon be able to start meeting domestic requirements of these vehicles. If the past is any guide, we understand that protection given to the domestic automobile sector has been the key to the development of this sector, which today is not only meeting the domestic requirements, but is also exporting automobiles to the rest of the world. It is also successfully procuring most of the components from within the country. It is notable that the Indian auto components Industry is also worth ₹3.95 lakh crore. The Indian auto component turnover constitutes 2.3 per cent of GDP and provides employment to five million people and exports to



TODAY, ELECTRIC VEHICLES ACCOUNT FOR LESS THAN ONE PER CENT OF THE ANNUAL CAR SALES. THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN GIVING A PUSH TO THE MANUFACTURING OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES TO REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTED FOSSIL FUELS AND REDUCE CARBON FOOT PRINT

(The writer is Professor, PGDAV College, University of Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)



the tune of \$15-16 billion or ₹1.06 lakh crore.

India's luxury car market is relatively very small. In the year 2019-20, the total number of luxury cars sold was 40,637, which was down to 19700 during the COVID-hit 2020-21. This is because a very small section of the population can afford these luxury cars beyond rupees ₹15 lakh or, say, \$20,000. And a very miniscule segment of the population can afford to buy cars beyond ₹30 lakh. If duty concession is given to Tesla, those who can afford will obviously buy imported Tesla electric cars and there will hardly be any incentive for the company to establish a manufacturing facility in India; and the country would be deprived of capacity creation in EVs.

India has launched a flagship Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to give a boost to domestic production of goods for which, so far, the country is dependent on foreign nations. Thirteen sectors have been included in this scheme. Prior to this, the phased manufacturing programme (PMP) was launched. It is a known fact that in telecom and IT hardware sectors, Indians lost the opportunity to become a manufacturing hub due to faulty policies of lowering of tariffs, and dumping by China and other countries. Thanks to PMP earlier and now PLI scheme, this sector has started showing some gains in domestic manufacturing.

If we reduce tariff on fully-assembled electric cars and cars of other companies, say, Volkswagen — who have also started staking

claim for lower tariffs on their cars — would we not be committing the same mistake of the past and miss the bus in manufacturing and technology development of electric vehicles, which we are looking forward to?

First, any reduction in custom duty on EVs will incentivise companies to merely import from the foreign markets and sell in the Indian market. This will not help in any value addition to the economy and such a move would jeopardise India's efforts to increase domestic manufacturing.

Secondly, domestic automobile companies and start-ups are consistently investing in R&D and product development and contributing to the growth of the sustainable economy. Rather than creating a disturbing policy atmosphere of favouring imports of electric cars, it would be appropriate to support and leverage the local component ecosystem by long-term policy of the central and State Governments.

Thirdly, Ola company backed by venture capitalists has launched its first electric scooter, with more than one lakh bookings on a single day. Ola and other two-wheeler (Original Equipment Manufacturers) OEMs are on the verge of setting upstate-of-the-art manufacturing plants. Any tariff reduction for Tesla will discourage future endeavours in this direction.

Fourthly, we should not also forget that Tesla's business model company does not give any opportunity to the domestic auto compo-

nents manufacturers.

In the words of Elon Musk, "We have a massive amount of internal manufacturing technology that we built ourselves.... It's like okay, what are the things we want to make, design a machine that will make that thing, then we make the machine." Firstly, we do not need lowering of tariffs on assembled cars; we rather need leveraging fiscal and non-fiscal support for EVs. Lowering GST, registration fee, permit fee, road tax, PLI, tightening of regulations to motivate shift to EVs are some such measures.

Secondly, rather than discouraging investment in Research and Development by allowing direct imports of EVs, we should create an environment to increase investment in R&D. If we allow Tesla Cars to be imported with tariff reduction, we would be hampering the development of the EV ecosystem.

Thirdly, we must leverage the fastest growing unified market in the world to our advantage of long-term technology building in and by Indian companies. There is a larger opportunity and value capture in developing not-yet-mature technologies such as EVs. For example, we could have been leaders in mobile phones if we had developed our capabilities in India for mobile phones in the early 2000s. We require this technological foundation to cater to global markets in the future, and increase the exports by the automobile sector to record highs; and in any case not reduce import duty on Tesla cars.

POINT COUNTERPOINT



HOW CAN THE TMC TAKE OUT A RALLY IN TRIPURA IN VIOLATION OF THE COVID NORMS IMPOSED BY THE ADMINISTRATION?

— WEST BENGAL BJP PRESIDENT DILIP GHOSH

THE BJP HAS LOST THE MORAL RIGHT TO TALK ABOUT THE APPROPRIATENESS OF HOLDING POLITICAL RALLIES IN COVID TIME.

— SENIOR TMC LEADER FIRHAD HAKIM

Taxing the new-age digital companies

Foreign digital companies sell goods in India but do not pay taxes as they are not physically present in the country and that is a key concern

Digital technology has not only changed the way the world works, it has also made inroads into the country's taxation system.

For years, any company which is a resident of India came under the purview of taxation laws. However, a company need not now be a resident of a country to engage in economic activity. Technology and internet have made it possible a company to be present in one country and operate in another. This has caused concerns for countries where the consumers are located as they are deprived of their share of tax collection due to archaic laws requiring physical presence of companies to levy taxes.

This inconsistency has led to an urgent need to amend



HIMA BINDU KOTA

(The writer is Associate Professor at Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal.)

international taxation laws. To work around this issue, several attempts have been made by international organisations to derive some common consensus, particularly by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) under Base Erosion and Profit Sharing (BEPS) Action Plan I, which recommended certain interim opportunities to tackle tax challenges arising out of the new age digital economy.

One such option is the concept of 'significant economic presence' (SEP) that could be defined in two ways. First, any transaction in respect of any goods, services, or property carried out by a non-resident with any person in India, including provision of download of data or software



in India, if the aggregate of payments arising from such transaction or transactions during the previous year exceeds ₹2 crore. Secondly, systematic and continuous soliciting of business activities or engaging in interaction with 300,000 users in India. The concept of SEP was introduced within the ambit of 'business connection', which is an on-going and continuous business relation between any

two enterprises resulting in the profit of a non-resident entity.

According to the recommendation of BEPS Action Plan 1, a non-resident enterprise would be taxable if it has a SEP in that country, engaged in a focussed, continuous and sustained engagement with the economy with the help of technology and automation.

Interestingly, India has been one of the early movers in this direction. As amending the existing tax laws is a time-taking process, a committee was set under the guidance of the Central Board of Direct taxes (CBDT), the apex tax administrative body in India, that recommended, in 2016, an equalization levy of six percent as a viable option for India in online advertising and ancillary services. Later on, by

2020, the domain was extended to include online sale of goods and services. This will become effective from 2022 onwards.

For example, Alibaba, the internet giant, selling goods worth millions of dollars in India, is presently not taxed as an enterprise because it is not physically present in India. With the introduction of the concept of SEP, Alibaba would be taxable for the sales made in India. In addition, according to the second condition of SEP, the mere act of soliciting business from Indians and not even actual sales can subject any enterprise to taxation in . This brings companies driven by information feeds and news like Facebook and Instagram, and social networks and other engagement-based platforms, like Whatsapp, WeChat and Tiktok, under the ambit of Indian taxation rules, subject to their incomes or user base crossing the prescribed thresholds.

The SEP is also applicable to any liaison office set up in India as they are also involved in the continuous soliciting of business, bring them under its purview. This may push several foreign companies to set up their wholly owned subsidiaries to circumvent these conditions and to take advantage of lower tax rate of 25 percent as compared to 40 percent tax rate for foreign companies.

Overall, the business connection and significant economic presence will be applicable subject to the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) India has with the home country of the business enterprise in question. DTAA's generally have specific clauses defining the conditions under which a host country can tax foreign companies located in their countries. And since DTAA's override any domestic tax regulations, it would be complicated taxing foreign companies in situations when the concept of significance economic presence in not mentioned in the same. However, such a move shows the intent of India to tax companies in this new age of digital technology. A global consensus in determining the commonly accepted thresholds for defining significance economic presence will go a long way in taxing new age digital companies.

Pakistan Govt open to pardon TTP members

If they give up terror activities, submit to Govt and Constitution of Pakistan: Qureshi

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Government would be “open to giving” a pardon to members of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) if they promise not to indulge in terrorist activities and submit to the country’s Constitution, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said.

Qureshi made the remarks during an interview with Britain’s online newspaper ‘The Independent’ and the video of the interview was posted on social media by the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan on Wednesday, Dawn reported.

Voicing concern about the reports of TTP figures being released from prisons in the

wake of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, Qureshi said, “If those guys come and start creating problems for us over here, it will affect innocent lives and we don’t want that.”

Pakistan is fighting a major domestic insurgency in the form of local Taliban offshoot the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or the TTP, as well as al-Qaeda and the ISIS.

Qureshi said if the new Afghan setup could use its influence and talk to the TTP, and “if [the TTP] are willing to mend fences and not take the law into their hands and not get involved in terrorist activities and they submit and surrender to the writ of the Government and the Constitution of Pakistan, we are even open to giving them a pardon.”

“But as long as they do not come and start undertaking terrorist activities [in Pakistan]. That is our concern,” the minister emphasised. Qureshi termed as “positive” the Afghan

Taliban administration’s announcement that they would not allow any terrorist groups to use their soil against any country, including Pakistan.

He said Pakistan had been “continuously” pointing out TTP sanctuaries to the previous Ashraf Ghani-led Government, “but they wouldn’t move”. It remains to be seen whether the Afghan Taliban act on their assurances, Qureshi added.

His comments come days after President Arif Alvi suggested during an interview with Dawn News that the Government could consider giving an amnesty to those TTP members who had not remained involved in ‘criminal activities’ and who laid down their weapons and agreed to adhere to the Pakistani Constitution. For years, the TTP unleashed deadly attacks on urban centres across Pakistan from their bases along the Afghan border.

China backs Taliban’s demand to America to unfreeze Af’s assets

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Wednesday supported the Taliban’s demand that the US should unfreeze Afghanistan’s assets and said that America has no legitimate reasons to do so as the Chinese envoy to Kabul called on acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and congratulated the interim Government.

According to reports from Washington, the US has frozen about \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to Afghanistan’s central bank and stopped shipments of cash to Kabul, in a bid to keep the Taliban Government from accessing the money.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters here that the US has no legitimate reasons to freeze Afghanistan’s assets.

Asked about the Taliban’s demand that the US should unfreeze Afghanistan’s assets stating that they belong to the people of Afghanistan and the

interim Government will take a legal action possible to get the funds released, Zhao said, “I think that the (Taliban’s) spokesperson is right”.

“The assets belong to Afghanistan and should be spent for the Afghan people.

“The US should not freeze them without justification. The US should face up to the legitimate demand of Afghanistan, abandon pressures and sanctions and stop creating obstacles to the economy, livelihood and peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan,” Zhao said.

After the Taliban’s seizure of power in Afghanistan last month, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank halted their aid to the war-torn country which largely depends upon the flow of foreign funds. According to reports from Kabul, Afghanistan’s economy is near collapse even as the United Nations has made hectic efforts to galvanise global efforts to rush food and essential supplies.

Over \$12m seized from ex-officials as cash crunch hits Afghanistan

Kabul: Afghanistan’s central bank said on Wednesday that the Taliban had seized more than \$12 million in cash and gold from the homes of former Government officials, as it called for all transactions to be made in local currency.

A foreign exchange crunch in the aid-dependent country threatens the Taliban’s rule one month after they seized power. Most government employees have yet to return to work — and in many cases salaries had already not been paid for months — leaving millions scrambling to make ends meet. Even those with money in the bank are struggling, as branches limit withdrawals to the equivalent of \$200 a week — with customers having to queue for hours.

And while remittances have resumed from abroad, customers awaiting funds at international chains such as Western Union and MoneyGram complained on Wednesday that branches they visited had run out of cash.

Afghan female footballers evade Taliban, reach Pak

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Thirty-two women football players from Afghanistan, who were facing threats from the Taliban, have reached Pakistan along with their families after the Government issued emergency humanitarian visas to evacuate them, according to a media report on Wednesday.

The footballers belonging to the national junior girls’ team had been originally due to travel to Qatar, where Afghan refugees have been housed at a facility for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, but were left stranded after a bomb blast at the Kabul airport that killed 13 US service members and at least 170 Afghans on August 26.

These women were facing threats from the Taliban due to their involvement in the sport, Dawn newspaper reported.

The Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August. These women football players had since been in hiding to evade the Taliban, according to the report.

The move to bring the 32



Afghanistan’s national women’s football team arrive in Lahore

footballers to Pakistan was initiated by British-based NGO Football for Peace in cooperation with the Government and the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), which is not recognised by FIFA.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino had visited the Afghan refugees during his trip to Doha last week, but the global football body has been criticised for its inaction in aiding the female footballers who were still in Afghanistan.

The footballers will proceed from Peshawar to Lahore where they will be housed at the PFF headquarters.

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
JAMMU POWER DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LIMITED (JPDC), JAMMU**
POWER DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Tel/Fax No: 0191-2562593, e-Mail: xened1power@gmail.com
e- NIT No: ED-I/e-NIT/42 of 2021-22
Dated: 11.09.2021

1. INVITATION:-
For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, the Executive Engineer (Distribution), JPDC, ED-I, Parade, Jammu, hereinafter referred as ‘Employer’, invites online e-bids from reputed Companies or Class ‘A’ registered contractors for “**Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 11 KV line including dismantling of existing HT Line 0.250 Kms. of Jagti local feeder to avoid crossing in the Premises of IIM, Jammu and Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 11 KV line including dismantling of existing HT Line 0.250 Kms. of feeder at IIT Jagti to avoid crossing over the IIM, Jagti Under the jurisdiction of Electric Division Div.-I (JPDC) Jammu. On Turn Key basis.**”
(on Turn Key basis)
1. Bidders are advised to study the Bidding Document carefully. Submission of e-Bid against this SBD shall be deemed to have been done after careful/conscious study and examination of the procedures, terms and conditions of the Standard Bidding Document with full understanding of its implications.
2. The tender document is available at website <http://jktenders.gov.in>. Interested Bidders may view, download the e-Bid document, seek clarification and submit their e-Bid online up to the date and time mentioned in the table below:
A. Tender Document Sale/Download Start Date :- 11.09.2021; (10:00 AM onwards)
B. Tender Document Sale/Download End Date :- 04.10.2021; (upto 02:00 PM)
C. e-Bid submission (start) date & time :- 13.09.2021; (10:00 AM onwards)
D. e-Bid submission (end) date & time :- 04.10.2021; (upto 02:00 PM)
E. Submission of Hard Copy of Tender Fee & EMD Instrument (End) date & time :- 04.10.2021 (upto 04:00 PM)
F. Commercial and Technical Bid opening date & time :- 05.10.2021; 02:00 PM
G. Online financial e-Bid opening date & time (Only of the technically qualified Bidders):- Will be communicated to the Technically Qualifying Bidders.
H. Venue of opening of techno-commercial Bids :- Office of Executive Engineer, JPDC, Ed-I, Parade, Jammu
I. Tender Value - Rs. 26.11 lacs (funds in pipeline)
J. Cost of e-Bid document - Rs. 10000 (Rupees one thousand only) (Non-Refundable)
K. Amount of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) :- Bid securing declaration form as per Format enclosed (In reference to Circular No. A/Misc.(2018)-III-895/J Dated 22-12-2020 issued by Finance Department Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir)
**Sd/- Executive Engineer
JPDC, Electric Division-I
Parade Jammu.**

No. DIP/J-2927-P/21
Dated :- 15-09-2021

ISIS bride wants chance to face UK courts, fight terror

PTI ■ LONDON

Shamima Begum, the London-born Bangladeshi-origin woman who fled the UK to join the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist network in Syria as a teenager, said she is sorry “from the bottom of my heart” and pleaded with Prime Minister Boris Johnson for a chance to face the UK justice system.

In her first live interview from the Al Roj refugee camp in Syria for ITV’s ‘Good Morning Britain’ programme on Wednesday, the 22-year-old said she would accept any sentence handed down if she were tried in a UK court as she would “rather die than go back to ISIS” and also offered to help Britain combat terrorism.

She insisted she was “groomed and taken advantage of and manipulated” and that her role with the terror outfit was only to be a “mother and a wife”.

“The reason I came to Syria was not for violent reasons. At the time I did not know it was a death cult, I thought it was an Islamic community I was joining,” she said.

“I am willing to go to court and face the people who made these claims and refute these claims, because I know I did nothing in IS but be a mother and a wife. These claims are being made to make me look worse because the government do not have anything on me,” Begum said, with reference to claims she engaged in terrorist acts.

UK bans Chinese envoy from Parl; angry Beijing condemns move

PTI ■ LONDON

China’s Ambassador to the UK Zheng Zeguang has been barred from the UK Parliament over sanctions imposed on some British MPs for their remarks on alleged human rights violations against Uyghur minorities in Xinjiang, triggering an angry condemnation from the Chinese Embassy here.

Zeguang was due to attend a meeting organised by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on China recently, but a letter from the sanctioned members of Parliament and House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle resulted in its cancellation.

The letter flagging the meeting was signed by Conservative Party MPs Ian Duncan Smith, Tim Loughton, Nusrat Ghani and the Chair of the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Tom Tugendhat — among those on the sanctions list. In their letter, the MPs argued: “The Chinese Government has so far made no attempt to reverse the sanctions.

Rishi Sunak, Priti Patel retain top jobs as Boris shuffles Cabinet

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday undertook a reshuffle of his top team, keeping two of his senior Indian-origin Cabinet Ministers Rishi Sunak and Priti Patel in their posts.

Sunak will remain next door to Johnson at Downing Street as his Chancellor of the Exchequer and Patel, who had been at the centre of some speculation of being moved, remains in her post as Home Secretary. Sunak, the son-in-law of Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy, has been in his post since February last year and has led the UK’s financial response to the Covid-19.

Patel, whose parents are of Gujarati-Ugandan descent, has been the Home Secretary since July 2019. However, among the senior ministers being shuffled around include Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who accepted a demotion to take charge as the new Justice Secretary, alongside his other roles of Lord Chancellor and Deputy Prime Minister.

Khalistanis gaining ground in US: Report

India’s appeals to curb them fall on deaf ears

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Pakistan-backed Khalistani separatist groups, banned by the Indian Government, are quietly gaining ground in the US, a top American think tank has warned, ruing that Washington has so far remained indifferent to the appeals made by New Delhi to curb their destabilising anti-India activities.

The US-based Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) is a pro-Khalistan group. In 2019, the Indian government banned it for its alleged anti-national activities.

The SFJ had pushed for Sikh Referendum 2020 as part of its separatist agenda. It openly espouses the cause of Khalistan and in that process challenges the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India. The outlawed group’s primary

objective is to establish an “independent and sovereign country” in Punjab.

In its ‘Pakistan’s Destabilization Playbook: Khalistani Activism in the US’ report published on Tuesday, the Hudson Institute examines the conduct of “Khalistan and Kashmir separatist groups within the United States” to investigate their support by Pakistan.

The report looks at these groups’ ties to militant and terrorist outfits in India, and the possible detrimental effects of their activities on US foreign policy in South Asia.

The report demonstrates that “like Pakistan-based Islamist terrorist groups, the Khalistan groups can emerge under new names.”

“Unfortunately, the United States government has shown no interest in violence committed by Khalistan activists, even though the Khalistan campaign’s most ardent supporters are located in western countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States.

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Online-Tenders are invited by Chief Engineer (O&M) for the followings:-

Description of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	E.M.D. (Rs.)	Cost of B.O.Q. (Non-Refundable)(Rs.)	Bid Processing Fee(Rs.)	Completion period
Design, Manufacture, testing, supply & delivery of 33KV, 1600A, 25KA, C2-M2 Class Vacuum Breaker with support structures, marshalling boxes, terminal connections (suitable for ACSR Moose) etc.- 150sets	3,77 Cr	7,54,728.00	11,800	5,900	6(Six) Months from NOA

Bid submission Start Date and Time	From 15:00 Hrs. of 29.09.2021
Date of Pre-bid meeting (via online mode)	On 11:00 Hrs. of 04.10.2021
Bid submission End Date and Time	Up to 15:00 Hrs. of 20.10.2021
Date of opening of Techno-Commercial Bid (Part-I):	After 16:00 Hrs. of 22.10.2021
Date of opening of price part	To be notified after Technical Bid Evaluation (www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

1. “Bid Processing Fee is mandatory to be paid through online mode i.e. Internet Payment Gateway (Credit/Debit Card), Net Banking, NEFT/RTGS”.

2. The Cost of EMD may be paid through either Online or Offline mode. In case, Cost of EMD is opted to be paid through Offline mode, Bank Guarantee/Demand Draft for EMD in favor of “Accounts Officer, BSPTCL, Patna” must be submitted to Chief Engineer (O&M), BSPTCL, Vidhut Bhawan, Patna positively up to 15:00 Hrs. of 20.10.2021 failing which the tender shall be summarily rejected. For online submissions of Cost of EMD, bidder shall must submit details of intimation to this Office by 15:00 Hrs. of 20.10.2021.

3. “Bid along with necessary online payments must be submitted through e-payment portal https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/ before the date & time specified in the NIT. The department doesn’t take responsibility for the delay/ Non submission of Tender/ Non Reconciliation of online Payment caused due to Non-availability of Internet Connection, Network Traffic/ Holidays or any other reason”.

4. **Pre-Bid meeting for the Tender shall be conducted via online mode. Interested bidders must provide the details viz. contact and email address to the Mob no.-7763817768 before schedule pre-bid meeting date.**

5. Tender may be cancelled at any stage by the competent authority without refunding the Cost of BOQ.

6. Bidder should have valid GST and all other applicable tax registration certificate and copies of the same duly attested shall be furnished.

7. No separate transportation cost shall be paid and the bidder shall have to quote the rate inclusive of transportation cost and all taxes.

8. Eligibility Criteria, tender documents along with General/Special condition, bids and any corrigendum/addendum of the tender are available only at website www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in

Chief Engineer (O&M)

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Working Hours: 8AM to 7PM (All days in week except few selected state holidays).
While participating in e-tendering process, the contractor shall have to get them registered to get user ID, Passwords and digital signature. This will enable them to access the Website: www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in only.

‘बिवादों के निषादन के लिए लोक अदालत का लाभ उठाये परस्पर सहमति से न्यायिक निर्णय प्राप्त करेंसमय एवं खर्च की बचत करें।’
For further details please visit website www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar

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GLOBE TROTTER

2 FIREFIGHTERS KILLED, IN CZECH GAS BLAST

Prague: Two firefighters were killed in a gas explosion that leveled a family house in southeast Czech Republic, officials said on Wednesday. The head of the regional government, Radim Holis, also said two other firefighters were injured. The regional rescue service said a total of four people were injured in the explosion that occurred in the town of Korycany shortly after noon. One was taken to hospital for treatment by a helicopter.

PAK: 7 SOLDIERS, 5 ULTRAS KILLED IN GUN BATTLE

Peshawar: Seven Pakistani soldiers and five terrorists were killed in a gun battle in Pakistan’s restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province bordering Afghanistan on Wednesday, the military said.

SMALL PLANE CRASHES IN INDONESIA’S PAPUA

Jakarta: A small cargo plane crashed in a steep mountainous forest in Indonesia’s Papua province on Wednesday, killing all three people on board, officials said. Timika rescue agency chief George Leo Mercy Randang said rescuers had reached the crash site of the Rimbun Air plane and confirmed that all three crew members were dead.

SRI LANKAN PRISONS MINISTER RESIGNS

Colombo: Sri Lankan Prisons Minister Lohan Ratwatte resigned on Wednesday after an uproar over his alleged remarks to kill Tamil prisoners during his recent visit to a jail in the island nation’s north central region. Ratwatte, the Minister of State for Prisons Management, tendered his resignation after outrage from the Tamil political parties which sought his exit from the Cabinet and arrest over the remarks.

Iran’s nuclear chief admits removal of damaged IAEA cameras

Tehran: Iran acknowledged on Wednesday that it had removed several surveillance cameras installed by UN nuclear inspectors at a centrifuge assembly site that came under a mysterious attack earlier this year.

The chief of the country’s nuclear program, Mohammad Eslami, sought to portray the removal of cameras as Tehran’s response to world powers reneging on their commitments under the tattered 2015 nuclear deal.

“The parties did not implement their commitments so there were no necessity for the cameras’ existence,” Eslami said after a meeting with lawmakers — remarks apparently aimed at his own domestic audience under the country’s new hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi.

Eslami’s comments come days after

a confidential International Atomic Energy Agency report that revealed the nuclear watchdog found four surveillance cameras to be destroyed and damaged after their removal from the centrifuge manufacturing site in Karaj, a city about 40 kilometers (25 miles) northwest of Tehran.

In June, Iran accused Israel of mounting a sabotage attack on the site, which makes components for machines used to enrich uranium. Without disclosing details of the assault, Iranian authorities acknowledged the strike had damaged the building.

Addressing swirling questions about the agency’s broken surveillance cameras, Eslami said Wednesday they were damaged during recent “terrorist operations,” without elaborating.

Kim Jong Un’s sister warns of ‘destruction’ of South Korean ties

AP ■ SEOUL

The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Wednesday criticised South Korea’s President and threatened a “complete destruction” of bilateral relations after both of the countries tested ballistic missiles hours apart.

The launches of missiles underscored a return of tensions between the rivals at a time when talks aimed at stripping North Korea of its nuclear program are stalled.

Kim’s sister, Kim Yo Jong, criticised South Korean President Moon Jae-in for comments he made while observing his country’s missile tests, including its first of a submarine-launched ballistic missile. Moon said South Korea’s growing missile capabilities will serve as a “sure deterrence” against North Korean provocations.

The tests came hours after the South Korean and Japanese militaries said North Korea had fired two ballistic missiles into the sea.

TENDER NOTICE

No.SSA/CW/KGBV-Lumding/264/2020/7584
Dated – 14/09/2021

The Mission Director, SSA, Assam, invites fresh bids for the following work from registered contractors [Class - I (A, B & C)] under A. P.W.D.(Building) Assam, having experience of similar nature of work. Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 16/09/2021(04:30 PM) to 06/10/2021 (2:00 PM) The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

Name of Work	Package No	Place	Approx. Value of Work	Time of completion	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	E.M.D. to be drawn in favour of	Tender Cost
CONSTRUCTION OF KASTURBA GANDHI BALIKA VIDYALAYA (CLASS VI TO X) (ACADEMIC BLOCK ASSAM TYPE WITH RCC HOSTEL BUILDING (G+2) (KGBV-TYPE-II), SSA, ASSAM	1L	Lumding ,Hojai	Rs.1,91,28,900.00 [Per site]	12 (twelve months)	Rs.3,82,578.00 (for General) Rs.1,91,289.00 (for reserved Category) [PER SITE]	The Mission Director, SSA, Assam, Guwahati -19	Rs.5000.00

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BEING VOCAL FOR LOCAL

VIDUSHI SAHANI and DIVYA SINGH RATHORE discuss key strategies to increase rural tourism in India

Martin Luther King Jr once said, “A visit to India was not just tourism but a pilgrimage...” And not just him, but travellers like Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus, Tavernier, Francois Bernier were so fascinated by the grandeur and attraction of real India. Today, we might have moved beyond, but the essence of that Indianness is still visible in our villages. Rural India holds the potential to change the face of India’s economy and with 65 per cent of us living across seven million villages, rural India is a force to reckon with. With a maddening rush to urban areas and the rat race to go cosmopolitan, we are ignoring the real India we grew up in. If *atma nirbharta* is the ultimate goal, then, building a self-sustaining rural economy is the key. Undoubtedly, rural tourism is one of such bright avenues.

For the first time India has come up with a draft of the national strategy for the development of rural tourism. If executed well, it would create several job opportunities and sources of livelihood in rural areas.

A proper governance structure and institutional mechanism at the national and state level will help to address the most persistent factors ailing the tourism sector — coordination. With this direction and political will, it is expected that the hidden opportunities for tourism in India’s hinterlands would see the light of the day.

Another remarkable feature is the adoption of a cluster-based approach. This will ensure that the natural and cultural heterogeneity of India is leveraged, which cannot be accomplished in the case of blanket schemes. What would be interesting to note is how clusters that should not disturb their natural potential vis-à-vis the administrative boundaries would be identified. In short, the rural tourism strategy has emphasised all key aspects of tourism such as model policies and best practices, digital technologies and building clusters, providing marketing support, creating capacity of stakeholders, governance, and institutional framework.

Most of all, the policy has come at an opportune time, when the global tourism industry is gasping for a fresh start. The burden of protocols, the fear of contagion, and the lack of preparedness have crippled the sector. However, what must also be noted is that tourism is something that is innate to society and cannot be contained for long.

The pandemic has redefined many things along with the existing structures. It might feel sudden, but



the shift was imminent nonetheless. However, the pandemic-ridden psyches of urban India have brought forth interesting insights. People are desperately looking out for an urban and digital detox. Having spent the last two years digitally caved up, there is an urge to move from mechanical cities to a more earthy lifestyle without compromising one’s health.

However, we have witnessed that these city dwellers planned short trips to rural offbeat locations which were already overburdened with tourist footfall, draining their originality and exclusivity. This trend highlights the dire need for a policy intervention to ensure tourist dispersal to lesser-known but equally attractive destinations.

Across the globe, tourist dispersal has become a priority. Nations are taking concrete steps to divert tourist traffic to the least-visited destinations and rural areas. For instance, nations like Australia and New Zealand have national level policies and strategies for encouraging tourist dispersal across the nation.

Another important aspect is the need to overcome financial bottlenecks in the implementation of the strategy. For instance, countries like Sweden, Germany, and so forth have



public spending on rural tourism within their rural development programs. On the other hand, we have China’s case where a major government policy has ensured the unhindered flow of funds and prioritisation.

Now that India is heading towards strategic rural tourism, we can expect bigger gains. The strategy addresses all the pain points of tourism in India, be

it lack of coordination, work in silos, a scattered skill ecosystem, and skewed private participation. Interestingly,

the strategy embeds tourism as a component of rural development. With this, we depart from the current scheme of things where random rural tourism projects are undertaken across the nation without a strategic direction or accountability for other states and

departments.

Distinctively, the strategy note mentions that the process of identification of rural tourism clusters should be broad-based, involving stakeholders from Government, industry, NGOs, rural community and local businesses. This would be a progressive step in acknowledging the critical role of private stakeholders and local communities especially rural youth in tourism development. However, a formal mechanism would be needed to elicit this cooperation in real terms.

Even globally, local communities are the fulcrum of rural tourism policies. Countries like France, Austria, and the United Kingdom have a long-established tradition of farm tourism, giving impetus to farming communities and their livelihood. Then, there are countries like Cambodia and Costa Rica where rural communities have been made key stakeholders for tourism development. Tortuguero village of Costa Rica is a rare example of how an entire population was involved in travel-related activities, with sea turtles conservation at the epicentre. Conservation efforts, policy changes, and behavioural changes made the village a globally recognised ecotourism hub.

This brings us to another important aspect, environmental protection. While sustainability remains at the heart of rural tourism, this is one area that is missing from the draft strategy document. Before embarking on any rural tourism plans, it is extremely important to chalk out an ecotourism strategy.

The success of the strategy would greatly depend on how the centre, states and all the private stakeholders can strike a synergy and overcome all the administrative bottlenecks. Tourism is one area which is spread across multiple domains and ministries and thus cannot function without appropriate convergence.

The rural tourism strategy is nevertheless a step in the right direction. For any nation, tourism is a story of its culture and its originality. Undoubtedly, our villages, some pristine and untouched, still hold that unique cultural and natural wealth. They are the reflection of our past and our Indianness.

As Mahatma Gandhi rightly said, “The future of India lies in its villages. If pampered and tended to, our villages can lead India as a global tourist destination, thriving on its sheer originality and Indianness.”

(The authors are independent policy researchers.)

Ajit Sharma takes charge as DMRC’s new director (Finance)

Ajit Sharma has taken charge as the new director of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation’s (DMRC) Finance department. Prior to joining DMRC, Sharma was working as the Finance director of the Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation Limited (MRVC), a PSU under the Ministry of Railways.

He is an electrical engineer from PEC, Chandigarh and MBA from the faculty of management studies in Delhi University and has a vast experience of 32 years with distinction in various capacities in the Indian Railways as well as in areas of planning and dealing with multilateral development banks in procurement and



financing during his tenure in Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation. He has extensively studied railways systems across the world and has in-depth knowledge of both suburban and non-suburban railway systems.

Alka Arora is NSIC’s new CMD

Alka Nangia Arora, IDAS (91) has assumed the additional charge as the chairman cum managing director (CMD) of The National Small Industries Corporation Ltd (NSIC), on September 14, 2021.

On the occasion, she interacted with senior officers of NSIC and encouraged all employees to continue giving their best performance during 2021-22.

Arora is an industry veteran with over 30 years of experience in diverse activities across the country. She is serving as a joint secretary in the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and she has also served in major positions in organisations under Government of India such as the additional commissioner of Handicrafts, in the Ministry of Textiles, the MD of Cottage Emporium, and the integrated financial advisor to the Western Air Command (Subroto Park) and FA Army Hospital (R & R).

She has also served in various capacities with the Navy; as a financial advisor to the Naval Dockyard and the joint-controller of defence accounts in Mumbai and as an FA to the Eastern Command Army, Kolkata.

PFC wins Rajbhasha Kirti award



Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC), the country’s leading non-banking financial company in the power sector, has won first prize in the prestigious Rajbhasha Kirti for the years 2019-20 and 2020-21. PFC has won these prizes in the category of PSUs, in the region ‘A’, for best performance in the official language implementation.

Home Minister Amit Shah presented both awards to Ravinder Singh Dhillon, the

CMD of PFC, during the Hindi Diwas celebrations that is organised at Vigyan Bhawan. PFC has been conferred this award for the eighth time in a row (winning first place for the sixth time).

PK Singh, the director of Commercial & Projects (additional charge), Parminder Chopra, the director of Finance, G Jawahar, the CGM of PFC, and Arun Shrivastava, the general manager of PFC, were also present on the occasion.

POWERGRID’s CorpCom team commended

The Corporate Communications team of Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna CPSU under the Ministry of Power, Government of India, has featured in Reputation Today’s ‘India’s Top 30 Corporate Communications teams’. The team is ranked 18th in the list which features only two PSUs from India.

The team was felicitated by the CMD of POWERGRID, K Sreekanth for this achievement in the presence of V K Singh, the director of Personnel, Mohammed Taj Mukarrum,



the director of Finance and Abhay Choudhary, the director of Projects yesterday .



Sri Lankan delegation visits NAFED to explore mutual business avenues

SRM and HCL collaboratively open an in-vitro diagnostic lab

SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur, has tied up with HCL Technologies Limited to open an in-vitro diagnostic lab on their premises.

The facility was inaugurated by the vice-chancellor of SRMIST, Dr C Muthamizhchelvan and the senior vice president of HCL, R Balamurugan.

SRMIST had signed an MoU with HCL to undertake collaborative device and assay development programmes along with



other collaborative R&D programs, verification and validation and other suste-

nance activities. As a part of the MoU, HCL IVD Lab was established and inaugurated in the SRMIST Kattankulathur Campus.

Also, SRMIST’s registrar, Dr S Ponnusamy, the dean of Research, Dr B Neppolian and the coordinator of IISM, Dr R C Satish Kumar were present on the occasion. From HCL Technologies Ltd Mohammed Farid, Praveen Kumar Mavila and M Chockalingam were present during the inauguration.

Hindi Diwas celebrations at PNB’s head office

Multiple departments of the organisation were rewarded under the Lala Lajpat Rai Shield Scheme for excellent implementation of the official language

Punjab National Bank (PNB), the country’s leading public sector organisation, celebrated Hindi Diwas yesterday with great zeal and enthusiasm in all the administrative offices and branches. On this occasion, Hindi Diwas Samaroh and cultural event was organised at the bank’s head office in Dwarka, New Delhi, which was presided over by the bank’s MD and CEO, S S Mallikarjuna Rao. Executive directors of the bank, Sanjay Kumar, Vijay Dubey, Swaroop Kumar Saha, as well as chief general managers and general managers were also present on the occasion. A cultural programme was also organised by the staff members, in accordance with Covid-19 protocols and Rao felicitated the winners of Lala Lajpat Rai Shield competitions which were organised by the Bank.

While addressing the gathering, Rao heartily congratulated all the employees of the bank for being awarded Rajbhasha Kirti’s first prize for the fourth consecutive year, which was conferred by the Department of Official



Languages under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, while highlighting the importance of Hindi Diwas. He further said that the use of Hindi in banking is not only a constitutional requirement but also a commercial necessity. That’s why PNB has adopted Hindi by heart and all digital products of the organisation such as net banking, mobile banking and the PNB One app have been made available in Hindi as well as other regional languages for the benefit of the customers. He urged all the staff

members to continue pursuing the work done for implementing the official language with the same zeal and enthusiasm in the future.

Sanjay suggested using the simple and easy official language in banking operations and enriching the Hindi dictionary by including words of other regional languages in it. Additionally, he administered the *rajbhasha* pledge to all staff members.

Congratulating all the award winners, the chief general manager, Rajbhasha, B S Mann requested them to contribute in the

progress of Hindi language and to keep the bank at the topmost level in the field of official language.

Oh the occasion, Manisha Sharma, the assistant general manager, Rajbhasha, apprised all the staff members about the work being done by the official language department of the bank for the propagation of Hindi and informed about the achievements of the bank in this field.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by S K Dash, the general manager, Rajbhasha.

Working and growing together

The Uganda High Commission in India, with the support of PHD Chamber of Commerce (PHDCCI), is working to improve the balance of trade between the two countries

The Uganda High Commission in India, with the support of PHD Chamber of Commerce (PHDCCI), is organising a three-day road show from September 16-18, at Hotel Clarks Amer in Jaipur to discuss the immense investment and business opportunities in Uganda and invite investors from India to encash the same in Uganda. A press briefing was organised yesterday for the same.

Speaking on the occasion, Digvijay Dhabriya, the chairman of PHDCCI’s Rajasthan chapter, informed about the century-old friendly Indo-Ugandan relations. Large number of Indians settled in Uganda have contributed significantly to the growth and development of trade and industry and through its robust policy framework and other facilities, Uganda is attracting foreign investment and entrepreneurs so that the existing adverse balance of trade can be improved, Dhabriya informed. Both the countries are committed for this and the road show at Jaipur is being organised in this direction, he added.

During the briefing, Mohammad Kajala, Uganda High Commission in India’s deputy high commissioner, informed about immense business opportunities in different sectors for



the investors. The prospective sectors include oil and gas, infrastructure, agriculture, food processing, dairy, mines and minerals, healthcare, education, skill development, tourism, film-making, information and communication technology, Kajala informed. At present the total exports from India to Uganda is to the tune of \$800 million as against the meager import of \$47 million, resulting in a very adverse balance of trade; both countries are committed to improve the same.

Through its investors-friendly policies and ease of doing business, Uganda is striving to achieve maximum value-addition of its resources in the country. During the three day hybrid road show, senior ministers

and government officials of different departments would be interacting with the Indian investors and industry leaders and provide details of opportunities, facilities and incentives, legal and policy framework for the investors while looking for new partnership and collaborations from Indian investors and entrepreneurs to harness opportunities, Kajala added. The rich cultural heritage of Uganda would also be exhibited through various cultural performances, he added.

During the road show, detailed deliberations would be held on investment-climate and other opportunities in ICT, oil and gas, manufacturing, SME, trade-promotion, tourism and film-making sectors to attract Indian investors.

Virat, Rahul static at 4th & 6th



PTI ■ DUBAI

India captain Virat Kohli and star batsman KL Rahul maintained their fourth and sixth place respectively among the batsmen while no Indian bowler featured in the top-10 in the ICC T20 rankings.

The top seven batsmen led by England's Dawid Malan maintained their rankings while South African keeper-batter Quinton de Kock is now ranked eighth while West Indies Evin Lewis has dropped a place to be

ninth in the list.

Among bowlers, Tabraiz Shamsi still holds the pole position followed by Wanindu Hasaranga and Rashid Khan.

India's top ranked bowler in the list is veteran pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar at 12th while injured off-spinner Washington Sundar is the other in the top-20 at 18th place. Yuzvendra Chahal is the only bowler who has shown improvement and is now 25th although he has been dropped from the Indian team for the T20 World Cup.

In the all-rounders' list, the only Indian among the top-20 is Hardik Pandya, who is just about managed to make the list with 98 points.

The Indians last played a T20 series in Sri Lanka and hence haven't played any games in the shortest format.

Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman has moved up two places to eighth after finishing with eight wickets in the series against South Africa while Nasum Ahmed (up 25 places to 15th) and Mehedi Hasan (up four

places to 20th) have also made notable progress.

However, Shakib Al Hasan has conceded the top spot for all-rounders to Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi.

In the ODI rankings for batters, Jaskaran Malhotra of the United States, who struck sixes in an over from Papua New Guinea's Gaudi Toka in a World Cup Super League 2 match, has rocketed 169 places to 132nd.

In the bowlers' list, Nepal leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane is now in top-100 at 91st place.

Limited spectators allowed at IPL

New Delhi: Limited spectators will be allowed into the stadiums when the much-awaited Indian Premier League resumes in the UAE this weekend, the event's organisers announced on Wednesday.

The IPL, which was suspended midway in May due to COVID-19 cases in its bio bubble, will resume from Sunday with defending champions Mumbai Indians taking on Chennai Super Kings at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium. "This match will be a momentous occasion as IPL will welcome the fans back to the stadiums after a brief hiatus owing to COVID-19 situation," an IPL statement said.

"Matches will be played at Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi with limited seating available keeping in mind the COVID protocols and UAE government regulations," it added.

It will be the first time since 2019 when the IPL will be played in front of an audience.

Last year, the league was played behind closed doors in the UAE while the first half of the 2021 edition was also played inside a strict bio-bubble. Although the league organisers did not specify the exact number of fans who would be let in but sources said their presence would be 50 per cent of the stadium capacity.

"Fans can buy tickets starting September 16 for the remainder of the tournament on the official website www.iplt20.com. Tickets can also be purchased on PlatinumList.Net," the league organisers said.



Delhi Capitals include net bowler Khejroliya in main squad

PTI ■ DUBAI

Delhi Capitals on Wednesday inducted left-arm seamer Kulwant Khejroliya in the main squad for the upcoming second half of this year's IPL after left-arm orthodox spinner Manimaran Siddharth was ruled out of the tournament due to quadriceps strain.

"Delhi Capitals today announced that left-arm orthodox bowler Manimaran Siddharth has been ruled out of the IPL 2021 due to an injury. The 23-year-old incurred a quadriceps strain during training in Dubai," Delhi

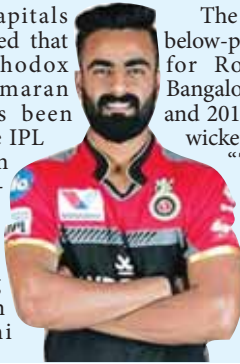
Capitals said in a release.

Left-arm medium fast bowler Khejroliya, who is already part of the Delhi Capitals team's bio-bubble as a net bowler, was readily included in the main squad.

Khejroliya, who plays domestic cricket for the Delhi state side, has so far taken 17 wickets in 15 T20 matches at an average of 23.29.

The 29-year-old had a below-par IPL debut season for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL 2018 and 2019 seasons, taking 3 wickets in 5 IPL matches.

"The DC support staff is currently overlooking Manimaran Siddharth's rehabilitation programme in Dubai," the release added.



Manika Batra not in India squad



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star paddler Manika Batra was on Wednesday left out of the India squad for the Asian Championships beginning September 28 in Doha after she did not attend the mandatory national camp in Sonapat.

In the absence of the world number 56th player, 97th-ranked Sutirtha Mukherjee will lead the women's team. The other members are Ayhika Mukherjee (ranked 131) and Archana Kamath (132).

Veteran Sharath Kamal (ranked 33) will spearhead the men's challenge in the company

Olympics.

Manika had informed the federation that she would like to continue training with her personal coach in Pune.

The Khel Ratna awardee has also made match fixing allegations against national coach Soumydeep Roy for asking her to throw a match during the Olympic qualifiers. TTFF has formed an inquiry panel to probe the allegations.

Sathiyam, Desai and Sutirtha joined the national camp late due to different reasons. Sathiyam was playing in Poland, Harmeet was in Germany while Sutirtha had fever.

Men's team: Manav Thakkar, Sharath Kamal, G Sathiyam, Harmeet Desai, Sanil Shetty.

Men's doubles: Sharath Kamal and G Sathiyam; Manav Thakkar and Harmeet Desai.

Women's team: Sutirtha Mukherjee, Sreeja Akula, Ayhika Mukherjee, Archana Kamath.

Women's doubles: Archana Kamath and Sreeja Akula; Sutirtha Mukherjee and Ayhika Mukherjee.

Mixed doubles: Manav Thakkar and Archana Kamath; Harmeet Desai and Sreeja Akula.

Will try and replicate 2017 Champions Trophy final: Hasan Ali

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan seamer Hasan Ali is confident that his team can beat arch-rivals India in the opening match of the ICC T20 World Cup, replicating its convincing win in the 2017 Champions Trophy final at the Oval. Since then, Pakistan has played India twice in the 50-over format and got thrashed both times — at the 2018 Asia Cup in Dubai and the 2019 ODI World Cup in England.

Before every global event, there is always a lot of hullabaloo from the Pakistan corner but till date, they haven't beaten India in either 50-over or T20 World Cup games.

In fact, they have also failed to beat India in practice games. "When we won the Champions Trophy (in 2017), it was a very good time for us and we will try to beat them again in the T20 World Cup.

We will give our best. Playing against India is always a pressure game because of the expectations of fans from both countries," Hasan told a virtual media conference on Wednesday.

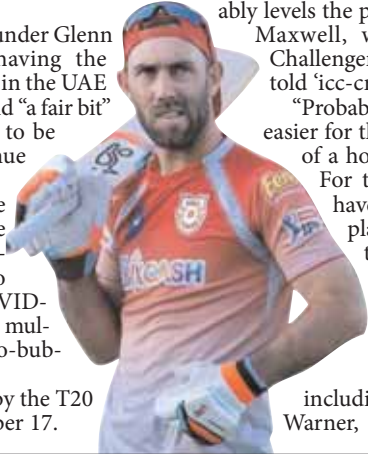
IPL in UAE will level playing field for T20 World Cup: Maxwell

PTI ■ DUBAI

Star Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell believes having the Indian Premier League in the UAE will level the playing field "a fair bit" in the T20 World Cup to be held at the same venue next month.

The IPL will resume on September 19 in the UAE after being suspended in May due to the second wave of COVID-19 in India, which led to multiple cases inside its bio-bubble.

It will be followed by the T20 World Cup from October 17.



"The tournament being in UAE probably levels the playing field a little bit," Maxwell, who plays for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL, told 'icc-cricket.Com'. "Probably makes it a little bit easier for there not to be as much of a home ground advantage. For the IPL to be there to have a lot of international players that are potentially going to be in that World Cup over there playing, I think it's probably levelled the playing field a fair bit." Australia's top players, including Steve Smith, David Warner, Aaron Finch and Pat

Cummins, have not competed in the last few months and will be back in action at the IPL.

Maxwell said the IPL stint will help the preparation of the Australian players.

"The fact we've got a lot of guys going over for the IPL as a preparation, get a few games in those conditions, it's going to do wonders for our batters," he said.

"Our bowlers are going to be up and firing by the time the tournament starts. I can assure you everyone is looking forward to hitting the ground running over there."

Australia will have to battle it out against defending champions West Indies, world number one England and South Africa in a tough group in the Super 12 stage.

Juventus beats Malmö 3-0 for 1st win since Ronaldo's exit

AP ■ MALMO (SWEDEN)

Juventus claimed its first win of the post-Cristiano Ronaldo era by beating Malmö 3-0 in the Champions League after a flurry of first-half goals.

Alex Sandro's 23rd-minute opener was followed by goals in the space of 60 seconds by Paulo Dybala — from the penalty spot — and Alvaro Morata on the stroke of half-time in the south of Sweden on Tuesday.

Juventus has failed to win any of its three games in Serie A this season, the last two being losses that came after the departure of Ronaldo to Manchester United.

A trip to the Swedish champions offered some respite from its domestic problems for Massimiliano Allegri's team, which can take some momentum into a big match in the Italian league against AC Milan on Sunday. "We came here after some bad results, but we knew that this is another competition and we knew what to do," Dybala said.

"We did it, playing with serenity," Sandro's goal — a stooping header from a right-wing cross from Juan Cuadrado that was flicked on by Rodrigo Bentancur — came just as Malmö was starting to apply some pressure on Juventus. After that, the visitors dominated.

Bayern beats Barcelona 3-0 for 1st loss of post-Messi era

AP ■ BARCELONA

Bayern Munich showed Barcelona exactly how dreary life will be without Lionel Messi when it dealt the Spanish team its first loss since the exit of the star forward.

Thomas Müller scored a goal and Robert Lewandowski added two more to help Bayern ease to a 3-0 victory at Camp Nou in their Champions League opener on Tuesday.

Müller's 34th-minute strike took his career tally to seven goals against Barcelona, including the two he netted in the 8-2 shellacking Bayern dealt Barcelona the last time they met in August 2020.

Without Messi to rely on as it had for years, Barcelona was running scared from the start as it focused on protecting itself from another embarrassing



defeat. The final score hid the total dominance of the Bundesliga powerhouse. Julian Nagelsmann's team turned the once great attacking juggernaut of Barcelona into a jittery bunch hunkered down in their own area.

Lewandowski capitalized on Bayern's complete control

with goals in the 56th and 85th, both times putting in rebounds from shots that came off the post to the striker.

"We gave little away at the back," Müller said.

"Going forward, we could have scored one or two more. It's a lot of fun playing here, the boys enjoyed it."

Lukaku seals Chelsea win over Zenit to start CL defence

AP ■ LONDON

Four games. Four goals. Just what was expected of Romelu Lukaku. Just what Chelsea missed so often last season. And just what he couldn't produce in his first spell at Stamford Bridge.

The striker who couldn't even get on the field in the Champions League a decade ago for Chelsea is back as the lead-

ing targetman. On his European debut for the club, the 28-year-old Belgian ensured Chelsea made a successful start to its Champions League title defense by clinching a 1-0 victory over Zenit St. Petersburg on Tuesday.

"That is why he is here," Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel said. "It is another step ahead, because winning and another clean sheet is super important for the belief and for our process. We are not finished,

but are in a good place to improve." It added to the three goals — including two in Saturday's win over Aston Villa — Lukaku has already scored in the Premier League this season.

"We have to keep growing. Today was a better performance than the weekend," Lukaku said. "It was a beautiful ball from Cesar. I just had to get my timing right and then place the ball in the corner."

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Players picking up bits of information on UAE conditions in IPL will help SA at T20 WC: Boucher

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Head coach Mark Boucher hopes South Africa's T20 World Cup bound players can pick up "bits of information" about the UAE conditions during the Indian Premier League which he feels will stand the team in good stead during the marquee ICC event.

The 44-year-old emphasised that the players need to manage themselves during the league so that they can peak at the right time as a unit for South Africa.

"We've spoken to the guys



going to the IPL. They need to stay quite disciplined and realise we want to peak at the right time as a unit," Boucher was quoted as saying by 'ESPNCricinfo'.

Have deepest concerns on 'place of boxing' in Olympics: IOC



PTI ■ LAUSANNE

The International Olympic Committee on Wednesday "restated its deepest concerns" on boxing's place in the 2024 Paris Olympics, citing "unresolved" issues with the International Boxing Association's governance structure, financial situation and the scoring system even as the AIBA promised to "exceed" the laid down criteria.

In a letter addressed to AIBA President Umar Kremlev, IOC Director General Christophe De Kepper said the Olympic body's Executive Board has asked him and its

Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer to "follow up" on the situation. The AIBA responded by saying that it is doing everything that that IOC expects from it.

"AIBA has been working on comprehensive reform for some time now and is grateful for the IOC's public acknowledgment that a step forward has certainly been taken in terms of good governance..." the AIBA stated in an e-mail to PTL, responding to the IOC letter. In the four-page communication, IOC expressed dissatisfaction with the work done by the AIBA to address concerns related to its governance, finances and the

refereeing and judging system that has been under intense scrutiny since the 2016 Rio Olympics.

"On the basis of the above, the IOC Executive Board restated its deepest concerns and reiterated its previous position regarding the place of boxing in the programme of the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and future editions of the Olympic Games," the letter stated.

The AIBA said it would do more than what has been mandated to regain the IOC's confidence.

"Wide-ranging reforms are already underway in terms of financial integrity, good governance and sporting integrity, including all the areas mentioned by the IOC and more," the AIBA said.

"Independent experts are involved in each of these sectors. AIBA is confident these reforms will see AIBA meet and even exceed the criteria laid down by the IOC for reinstatement." The IOC said while it acknowledges that AIBA has taken "a step forward in the direction of better governance" but several concerns remain unaddressed.