

## OPINION 6

PORNOGRAPHY IS THE THEORY, RAPE PRACTICE

## WORLD 8

WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH MEMBER STATES ON AF ISSUE: CHINA

## SPORT 12

INDIA'S ODI TOUR OF NZ POSTPONED TO 2022

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CRITICISM IS VALID AT TIMES: JACQUELINE 10 VIVACITY

## Mega bid to bail out ailing banks

Govt clears ₹36,000 cr to solve bad loans, plans speedy disposal of stressed assets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after imitating a major reform in the telecom sector, the Government on Thursday came out with a ₹36,000 package for acquiring stressed loan assets, paving the way for operationalisation of the bad bank. This will help ailing banks such as Yes bank.

While shares of Yes bank spiked by 16 per cent in stock market, Vodafone idea surged by 26 per cent on the back of the Wednesday announcement of relief measures for the telecom sectors.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that ₹30,600 crore Government guarantee for the National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) would be for a period of 5 years. The NARCL would have to pay a fee for this.

The NARCL will purchase bad loans from banks under a 15:85 structure, where it will pay up to 15 per cent of the net asset value in cash and issue Security Receipts (SRs) for the rest. The Government guarantee would be invoked if there is loss against the threshold value.

The NARCL has been incorporated under the Companies Act and has applied to Reserve Bank of India for license as an Asset Reconstruction Company. PSBs will maintain 51 per cent ownership in the NARCL.

The decision to provide sovereign guarantee for secu-



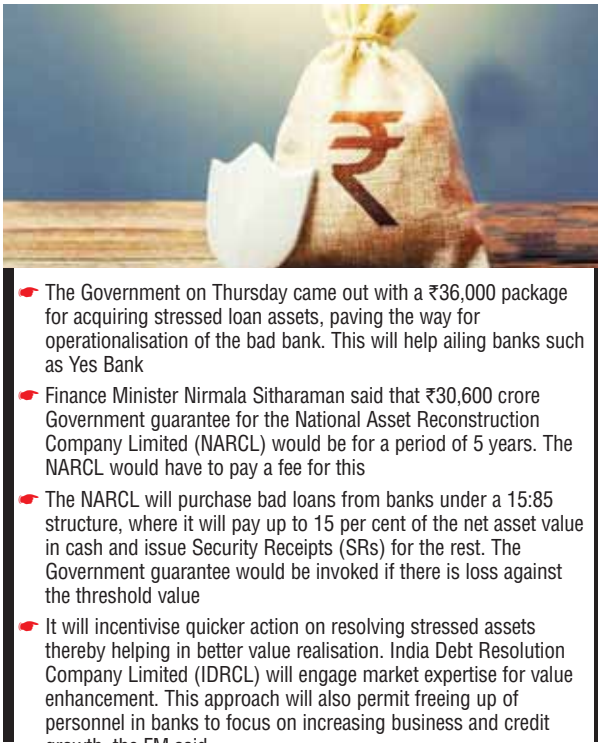
Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during a Press conference at NMC in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

urity receipts (SRs) issued by the NARCL was taken at a meeting of the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday.

The FM in Budget 2021-22 announced setting up of a bad bank as part of resolution of bad loans worth ₹2 lakh crore.

The NARCL will pay up to 15 per cent of the agreed value for the loans in cash and the remaining 85 per cent would be Government-guaranteed security receipts. The Government guarantee would be invoked if there is loss against the threshold value.



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- It will incentivise quicker action on resolving stressed assets thereby helping in better value realisation. India Debt Resolution Company Limited (IDRCL) will engage market expertise for value enhancement. This approach will also permit freeing up of personnel in banks to focus on increasing business and credit growth, the FM said

“For the SRs to hold on and to have their value intact, there is a need for the Government to give the backstop arrangement and that’s why ₹30,600 crore has been cleared by the Cabinet yesterday,” she said.

“The SRs are getting the backstop through the Government funding only in as much as to pay the gap between the realised value (resolution/liquidation) and face value of SRs and this will

hold good for five years,” Sitharaman said.

The fee for the guarantee would be initially 0.25 per cent, which would progressively increase to 0.5 per cent in case of delay in resolution of bad loans, Financial Services Secretary Debasish Panda said. This would enable speedy disposal of stressed assets and clean up banks’ balancesheets for further lending, he explained.

## Madras HC stays IT rule clauses for media’s freedom

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Thursday stayed the operation of certain sub-clauses of the recently introduced Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, holding there was prima facie substance in the petitioners’ contention that a control mechanism would rob the media of its independence and democratic principles. Incidentally, the Bombay High Court had last month pronounced similar order on a related case.

The sub-clauses — (1) and (3) of Rule 9, which were stayed on Thursday, stipulated the adherence to the Code of Ethics. They were inserted to the original IT Rules in February this year.

The first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice PD Audikesavalu granted the stay while passing interim orders on a batch of PILs from carnatic musician TM Krishna and Digital News Publishers Association, consisting of 13 media outlets and another individual, challenging the constitutional validity of the new rules.

Prima facie, there is substance in the contention of the petitioners that the mechanism to control the media by Government may rob the



media, both print and electronic, of their independence and the democratic principles, the bench said. The court adjourned the matter to the last week of October, when it was informed that similar cases pending before the Supreme Court are scheduled to come up for hearing in the first week of next month.

The Bombay High Court, while granting the interim stay in August, had held that “disent” was vital for democracy. Sub-clauses 1 and 3 of clause 9 of the new Rules were, on the face of it, “manifestly unreasonable”, and “the indeterminate and wide terms of the Rules bring about a chilling effect qua (regarding) the right of freedom of speech and expression of writers/editors/publishers” as they can be hauled up for anything if the authorities so wish, it had then said.

## CAPSULE

## INDIAN'S ABDUCTION IN AF: GOVT IN TOUCH

**New Delhi:** India on Thursday said it is in touch with all concerned following reports that an Indian national has been kidnapped from Kabul. According to reports, Bansri Lal Arendeh was kidnapped at gunpoint on Tuesday in the Afghan capital city.

## DELHI: HIGHEST RAINFALL THIS MONSOON SINCE 1964



**New Delhi:** The monsoon this year has dumped a bounteous 1159.4 mm of rainfall in Delhi till Thursday afternoon, the highest since 1964 and the third-highest since the data has been maintained by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Delhi's September rainfall has breached the 400 mm mark. At 403 mm till Thursday afternoon, it is the maximum rainfall recorded in the month since 417.3 mm in September 1944.

MARKETS	
SENSEX	59,141.16 (+417.96)
NIFTY	17,629.50 (+110.05)
GOLD	45,903.00 (-993.00)
SILVER	60,891.00 (-2402.00)
WEATHER	
MAX	32.0°C
MIN	23.0°C
Partly Cloudy Sky	
POWERED BY UNIGATE GENERAL MEDIA (P) LTD	
<a href="https://pioneeredge.in">https://pioneeredge.in</a>	

## HC lifts stay on Char Dham Yatra with conditions

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The Uttarakhand High Court has lifted the stay it had ordered earlier on the Char Dham Yatra in the State. It has allowed the Government to facilitate the pilgrimage while also putting a cap on the number of pilgrims allowed to visit the shrines on a daily basis in view of the Covid-19 situation.

Hearing on the petition while considering the affidavit submitted by the State Government, the division bench of Chief Justice RS Chauhan and Justice Alok Kumar Verma directed the State Government to consider specific aspects before facilitating the Char Dham Yatra.

The court has permitted 800 pilgrims to visit Kedarnath per day, 1,000 in Badrinath, 600 in Gangotri and 400 in Yamunotri per day. The pilgrims should either have an RT-PCR negative report or a double vaccination certificate.

## Centre reinstates NCLAT chairman after SC warning

Justice Cheema to hold post till Mon; he was prematurely retired

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre and the Supreme Court literally went for a showdown on Thursday on the issue of appointment to various tribunals and premature retirement of NCLAT chairman Justice Ashok Iqbal Singh Cheema.

The Centre climbed down after Chief Justice of India NV Ramana warned Attorney General KK Venugopal that the court would quash the new Act regarding appointments to various tribunals. Facing the Supreme Court's ire, the Centre said Justice Cheema would

continue as NCLAT chairman till September 20.

The hearing reached a point when the bench headed by the Chief Justice warned the Centre that it would exercise its suo motu power to stay the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021, which was referred to by Attorney General K K Venugopal as empowering statute to retire the NCLAT head.

Justice Cheema, the former Chairperson of National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), was to superannuate on September 20, but Justice M Venugopal was appointed as the acting head of the tribunal with effect from September 11, creating a peculiar situation.

## PM inaugurates Def Ministry buildings under Vista project

Ease of living, doing biz reasons for Central Vista project: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated the new Defence Ministry buildings, which is a part of the Central Vista project, and slammed its critics saying ease of living and doing business is the main objective to undertake this initiative.

Making this assertion after inaugurating the two new multi-storey swanky office complexes at Kasturba Gandhi Marg and Africa Avenue, he also said those opposing the project never bothered to find out about the working condition of the armed forces personnel and others in the old buildings and hutments.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of the Defence Offices Complex in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

“Today, in the 75th year of Independence, we are taking another step towards developing the national Capital according to the needs and aspirations of the new India,” he said.

The two buildings will house more than 7,000 employ-

ees of the Defence Ministry and the armed forces. Modi said these new office complexes are going to “further strengthen our efforts to make the working of our forces more convenient and effective.”

## All 24 new faces in Guj CM's Cabinet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 24 “brand new” Ministers under Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel took oath at Raj Bhavan in Gandhinagar on Thursday. None of the Ministers from Vijay Rupani Cabinet got a berth in the Ministry.

This is for the first time that such an experiment has taken place in the Indian politics in the Government formation. The induction of all-new Ministers under the new Chief Minister shows a new approach by the BJP top leadership to tackle the anti-incumbency burden in the home State of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had surprised many by suddenly hand-picking a new Gujarat Chief Minister a year before State Assembly polls, congratulated all those who have taken oath as



Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel with newly sworn-in Cabinet Ministers at their oath ceremony in Gandhinagar on Thursday

PTI

Ministers in the Gujarat Government. “Congratulations to all party colleagues who have taken oath as Ministers in the Gujarat Government,” Modi said in a tweet.

## Virat to make way for Rohit's T20 captaincy after World T20 event

PTI ■ DUBAI

Virat Kohli on Thursday announced he will step down as India's T20 skipper after the T20 World Cup in UAE but will continue to lead the side in ODIs and Test cricket, a decision that paves the way for Rohit Sharma to captain in the shortest format.

“I’ve decided to step down as the T20 captain after this T20 World Cup in Dubai in October,” the 32-year-old Kohli, who is here to compete in the IPL that resumes on Sunday, said in a statement posted on his Twitter page.

“Understanding workload is a very important thing and considering my immense



workload over the last 8-9 years playing all three formats and captaining regularly for last five to six years, I feel I need to give myself space to be fully ready to lead Indian team in Test and ODI cricket,” Kohli explained.



A man stands near a partially submerged vehicle due to waterlogging following heavy rain in Lucknow on Thursday

PTI

## Gifts given to Modi to go under the hammer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gifted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, memorabilia like sports gear and equipment of the medal winning Olympians and Paralympians, replica of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, Chardham, Rudraksh Convention Centre, models, sculptures, paintings, angavastra, etc., will soon be e-auctioned by the Union Culture Ministry.

In an official statement on Thursday, the Ministry said interested parties can participate in the e-auction through the website: [pmmementos.gov.in](http://pmmementos.gov.in) between September 17 and October 7, 2021. Any individual can also take part in the e-auction, said the Ministry.

It said proceeds from the e-auction shall go to the Namami Gange Mission aimed at conserving and rejuvenating the



Ganga.

This is not the first time Modi has offered his gifts for auction. In January 2019, 1,900 such gifts were also put up for auction. A statue of Gautam Buddha, which had a base price of Rs 4,000 fetched Rs 7 lakh back in January.

Similarly in September 2019, from idols of Lord Hanuman and Lord Ganesha

to as much as 576 shawls were auctioned. A whopping 964 angavastram, 88 pagris that he was presented at various official events were put up for sale. National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi had been displaying these items. But now because of Covid-19, the items are being auctioned online, said a senior official from the Ministry.



# Gadkari, Hry CM inspect construction of Delhi-Mumbai Expressway

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said that 15 projects for construction of roads and bridges have been approved for Delhi NCR at a cost of Rs 53,000 crore.

“Out of these 14 projects are in progress. With the completion of these projects, pollution will reduce in Delhi NCR and people will not have to waste their time in long traffic jams,” Gadkari said after inspecting the construction work of Delhi-Mumbai Expressway along with Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. Gadkari addressed a programme organized at Lohkti village of Sohna sub-division of Gurugram district. He was also accompanied by Union Minister of State for Statistics Programme Implementation, Rao Inderjit Singh and Sohna MLA Sanjay Singh.

The Union Minister said that Delhi-Mumbai Express Highway of about 1380 km length is the longest expressway in India which will be ready by March-2023. About Rs 95,000 crore will be spent on this. The part of this expressway from

Delhi to Dausa in Rajasthan and from Vadodara to Ankleshwar will be built by March-2022.

This expressway is being developed as an 8-lane access control green field expressway, which can be expanded to 12 lanes by adding 4 more lanes in future. A median of 21 meters width is being built on this expressway, which can be reduced in future to widen the expressway, he said

Gadkari said that about 160 km length of this expressway falls in the state of Haryana on which Rs 10,400 crore is being spent. Out of this, work has also been allotted for the construction of an expressway of 130 km length. This expressway will pass through Gurugram, Palwal and Nuh districts of Haryana. Way-side facilities will be built at 6 places in the part falling in Haryana, he said.

This also includes various facilities for passengers like resorts, restaurants, dormitories, hospitals, food courts, fuel stations etc., besides parking garages for trucks etc. Not only this, there will also be commercial space for a logistic park, he added.

The Union Minister said that helicopter ambulance ser-

vice would also be available on this expressway to take the accident victims to the nearest hospital at the earliest.

Accepting the demands put forth by the Chief Minister, Gadkari informed that three projects including villages Bilaspur, Manesar and Kapriwas have been approved on the Delhi-Jaipur highway at a cost of about Rs 250 crore. On this occasion, the Chief Minister had demanded to build underpasses or flyovers at these places so that people get facilities there and the number of accidents are reduced.

The Union Minister further said that the work of making interchange on Palwal-Aligarh National Highway and Eastern Peripheral Express Highway (KGP) has also been approved.

Gadkari also approved the demand of the Chief Minister to connect Faridabad city with Jewar airport. He also informed that a 6 lane 5-kilometer long elevated road is being constructed on Gurugram-Sohna road at a cost of about Rs 1700 crore which will be completed by March 2022. The U-turn underpass being built near Ambience Mall on Delhi-Jaipur



highway will also be completed by October 2021.

Gadkari further informed that for the construction of

Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, one and a half times compen-

sation has been given to the farmers so that the farmer

does not suffer. "I am also a farmer and I understand the problems of the farmer," said Gadkari while calling upon the farmers not to sell their land adjacent to the highway, but if they develop that land, they will get more profit.

Responding to a question, Gadkari said that 8 percent waste plastic is being used in road construction. The Ministry has also issued a notification regarding this. In addition, the quality of tire rubber waste is being enhanced by mixing it with bitumen, he said.

Earlier, the Chief Minister said that many such highways are now being built in Haryana. By making them our financial condition will improve. Industries will be set up, more services will be provided, people will get an opportunity to live a comfortable life and of course we will move forward, as a nation, he said.

Gurugram, Nuh and Palwal districts of Haryana would be benefited after the construction of Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. Investors will come here, industries will come up and people will get employment. A good road signifies the economic progress of that area, he added.

## Over two crore Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in Haryana: Anil Vij

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij on Thursday said that the work of COVID-

19 vaccination is going on at a fast pace in the state and more than two crore eligible beneficiaries have been given vaccination against COVID-

19 till date.

“Haryana has achieved the target of two crores for Covid vaccination today with 1,47,92,987 people adminis-



tered the first dose and 52,67,220 given both the

doses of vaccine. Eligible persons for vaccination above 18 years of age in Haryana are 1,90,69,418,” the Health Minister said.

Several residents from other states have also been administered COVID-19 vaccine in Haryana.

Sharing more details about the vaccine campaign in the state, Vij said that out of 1,90,69,418 total eligible beneficiaries, 1,05,67,138 beneficiaries falling in the age group of 18 to 44 years have been vaccinated. Out of this category, 87,20,304 beneficiaries were given the first dose which is 77 percent. Similarly, 18,46,834 beneficiaries have been given the second dose, which is 16 percent, he added.

The Minister also informed that a total of 47,61,715 beneficiaries in the age group of 45 to 60 years have been vaccinated and out of which 32,06,714 beneficiaries were given the first dose which is 70 percent. Similarly, 15,55,001 beneficiaries have been given a second dose which is 34 percent, he said.

A total of 37,54,943 beneficiaries above the age of 60 years have been vaccinated and out of which 23,62,091 beneficiaries were given the first dose, which is 77 percent. And, 13,92,852 beneficiaries have been given the second dose, which is 45 percent, he added.

Vij further said that so far, 4,88,150 frontline workers and 4,88,261 healthcare workers have been vaccinated in Haryana.

## Haryana CM visits village Bhondsi to meet family members of martyr Tarun Bhardwaj

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday visited the residence of martyr Tarun Bhardwaj at village Bhondsi in Gurugram district to meet his family members and express his condolences. 21-year-old Tarun was martyred in an avalanche in Siachen last week.

Giving courage to the bereaved family, the Chief Minister said that Tarun has made a supreme sacrifice for the country and everyone is proud of his martyrdom. Paying obeisance to Nand Kishore, the father of martyr Tarun, the Chief Minister said that the State Government has made a policy for the martyrs, according to which their family will be given financial assistance and one

member of the family will also get a job as per the qualification.

Khattar also announced to name the community centre of the village after the martyr Tarun. The Chief Minister further said that the possibilities of upgrading the village Bhondsi PHC to CHC or to a small hospital would be explored. He also announced to name a road after the martyr Tarun. Khattar said that the present State Government has given jobs to 279 persons by identifying the families of the martyrs. These include the families of the martyrs of the Indo-Pak war of 1971. According to the policy made by the Haryana Government for the martyrs, financial assistance of Rs 50 lakh is given to the family of the martyr and a job is given to a family member.

NORTHERN RAILWAY							
Tender Notice							
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Northern Railway, Moradabad for & on behalf of the President of India e-quotation for the following work:-							
S. N.	Name of Work & Place	Area (in sq-meter)	Reserve Price for 90 Days (excluding GST)	Earnest Money (2% of reserve price of 90 Days)	Completion period	Address of website from which tender documents can be downloaded	Last Date & time of submission
1.	Quotation for Cycle Scooter, Motor-Cycle Stand at Najibabad Railway Station, ('B' - Category)	465 Sq-m	Rs. 82,730.95/-	Rs. 1,700/- to be paid through online payment gateway	90 Days	www.ireps.gov.in (E-tendering mode)	Up to 14.00 hrs. on 27.09.2021 and will be open on the same day
2.	Quotation for Cycle Scooter, Motor-Cycle Stand at Jwalapur Railway Station, ('D' - Category)	90 Sq-m	Rs. 63,015.78/-	Rs. 1,300/- to be paid through online payment gateway	90 Days		
<b>Note:</b> 1. In case of any difficulty helpdesk and learning centre available on the website IREPS may be approached. 2. Tenderer(s) are advised to read tender document carefully before participating in the tender. <b>No. 21-10/Quotation-Parking/MB/2021/C Dated: 16.09.2021</b>							
2080/21							
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE							

DELHI JAL BOARD: DELHI SARKAR				
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SOUTH) IV				
O.H.T O.I.A Ph-II: OPPOSITE GOVIND PURI: NEW DELHI -20,				
e-mail: eesouthiv498@gmail.com/Tei_011-26388976				
"STOP CORONA; Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"				
Press N.I.T, NO: 33 SIV (2021-22)				
S.No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (In Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1.	Making outfall of JJC disposal going into drain and connected into DJB sewer line Janta Jeevan Rajeev Camp F-Block Okhla Ph-II, Janta Jeevan Camp at B-Block Okhla Ph-II, at D-Block at Tughlakabad Constituency under EE(South)-IV AC-52.	25,44,434/-	2021_DJB 208378_1 15.09.2021	11.10.2021 up to 3.00 pm
Further details in this regard may be seen at (https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in)				
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)			Sd/- Rajeev Kumar Gupta)	
Advt. No. J.S.V. 397(2021-22)			EXECUTIVE ENGINEER(SOUTH)IV	

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT OF N.C.T OF DELHI				
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (NORTH)-I				
OVER HEAD TANK, MUKHERJI NAGAR, DELHI-110009				
"STOP CORONA; Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"				
NIT No. 27 Item No. 1 to 3 (North)-I (2021-22)				
S. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Last date of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
	P/L 150 mm and 100 mm dia Water Line in E-Block, Shashtri Park Extn. AC 02 under EE (N)-I. Tender I.D. NO. 2021_DJB_208354_1	32,39,574/-	Exempted vide office Memorandum No: F/94/2020-PPD and DJB Endorsement No: DJB/2020-21/Misc-III(PT)/971 Dated:23.12.2020	15-09-2021 05.00 P.M. onward
However, the reimbursement of diesel consumption will be paid as per current market rates.				
Further details in this regard can be seen at https://govtprocurementsdelhi.gov.in				
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)			Sd/- (S. K. SINGH)	
Advt. No. J.S.V. 396 (2021-22)			Executive Engineer (N) -I	

NORTHERN RAILWAY							
TENDER NOTICE							
S. N.	Name of work with its location	App. Cost of the work (in Rs.) p.a	Cost of Tender Form through E-Payment Gateway (In Rs.)	Earnest Money to be deposited through E-Payment Gateway (in Rs.)	Completion period of the work	Date & Time for submission of tender & opening	Webiste particulars & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.
1.	Pay & Use Toilet, Bareilly Railway Station	14,76,132/- P.A Excluding GST@18%	3,540/- Including GST@18%	1,47,700/-	Three Years	Tender will be received up to 14.00 Hrs. of 12.10.2021 and opened thereafter	Tender will only be accepted via e-tendering through <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> any tender received manually or through any other mode will not be considered
2.	Pay & Use Toilet, Dehradun Railway Station	7,45,375/- P.A Excluding GST@18%	3,540/- Including GST@18%	74,600/-			
3.	Pay & Use Toilet, Moradabad Railway Station	8,10,000/- P.A Excluding GST@18%	3,540/- Including GST@18%	81,000/-			
4.	Pay & Use Toilet, Hapur Railway Station	2,78,412/- P.A Excluding GST@18%	2,360/- Including GST@18%	27,900/-			
No correspondence will be entertained after opening of tender.							
No.: 9/Pay & Use/MB Div/21.c			Dated: 16.09.2021				
2076/2021							
Serving Customers with a Smile							

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## कार्यालय जिला पंचायत, नैनीताल

जनपद नैनीताल के समस्त नागरिकों को माँ नन्दादेवी महोत्सव की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं। कोरोना वायरस (COVID-19) महामारी के संक्रमण को रोकें जाने हेतु केन्द्र सरकार एवं राज्य सरकार द्वारा जारी गाईड लाईन का अनुपालन किये जाने के साथ—साथ मा० उच्च न्यायालय उत्तराखण्ड नैनीताल के आदेशों के क्रम में पॉलीथीन का प्रयोग न करने एवं कूड़े को नियत स्थान पर डाले जाने की अपेक्षा की जाती है।

**श्री पी०एस० बिष्ट,** **श्री आनन्द सिंह दरम्वाल,** **श्रीमती बेला तोलिया,**  
**अपर मुख्य अधिकारी,** **उपाध्यक्ष,** **अध्यक्ष**  
**जिला पंचायत, नैनीताल। जिला पंचायत, नैनीताल। जिला पंचायत, नैनीताल।**

एवं समस्त मा० सदस्यगण श्रीमती नेहा, श्रीमती मीना देवी, श्रीमती ममता, श्रीमती भावना कपिल, श्री लाखन सिंह नेगी, श्री कमलेश सिंह, श्रीमती मंजू आर्या, श्री विपिन चन्द्र, श्रीमती आशा देवी, श्री किशोरी लाल, कु० मीरा, श्री ललित मोहन, कु० पूजा अरोड़ा, श्री नरेंद्र सिंह, कु० आशा, श्रीमती निवेदिता जोशी, श्री मोहन सिंह बिष्ट, श्री अनिल कुमार चनौतिया, श्रीमती गीता बिष्ट, श्रीमती लेखा भट्ट, श्री प्रेम बल्लभ बृजवासी, श्री अंकित साह एवं समस्त अधिकारी / कर्मचारी जिला पंचायत, नैनीताल।

# Prepare database of child labourers and beggars: DM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Dehradun district magistrate R Rajesh Kumar has directed officials concerned to conduct regular raids to restrict child labour activities and beggary across the district. He has asked the officials to prepare a complete database of children who are found as labourers and beggars in the district. Kumar instructed this in the meeting of the district task force headed by

him on Thursday.

He said that parents of the children found as labourers or beggars during the raids must be identified too. Besides this, the DM said that special child labour activities and beggary arrangements should be made for the protection and education of such children.

He also asked the officials to work on strengthening their information system.

He said that the local intelligence unit should

also be involved in this

programme in order to get the information of children being brought from other states in advance for criminal purposes. Such steps can help authorities to reach the people involved in such heinous crimes against children, stated Kumar.

He ordered the committee members and the labour department to execute the plans while ensuring proper implementation to catch the offenders.



Superintendent engineer Shankar Kumar Saha of Irrigation Research Institute, Roorkee, receives the Engineering Excellence in Field/Industry award from The Institution of Engineers

Pioneer photo



# Ascetic ends fast unto death on 16th day, locals celebrate



PNS ■ JOSHIMATH

The locals and stakeholders in Badrinath have ended their opposition following the high court order withdrawing the stay on the conduct of the Char Dham Yatra. Mauni Baba ended his protest unto death on the sixteenth day in Badrinath even as Teerth Purohiths, businessmen, members of the religious fraternity and those generating income from the pilgrimage activities welcomed

the decision of the court. Opposition to the stalled pilgrimage was most visible in Badrinath where various stakeholders were on protest under the banner of the Badrish Sangharsh Samiti apart from the ascetic Mauni Baba being on a protest unto death demanding start of the pilgrimage. The ascetic broke his fast unto death with fruit juice offered by sub divisional magistrate Kusum Joshi following the high court orders. The locals took out a rally

to the beat of drums to express their gratitude for the development. The sub divisional magistrate said that as per the SOPs of the HC, Mauni Baba was tested for Covid and his vaccination certificate was checked before allowing him to pay obeisance to god Badrinath. Only he was allowed to visit the temple on Thursday as he had entered the 16th day of his fast unto death which was to be ended only after he could pay his obeisance to god Badrinath in the shrine.

# Stakeholders & devotees rejoice after HC orders on Char Dham Yatra

PNS ■ NEW TEHRI

The devotees waiting for Darshan of the deities in the Char Dham shrines in Uttarakhand now have a reason to rejoice with the Uttarakhand High Court vacating the stay on the pilgrimage with certain conditions on Thursday. The Char Dham pilgrimage was stalled due to the restrictions put in place in view of the Covid-19 pandemic by the high court earlier but now after wait of more than thirteen months it has permitted the Yatra with some restrictions.

The temple priests of all the four shrines have welcomed the development. The council representing the government said that the Covid situation is now under control hence the stay should be vacated. The government will introduce new Standard Operating Procedures

(SOPs) for this purpose soon. It is pertinent to mention here that the high court had stayed the Yatra on June 26 due to the Covid surge. The government had filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court against the HC order but withdrew it later. The business community and all those including members of the religious fraternity, dependent on income from pilgrimage have suffered considerable economic losses due to stay on the pilgrimage. The Gangotri Mandir Samiti secretary Deepak Semwal and Yamunotri Mandir Samiti secretary Kriteshwar Uniyal have welcomed the

move. They said the pilgrims will be able to undertake the pilgrimage following Covid protocol. It is also worth mentioning here that the stalling of the Char Dham pilgrimage was also being exploited by political parties and some protesters especially in view of the Assembly elections to be held next year in the State. Political observers opine that while the decision of the high court has come as a relief for the economic stakeholders and devotees, it has come as a mixed development for politicians wanting to score more points from the issue.

# Candid Notes

OF SNAKES & DONKEYS

By letting the old spirit of the Dhaincha seed scam out of the bottle the indomitable Harak Singh Rawat has opened a front against the former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat within the ruling BJP. In an interview Harak who has a reputation of being a party hopper claimed that the then Chief Minister Harish Rawat wanted TSR behind the bars in the scam but he (Harak) saved the skin of TSR by writing a note in his support on which an annoyed Harish Rawat quipped that he is feeding milk to a snake. Not known to mince words TSR shot back by commenting that Dhaincha - Dhaincha sound is uttered by an animal which brays and with his tongue in cheek praised the character of Harak. Alarmed by this seemingly all out war between these prominent leaders in which they are not hesitating to hit below the belt the saffron party has initiated a fire fighting exercise. It would be interesting to note whether the BJP leadership is able to put a restrain on the two leaders or if they would continue to wash the dirty linen in public.

Gajendra Singh Negi

ELECTORAL COMPULSIONS

In an example of how compulsion of facing the electorate dictates the policies and the decisions, the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhumi has recently proclaimed that eight new government colleges would be opened in different parts of the state while existing seven would be upgraded. This seemingly innocuous decision should be viewed in light of an earlier resolve of the government that no new government colleges would be opened in the state. This resolve of the newly sworn-in BJP government had received widespread appreciation especially after the outgoing Congress government had opened as many as 26 new colleges just ahead of the assembly elections of 2017. Since these colleges were operating in rented buildings the new BJP government at that time had decided not to open new colleges in the state and minister Dhan Singh Rawat had even gone ahead to declare that colleges with low enrolments would be closed. However this commitment went up in smoke when the pressure started building up for the decisive electoral battle of 2022.

RANK RANCOUR

A strict system of hierarchy in the armed forces is necessary to maintain order during an arduous time such as war and for ensuring efficiency during peacetime. The soldiers become so accustomed to adhere to the structure of hierarchy that even after superannuation they follow the system of rank assiduously and any deviation from the set protocols irritates them. Such irritation was manifested in the recent resignation of an officer who was heading a board meant for the welfare of ex-servicemen in the State. It is learnt that this officer who is a retired brigadier took offence to the tone and tenor of the minister concerned. Since the minister himself was once a Sepoy in the army his brusque mannerism offended the officer who thought it prudent to put his papers instead of facing the ignominy of getting ordered by someone who in the military hierarchy was much junior to him.

## CJ inaugurates State's first e-Sewa Kendra

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The Uttarakhand High Court chief justice Raghvendra Singh Chauhan inaugurated the first e-Sewa Kendra at the high court premises in Nainital on Thursday. The registrar general Dhananjay Chaturvedi informed that this centre will help people in multiple ways. He said that people can now easily know about the facilities available digitally under the e-Court programme. Litigants and defendants will also be aware of the updated status of the cases, leaves of judges and dates of hearings. Besides this, other crucial information will

be available in the e-Sewa Kendra too, stated Chaturvedi. He said that people can also get information about seeking free legal services from District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) and Supreme Court Legal Services Committee through the centre. He revealed that this e-Seva Kendra is the first service centre in the state and the next centre will be opened in Almora soon. Considering the importance of such centres in the present times, more will be established in all the district courts in future, stated Chaturvedi.

# U'khand Cong to make 10 Lakh new members

HC order on Char Dham vindication of Congress's struggle for starting the Yatra- Ganesh Godiyal

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Coming full steam into the Election mode, the Uttarakhand Congress has decided to enrol 10 lakh new members in the party. The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Ganesh Godiyal started the membership drive from the Rajiv Bhawan here on Thursday. Talking to the media persons the PCC president Godiyal said that the party would review the progress of the campaign in the last week of October. Taking a dig at the BJP, the PCC president said that the Congress would not make members by a miss call but would get the registration form filled after collecting the fee of Rs five. He claimed that a large number of people from all sections of the

society are eager to join the Congress party. Expressing his pleasure at the decision of the Uttarakhand High Court (HC) to start the Char Dham Yatra, Godiyal said that the struggle of the Congress party to start the Yatra has been fulfilled. On being asked to comment on the deliberations of the BJP and arrival of the In-charge and co-in-charges of the party, Godiyal said that the BJP government has done nothing in the last four and half years. He said that BJP would not have to undertake deliberations ahead of elections if it had addressed the issue of unemployment and rising prices properly during its rule. Godiyal claimed that the people of the state have made up their mind to oust the BJP out of power in Uttarakhand. Godiyal said that the recent war of words between the cabinet minister Harak Singh Rawat and former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat has exposed the BJP.

# Young voters unimpressed by same old inconvenient political shows

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

At a time when all mainstream political parties are especially targeting young voters ahead of the Assembly elections to be held next year in Uttarakhand, various activities of the political parties continue to cause major public inconvenience contradicting the dialogues uttered by top leaders of all these parties from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Aam Aadmi Party national convener and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. On Thursday, Bharatiya Janata Party workers welcoming three of their leaders from Delhi caused traffic jams and considerable public inconvenience on major roads of Dehradun exacerbating the problems already being faced by the public due to factors including governmental inefficiency. Such shows of 'strength' are not limited to the BJP as the others including Congress, AAP and smaller political outfits also apparently make it a point to cause major public disruption to exhibit their 'strength'. The Pioneer interacted with some young voters to know their opinions on this issue.

A college student, Filza Khan said that "We would like to vote for somebody who

would prove to be productive for us. On the other hand, the traffic jams due to political processions are a major inconvenience for us." She believes that such activities are useless and do not exert any positive impact. "Actions speak louder than words and only real productive actions can earn my vote," she added. Graduate student Pooja Negi said, "These traffic jams cause the youth and the general public to suffer." She opined that the political parties easily carry out their entire rallies but the general public suffers in their daily activities and important works. She added, "The youth should take into account all these instances and ascertain the motives of all parties while casting their votes. If we are suffering because of the petty shows of these parties, how will they really help us?"

Another young voter Anusha said, "When such processions are underway, it feels like we are prioritising the political parties over the good of the people." She believes that when people in power cause such inconvenience it doesn't do much to sway the votes in their favor. However, not everyone shares the same opinion. A politically inclined business student, Harshvardhan Sindhwani said, "Any political party needs rallies to show its presence." He admits that while everyone, school or college students and working professionals, suffers from such jams, if political activities are not carried out then it would be tough for the parties to make their presence felt. He added, "Such processions can display the strength in numbers of the parties and make the public pay attention."

# 20 new cases, 28 recoveries in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The state health department reported 20 new cases of the novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) and 28 recoveries from the disease on Thursday. 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 3,43,330 while a total of 3,29,582 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 96 while the sample positivity rate on Thursday was 0.10 per cent. The state health department reported seven new patients of Covid -19 from Dehradun, three from Nainital, two each from Chamoli and Pauri and one each from Almora, Bageshwar, Pithoragarh, Rudrapur, Udham Singh Nagar and Uttarkashi and Tehri districts on the day. The state now has 284 active cases of Covid-19. Dehradun with 142 cases is at the top of the table of active cases while Pauri has 29 active cases. Tehri and Udham Singh Nagar have no active cases of the disease. In the ongoing vaccination drive 60,548 people were vaccinated in 935 sessions in the state held on Thursday.


# 'Govt should focus on rehab of slum dwellers instead of victimising them for political gains'





PURNIMA BISHT ■ DEHRADUN

Despite the announcements of various schemes to rehabilitate the slum dwellers, successive state governments in Uttarakhand have failed to fulfil these due to vote bank politics. Rather than rehabilitating them, the parties continue to victimise them and exploit their situation to garner the maximum votes during elections. The government has even recently extended the ordinance to provide temporary relief to slum dwellers for three years rather than doing the needful at ground level to rehabilitate them. This trend is also adversely affecting the environment besides affecting the lives of slum dwellers. Rampyari, a 40-year old slum dweller near Rispana river in Adhoniwala said that the water enters her home every year during the monsoon and there is no toilet nearby but the families living there have no other place to live. "We were told a few years ago by some political leaders that we will be given houses if their party wins. We voted for them but nobody has even taken a peek here since then," she said. On the question of whether they are aware of the schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) under which the government can facilitate homes for them, most of the slum dwellers denied having any knowledge about it. Others said that they have heard about it but do not know anything about the

procedure. Social activist and founder of Social Development for Communities (SDC) foundation, Anoop Nautiyal said that the lack of serious attitude of the authorities towards the slum dwellers has made it a big urban issue across the state. He said that there are lakhs of people living in slums in Dehradun alone and the political parties see them as major vote banks. "Currently, the government does not have any plan to rehabilitate the slum dwellers. The political parties need a long term plan by rising over their short term political aims. The slums here are quite vulnerable to climatic conditions which can lead to a catastrophe too and planned work must be done to avoid it," said Nautiyal. Dehradun based activist Lokesh Ohri also stated that authorities assure slum dwellers of proper rehabilitation but their conditions remain the same. "Most of them living near the rivers do not have proper drainage and sewerage treatment system due to which their untreated sewage goes into the rivers that contaminate the Ganga river," stated Ohri. He said that the government is spending a fortune on projects like Namami Gange but nothing is actually being done at the ground level to make it a success. He said that rather than victimising slum dwellers, authorities should focus on proper rehabilitation of slum dwellers which can solve many interconnected issues in the State.









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# Dhoni, Mahindra, Rathore part of NCC review panel



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former India cricket captain MS Dhoni, industrialist Anand Mahindra and Olympic medal winner and Member of Parliament Colonel (retired) Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore are part of a committee to suggest way to improve the functioning of the National Cadet Corps(NCC), which has more than 12 lakh cadets. The Defence Ministry has constituted a High Level Expert Committee, under the chairmanship of former Member of Parliament Baijyant Panda, for a comprehensive review of the NCC to make it more relevant in changed times, officials said here on Thursday.

The Committee also includes Rajya Sabha member Vinay Sahasrabudhe, Principal Economic Advisor in the Finance Ministry Sanjeev Sanyal and Jamia Millia Islamia Vice Chancellor Najma Akhtar, former SNTD Women's University vice-chancellor Vasudha Kamat, Maj Gen (retd) Alok Raj, National Organising Secretary, Bhartiya Shikshan Mandal, Mukul Kanitkar, Managing Director, SIS India Ltd, Rituraj Sinha and CEO of Databook Anand Shah.

Incidentally, Dhoni is an honorary Colonel in the Territorial Army and successfully completed parachute jumping course some years back.

The terms of reference of the Committee broadly provide for suggesting measures which can empower the NCC cadets to contribute more

effectively towards nation building and national developmental efforts in various sectors and propose measures for gainful engagement of its alumni for betterment of the organisation as a whole.

The panel will study and recommend best practices of similar international youth organisations for inclusion in the NCC curriculum.

The NCC is the largest uniformed organisation which aims at developing character, discipline, a secular outlook and ideals of selfless service amongst young citizens. It also aims to create a pool of organised, trained and motivated youth with leadership qualities in all walks of life.

Dhoni's inclusion in the high-level panel came days after he was appointed mentor for India's T20 cricket world cup team.

## 8-lane Delhi-Mumbai expressway to cut travel time by 12 hrs: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said the 1380-km eight-lane Delhi-Mumbai Expressway — passing through Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat — will reduce travel time between the cities to 12-12.5 hours. Gadkari also announced a six-hour drive on the Delhi-Katra expressway in two years.

The minister was addressing the Press in Lohatki, Sohna on Thursday after he reviewed the progress of a section of the Delhi-Mumbai expressway in Sohna. Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh were also present at the occasion.

Calling it a matter of pride, Gadkari said the expressway will be the longest in India and connect urban centres of Delhi through Delhi-Faridabad-Sohna section of the corridor with a spur to Jewar Airport and Jawaharlal Nehru Port to Mumbai through a spur in Mumbai.

"The expressway will have wayside amenities — resorts, restaurants, food courts, fuel stations, facilities for trucks, logistics parks — at six points in Haryana. We have also envisaged a helicopter ambulance service for accident victims and there will be a heliport, which will use drone services for business as well. I

also want to build electric highways along the expressway," said Gadkari.

Developed at ₹98,000 crore, the expressway is expected to be completed by March 2023. The eight-lane access-controlled expressway can be expanded to a 12-lane expressway depending on the volume of traffic in the future.

The first phase from Delhi-Jaipur (Dausa)-Lalsot and Vadodara-Ankleshwar is expected to be open to traffic by March 2022. More than 160 km stretch of the expressway which passes through Haryana is being built at ₹ 10,400 crore, the minister said.

"This corridor will improve connectivity in Nuh and Palwal through multiple interchanges to connect the expressway with major highways like KMP and DND Sohna. To address the serious problem of air pollution and traffic congestion in Delhi-NCR, the ministry is undertaking 15 projects worth Rs 53,000 crore, of which 14 projects have been initiated. This expressway will lead to a reduction of 27 per cent in vehicular pollution in Delhi," he said.

He said that the soon to be opened Delhi-Meerut Expressway will reduce commute time between Delhi and Meerut to 40 minutes. "There was an issue with an overbridge, which has now been resolved. I will inaugurate it next month," he said.

On the occasion the Minister said another ambitious expressway is to connect the national Capital to Jammu and to reduce the distance from 727 to 572 kilometres to make you will reach Katra from Delhi in six hours. "We are also working on new roads from Delhi-Chandigarh, Delhi-Dehradun and Delhi-Haridwar, to take you there in two hours."

Gadkari said that the ministry had paid 1.5 times more than the market price to farmers for land acquisition, in a liberal approach. "I appeal to farmers to not sell their land to builders and developers, who usually profit when prices increase after road construction. They (farmers) will get more money if they develop the land," he said.

Responding to a question about toll taxes making travel costly on national highways, Gadkari said, "If you want good services, you have to pay for it. If one wants to conduct a programme in an air-conditioned hall, one will have to pay the rent (kiraya). Otherwise, a wedding can be conducted in a field (maidan) for free as well."

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, said, "With these road stretches being built, there will be economic prosperity in the region (Palwal, Nuh and Gurgaon) and bring employment opportunities, services and give a fillip to industry and growth. At least 73 villages in this region will benefit from this stretch."

## 'PLI scheme to create ₹900 cr turnover from drones manufacturing'



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The production-linked incentives (PLI) scheme will help create a turnover of ₹900 crores from drones manufacturing in the next three years, which would help in creating employment for 10,000 people in this sector. Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Thursday expects that the drone industry will have a total turnover of up to ₹15,000 crore by 2026.

Addressing a press conference, Scindia said that the current size of the drone manufacturing segment in India is around ₹ 80 crores and the Government will work towards making India a drone manufacturing hub by 2030. Scindia said that the drone sector will see investment worth Rs 5,000 crores in India in the next three years.

"Over a period of three years, Estimated investment

worth ₹ 5,000 crore for manufacturing sector drones will be done which in turn will bring a turnover of ₹900 crore, and 10,000 job opportunities will be created," Scindia said.

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a PLI scheme for drones and drone components with an allocation of Rs 120 crore spread over three financial years. The PLI scheme comes as a follow-through of the liberalised Drone Rules, 2021, released by the Centre on August 25.

Experts say Drones offer tremendous benefits to almost all sectors of the economy. These include— agriculture, mining, infrastructure, surveillance, emergency response, transportation, geo-spatial mapping, defence, and law enforcement to name a few. Drones can be significant creators of employment and economic growth due to their reach, versatility, and ease of use, especially in India's remote and inaccessible areas.

## 62% Indian adults have got at least 1 Covid shot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Thursday said that at least three in five Indian adults—or 62 % — have now been covered with at least one Covid vaccine dose and while one in every five—or 20 % of the adult population is now fully immunised.

The latest data provided by the Union Health Ministry showed Chandigarh entering the coveted league of states and UTs to have ensured inoculation of their entire adult population with at least the first shot against coronavirus.

Further, as the festival season nears, ICMR DG Balram Bhargava at a press conference here said the need of the hour is vaccine acceptance, maintenance of Covid-appropriate behaviour, responsible travel and responsible festivities.

He also ruled out the introduction of booster doses of the vaccine saying that "these were not a priority for the government at this moment."

The country, by Thursday evening, had seen a total of 77.1 crore Covid jabs administered in India of which 58.26 lakh were administered in a day.

Commenting on the scale of inoculation, the Centre said that in the first 15 days of September over 11 crore doses—or about 76 lakh vaccinations in a day on an average—have been administered which is double of the doses given through the entire month of May.

## SC allows symbolic immersion of Ganesh idols in Hyderabad's Hussain Sagar Lake

IAANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday allowed immersion of Lord Ganesh idols, made from Plaster-of-Paris (POP) in Hussain Sagar Lake in Hyderabad, during the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations. A bench headed by chief justice NV Ramana made it clear that the court will allow it for the last time - the immersion of idols -- this year, and no more immersion from next year. The bench also comprising justice Surya Kant asked the Telangana government to make certain arrangements from next year. The bench added the idols should not be allowed to be left in the lake after immersion and they should be taken out immediately. The bench said: "Let them do symbolic immersion this year. A last chance for them. They say they will ensure no harm is caused to the pond."

## ED raids four firms in FEMA case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has conducted searches at the office premises of four firms, Paul Merchants Ltd, Quick Forex Ltd, Supama Forex Pvt. Ltd. and Curo India Pvt. Ltd., and residential premises of their directors and associates in Chandigarh, Panchkula, Mohali, Jalandhar and Delhi in a FEMA

case.

The searches yielded foreign currency worth ₹3.88 crore and bullion worth ₹24.2 lakh besides incriminating documents, laptops, mobile phones and property documents. The ED had initiated an investigation under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) on the basis of credible information.

During the course of inves-

tigation, it is revealed that the said entities have sent outward remittances over ₹475 crore to Singapore, Hong Kong and UAE on behalf of shell/dummy entities namely Triple Streak Dream Holidays, Wangerster Travels Pvt. Ltd., Peripatizo Travels Pvt. Ltd., Himalaya Tourism, Ezax Holidays and Great Journey Tours among other such firms, the ED said.

## 3,631 oxygen PSA plants being installed in country, says Centre



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Learning lessons from the second Covid-19 wave when the country faced severe shortage of Oxygen resulting in several deaths and serious illness across the country, the Centre on Thursday said that 3,631 oxygen PSA plants are being installed in the country—nearly half of which will be installed through central resources, a move planned amid a looming threat of the third Covid wave in India.

These plants will have the capacity to generate about 4,800 MT of medical oxygen. "Of the planned oxygen plants to be installed in hospitals, 1,595 or about 47% have already been commissioned," Union health secretary Rajesh

Bhushan said in a press briefing on Thursday.

As per the details shared, of the total 3,651 PSA plants sanctioned with 4,751 MT capacity generation when commissioned, 1,491 plants with 2,281 MT have been commissioned with central support.

Nearly 2,140 with 2,289 MT capacity on the other hand are planned with the states and other sources such as states, urban local bodies, MPLAD, and through CSR activities.

Of the 1,595 PSA plants commissioned so far with a capacity of 2,088 MT medical oxygen generation, 731 (with 1024 MT) PSA plants have been set up with central resources.

These plants are of utmost

importance given that the second wave of the pandemic had triggered a massive shortage of the crucial oxygen supply in most parts of the country during April-May this year.

The official, while noting that situation in Mizoram with Covid cases surging, also urged states to prepare ahead for any potential spike highlighting that as the situation is stable with cases reducing even in Kerala, the months of October and November would be critical given the festive season.

"The next quarter will be critical. We advise states and municipal corporations to prepare ahead to ensure best models of home care and also to prepare infrastructure," V K Paul, Niti Aayog member said.

## Priyanka to finalise 'Pratigya Yatra' programme next week in Lucknow

IAANS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will visit Lucknow next week to give a final shape to the "Pratigya Yatra" programme to be launched by the party unit ahead of the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh next year.

She will have scheduled

meetings with the manifesto committee and with the election committee to assess the party's poll preparedness in the state, sources said.

Priyanka is likely to participate in one of the training programmes being organised by Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee.

On Thursday, she targeted the Yogi Adityanath gov-

ernment and said, "The government is doing drama ahead of polls while withdrawing cases of stubble burning."

The Congress in Uttar Pradesh will take out a 'Congress Pratigya Yatra' with the tagline — 'Hum Vachan Nibhayenge', ahead of the Assembly elections, due early next year.

## Vitiligo patients finding succour in DRDO herbal cure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Many patients with vitiligo, which is an autoimmune disorder characterised by the loss of skin colour in parts of a body, seem to be finding succour in herbal remedies like Lukoskin developed by the Defence and Research Development Organization (DRDO).

Till now, more than one lakh patients suffering from the skin condition, also known as leucoderma, have been treated with Lukoskin with an average success rate of 70 per cent, said Dr Nitika Kohli from AIMIL Healthcare which is manufacturing and marketing the drug. An ayurveda expert herself, Dr Kohli said, that after DRDO transferred the technology, clinical trials were conducted on the patients and then in 2011 it was launched in the market. "In these ten years, over one lakh patients have been treated with the drug. We found 70 percent success rate," she said.

An estimated four to five per cent of the Indian population suffers from leucoderma. The condition is characterized by patches of the skin losing their pigment.

The condition is noticeable in people with dark skin.

For better success rate and with an aim to reach out to more patients, the AIMIL is in the process of launching the advanced version of the drug. DRDO is already working in this direction.

Dr Kohli was speaking at a conference "Clinical management of tough skin diseases" held online to mark the ten years of launch of Lukoskin as well as of AIMIL Healthcare.

has also been attached.

The ED had initiated money laundering investigation, on the basis of an FIR registered by the NIA under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against Sarith PS, Swapna Prabha Suresh, Faisal Fareed, Sandeep and others.

The customs department had registered a case relating to the seizure of 30.24 kg of 24 carat gold worth ₹14.82 crore at Trivandrum International Airport. The said gold was camouflaged as diplomatic baggage to UAE Consulate, which has immunity from checking at airport as per Vienna Convention.

The consignment was to be

received by the accused Sarith PS, who had worked in UAE Consulate earlier as Public Relations Officer in complicity with Swapna Prabha Suresh, Sandeep Nair and others.

In the NIA case, accused Sarith PS, Swapna Prabha Suresh and Sandeep Nair were arrested by the ED on July 22 last year and the PMLA Court had remanded them to ED custody from August 5 to 17, 2020. They were subsequently remanded to judicial custody.

Another accused M Sivasankar, IAS, then Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister of Kerala was also arrested by the ED on October 28, 2020 and was remanded to ED custody from October 29 to

## Congress seeks probe into alleged data fudging by ICMR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday demanded that an inquiry should be conducted into the alleged data fudging by the ICMR to keep the political masters happy which led to the loss of human lives.

Addressing media persons, party's General Secretary Ajay Maken alleged that senior scientists, who worked with the ICMR, and other organisations, are now coming forward to point out serious irregularities in Covid management.

"The Congress demands a criminal investigation against the Prime Minister, the then Health Minister, and also against management of ICMR. The inquiry should be conducted by a sitting judge," Maken said.

He said that the party will raise the issue in and outside Parliament. "Now, as the time goes by, more and more scientists who worked with the Indian Council of Medical Research are coming forward with startling facts of political interference and arrogance which was not only against science and democracy, but also caused millions of preventable deaths. These scientists, to name a few, include Dr Anup Aggarwal, Dr Naman Shah, Dr Somdatta Sinha, Dr Shahid Jameel and some others, are gradually opening up in social media and foreign publications," Maken alleged.

"In June 2020, a study commissioned by the ICMR concluded that Modi's lock-



down had slowed but would not stop the virus spread. Within days, the authors withdrew it and ICMR tweeted the withdrawal. Some of the scientists now say that they were forced to withdraw the report. In July 2020, DG, ICMR, Dr Balram Bhargav forced ICMR scientists to withhold data, based on serological studies, which suggested that virus was spreading to 10 cities. This deliberate blunder led to loss of lakhs of lives."

Maken said, "The second Covid wave hit India severely in April 2021 and the Modi Government was caught unprepared, people of India were left to fend for themselves. "Black Marketing of drugs like Hydroxychloroquine, Ivermectin, Fabiflu, Dexona, Tocilizumab, Remdesivir, Paracetamol was galore. A single injection of Remdesivir was selling between ₹50,000 and ₹1 lakh, Tocilizumab injection for up to ₹10 lakh in black market."

"People gasped for breath and died as there was no oxygen. People died as there were no ventilators. People died as there were no hospital beds. Lakhs of bodies floated in the Ganga and other rivers."

The Modi Government abandoned India as close to 50 lakh people died," he further said.

October 12, 2020 and all four persons continue to undergo judicial custody.

"During the PMLA probe, it was revealed that accused persons had obtained the Proceeds of Crime in the form of 30.245 kg of smuggled gold valued at ₹14.82 crore. The accused/suspects illegally routed the sale proceeds of previously smuggled gold to Dubai which was further used for purchase of next consignment of gold intended to be smuggled into India and recycled this process throughout the operations and thereby proceeds of crime generated out of gold smuggling previously was used to purchase the said 30.245 kg gold," the ED said in a statement.

It was further revealed that the accused Sarith PS and Swapna Suresh had obtained the Proceeds of Crime to the tune of Rs 14.98 lakh.

## Country to see extended monsoon spell

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As rainfall activity is still continuing over north, northwest and central parts of the country, India will witness an extended monsoon spell and withdrawal is expected to be delayed by the end of September.

According to India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General Dr Mrutunjay Mohapatra, "There are no signs of monsoon withdrawal from north India for the next 10 days. This means the monsoon spell will continue till the end of September. If low pressure forms, this will be further delayed."

The normal date for the monsoon's retreat from Rajasthan is September 17 but this may not be realised. In recent years, the overall completion of monsoon withdrawal from the entire country has shown a delaying trend. India received 781.4 mm rainfall as against the normal of 813.2, a deficiency of almost four per cent so far. At least 19 states and union territories have witnessed less rainfall this year.

According to the IMD, southwest monsoon withdrawal from northwest India takes place if there is cessation of rainfall activity over the area for continuous five days.

An anti-cyclonic wind has to form over the lower troposphere, and there should also be considerable reduction in moisture content.

"The conditions are not likely to be favourable for the commencement of withdrawal of monsoon from parts of Northwest India before the end of the second week of this month (September 16-22).

# CBI grills Didi’s poll agent in murder case

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A team of CBI officials on Thursday subjected Mamata Banerjee’s election agent at Nandigram Abu Sufiyan to four hours intense grilling in relation to a murder case that took place soon after the April-May Assembly elections.

Sufiyan the vice chairman of the East Midnapore district board was summoned by the CBI following allegations that Debabrata Maity a BJP worker was murdered by alleged TMC goons a day after the Bengal election results were declared.

The victim died at SSKM Hospital in Kolkata on May 13. The CBI lodged a case in this connection on August 31 following the August 19 Calcutta High Court order directing

the Agency to probe all the post-election murder cases.

Though the CBI has questioned many TMC district leaders during the investigation, this is the first time a leader known to be close to the Chief Minister was interrogated.

When contacted the Sufiyan denied his involvement with the murder saying “any death is unfortunate but implicating an innocent man for political mileage is no less deplorable... The BJP is implicating me in this case because they want to derive political mileage out of it... it is the handiwork of Suwendu Adhikari who has left the Trinamool Congress giving into the pressure of the central agencies whereas we have refused to get cowed down by the BJP and are continuing our

fight under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee ... this is the reason we are being harassed like this.”

Sufiyan a former protégé of Adhikari said “the harassment we are being subjected to is the result of keeping our spines straight and not giving into the pressure of the BJP which is threatening the entire country with agencies.”

The CBI which has registered three dozen cases and filed charge sheet in at least three related to post-poll violence has formed several teams comprising DIGs and SPs --- forensic experts, CISF personnel --- from Delhi, UP, Punjab, Karnataka etc. The CBI team is headed by a joint director.

In an unrelated development a team of National Investigation Agency on Thursday reached the house of

BJP MP Arjun Singh at Jagaddal in North 24 Parganas to investigate bomb attacks on the parliamentarian’s house.

Some NIA officers led by an SP-level officer “conducted investigations in my house at Jagaddal,” the saffron MP who claimed to have been a target of the Trinamool Congress goons said adding he was cooperating with the investigating team.

The NIA officials also spoke to the local police officers, sources said. Crude bombs were hurled on two consecutive days at the Barrackpore MP’s house a few days ago, Singh claimed adding he and his family members were under threat of being eliminated by the TMC “which is finding it difficult to wrest back its organizational in Barrackpore till I am there.”

Two of Singh’s close associates had been shot dead in the past less than two years.

“These attacks are being orchestrated by the Trinamool Congress and its leaders ... they will kill me in the first instance and opportunity,” the BJP strong man who left the TMC before the 2019 general elections --- after being denied nomination from Barrackpore by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee --- and went on to defeat the then sitting MP Dinesh Trivedi by about 15,000 votes said. Singh has been three-time TMC MLA before he quit that party.

Earlier the Union Home Ministry upgraded the BJP MP’s security from Y+ to Z category following the bomb attacks and he is currently being protected by a posse of CISF personnel.

## TMC MP resigns on ‘personal grounds’

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Amid theories flying thick and fast in the Trinamool Congress over the sudden resignation of Arpita Ghosh a party Rajya Sabha MP the parliamentarian on Thursday said she had not been under pressure to put in her papers and that the “decision to resign was very much my personal decision.”

The dramatist-turned-TMC leader was a two-time Lok Sabha MP from the party before she was defeated by the BJP candidate from Balurghat constituency in 2019. She was subsequently sent to the Rajya Sabha.

When asked to comment on the reason behind her sudden resignation, Ghosh said that she wanted to “concentrate more on the organizational work and my theatre which was getting hampered ... and so I have tendered my resignation.”

When asked as to whether she was forced to resign because the party leadership was try-

ing to vacate the seats for other bigger leaders from other States whom Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was trying to use for her national designs Ghosh said “the leadership will answer about the policy decisions ... but as for my decision to resign it was solely based on my personal reasons.”

After Ghosh’s resignations there are talks inside the party that some more Upper House members may be asked to resign to make way for some national level names so as to afford the TMC and the Chief Minister a national image. Inside sources said that Ghosh was not happy at being robbed off the Rajya Sabha post. Sources also said that she had a conversation with party national secretary Abhishek Banerjee a day before the resignation.

The junior Banerjee is known to have promised a priced party post. When asked to comment on her future plans she said “in a few days you will get to know whether I am given any organizational post or not.”

## PUNE-SATARA TOLL COLLECTION FRAUD CASE

# HC to hear criminal PIL against Reliance Infra next week

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court is likely to hear early next week a criminal public interest litigation seeking it to direct the CBI to register a case under IPC and Prevention of Corruption Act against Messrs. Reliance Infra for alleged irregularities in the Pune-Satara toll collection project.

The petitioners – Advocate Pravin Wategaonkar and Sanjay Shirodkar – had moved a praecipe before the high court seeking an urgent hearing of their PIL on September 20 (Monday), following the Maharashtra Government’s failure to permit the CBI to register a case against M/s Reliance Infra in the Pune-Satara toll collection project.

In their petition, Wategaonkar and Shirodkar stated that on October 1, 2010, a six-laning contract of the National Highway section of Pune-Satara with Toll collection rights was awarded to M/s. Reliance Infra – which formed

a SPV M/S Pune Satara Toll Road Pvt Ltd for the project -- for 24 years including construction period of 2.5 yrs/ 30 months.

The NHAI rejected a pre-bid request for a longer construction period of 3.5 yrs 42 months. M/s. Reliance Infra formed SPV M/S Pune Satara Toll Road Pvt Ltd for the project. Six laning construction remained incomplete about ten years later in January 2020, about the time a complaint was filed with CBI. Earlier, in December 2013, the Centre had amended rules and provided that no user fee would be levied for the delayed period between the date of completion as per the agreement entered into with the concessionaire and the date of actual completion.

“As per the contract, Contractor’s equity, bank loans and fees collected were to be used strictly in order laid down in the contract essentially for project related purposes. For use of funds in any other order or purpose, prior written permis-

sion of NHAI was required,” the petitioners told the court.

As per agreement, Pune-Satara six-laning construction was to be completed by March 2013. As per a government circular, NHAI has authority to extend completion date by entering into supplementary agreement with Contractor within 28 days of date of completion as per agreement. The petitioners alleged in their petition that after CAG reported fund diversion to Mutual Fund investments by Contractor in April 2014, NHAI belatedly and in violation of its own policy circular, entered into a supplementary contract with Contractor in October 2014 for extension of Construction period till December 2015. Thereafter there is no supplementary contract for further extension.

User fee collection on the said Highway since January 1, 2014 and more particularly since January 1, 2016, is ultra vires of the rules in the matter and amounts to cheating vehicle owners using the said road.

# HC dismisses Mumbai ex-CP’s plea seeking 2 probes launched against him

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a major setback to Mumbai’s former Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, the Bombay High Court on Thursday dismissed a petition challenging two preliminary inquiries launched against him by the Maharashtra Government for alleged violation of service rules and another for alleged corruption.

While dismissing Singh’s petition on the ground that it was “not maintainable”, a HC division bench comprising Justices SS Shinde and NJ Jamdar said that “it is a service matter” and asked him to approach the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), which is an appropriate forum.

“(When) the petitioner approaches the appropriate forum, then the same shall be heard and decided without any prejudice to the HC’s order,” the HC bench said.

The HC had on July 28 reserved its order on Singh’s petition seeking quashing of his petition challenging two preliminary inquiries launched against by the Maharashtra Government on April 1 and April 20, 2021 respectively for alleged dereliction of duty and misconduct and for alleged corruption.

While Maharashtra’s former Home Minister had on April 1 2021 had passed an order launching a preliminary against Singh for alleged violation of some All India Services (Conduct) Rules, his successor and current State Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil had ordered another preliminary against the former police commissioner over the allegations of

corruption levelled against the latter by Inspector Anup Dange.

Describing himself as a ‘whistle-blower’ who had sought to highlight corruption in the highest public office, Singh had stated in his petition that the inquiries came to be launched against him a month after he had accepted the then Home Minister Anil Deshmukh of allegedly extorting Rs.100 crore per month from Mumbai hoteliers through a dismissed Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Vaze.

Opposing Singh’s plea, Senior Advocate Darius Khambata – representing the Maharashtra government – told the high court that the (CAT) was the “appropriate forum” for petitioner’s grievances as the inquiries were of administrative nature pertaining to his conduct as the police commissioner.

However, senior Advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, representing Singh, argued that these were criminal Inquiries as there was a reference to the section 32 of CrPC and hence he could expect a remedy only from the high court.

The inquiries pertain to alleged violation of services rules in the sensational Antilia case and allegations of corruption levelled by a policeman Anup Dange who accused Singh of shielding people with mafia links and that one alleging the top cop’s relative of demanding a ₹2 crore bribe to reinstate him in the police force.

Khambata told the court that Singh’s contentions on the maintainability ground as they contradicted his own plea in which he accepted that these are administrative

inquiries and said writing letters would not ‘immunise’ him from the same.

Khambata also said that Singh’s primary grievance related to the Director-General of Police Sanjay Pandey conducting the inquiries and said that the IPS officer (Pandey) had recused himself from the enquiries which have been assigned to different officers now.

Among other things, Jethmalani contended that Pandey was an ‘emissary’ of the government trying to convince Singh to withdraw his complaint and offering to mediate on the issue.

It may be recalled that three days after he was shunted and posted in a relatively insignificant post as the Commandant General of Home Guards, Singh had in an eight-page sensational letter written to the chief minister Uddhav Thackeray On March 20 alleged that State Home Minister Deshmukh had asked now arrested and suspended police officer Sachin Vaze last month to “collect” a staggering Rs 100 crore per month from bars, restaurants and other sources.

Vaze -- who was on March 13 in connection with the gelatine sticks laden Scorpion recovery case and later booked for the murder of businessman and vehicle’s owner Mansukh Hiran in March -- is being prosecuted in the sensational twin cases.

Vaze had allegedly parked the Scorio car laden with 20 gelatine sticks near Mukesh Ambani’s residence in Mumbai. He was allegedly involved in the conspiracy to murder Hiran.

# IT conducts searches at Sonu Sood’s Mumbai home for second day

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Income Tax (IT) department officials conducted searches at actor and philanthropist Sonu Sood’s residence in Mumbai for the second consecutive day on Thursday ostensibly in connection with allegations of alleged tax evasion in a real estate deal.

A day after they conducted searches at six premises in Mumbai and Lucknow linked to Sood, the IT officials descended on the actor’s Juhu residence in Mumbai to carry out what they called “survey” in connection with the alleged tax evasion.

The IT officials reportedly went through bank statements, books of accounts, documents and details of financial or other business transactions during the ‘survey’, for suspected tax evasion. However, there was no official statement from the IT department regarding the searches conducted by its officials for the second consecutive day.

The action against Sood has come on the heels of the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP government declaring him as a brand ambassador for its mentorship programme for school students in Delhi.

On its part, the ruling BJP at the Centre has denied that the searches on Sood’s premises had anything to do with politics.

Forty-eight year-old Sood, whose humanitarian work during the Covid-19 triggered lockdown period has earned him a lot of goodwill among the people across the country, has so far not commented on the raging speculations about his joining the Aam Admi Party (AAP) and contesting the Punjab Assembly elections next year.

It may be recalled that Sood had organised special flights and buses home for migrants stranded in Mumbai after the lockdown declared last year and he also organised Oxygen for Covid-19 patients at the peak of “second wave” in April-May this year.

## 17-year-old girl raped at gunpoint in Shamli



**Muzaffarnagar (UP):** A 17-year-old girl was allegedly raped at gunpoint by two people in a village in Shamli district, police said on Thursday.

A case has been registered and one of the accused arrested, they said, adding that the minor was sent for a medical examination.

According to the complaint lodged by the victim’s father, the two accused raped her at gunpoint on Wednesday and threatened to kill her, the police said. **PTI**

## Man held for rape after teenage girl found pregnant

**Palghar:** A 15-year-old girl was allegedly raped repeatedly by a man residing in her neighbourhood here in Maharashtra following which she became pregnant, police said on Thursday.

The offence took place between January and May this year and the 20-year-old accused was arrested on Wednesday, they said.

The girl recently complained of abdominal pain following she was taken for a medical examination which revealed that she was pregnant, an official from Palghar district rural control room said.

Her parents filed a police complaint against the accused on Wednesday. **PTI**

## Price rise continuous process, announce special financial package to people in distress: Kumaraswamy

**Bengaluru:** Terming price rise as a ‘continuous process’ JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy on Thursday urged the Karnataka government to announce a special financial package to those in distress, and announce relief to common man, who is finding it difficult to lead life.

He asked the government to use the revenue that was generated out of levying cess and taxes on petrol, diesel and others items, to come to the rescue of the people. “Price rise, according to me, is a continuous process.

Since independence, on several instances price rise has been inevitable to improve the financial condition of the government and to raise money for implementing programmes. Whichever party may be in power, it is natural,” Kumaraswamy said.

Intervening during the debate on price rise in the legislature assembly, he said opposition parties protesting against price rise is also a continuous process in the democracy. Kumaraswamy, during his speech highlighting the trouble faced by common man, especially the poorer section, said it is a double whammy for them with both price rise and COVID-19 pandemic. “This is not the issue to be discussed in a partisan manner and to make allegations against one another to score political brownie points.

We should rather look at what can be done to get relief to those in distress from the government in power,” he said. Asking Karnataka to become model for the entire country, Kumaraswamy urged the government to announce a special financial package and come to the rescue of poor and weaker

## AP logs 1,367 new cases

**Amaravati:** The Covid-19 caseload in Andhra Pradesh increased to 20,34,786 as 1,367 were added afresh on Thursday.

In the 24 hours ending 9 am today, 1,248 infected persons got cured while 14 succumbed, leaving 14,708 active cases, the latest bulletin said.

The total recoveries increased to 20,06,034 and deaths to 14,044, the bulletin said. East Godavari district reported 288 fresh infections and Chittoor 217 while six other districts added between 100 and 160 each. **PTI**



Devotees gather to offer prayers during Teja Dashami celebrations amid coronavirus pandemic in Beawar on Thursday

## Cops foil family’s suicide bid outside Thane police station over ‘inaction’ in rape case

**Thane:** A woman and her parents tried to commit suicide outside a police station in Maharashtra’s Thane district while alleging action by police in a rape case, but their attempt was foiled by security personnel, officials said on Thursday.

A video of the incident, which took place in front of the Ulhasnagar police station here on Wednesday, went viral on social media.

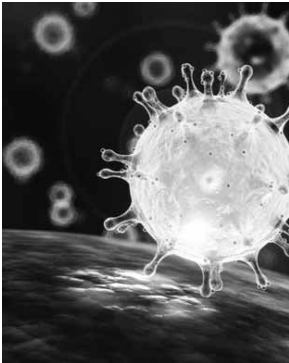
In the clip, the three family members were seen shouting and dousing themselves in kerosene. They were about to set themselves on fire, but some police personnel, including women security staff, took away their lighter and pinned them down.

Notably, based a complaint earlier filed by the parents in connection with the alleged rape of their daughter, the Ulhasnagar police in July this year registered a rape case against two persons from the township.

In the video, the three family members were seen claiming that despite their repeated pleas, no further action was taken against the accused by police.

The video also showed the three being taken inside the police station where the security staff tried to pacify them.

When contacted, local police inspector and other senior officials refused to comment on the incident, saying it was a sensitive matter. **PTI**



**Thiruvananthapuram:** Kerala on Thursday reported 22,182 fresh Covid-19 cases and 178 deaths, which took the caseload to 44,46,228 and fatalities to 23,165.

The number of people who recovered from the infection since Wednesday was 26,563 which brought the total recoveries to 42,36,309 and the number of active cases to 1,86,190, a State Government release said.

While the release said that 1,21,486 samples were tested in the last 24 hours, it, again for the second day running, did not state what the Test Positivity Rate was. However, 22,182 fresh positive cases, reported in the last 24 hours, out of 1,21,486 samples tested during the same period, gives a figure of 18.25 per cent. Among the 14 districts,

Thrissur recorded the highest with 3,252 cases followed by Ernakulam (2,901), Thiruvananthapuram (2,135), Malappuram (2,061), Kozhikode (1,792), Palakkad

(1,613), Kollam (1,520), Alappuzha (1,442), Kannur (1,246), Kottayam (1,212), Pathanamthitta (1,015) and Idukki (973).

Of the new cases, 105 were health workers, 89 from outside the state and 21,122 infected through contact, with the source of the contact not being clear in 866 cases. There are currently 5,54,807 people under surveillance in various districts, of whom 5,27,791 are in home or institutional quarantine and 27,016 in hospitals. **PTI**





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Terror and hunger

Apart from the dread, hunger and lack of nutrition are gnawing at the Afghan people

It is time to strike a balance between terror and hunger in Afghanistan. Millions of lives are at stake as the UN organisations involved in relief activities say food stocks may last not more than a month in the vast rural stretches. Hunger and lack of nutrition are the bywords as the country's economy is in a downward spiral. Essential commodities are already out of stock in urban stores. Scarce vegetables are selling at double the prices. Panic buying in the aftermath of the Taliban takeover on August 15 cleaned up shelves in stores with no replenishing. Flour and oil are already out of limits for the poor. In the villages, the situation is worse as families are falling back on grain and wheat stored for future crops. Drought and famine have anyway hit the country for the umpteenth time. The risk of displacement adds to the pangs of hunger for a large section of the population. The fighting before August had made over 600,000 Afghans flee homes.



The UN agencies estimate that around 3.5 million people are internally displaced. At least 10 million children, a sizeable section of them malnourished, depend on humanitarian assistance just to survive. The UN's World Food Programme has said many Afghans did not have access to cash to afford sufficient food. That is because banks had closed down after August 15. The Taliban are now negotiating with banks for re-opening branches. However, they have set a cap on weekly withdrawal of \$200 to avoid a run on banks.

Afghanistan's economic experts, now in exile, insist that the situation will lead to a weaker currency, faster inflation and capital controls. Most civil servants have not been receiving salaries for months. Many more claim they have suffered pay cuts as high as 75 per cent since the Taliban took over. There is no indication that the Taliban are bothered about the dire straits. No proactive economic decisions have been forthcoming. Their contribution has been limited to appointing an obscure official to head the central bank to address the crisis. Little is known about his actions. The Taliban cadres though appear unfazed as it is rumoured that there is enough drug and opium money in their coffers. They are currently embroiled in internal squabbles that appear to have worsened after the interim set-up was announced. The Taliban are preoccupied with settling an existential debate — their Achilles' heel, actually — between their urban political face and orthodox armed command represented by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani, respectively. The question is whether the Taliban are playing a blinking game with the rest of the world, holding the latter responsible for restoring economic order. Do they await the international community to pour money into rehabilitation works? Or expect it to recognise their interim governance apparatus? That is linked to lifting the freeze on Afghan assets worth billions of dollars; only a recognised government can take control of the funds.

### PICTALK



Haitian migrants walk towards boats that will take them from Necocli to Acandí, Colombia

PTI

## AAP eyeing UP

Can it alter the script and make a mark in the upcoming Assembly elections?

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is seriously trying its luck in the forthcoming Assembly election due next year. The party recently kicked off its campaign with a 'Tiranga Yatra' in Ayodhya. Enthused by the response, the party is likely to hold more such yatras in the coming months in other districts of Uttar Pradesh. Though the elections in Uttar Pradesh are a little away, most parties have already started activities to woo voters. And it makes sense as the stakes are high. Uttar Pradesh has 80 parliamentary seats. It is generally the Congress, BJP, Samajwadi Party and the BSP that fight the elections. But now the AAP is making inroads into the State. It has been consistently trying to make its presence felt in several States, including Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Goa. The party seems to be filling up the vacuum created by the missing Congress. The BJP and the BSP have their cadre on the ground in 'Jan Sammelan Yatras'. The SP is holding a 'Shiv Sevak Sammelan'. The Congress is conspicuous by its absence. Most

of the parties are trying to woo the Brahmin voters who are disgruntled with the incumbent Government, which is seen favouring the Thakurs.

Brahmins, who make up 12 per cent of UP's population, are significant from the poll point of view. The AAP is also planning 'Chanakya Sammelans' to engage Brahmins. The 'Tiranga Yatra' in Ayodhya was led by Manish Sisodia along with the party's UP in-charge, Sanjay Singh. So far, the AAP has not had a very good response in Uttar Pradesh. Arvind Kejriwal fought against Narendra Modi and lost. During the 2014 Lok Sabha election, the AAP contested 77 seats and lost the deposit on 76. The party then contested the 2017 local body elections. It had 3,400 candidates in the fray but only 44 won. It was at number five. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the party failed to open its account and all its candidates lost their deposit. For the 2022 Assembly polls, it has decided to contest all the seats on its own. But the situation could change as the AAP is trying a tie-up with OP Rajbhar's Bhagidari Sankalp Morcha. Sanjay Singh is in talks with SP chief Akhilesh Yadav. He is also trying to build the party at the grassroots and strengthen the organisation. It might not win as yet but it can be a spoilsport for the ruling party.

# Pornography is the theory, rape practice

The easy access to online obscene content is making an increasing number of people getting hooked on to the extent of perversion



HASAN KHURSHID

Online pornography has literally created a 'porn pandemic' as deadly as 'COVID-19'. Experts trace a marked correlation between watching pornography and sexual crimes. Pornography is a Greek word, which originally meant "writing about prostitutes".

Today, according to modified version of *Kuhn et al-2007*, "Pornography is a communication material provided for the purpose of arousing or gratifying a user in isolation from others or in company of others." Pornography is "perversion". It provides a field for deviant and violent fantasies to be developed eventually leading to some viewers acting out those fantasies in practice. Before the advent of online pornography, the compulsive voyeur used to haunt public places, parks and bedroom windows from where he could surreptitiously watch courting couples. Now the voyeur is privileged to watch couples on screen. After getting constantly aroused, he would prowl around in search of a soft target, mainly the tender-aged child, as many a time the voyeur has low level of sexuality and finds himself partially impotent with a grown up woman.

Alfred C Kinsey considered voyeurism to be limited solely to men, but in the US, the 1971 Commission of Pornography and Obscenity revealed that women responded to visual stimulation, pictures of nudes, in the same way as men do. According to a recent survey, a large number of users of these porn sites is not adults but adolescents.

Does online pornography have the destructive power to turn a simple normal, everyday man into rapist or murderer? Why this alarming question does not surface every time a rape with murder, especially of children and infants, hits the headlines. Ironically, there is no stringent law in India on full viewing of sexual acts online; whereas, on the contrary, the law of the land showed its utter sensitivity on obscenity under the provisions of Section 292 and 293 of IPC.

This is evident from the fact that Kamlesh Vaswani, Advocate,



filed in the Supreme Court a petition seeking to ban pornography in India and praying for direction to the Government to treat watching of porn videos and sharing as non-bailable and cognisable offence, but the Government supported pornography in the court.

The Attorney General submitted that if someone wished to watch porn within their bedroom, how can the State interfere with such an activity? He asserted that the Government did not want to do moral policing and that we (India) cannot become a totalitarian State by banning all pornographic websites because clampdown would infringe the "Right to freedom". The State's action may raise issues regarding privacy rights.

Chief Justice HL Dattu, who had used a similar line during the previous hearing, interrupted and said: "Mr Attorney, why are you using our lines?" The Attorney General further contended: "Simply viewing an obscene object is not an offence. It becomes an offence only when someone has in possession such objects for the purpose of sale, hire, distribution, public exhibition or putting it into circulation."

Petitioner's counsel Vijay Panjwani argued that "criminal

activity is a criminal activity", whether carried out in private or public. Moreover, when the obscene object has come on the internet, it has already been circulated and automatically becomes "public". Subsequently, on February 26, 2016, Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand told Justice Dipak Misra: "It is difficult to ban pornographic websites as they do not fall under any country's jurisdiction."

Differing, the Bench said: "When obscenity is an offence under the criminal law, then why can't you define it accordingly? It has already been decided that freedom of speech and expression is not absolute." The petitioner's counsel contended: "There is technology available to block such sites. In India, there are 11 towers which receive signals from under water cables of foreign countries. A technologist from Banaras Hindu University has undertaken to block all those 11 points that receive porn contents. It is a very low-budget technology, provided the Government agrees to it." A committee under the leadership of then Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had been constituted to review this matter but he gave the statement: "We are not a control freak Government and

strongly object to the word 'Talibanisation'."

In fact, there is enough evidence available about the link between serial killers/rapists and their addiction to pornography. The accused of the Delhi gang rape case of December 2012, in their 164 Criminal Penal Code statement, had admitted that before committing the ghastly crime, they had consumed liquor, watched pornography, and then decided to have a party (they meant committing rape).

In his interview to Games C Dobson, notorious American serial killer Ted Bundy seven hours before his execution in the electric chair documented: "I was a normal person. I led a common life except for this one segment. Pornography can reach in and snatch a kid out of any house today. It snatched me out of my home 30 years ago. I deserve, certainly, the most extreme punishment society has. And I think society deserves to be protected from me and from others like me." According to Government's figures in December 2017, a child is sexually abused every 15 minutes, still the authorities are more concerned on 'naked capitalism'.

(The writer is a legal journalist and author. The views expressed are personal.)

“THE ACCUSED OF THE DELHI GANG RAPE CASE OF DECEMBER 2012 HAD ADMITTED THAT BEFORE COMMITTING THE GHASTLY CRIME, THEY HAD CONSUMED LIQUOR, WATCHED PORNOGRAPHY, AND THEN DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SANSAD TV GOES ON AIR

Sir — The start of Sansad TV will mark another lesson in India's democratic history. Inaugurated on the day of International day of Democracy, the new media channel will voice out the truth of India's democratic system. We all know that Lok Sabha TV and Rajya Sabha TV have been dedicatedly telecasting relevant issues of our democracy with quality information and facts. In fact, both the LS and the RS TV are especially watched by UPSC aspirants for quality preparations. Both these channels have telecasted the functioning of the two houses of the Parliament individually.

Now with Sansad TV in the picture, we can expect more quality content and information on a single platform. Sansad TV will merge the quality and technology of India's two state of the art media channels, so as to deliver the best information to its viewers. We hope that with Sansad TV, every Indian is empowered to get faithful news and right information at the right time so that citizens do not get misled by false information. Right information will empower citizens to make better decisions over the issues of national, social, economical and political importance.

Dimple | *kanpur*

### RAHUL'S 'FAKE HINDU' JIBE

Sir — There is substance in Rahul Gandhi's statement that the RSS and its political arm the BJP, are 'fake Hindus' and 'brokers of religion'. The Congress leader has shown the courage to call a spade a spade. BJP's role in Indian politics validates Rahul Gandhi's charge of 'Dharam ki dalali'. The way he saw it, BJP is 'disrespecting and insulting goddesses 'Lakshmi and Durga'. He elaborated that the ruling party was busy transferring wealth from people to a few corporate houses and it did not believe in *nari shakti* (women's power). Rahul Gandhi's metaphorical speech provoked the BJP to call him the 'son of a Catholic mother and a Parsi father' and ask him 'to stop lecturing on Hinduism and hurting Hindu sentiment'.

The use of religion, a centre of devo-

## Telcos get a respite



The Union Cabinet has cleared a set of structural and procedural reforms for the telecom sector in hope of rejuvenating its cash-strapped companies. The key measures announced by the Cabinet include a four-year moratorium on payment of statutory dues by telecom companies and a change in the definition of adjusted gross revenue (AGR) to exclude non-telecom revenue. The change in the definition of AGR

is momentous as it was at the centre of a long and arduous legal battle between the telecom companies and the Centre. The companies had disputed the Department of Telecommunication's definition of AGR as including revenue from non-telecom sources as well.

Since the licence fees and spectrum usage charges that the telcos have to pay the department are calculated based on AGR, there was much at stake. After nearly 15 years of legal battles, the Supreme Court upheld the DoT's definition, leading to a Rs.1.6 lakh crore payment backlog for the telcos. The change in definition does not wipe out these past dues as it does not have retrospective effect. The relief on this front is from the four-year moratorium on payments, though the companies still have to pay interest. It is a right step in the right direction. These fresh reforms will further boost efforts to invest in the digital future.

CK Subramaniam | *Mumbai*

tion for the multitudes, by the BJP to achieve its political ends has become the salient and striking feature of politics in today's India. The encroachment of religion into politics has been so normalized with the nomenclature 'Hindu nationalism' over the decades that anyone who is against defining nationhood on the basis of religion is branded 'anti-national'. The retreat from secularism diminishes our identity as a pluralist democracy and our capacity to prosper.

G David Milton | *Maruthancode*

### PLANET EARTH IS HEATING UP

Sir — A new survey by the BBC has found that the number of days when the temperature reached 50 degrees centigrade has doubled over the last 40 years. The study found that between 2010 and 2019, the temperature reached 50 degrees for 26 days on average. Between 1980 and 1990, that figure was just 14 days. The analysis shows that the frequency of exceptionally hot days is increasing every year. Every 10 years, the

overall number of days with temperature hitting the 50 degrees centigrade mark has risen. Urgent action must be taken by world leaders to control global temperature rises.

It must be understood that even below 50 degrees, high temperature and humidity could create severe health risks. As a consequence of extreme heat, disasters such as droughts and wildfires have become more frequent. Global warming, depletion of the natural sunscreen — the Ozone layer, and melting glaciers are more common than ever. Unless the countries wake up to the severity of the situation and adopt measures to mitigate global warming, our existence on this planet will be in peril. Reversing the already caused damage might be a lost cause but doing our bit can delay the onset of tragedies we're not prepared for.

Venu GS | *Kollam*

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUND BITE

Within 24 hours of coming to power, the AAP will provide 300 units of free electricity for residential use to every single person in UP.



### Delhi Deputy CM

—Manish Sisodia



We were like a hired gun. We were supposed to make the US win the war in Afghanistan, which we never could.

### Pakistan Prime Minister

—Imran Khan

I lived alone so it was like cake, ice cream, anything crispy and then starving for a week. I had a terrible relationship with food.



### Actor

—Jacqueline Fernandez



We are excited to have fans back at the IPL. It's been too long to hear that roar of KKR fans at Eden Gardens.

### KKR captain

—Eoin Morgan

With the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, employment opportunities will increase in Haryana and its connectivity with other States will improve.



### Haryana Chief Minister

—Manohar Lal Khattar





## FIRST COLUMN BUILDING BLOCKS OF DEVELOPMENT

India has its task cut out to make itself heard in global affairs concerning its interests



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

A bunch of regional and multilateral dialogues are coming India's way between September and the last quarter of 2021. As a follow up to the BRICS summit, India participated in the Shanghai Cooperation organization (SCO) meeting in Dushanbe this week. External affairs minister S Jaishankar travelled there and Prime minister Narendra Modi addressed the meeting virtually.

In the wake of the developments in Afghanistan, any opportunity for India to spread its diplomatic clout on the events unfolding in Central Asia is crucial. The SCO has a formidable bunch of representation from nearly all countries that have a say in Central and South Asia. However, therein lies its biggest failure to develop as a regional dialogue platform for Central Asia.

The SCO has a whole laundry list of ambitious goals such as promoting mutual trust and neighbourliness among members, ensuring peace, stability and security in the region based on principles of non-



alignment and "non-targeting any third country and openness". The events in India's eastern border with direct military interventions by China in 2020 and the on-going tensions may seem contradictory to any of the goals. The SCO, like another regional platform BRICS, was primarily a body sponsored by China and Russia to challenge the US in a "unipolar" world and establish the centrality of these powers. When it was conceived, India was still aligning itself to the suddenly new unipolar world having been indecisive about the path it ought to choose for a prosperous future. However, in the last decade or so, a strategic shift has been made to migrate to a US-India strategic relationship based on mutual economic interests and security specially in the Indo-Pacific region. There is growing confidence among the two largest democracies to deal with the new challenges of the global order based on shared targets and economic prosperity.

Coming back to SCO, India focussed on the Afghanistan crisis during its dialogue with SCO leaders. It is significant since this is the second time in a fortnight that top leaders of Russia, China and India spoke to one another on Afghanistan and the overall security situation in the region. The External Affairs minister held bilaterals with his counterparts of Russia and Iran on the situation prevailing in the region. Earlier, India had reiterated its position on providing non-discriminatory and direct distribution of humanitarian assistance to all groups in Afghanistan under the UN banner.

It may be recalled India held the presidency of the security council in August and managed to get a resolution passed on Afghanistan with Russia and China abstaining. The pressure from China and some other SCO members to formally recognize the Taliban government exists. India needs to watch its step. The SCO in its current avatar also needs to bring in democratic reforms and work towards mutual trust of its member-states and dialogue partners before it can challenge alliances like Nato.

Next up in September is the high-level personal dialogue of Modi with President Biden during the Quad summit. In the wake of an aggressive China emerging as a threat for the four large economies of the US, Australia, Japan and India, the Quad grouping has significant potential. The agenda of the summit consists of dialogue on critical and emerging technologies, connectivity and infrastructure, cyber security, maritime security, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, climate change, and the Indo Pacific region. Any five of these strategic goals, if followed through, have a huge potential to create significant economic opportunities for Quad members. Its leadership needs to start publicizing its targets in their respective media for more broad-based participation.

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

# Mighty challenges in Indian agriculture



SUBHASH CHANDRA PANDEY

India has all the means to become an agricultural power in the world but we are currently tapping only a fraction of our strength and letting the rest slide

Current focus of public discourse in agriculture is on marketing system in the backdrop of the three contentious farm laws enacted last year. Early this year, the Supreme Court ordered a temporary stay on their implementation and appointed an expert committee whose report is lying unacted since March. The Government's offer to seek suggestions on specific changes in the law have fallen on deaf ears and the protests seeking outright scrapping of laws have now turned distinctly political.

This focus on marketing has eclipsed attention on important issues of growing water deficit, soil erosion and environmental degradation - particularly nitrogen pollution or air and water — caused by current farming practices. Here is a brief explainer of issues and concerns.

In a pandemic-stricken world, time-bound eradication of hunger and malnutrition by 2030 in an environmentally sustainable manner is an international priority and commitment under United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Food Systems Summit is due to be convened soon to review global preparedness. Action is required to ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all; shift to sustainable consumption patterns; boost nature-positive production; advance equitable livelihoods; and build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress.

India has offered to use its overflowing granaries to tackle extreme hunger but India can do much more and be an agricultural power but we are presently tapping only a fraction of our strength. Here are some suggestions to achieve this mission.

By the mid-1960s, hit by back-to-back droughts, India was a "ship to mouth" economy waiting for PL480 wheat imports from USA. Today, India is the largest exporter of rice and the second-largest producer of both wheat and rice, after China. Except for oilseeds and pulses, the country is now self-sufficient in foodgrain production.

This feat has been achieved by ushering 'Green Revolution' in the 1960s. One of the important fallouts of Green Revolution was increased use of chemical fertilisers, mainly urea for nitrogen and others to provide potassium and phosphorus.

Textbook science tells us that bacteria in the roots of leguminous plants (pulses) help in 'nitrogen fixation', conversion of atmospheric nitrogen into nitrogenous compounds that serve as fertilisers. These plants therefore naturally increase the nitrogen content of soil. Traditional agriculture practice of 'crop rotation' was to sow the legumes in between other crops to restore depleted nitrogen content of soil.

Green Revolution changed many of these practices. It boosted production with three major failings. First, its impact was confined to a few cereal crops — mainly wheat and rice — and to water surplus regions of Punjab, Haryana and parts of UP. These are no more water surplus and the water table has gone very deep. Further, the



THEN THERE IS THE ISSUE OF POLLUTION CAUSED BY CHEMICAL FERTILISERS AND PESTICIDES. SCIENTISTS FOUND THAT CROPS GENERALLY USE UP ONLY 30 PER CENT OF NITROGEN FERTILISERS SPRINKLED IN THE FIELDS; THE REST SEEPS INTO THE ENVIRONMENT, HARMING HEALTH AND ADDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

*(The writer is former Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, GOI. The views expressed are personal.)*



new varieties require chemical fertilisers and pesticides and there is a risk of the chemicals seeping into air and water.

Three crops (rice, wheat and sugarcane) corner 75 to 80 per cent of irrigated water. Diversification of cropping patterns towards millets, pulses, oilseeds, horticulture is needed for more equitable distribution of water, improving sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture and most important of all, addressing the problem of nutrition deficit. Too much of cereals and sugarcane at the cost of pulses, fruits and vegetables is not good for health.

At a time when some misguided environmentalists have aligned with misguided farmers in perpetuating over-production of cereals in an environmentally unsustainable manner, it is apt to recall the report released by UN agencies (FAO, IFAD, WHO, UNICEF, WFP) on State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World on July 13, 2020.

The UN Report has estimated that if last five years' trends persist, the number of undernourished people will exceed 84 crore by 2030 whereas the goal is to reduce it to zero under SDGs.

Then there is the issue of pollution caused by chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Nitrogen pollution has implications for global warming as well.

The farmers were initially impressed by four-to-ten-fold increase in productivity of wheat and rice. They kept on increasing fertiliser use, particularly of cheaper urea. The soil kept losing its natural health and became 'addicted' to urea. With the fertiliser use efficiency on the decline, farmers used more fertiliser (than minimum

required) in the hope of raising yield. Scientists found that crops generally use up only 30 per cent of nitrogen fertilisers sprinkled in the fields; the rest seeps into the environment, harming health and adding to climate change.

The "nitrogen use efficiency" of the global food system integrating crop and livestock production systems is very low, just about 15 per cent. This means that 85 per cent of nitrogenous chemicals used are lost to air, groundwater or surface runoff, threatening the quality of air, soils, and fresh waters, driving climate change, and thereby endangering ecosystems and human health (2013 Study).

Nitrous oxide is a particularly potent greenhouse gas as it is over 300 times more effective at trapping heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. Agriculture leads to about 70 per cent of nitrous oxide emissions in India. Of this, 77 per cent is contributed by fertilisers, mostly urea, according to the Indian Nitrogen Assessment published in 2017.

Cereals consume over 69 per cent of nitrogen fertilisers in India and fertilizer consumption shows a continuously growing trend, with a yearly increase of about six per cent since 1970.

Concerned about excessive use of urea and its adverse effect on environment, a major policy intervention has been introduction of neem-coated urea — coating of *Neem* on urea granules means the urea does not readily dissolve in water and the soil gets additional natural insecticide.

This should help but eventually we need to gradually return to chemical-free agriculture.

Obviously, we cannot proceed like Sri Lanka which banned import of chemical fertilisers in the face of a serious shortage of dollars with them. It has affected food production and supply leading to imposition of emergency.

Chemical-free farming or organic farming or zero budget natural farming is yet to pick up in a big way. Currently, 38 lakh hectares of cultivable area is organically farmed by 30 lakh farmers with an export and domestic demand of Rs.7,000 crore and Rs.4,400 crore, respectively. The domestic market is growing at 17 per cent and the projected demand of organic food market is likely to cross Rs. 87.1 crore by 2021 from Rs. 53.3 crore in 2016. The export market size of organic products has increased by 42 per cent during 2021 compared to last year and the volume of organic products exported from April 2020 to February 2021 was 819,250 MT with value of \$948 million.

'Sresta Natural Bioproducts' is a sustainable livelihood venture that has enabled 45,000 farmers turn to practicing organic farming across the country. The company has converted two lakh acres of land across 15 states. Over 200 products are sold in 10,000 stores and exported to 50 countries under the brand name 24 Mantra. A 'jaivik khetai' web portal in fact connects farmers to consumers for better prices. These are encouraging but still baby steps. Organic farming, perceived as a fad of the rich and expensive, cannot become a mass movement unless organic products are verifiable and affordable.

When shall we see a 'mahapan-chayat' discussing these challenges before Indian agriculture?

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

THEY (THE BJP) ARE FAKE HINDUS. THEY USE RELIGION, THEY ARE BROKERS OF RELIGION, BUT THEY ARE NOT HINDUS. —CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



RAHUL GANDHI SHOULD NOT MAKE THESE STATEMENTS. HE IS TOTALLY DISCONNECTED FROM THE GROUND AND HAS NO INFORMATION. —BJP NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY ARUN SINGH

# As NaMo turns 71, the world turns to him

The universal farsightedness of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his ability to foresee challenges places him well above others

On September 17 this year, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi turns 71, his fans cutting across political lines remind themselves how he has proved to be a visionary and charismatic statesman, a role model for others to follow.

Even his detractors have to acknowledge that his public image shines, as evidenced by a recent Morning Consult survey judging him the most popular among 13 world leaders.

With an acceptance rating of as high as 70 per cent, he was crowned as the tallest leader, followed by Mexican president Andres Manuel López Obrador with a score of 64 per cent. They were followed by Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi (63 per cent), German



JASIM MOHAMMAD

*(The writer is Professor and Founder Chairman, Centre for Narendra Modi Studies, Aligarh. The views expressed are personal.)*

Chancellor Angela Merkel (52 per cent), US President Joe Biden (48 per cent), Australian PM Scott Morrison (48 per cent), Canadian PM Justin Trudeau (45 per cent), UK PM Boris Johnson (41 per cent), Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro (39 per cent), South Korean President Moon Jae-In (38 per cent), Spanish PM Pedro Sánchez (35 per cent) and French President Emmanuel Macron (34).

No doubt, on September 24 when Modi visits the United States for a Quad summit, he is likely to meet President Biden for bilateral talks on subjects including Afghanistan for the first time after Biden rose to presidency.

There are many reasons why Modi has achieved globally what many other Indian



PMs failed to. One of them is universal farsightedness that he is credited with. He can foresee the challenges lying ahead and has solutions ready for them. This quality not only made him different from his predecessors but put him ahead of other top world leaders.

Take the case of the Covid-19 pandemic that brought the world to a standstill last year. Braving the criticism of the opposition parties at home,

Modi emerged as a global messiah by reaching out to other countries with vaccines while ensuring that the vaccine supply to Indians was not adversely affected. If this was not enough, he turned health into a key global agenda at the BRICS summit that he chaired on September 9.

He "stressed the need for accelerating 'buildback' by enhancing speed and accessibility of vaccination, creating 'resilience' by diversifying pharmaceutical and vaccine production capacities beyond the developed world".

Another major success of Modi as the host of the BRICS Summit was his affirmation in the presence of Chinese President Xi Jinping about the global stand against terrorism and the unprecedented situa-

tion that has dramatically unfolded in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of troops by the US.

In the wake of the stand of Communist China, which has decided to hobnob with the Taliban in league with Pakistan to expand its presence in Afghanistan not only for commercial interests but also for secret strategic purposes, a development that can pose a serious threat to India, Modi has been able to tie smartly four other countries to the New Delhi Declaration.

The joint resolution underlined: "We follow with concern the latest developments in Afghanistan. We call for refraining from violence and settling the situation by peaceful means. We stress the need to contribute to fostering an

inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue so as to ensure stability, civil peace, law and order in the country. We condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks near the Hamid Karzai Kabul International Airport that resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries. We underscore the priority of fighting terrorism, including preventing attempts by terrorist organizations to use Afghan territory as terrorist sanctuary and to carry out attacks against other countries, as well as drug trade within Afghanistan. We emphasise the need to address the humanitarian situation and to uphold human rights, including those of women, children and minorities."

Significantly it also came a day after Russia and India discussed coordinating among

themselves on Afghanistan during NSA-level talks in New Delhi. The New Delhi declaration also carries a veiled yet strong warning from Modi to Pakistan, which is not part of BRICS but is aligned with China and has been chiefly responsible for overthrowing a democratically elected and India-friendly government in Afghanistan by supporting a terrorist outfit like the Taliban militarily.

If China, at the behest of Pakistan, dares to play any mischief from Afghanistan targeting India in future, Modi and leaders of the three other nations would have every right to confront Jinping for violation of the agreement. And that would certainly not be a good experience for the leaders either Beijing or Islamabad.

# AHEAD OF SCO SUMMIT China says will work closely with member States on Af issues

**Beijing:** Ahead of the SCO summit, China on Thursday said it is ready to have close communication and coordination with the bloc's member states and jointly work on Afghanistan to build an open and inclusive political structure in the war-torn country controlled by the Taliban.

The eight-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) grouping of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan will hold its 21st summit on Friday at Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe.

Afghanistan is an observer in the SCO.

The SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) comprising Russia and Central Asian States will hold a joint summit meeting on Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with Chinese

President Xi Jinping would address the summit via video link.

Asked about the SCO and CSTO summit on Afghanistan, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here that "the Afghan situation bears on regional security and stability".

"Members of the SCO and CSTO are all close neighbours of Afghanistan and they all actively support the peace and reconstruction and reconciliation process in Afghanistan," he said.

"China is a member of the SCO which is ready to have close communication and coordination with relevant countries, jointly work on Afghanistan to build an open and inclusive political structure, adopt moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies, make a clean break with all forms of terrorist groups and live on friendly terms with other countries."

"We are ready to continue to have good neighbourliness and friendly cooperation with Afghanistan, and play a constructive role in its peace and reconstruction," he said.

China, which has kept its embassy open in Kabul along with Pakistan and Russia, has maintained close communication with the Taliban's interim government though it has not formally recognised it.

Beijing has announced a USD 31-million aid for the war-torn country.

The Taliban seized power in Afghanistan on August 15, two weeks before the US' complete troop withdrawal on August 31 after a costly two-decade war. This forced Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to flee the country to the UAE. **PTI**

## Taliban hand over seized cash, gold to Af central bank

IANS ■ KABUL

The Taliban have handed over about \$12.3 million cash and some gold to Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB), the country's central bank, a statement said on Thursday.

The cash and gold bars found from the houses of former administration's officials and local offices of former government's intelligence agency have been returned to Da Afghanistan Bank's treasury, Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as saying.

"The officials of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan by handing over the assets to national treasury proved their commitment to transparency," it added.

## Afghans long for better life as Taliban manage to run country

IANS ■ KABUL

While the security situation in Afghanistan has remained stable since the Taliban takeover in August, the country is now facing economic and humanitarian challenges, with its people longing for a better life and the new Government calling for international assistance.

There has been no major security incident or armed clashes since August 15 when Taliban took over 33 of the country's 34 provinces, except a deadly suicide bomb blast and shooting outside the Kabul International Airport, which killed over 170 Afghan civilians and 13 US soldiers, while injuring nearly 200 others, Xinhua

news agency reported.

On September 6, the Taliban announced that its fighters had captured Panjshir, the only province that had remained out of the group's control, days after sporadic clashes were reported in the mountainous province.

There were no civilian casualties during the fighting in Panjshir, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said, adding that electricity and internet service would resume in the province soon.

No major clashes have been reported in Panjshir since then, although the so-called National Resistance Front of Afghanistan led by Ahmad Massoud, the son of former anti-Taliban leader Ahmad

Shah Massoud, has denied the Taliban's claim of capturing Panjshir.

"The war is over, and insecurity and fighting are not a concern among the Afghans anymore," Mujahid said.

Afghanistan would soon have a regular army to defend the country, Taliban's army chief of staff Qari Fasihuddin said Wednesday.

"Afghanistan would have a regular, disciplined and strong army in near future to defend and protect the country and consultations in this field continue," Fasihuddin said at a gathering in Kabul, adding members of the proposed army would be well-trained and disciplined to defend and protect Afghanistan.

## Over 634,000 Afghans displaced this yr: UN agency

**Kabul:** More than 634,000 Afghans have been internally displaced by conflicts in 2021, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the war-torn nation said on Thursday.

A total of 634,800 people had been verified as having been displaced by conflicts as of September 12, 2021, out of which 282,246 displaced people had received assistance, Xinhua news agency quoted the OCHA as saying in a report.


The report came as the security situation in Afghanistan has remained stable since the Taliban's takeover of the country in mid-August.

Afghan officials and humanitarian agencies have expressed concern over the living condition of the displaced families in the country since the it affected the life of women and children as they do not have access to health facilities and schooling.

More than 28,000 Afghans have been also affected by natural disasters across Afghanistan starting this year, according to the figures provided by OCHA.

On Monday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the possibility of a complete economic collapse in Afghanistan was "serious" and highlighted an urgent need for funding support at a high-level ministerial meeting on Afghanistan's humanitarian situation in Geneva.

On Tuesday, the UN appealed to the countries pledging \$1.2 billion in relief for Afghanistan to take action quickly. **IANS**

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Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-1) GGSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2021\_POWER\_72014\_1 for Mtc. of railway track in GGSTP railway yard (equated length 35.266 KM) and railway track from Ropar railway station to GGSTP railway station (RTP Block Section) equated length 7.506 KM. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from **17-09-2021/ 11.00 AM** onwards.  
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>.  
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**Name of work :** Annual contract for Operation, routine Maintenance and upkeeping 33/11 KV substation & 500KVA DG Set at Hathiyari  
**Estimated cost :** **₹ 32,86,221.00 (Taxes Extra)**  
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**Last date for submission of bids on website:** 11.10.2021 upto 17:00 hrs.  
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**MODERN COACH FACTORY, RAEBARELI**  
**Tender No.: Re-CAMC-EOT-2021-22-8A Due on 04/10/2021**  
Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/M&P, Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli for and on behalf of president of India, invites ONLINE open tender based on two packet system from reputed firms through Indian Railways portal [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in) for Tender notice no. **Re-CAMC-EOT-2021-22-8A, Due on 04/10/2021** on prescribed format for the under mentioned work- **Description of Work:-** Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of 35 Nos. EOT cranes along with DSL for 02 year as per scope of work. **Approx. Value (in Rs.)** 1,14,24,750.00 (Rs. One Crore Fourteen Lakhs Twenty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty Only); **Earnest Money :- Nil; Cost of Tender Document :-** Rs.5,000.00 **Completion period from the date of commencement of work:-** 24 months (02 years) **Date and Time of closing of tender -** 04.10.2021 at 15:30 hrs. • Detailed Tender Notice, Eligibility criteria, Terms and conditions are available in tender document at Indian Railways portal : [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in).  
**Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (M&P)**

**e-Advertised Tender Notice No. 33/ET/2021-22 Dated: 13.09.2021**

SN	Tender No.	Short Description	Qty.	Due Date
01	12211097	Brake Support	6799 Nos.	11.10.2021
02	12211069	Wear Plate	6852 Nos.	30.09.2021
03	05201033	LED Light Fitting for Doorway / Gangway Area	2944 Nos.	01.10.2021
04	15195229C	SMF VRLA Battery, Sealed MF Rechargeable	120 Nos.	11.10.2021
05	11211079	Stiffening Plate	6405 Nos.	11.10.2021
06	12211048	Roll Link	3801 Nos.	13.10.2021
07	11211167	End Construction for LHB High Capacity Parcel Van Coach	268 Nos.	11.10.2021
08	05211190	Led Light fitting for Toilet Indication in LHB AC Coaches.	2241 Nos.	08.10.2021

**Corrigendum**

01	Corrigendum No.03 Dated 01.09.2021	Tender No. 04211266	Due date may be read as 22.09.2021 instead of 08.09.2021
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**e-Advertised Tender Notice No. 34/ET/2021-22 Dated: 15.09.2021**

SN	Tender No.	Short Description	Qty.	Due Date
1	05211338	Aluminum Pipe	118605 MTR	18.10.2021
2	05211339	Battery Box Assembly (Installation and Commissioning Not Required)	984 Nos.	22.10.2021
3	12211035	Bogie Bolster Assembly for Air Spring Type Flat Bogie	723 Nos.	25.11.2021
4	05211362	Cable Duct L= 3 M	19440 Nos.	12.10.2021
5	05211371	Set of Panel (for LHB Non AC Coaches) Without LV Panel	129 Set	12.10.2021
6	05211376	Cable Duct as per Drg. No. LW44174 Item 6 ALT C with length 3 mtrs.	10591 Nos.	08.10.2021
7	12211146A	Male Stud Connector	4000 Nos.	07.10.2021

**Corrigendum**

01	33/ET/2021-22 Dated 13.09.2021	Tender No. 04211266	Due date may be read as 30.09.2021 instead of 22.09.2021
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**Website Address: [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in) & [www.mct.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.mct.indianrailways.gov.in)**  
**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

## 3 dead, 60 hurt in 6.0-magnitude China earthquake

**Beijing:** Three people were killed and 60 others injured on Thursday after a powerful 6.0-magnitude earthquake jolted Luxian county in China's Sichuan province, authorities said.

China Earthquake Administration has dispatched a work team to guide on-site disaster relief work, reports xinhua news agency.

A total of 890 commanders and fighters from nearby fire-fighting and rescue brigades have been mobilised, while another 4,600 rescue workers are on standby.

There were a total of 737 collapsed houses, 72 houses with serious damage, while 7,290 with damage to some extent.

Collapsed walls and houses were seen on the way to rain-battered Jiaming township in the epicentre area.

Electricity in most of the houses in the town has been suspended.

Amid heavy rain in Fuji township, rescue workers were going door to door searching for people in the damaged houses and moving them to

temporary shelters.

More than 6,900 affected residents have been relocated, and over 10,000 people were shifted to temporary shelters as of early Thursday morning, according to the local government.

According to the China Earthquake Networks Centre, the earthquake occurred at 4.33 a.m.

The epicentre was monitored at 29.2 degrees north latitude and 105.34 degrees east longitude. The quake struck at a depth of 10 km.

Approved by the provincial government, the earthquake relief headquarters of Sichuan has activated a level-II response, the second highest in China's four-tier earthquake emergency response system.

Some telecommunication base stations and cables were damaged.

The Luzhou high-speed railway station has been closed, according to railway authorities.

All coal mines have been ordered to halt underground operations and evacuate miners in shafts. **IANS**

## ‘New AI tool can help treat Covid patients globally’

PTI ■ LONDON

A team of international researchers has developed an artificial intelligence (AI) tool that can predict how much extra oxygen a Covid-19 patient might need during hospital care.

To check the accuracy of the AI tool, it was tested out in a number of hospitals across five continents.

The results showed it predicted the oxygen needed within 24 hours of a patient's arrival in the emergency department, with a sensitivity of 95 per cent and a specificity of over 88 per cent.

The outcomes of around 10,000 Covid-19 patients from across the world were analysed in the study published in the journal Nature Medicine on Thursday.

The technique, known as federated learning, used an algorithm to analyse chest X-rays and electronic health data from hospital patients with coronavirus symptoms.

To maintain strict patient confidentiality, the patient data was fully anonymised and an

algorithm was sent to each hospital so no data was shared or left its location.

Once the algorithm had 'learned' from the data, the analysis was brought together to build the AI tool.

"Federated learning has transformative power to bring AI innovation to the clinical workflow," said Professor Fiona Gilbert, from the University of Cambridge in the UK, who led the study.

"Usually in artificial intelligence development, when you create an algorithm on one hospital's data, it doesn't work well at any other hospital," said study first author Ittai Dayan, from Mass General Brigham in the US.

By developing the model using objective, multimodal data from different continents, the researchers were able to build a generalisable model that can help frontline physicians worldwide.

Bringing together collaborators across North and South America, Europe and Asia, the study took just two weeks of AI 'learning' to achieve high-quality predictions.

## ‘Menstrual changes after Covid vax plausible, must be investigated’

**London:** A link between changes in the menstrual cycle and Covid-19 vaccination is plausible, and must be investigated, according to an editorial published in the peer-reviewed British Medical Journal today.

In the editorial, Victoria Male, a reproductive specialist at Imperial College London, UK noted that periods or unexpected vaginal bleeding are not listed as common side effects of Covid-19 vaccination.

Over 30,000 such reports had been made to the UK Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) surveillance scheme for adverse drug reactions by September 2, she said.

The expert, however, noted most people find that their period returns to normal the following cycle and, importantly, there is no evidence that Covid-19 vaccination adversely affects fertility.

"One important lesson is that the effects of medical interventions on menstruation should not be an afterthought in future research," Ms Male said. MHRA states that its surveillance data does not support

a link between changes to menstrual periods and Covid-19 vaccines, since the number of reports is low in relation to both the number of people vaccinated and the prevalence of menstrual disorders generally.

However, Ms Male said the way in which data is collected makes firm conclusions difficult.

She argues in the editorial that approaches better equipped to compare rates of menstrual changes in vaccinated versus unvaccinated populations are needed.

Reports of menstrual changes after Covid-19 vaccination have been made for both mRNA and adenovirus-vectored vaccines, she said.

This suggest that, if there is a connection, it is likely to be a result of the immune response to vaccination, rather than to a specific vaccine component, Ms Male said.

The editorial also noted that the menstrual cycle may be affected by the body's immune response to the virus itself, with one study showing menstrual disruption in around a quarter of women infected withS-CoV-2. **IANS**

## New Zealand launches vaccine buses

**Auckland:** Three mobile vaccine buses launched in New Zealand's Auckland city on Thursday to help people fasten their Covid-19 vaccination.

According to local media, 12 such buses in total converted from airport Park and Ride vehicles will be provided to suburbs where access to vaccinations is more difficult, reports Xinhua news agency.

The converted black and orange airport buses have vaccination signs posted on their sides. One reads "Roll up your sleeves, Auckland", and another "Vaccinate for Auckland".

Auckland is experiencing the fifth consecutive week of Level 4 lockdown, the longest period since Covid-19 outbreak in the country. **IANS**

## Several patients with Black Fungus detected in SL

**Colombo:** Sri Lanka's Health Ministry said patients with the Black Fungus had been detected from several areas of the country amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Deputy Director General of Health Services Hemantha Herath told the media on Wednesday that the Black Fungus had been detected on patients infected with Covid-19, who were under treatment in the Colombo National Hospital, Kurnegala Hospital and Ratnapura Hospital, among others, reports Xinhua news agency.

"The symptoms of this disease develop depending on the place where the fungus appears on the body. The fungus can be found on the skin, around the eyes, nose, brain and lungs," Herath said. **IANS**



# Markets maintain record run

## SENSEX BREACHES 59K FOR FIRST TIME

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmark Sensex scaled the 59,000-mark for the first time on Thursday as investors remained in risk-on mode following the government's policy support measures for various sectors.

Advancing for the third consecutive session, the 30-share BSE index climbed 417.96 points or 0.71 per cent to its new closing peak of 59,141.16. It touched an intraday record of 59,204.29.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 110.05 points or 0.63 per cent to finish at its fresh lifetime high of 17,629.50. During the session, it scaled an all-time peak of 17,644.60.

IndusInd Bank was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, spurring 7.34 per cent, followed by ITC, SBI, Reliance Industries, Kotak Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank.

In contrast, TCS, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, HCL Tech and Dr

Reddy's were among the laggards, slipping up to 1.32 per cent.

"Driven by reforms, the Indian market kept raising its bar and traded to new record highs.

Today's market rally was driven by strong buying in Banking stocks especially in PSBs.

The banking sector is expected to perform well in the coming days as the sector which failed to fairly participate in the ongoing rally due to fear over asset quality is gaining traction.

"Asian markets traded with cuts as the fall in Chinese property stocks pushed Asian stocks down while European markets traded with positive sentiments," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities, said, "Ahead of the operationalisation of the National Asset Reconstruction Company (NARCL), banks provided the much needed ammunition to the bulls to notch up record highs of 59K on the Sensex. The charge of the energised bulls took India's market capitalisation ahead of France as PSU banks lent the

firepower."

BSE bankex was the biggest sectoral gainer, jumping 2.12 per cent, followed by energy, finance, FMCG and oil & gas indices. Metal, teck, IT and basic materials were among the losers.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap and smallcap gauges rose up to 0.48 per cent.

Asian equities sank after liquidity crisis at Chinese real estate major Evergrande Group fanned fears of a broader contagion.

Bourses in Shanghai, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong ended with significant losses.

However, equities in Europe were trading with robust gains in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.16 per cent to USD 75.58 per barrel.

The rupee slipped 2 paise to close at 73.52 against the US dollar on Thursday, tracking a strengthening greenback in the overseas markets.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets as they purchased shares worth Rs 232.84 crore on Wednesday, as per provisional exchange data.

## Rupee edges 2 paise lower at 73.52 against US dollar

Mumbai: The rupee closed marginally lower at 73.52 against the American currency on Thursday, tracking a rebound in the US dollar index.

Forex traders said a bullish trend in the domestic equities and sustained foreign fund inflows supported the local unit, but firm crude oil prices and stronger dollar against key currencies weighed on overall sentiment.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the domestic currency opened flat at 73.51, witnessed an intra-day high of 73.34 and a low of 73.52 against the American currency during day trade.

The local unit finally settled for the day at 73.52, down 2 paise over its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.24% higher at 92.77.

# GST Council to meet on Friday

## Rate review, tax concession to 11 Covid drugs on cards

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, will meet on Friday, which among other things may review tax rate of over four-dozen items and extend till December 31, tax concessions on 11 Covid drugs.

Also, taxing petrol and diesel under the single national GST tax and a proposal to treat food delivery apps such as Zomato and Swiggy as restaurants and levy a 5 per cent GST tax on supplies made by them would be taken up by the Council at its meeting in Lucknow on September 17.

"Finance Minister Smt @nsitharaman will chair the 45th GST Council meeting at 11 AM in Lucknow tomorrow. The meeting will be attended by MOS Shri @mppchaudhary besides Finance Ministers of States & UTs and Senior officers from Union Government & States," the Finance Ministry tweeted.

The Council, comprising

central and state finance ministers, will deliberate on the proposal of extending the existing concessional tax rate structure on Amphotericin B, Tocilizumab, Remdesivir and anti-coagulants like Heparin, till December 31, 2021, from the present September 30.

Tax rate on Amphotericin B, Tocilizumab was cut to 'Nil', while Remdesivir and Heparin was reduced to 5 per cent in June 2021.

The Council on Friday may also discuss the proposal of reducing GST from 12 per cent to 5 per cent to seven more drugs till December 31, 2021. These are Itolizumab, Posaconazole, Infliximab, Bamlanivimab & Etesevimab, Casirivimab & Imdevimab, 2-Deoxy-D-Glucose and Favipiravir.

To curb tax evasion, the proposal to make the food delivery platforms like Swiggy and Zomato liable to pay the Goods and Services Tax on restaurant services supplied through them would also be considered by the Council.

## BRIEFS

### DR SANJAY KUMAR LAL JOINS AS DIRECTOR (FIN) – DELHI TRANSCO LTD

Dr Sanjay Kumar Lal, an officer of 2001 batch of Indian Revenue Services has recently joined Delhi Transco Limited as Director (Finance). He has done his Doctorate from prestigious Indian Agriculture Research Institute, Pusa, Delhi. Besides this, he is also a Law Graduate. Dr Sanjay Kumar Lal has a vast experience in the field of Taxation, Account and Finance and his expertise will be of immense use in Delhi Transco. He has worked in various capacities in the Income Tax Department in its different wings such as Investigation, International Taxation, headquarters etc. He has also rendered his services in the Ministry of Finance. During his tenure in the investigation wing, he had conducted various highly successful searches.



### GOVT SEEKS ₹8-10 LAKH CRORE VALUATION FOR LIC

New Delhi: India is seeking a valuation of between ₹8 trillion and ₹10 trillion for the state-backed Life Insurance Corporation in what's slated to be the nation's biggest initial public offering, Bloomberg reported. The government is considering selling a 5-10 per cent stake in the company, which could raise between ₹400 billion and ₹1 trillion, according to the people with knowledge of the matter, who asked not to be identified as the matter is private. The potential valuation is based on preliminary talks and may change after further discussions, due diligence and an official valuation report, the report said.

### LOWER GST ON TETRA PACKS CAUSED ₹948 CR LOSS: THINK TANK

New Delhi: Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Smriti Manch, a Delhi-Mumbai based think tank, has highlighted that tetra pack is incorrectly categorised in the 12 per cent GST slab as a paper based aseptic packaging, while other aseptic packaging containing plastic or aluminum or multi-materials like tetra-pack attract 18 per cent GST rate. The think tank has appealed to the GST council, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and the Finance Ministry to amend the GST slab of Tetra pack from 12 per cent to 18 per cent. "Due to the GST anomaly, tetra packs have become a source of unethical tax saving for brands," said Vinod Shukla, president of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Smriti Manch and nephew of Deendayal Upadhyay.

## Shorter settlement cycle is in interest of all market participants: Sebi chief

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst concerns raised by brokers' association and FPIs over the implementation of the shorter settlement system, Sebi chairman Ajay Tyagi on Thursday said the T+1 (trade plus one day) settlement cycle is in the interest of all market participants.

T+1 means that market trade-related settlements will need to be cleared within one day of the actual transactions taking place. Currently, trades on the Indian stock exchanges are settled in two working days after the transaction is done (T+2). "Early settlement will be good for all market participants. It is in the interest of everyone," Tyagi said in an event organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), earlier this month, allowed exchanges to move to the T+1 settlement cycle on an optional basis.

## Niti Aayog Vice Chairman emphasises need to reduce carbon footprint in urbanisation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar on Thursday emphasised the need to reduce carbon footprint in urbanisation and said urban India will be powering the country's economic growth.

Releasing a report on 'Reforms In Urban Planning', he said there is a compelling need to plug the gaps in urban-planning capacity in the country. Otherwise, a huge opportunity for rapid, sustainable and equitable growth would be at risk of being missed, he added.

Kumar also highlighted the shortage of town planners, saying experts are needed to provide services to about 4,700 urban local bodies.

There is a need to build smart and carbon positive cities with a view to reduce carbon footprint, he noted.

Speaking on the occasion, Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra said urban planning



holds the key for economic development and optimum utilisation of available infrastructure, especially in sectors like water, sanitation, health-care and education.

Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said urbanisation is the driving force of the Indian economy, adding that the country has reached a turning point in its transformation.

This is the first time in the history of India that the question of urban planning capacity has been dealt with in-depth, Kant said about the report.

## PLI scheme for auto sector to build self-sustaining framework for e-mobility industry: SMEV

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Electric vehicle manufacturers' body SMEV on Thursday said the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for auto and auto-components will build a self-sustaining framework for the e-mobility industry.

The Union Cabinet has on Wednesday approved a ₹ 26,058 crore PLI scheme for auto, auto-components and drone industries to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities.

The scheme will incentivise the emergence of advanced automotive technologies' global supply chain in India, with incentives worth around ₹26,000 crore to be provided to the industry over the next five years.

The scheme is especially beneficial for existing large players engaged in the automotive business and new entrants, as it will renew the interest of traditional players and motivate them to invest in

the sector, Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) Director-General Sohinder Gill said in a statement.

It is estimated that over the five years, the PLI scheme for the automobile and auto components industry will lead to a fresh investment of over ₹ 42,500 crore, incremental production of over ₹2.3 lakh crore and will create additional employment opportunities of over 7.5 lakh jobs. The move will strengthen the manufacturing ecosystem and build a self-sustaining framework for the e-mobility industry, Gill noted. However, he said, most of the existing small and medium OEMs engaged in the EV automotive business and new startups may not be able to qualify for the scheme and will have to operate under the existing norms. Policies supported by fiscal and non-fiscal incentives are the pillars that drive consumer sentiment and accelerate the adoption of new products in the market, he said.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all the concerns that my client VIMAL JYOTI SO LATE SH. MURARI LAL R/O A-253-254, GALI NO.5, WEST VINOD NAGAR, DELHI-110092 have severed all of his relation and debarred his unmarried Son MAYANK JYOTI From his moveable or immovable properties in Delhi due to disobedient attitude. My client and his other legal heirs shall not be responsible for any of his act, deeds done by him in future in any manner and anybody dealing with him shall be at his own risks and consequences.

Seema Sharma (Advocate) Ch.No.D-418, Karkardooma Court, Delhi

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas my clients, (1) Mrs. Anju Sachdeva W/o Mr. Mahesh Kumar & (2) Mr. Mahesh Kumar S/o Sh. Tuls Das both R/o A-128, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi-68, hereby declare that they have disowned, disinherited & debarred their Son Mr. Mohit Sachdeva & their Daughter-in-law Mrs. Sakshi Arora from their Property No. A-108, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi-68, & all moveable, immovable & other properties w.e.f. from today & if anybody deals with them, shall do so at his/her/their own risk, cost & responsibility, my clients & their family members shall not be responsible in any manner. My Clients shall not responsible if any person shall any type of deal with son Mr. Mohit Sachdeva & their Daughter-in-law Mrs. Sakshi Arora both R/o A-108, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi-110088.

Saty Kumar (Advocate) Ch.No.118, Rathi Block, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-54

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas my clients, (1) Mrs. Kanika Devi W/o Mr. Ved Ram & (2) Mr. Ved Ram S/o Late Nekki Lal both R/o Jhuggi No. N-77/C-419, Sawan Park Extn, Ashok Vihar, Delhi-52 hereby declare that they have disowned, disinherited & debarred their Daughter Mrs. Anrita W/o Mr. Raj Kumar and their Son-in-law Mr. Raj Kumar from their Property / Jhuggi N-77/C-419, Sawan Park Extn, Ashok Vihar, Delhi-52 & all moveable, immovable & other properties w.e.f. from today & if anybody deals with them, shall do so at his/her/their own risk, cost & responsibility, my clients & their family members shall not be responsible in any manner. My Clients shall not responsible if any person shall any type of deal with daughter Mrs. Anrita W/o Mr. Raj Kumar and their Son-in-law Mr. Raj Kumar R/o H.No.418, Near MC Primary School Metro South, Hosiabi Khurd, Delhi-110082.

Saty Kumar (Advocate) Ch.No.118, Rathi Block, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-54

**SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE**  
**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd.3rd Floor, Plot No-23, Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005  
**Whereas**  
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.  
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.  

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Roop Narain Kaushik/ Chanchal Kaushik/ Frames Twenty Four Communications Pvt Ltd/ LBFDB00003334292	Plot No A 10A, Basement Rear Front Side, And 2nd Floor Rear Side With Terrace Green Park, Delhi/ Sep 13, 2021	June 24, 2021 Rs. 3,09,85,833/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

**Date : September 17, 2021**  
**Place: Delhi/ NCR**

**Authorized Officer**  
**ICICI Bank Limited**

**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
**GUJARAT MARITIME BOARD**  
"Sagar Bhavan", Sector 10/A, Chh Road, Opp. Air Force, Gandhinagar 382010 Phone 079-2323 8346/47/48/51  
On behalf of Chairman, Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) invites E-tenders from the NABET accredited consultants for the following works.  

Name of Work	
"obtaining amendment in existing Coastal Regulation Zone Clearance for the Project of construction of administration building and staff quarters at Okha, District-Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat"	
Details	
Bids downloading commencement Date	18-09-2021 from 15:00 hrs
Last Date for On-line submission of Bids through <a href="http://www.nprocure.com">www.nprocure.com</a>	22-10-2021 up to 18:10 hrs

Detailed terms and conditions and other related information is given in Bid documents. For Bid documents and more details, please visit website [www.nprocure.com](http://www.nprocure.com) or [www.gmbports.org](http://www.gmbports.org) or contact Deputy General Manager (Env), Environment Cell, Gujarat Maritime Board, Gandhinagar.  
**NO/INF/VPN/2021/G/1084**

**POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CHHATTISGARH, ATAL NAGAR, NAVA RAIPUR**  
**Re-tender Notice**  
No.PHQ/Sec-10/Kit-Clo/3893/21 Nava Raipur, Dated: 14/09/2021  
Sealed tenders are being invited from original equipment manufactures (OEM) Or authorized by manufacturer (only one) for the following item :  

Sl.No	Name of Item	Qty	Specification	EMD in Rs.	Remarks
1	Long Range Tropical 5 Inch Ankle Trekking Boot	2000 Pair	AS Per Section -IV	2,400,000/-	The tenders shall submit Three pair untested samples of Trekking Boot as per the specification. <b>Sample-1:</b> must be Embossed/stamped with the manufacturers name or his recognized trade mark, size and monthly/year of manufacture in outside. <b>Sample- 2 &amp; 3:</b> without any trade mark of manufacturer in outside. <b>Lab test can be performed by the department from any government lab.</b>

**Note -1-** Tender document fee of Rs. 3000/- & Testing charges for shoes of Rs. 22,000/- (Rs. Twenty Two Thousand only) will be paid at the time of bid submission of Tender, in the form of Demand Draft of State Bank of India/ Scheduled Bank (other than Cooperative Bank) payable at Raipur in favour of A.I.G. of Police (Accounts), PHQ Nava Raipur, Atal nagar or State Govt. Challan to be deposited in the Head of A/c- 0055- Police-800- other receipt, Tender fee and Testing fee is non refundable and can't be exempted in any condition.

**2-** Quantity will be variable.

**SCHEDULE FOR TENDER**

a)	Address for submission of Tender Document :-	A1G of Police(P&P) ,Block no 03, Room No.309 Police Headquarters Headquarters,Chhattisgarh, Sector 19, Nava Raipur.
b)	Last date & time for Submission of Tender Document	13/10/2021 till 03.00 pm
c)	Place, Time and Date of Opening Technical Bid :-	A1G of Police(P&P) ,Block no 03, Room No.309 Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Sector 19, Nava Raipur. 13/10/2021 at 04.00 pm
d)	Place, Time and Date of opening Financial Bid :-	Shall be intimated.
e)	Date till which the Bid to remain valid	120 days from the scheduled date of submission of the Bid.

**Note:-**  
1. In case of tender opening date being declared as holiday, tenders will be opened on next working day.  
2. Tender documents can be downloaded from our website [www.ecgpolve.gov.in](http://www.ecgpolve.gov.in).  
3. Modification/Amendments/Corrigendum, if any shall not be advertised on the news paper but shall be published in the aforesaid web site only.  
4. If any bidder sends tender documents through Courier/Speed post. The tender documents will be accepted till 3.00 pm on 13/10/2021 at Block no. 03, Room No.309 Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Sector 19, Nava Raipur only. Received tender documents in any other address at PHQ on stipulated Date and time, will not be accepted.

**Sd/-**  
**R.O. NO.: 63683/3**  
**A.I.G of Police (P&P)**  
**R.O. Date :- 15/09/2021**  
**For-Director General of Police**

## Prospects brightening for economy as 2nd Covid wave wanes: RBI bulletin

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Prospects are brightening for the Indian economy achieving "escape velocity" from the pandemic as the second wave of Covid-19 wanes and preparedness for future remains on war-alert status, according to an RBI bulletin published on Thursday.

An article on the state of the economy, published in the September bulletin, said aggregate demand is gaining firmer ground, while on the supply side, IIP and core industries mirror improvement in industrial activity and services sector indicators point towards

sustained recovery.

"In August, we believe that India passed a turning point which consolidates and thrives come September," said the article authored by a team lead by RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra.

It further said the trajectory of inflation is shifting down more favourably than anticipated.

"As pandemic scars heal and supply conditions are restored with productivity gains, a sustained easing of core inflation can be expected, which will reinforce the growth-supportive stance of monetary policy," it said.

## India second-largest technology hub for Amazon globally: India Head

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is the second-largest technology hub for Amazon globally and its teams are powering innovations not only for customers in the country but globally as well, a top company executive said on Thursday.

Speaking at Amazon India Career Day, Amazon Global Senior Vice President and Country Head India Amit Agarwal said the e-commerce company employs over one lakh professionals in India across diverse areas from engineering, supply chain, content creation, marketing, video and others. "India is also the second-largest technology hub for

Amazon globally, with some of the most talented software developers, product managers, machine learning scientists, and research scientists as part of the team," he said.

The teams are powering innovations not only for India, but also for customers globally, building services that practically touch every aspect of the customer journey with Amazon, he added.

Agarwal cited the example of its team in Bengaluru that has built a cloud-based warehouse management system to help sellers streamline their warehouse operations, and ship orders to customers fast and reliably.

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ई-मेल: [eeuki-uj-s-uk@nic.in](mailto:eeuki-uj-s-uk@nic.in), [uj.suttarkashi@gmail.com](mailto:uj.suttarkashi@gmail.com)  
**पत्रांक : 1044 / ई-निविदा / 2021-22** **दिनांक : 16 / 09 / 2021**  
**ई-निविदा सूचना**  
अनुसूचना खण्ड उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान उत्तरकाशी द्वारा ई-निविदा (टू बिड सिस्टम) के अन्तर्गत निविदायें पुनः आमंत्रित की जाती है।  

निविदा सं०	कार्य विवरण	धरोहर धनराशि रु०	ई-निविदा द्वारा निविदा प्रपत्र की तिथि एवं समय	ऑनलाइन निविदा प्रपत्र जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	रकमों की बिड खोले जाने की तिथि एवं समय	निविदा की वैधता	टि-बिड मीटिंग की तिथि एवं समय
1	विकास क्षेत्र डुङ्गा में जल जीवन मिशन कार्यक्रम के अन्तर्गत बड़े पेयजल योजना का पुनर्गठन कार्य	As per LT/ No. 42/SPMG/ Namami Gange/ fund Demand Dt. 12-01-2021 & TE-160111/22 020-0lo	17.09.2021 from 11:00 a.m	04.10.2021 upto 17:00 p.m	05.10.2021 upto 14:00 p.m	06.10.2021 at 11:00 a.m	90 Days at 11:00 a.m
2	विकास क्षेत्र डुङ्गा में जल जीवन मिशन कार्यक्रम के अन्तर्गत बौन पेयजल योजना का पुनर्गठन कार्य	PSNMCG Dt. 24.11.2020					
3	विकास क्षेत्र डुङ्गा में जल जीवन मिशन कार्यक्रम के अन्तर्गत मातृली पेयजल योजना का पुनर्गठन कार्य						

अर्हता:- पाइप लाइन laying हेतु मुख्य महानगरिक उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, नेहरू कालोनी, देहरादून में "ए" श्रेणी के अन्तर्गत फजीबल टेकरिकर / फर्म हो निविदा में प्रतिभाग कर सकती है।  
ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित समस्त जानकारीयों व शर्तें उत्तराखण्ड की वेबसाइट [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in) पर ऑन लाइन देखी / प्राप्त की जा सकती है।  
**"जल संस्थान-जीवन संस्था"** **अधिशासी अभियन्ता**





**Bollywood**

'Social media educated the mother in me. There are so many things we might not be aware of...'

—Sameera Reddy

# HAVE YOUR BACK

MEENAKSHI MOHANTY suggests nine easy stretches to relieve your backache

We all experience back pain and now it has become one of the most common issues especially due to the increased work-from-home situation. Also, continuously sitting in front of our laptops can further make your back feel sore. While many of us continue to live with back pain, the consequences cannot be good. It not only disrupts our daily lives but also holds us back from doing the things we love. The good news is there are some simple stretches that you can incorporate in your daily routine to help ease your back pain—

**Child's pose/ prayer stretch**  
Rejuvenating both the body and mind. Its great for relieving tension in the lower back and lengthening the entire spine.

**How to do** – Start on all fours. Ensure your knees are hip width apart and toes together. Now with palms facing towards the floor, extend your hands in front of you while pushing your hips back toward your heels until you feel a mild stretch in the back. Hold this position for 30 seconds.



**Cobra stretch**  
This stretch is beneficial if you are looking to decrease the stiffness in your lower back.

**How to do** – Lie down flat on the floor on your belly. Place your palms flat on the ground directly under your shoulders and press your elbows against your ribs. Now inhale and slowly stretch your arms while lifting your chest from the floor. Ensure your lower back is relaxed. Hold for 10 seconds and release.



**Lower back rotational stretch**  
This increases flexibility in your lower back.

**How to do** – Begin by lying on the floor with your knees bent. Now keeping your shoulders firmly on the ground, take both your knees are roll it over to the right side. Hold for a few seconds and return to the starting position. Repeat on the other side.



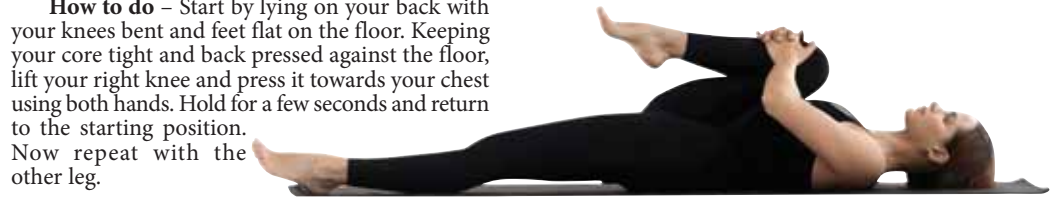
**Cat/ cow stretch**  
This pose is ideal for those dealing with back pain and helps to improve posture and balance.

**How to do** – Start on all fours with your hands in line with your shoulders and your knees beneath your hips. Now exhale and gently arch your back like a cat. Hold for 10 seconds and move back to normal position. Repeat 20 times and remember to move slowly in between movements.



**Knee-to-chest stretch**  
Ideal for lower back muscles and helps relieve pressure on the spinal nerves.

**How to do** – Start by lying on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Keeping your core tight and back pressed against the floor, lift your right knee and press it towards your chest using both hands. Hold for a few seconds and return to the starting position. Now repeat with the other leg.

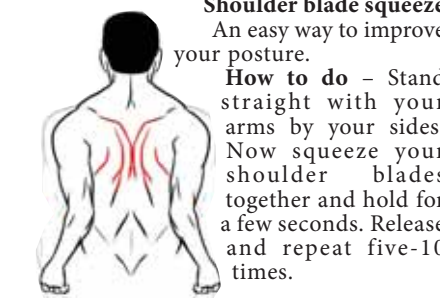


**Bridge**  
Benefits your hamstrings, lower back and abs. It is also great for people suffering from back, hip, or knee pain.

**How to do** – Start by lying on the floor with your knees bent. Now raise your hips till your knees to your shoulders are in line. Hold this position for five seconds and return to the starting position. Repeat three-four times.

**Pelvis stretch**  
A simple way to improve flexibility and release tight muscles.

**How to do** - Lie on your back with knees bent and hands by your sides. While tightening your abdominal and buttock muscles, push your pelvis upwards. Hold for a few seconds and relax.



**Shoulder blade squeeze**  
An easy way to improve your posture.

**How to do** – Stand straight with your arms by your sides. Now squeeze your shoulder blades together and hold for a few seconds. Release and repeat five-10 times.



**Side bend stretch**  
Helps to strengthen the intercostal muscles which supports the ribs.

**How to do** – Stand upright with your feet, hip-width apart and hands down your side. Now raise your right arm overhead and bend your upper body to the left. You should feel the stretch along the side. Hold for 10-15 seconds and return to the starting position. Repeat on the other side.

(The author is a fitness expert at Meenakshi, an eclectic Delhi-based fitness platform.)



Countries in South Asia, while having their own peculiarities, share common cultures and ways of life. The norms and values of Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism are deeply rooted in South Asian societies. Although the number of followers of these religious and cultural mainstays vary from country to country, their presence and influence in local arts, cultures and traditions, are distinctly visible in every country and society in the region. Nepal, too, has its unique geography, history and cultural heritage, and still is an integral part of the broader cultural history and tradition of the Indian sub-continent.

While being parts of broader South Asian culture, Nepal and India share a special bond and similarity in cultural tradition. They are so closely knit by social life and cultural tradition that nobody can imagine them apart. Both have made great contributions in enriching religious and cultural heritage in this region, and beyond.

Lord Buddha for instance, born in Nepal, has left his footprints not only in South Asia but all over the world. Another example is Sita, the daughter of Nepal, who was married to Ram, the crown prince of Ayodhya in India, has made a special place in the hearts of Hindus living anywhere in the world. The contributions made by Indian philosophers and

## Culture sees no borders

KAJAL NAINA discusses the social and cultural cross-border relationship between India and Nepal

saints need no further elaboration. It is these great personalities of this region that have helped evolve, develop and spread the cultural heritage that is proudly known today as South Asian culture.

The cultural links between Nepal and India have many facets. Religion is, perhaps, the most important factor, and plays a predominant role in shaping the cultural relations between these two countries. This is manifested in the large number of people from both countries visiting each other's countries for pilgrimage. Thousands of Nepalese nationals visit pilgrimage sites in India every year. The *char dham* yatra (visit of four dhams in India, viz. Badrinath/Kedarnath in Uttarakhand, Jagannath (Puri) in Orissa, Rameshwaram in Tamilnadu, and Dwarka in Gujarat) is a life-time aspiration of almost all Hindus. There are many other places in India which are considered sacred sites by Nepalese people. They include Haridwar, Rishikesh, Varanasi, Gaya, Vaishnodevi, and many more. Similarly, there are a number of religious sites in Nepal which are con-



sidered very sacred and important, and are attractions as 'must visit' religious destinations for Indian nationals. Such sites include Pashupatinath in Kathmandu, Lumbini (the birth-place of Buddha) in Rupandehi district, Ram-Janaki temple in Janakpur (the

birth place of Janak and Sita), and many more. As the people of both countries share common religious faiths and philosophies, and revere and worship the same gods and incarnations, their cultural ties are very strong and inseparable.

Except for the seamless exposure to the cultures, these countries also share a lot of traditions and ways of doing things. Following Indian traditions, Nepal is catching up quickly on the use of ornaments that are given religious and symbolic importance like *rudraksha*, *mangalsutra*, et al. *Mangalsutras* are getting a lot of attention and being used in marriages across Nepal. The trend was started by a Nepali actress with a special piece designed for her wedding day to give a meaningful, unique and relevant touch to modern day brides that has changed the game for this piece of jewellery amongst Nepalese women and abroad. This tradition is riding a big wave in Nepal and will give rise for many more to come.

Another component of Nepal-India cultural relations is cinemas and music. Indian movies are popular in Nepal; and so is Indian music. Similarly, Nepali cinemas and music are popular in India, especially in places with concentration of the people of Nepalese origin, mainly in Northern and North-eastern India.

Between Nepal and India,

there have been frequent exchanges of ideas, personalities and groups of people representing the areas of art, culture, music, literature and sports. These kinds of events are not limited to government entities alone, but are taking place even more at the grass-root level. Nepal's diverse cultural heritage of dance and music (both classical and folk), theatre, fine arts, and sports have been interacting with their counterparts in India, and have been contributing to foster friendly ties and generate a better understanding and appreciation of each other's traditions. Every facet of art and culture has become a way of life, and is expressed in carvings, paintings, architecture, sculptures and performing arts like music, cinema and dance. Every form of art in these countries is heavily influenced by the respective religious traditions and mythologies, and has helped shape religious norms and values in Nepal and India.

Having a seamless exposure to both the countries' traditions, cultures and ways of life; these two will have better mutual understanding. These waves, including religion, traditions, clothing and jewellery, will surely promote the existing ties and enhance the Indian touch reaching Nepal.

(The author is the founder and CEO of Kajal Naina Fine Jewellery, a Hong Kong-based jewellery store.)



### 'A SIMPLE YET MAGICAL STORY'

As his short film, *Shimmy*, releases today, actor **PRATIK GANDHI** expressed how deeply he connected with the story wherein he plays the father of a teenaged daughter.

"It is the story of an aloof father and a daughter with a secret and how they embark on a journey to some uncomfortable destinations. Disha Noyonika Rindani, the director, knows how to lend a magical touch to the simplest of moments," expressed Gandhi.

You can watch *Shimmy* on Amazon Mini TV.

### fairtalk

ZOYA HUSSAIN



'I think the toughest thing is to stay patient and motivated between projects, however, that is a choice you have to make as an actor. Thankfully, after my debut in *Mukkabaaz*, I have been working constantly. As a professional actor, it is important to keep on working, because which film will get what amount of visibility is not really in our hands.'

### dailytalk

JACQUELINE FERNANDEZ



'I have come across numerous instances on social media where someone is saying something mean about me. It's ok we all get it. I have read accounts of how terrible I sound, how terrible my accent is and the way I speak Hindi, and some criticism on my appearance. I try to take it positively, at times I think that some of the criticism is valid.'

### PAVING HER OWN PATH: BERRY

Oscar-winning actor **HALLE BERRY** has debunked the notion that she has had an easy life, suggesting people are quick to judge her on the basis of her good looks.

She shared, "This is another battle that I have had to fight my entire life. That because I look a certain way that I've been spared any hardship. I've experience abuse, loss and a lot of pain in my life."

"Despite winning the Oscar for *Monster's Ball*, I still had to fight to make my way in life," Berry further revealed.





# Nanda Devi Mahotsav- A celebration of faith & culture

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Afzal Fauji/Nainital

temple in Nainital is venerated by all devotees of the goddess. In this shrine the goddess is worshipped in the incarnation of Nav Durga.

The present temple was established in 1883. Before that it was located near the Boat House but was destroyed in the devastating landslide of 1880. After the new temple was built in 1883, it continued to expand to its present condition. Now, a large number of people from across India and abroad come here to pay their obeisance to the goddess. Currently, the 119th Nanda Devi Mahotsav is currently underway in Nainital wherein sister goddesses Nanda and Sunanda are worshipped with fervour.

Since ancient times, Nanda Devi has been venerated in Uttarakhand as a tutelary goddess. The Naina Devi

The facial representations of goddesses Nanda and Sunanda are made from Kadli (plantain stems), bamboo and organic colours for this festival. For making the faces of the goddesses, the plantain is used to craft the outer appearance of the



face. Bamboo is used to craft the eyebrows and also to nail the parts of the representation after which these are painted in attractive colours. After this, the faces are adorned with ornaments including a crown made of silver, a gold ornament for the forehead, earrings, nath (traditional nose ring) and other items. After that the idols are brought to the Naina Devi temple and ritually installed there. After being kept in the temple for the devotees to pay their obeisance, the representation of the goddesses are immersed in the Naina lake following a procession either attended or welcomed by most of the townsfolk.

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# Virat Kohli to quit as T20 captain

**PTI ■ DUBAI**

Virat Kohli on Thursday announced he will step down as India's T20 skipper after the T20 World Cup in UAE but will continue to lead the side in ODIs and Test cricket, a decision that paves the way for Rohit Sharma to captain in the shortest format.

"I've decided to step down as the T20 captain after this T20 World Cup in Dubai in October," the 32-year-old Kohli, who is here to compete in the IPL that resumes on Sunday, said in a statement posted on his Twitter page. "Understanding workload is a very important thing and considering my immense workload over the last 8-9 years playing all three formats and captaining regularly for last five to six years, I feel I need to give myself space to be fully ready to lead Indian team in Test and ODI cricket," Kohli explained.

For some time, there has been speculation surrounding Kohli's future as white-ball captain especially in the backdrop of Rohit's brilliant track record of winning five IPL titles for Mumbai Indians.

The 34-year-old Rohit is Kohli's deputy in the white-ball formats and is most likely to take up the leadership role when India clashes with New Zealand in a home series in November that will feature three T20 Internationals along with two Test matches.

BCCI Secretary Jay Shah, in a statement issued by the Board after Kohli's announcement, said the body has been in discussion with Kohli for a while now.

"We have a clear roadmap for Team India. Considering the workloads and ensuring that we have smooth transition, Mr Virat Kohli has decided to step down as T20 Captain after the upcoming World Cup," Shah said. "I have been in discussions with Virat and the leadership team for the last six months and the decision has

# India's ODI tour of NZ postponed to 2022

**PTI ■ WELLINGTON**

India will not be touring New Zealand later in the year due to a packed calendar and COVID-19 related restrictions. India would have had to quarantine for 14 days to play three ODIs as part of the World Cup Super League.

A New Zealand Cricket (NZC) spokesperson confirmed to Stuff that the India games will be played after the T20 World Cup in Australia next year. New Zealand anyway are scheduled to tour India in November for two Tests and three T20s.

New Zealand will be hosting Bangladesh, The Netherlands and South Africa in the summer besides the seven teams in

# Golden sweep for Indian girls in Tunis

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India's Swastika Ghosh defeated compatriot Yashaswini Ghoshphade 3-2 in what tuned out to be a gripping Under-19 girls final of the WTT (World Table Tennis) Contender event in Tunis, Tunisia.

However, a little while before, the silver medallist Yashaswini won gold in the Under-17 girls final, beating Egyptian Farida Badawy 11-6 14-12 11-7.

In the Under-19 final, Swastika defeated Yashaswini 6-11 11-6 6-11 11-6 11-8.

These were not the only successes in Tunis as the Indian paddlers collected all the gold on offer, besides some silver and bronze medals.

Suhana Saini accounted for Pritha Vartikar in the Under-15 girls final for her second international gold. She had earlier won the title during her Slovenia sojourn.

M Hansini was another Indian who excelled, winning

been thought through. "Virat will continue to contribute as a player and as a senior member of the side in shaping the future course of Indian cricket," he added.

Kohli took over India's limited-overs captaincy in 2017, succeeding Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

"I have given my everything to the Team during my time as T20 captain and I will continue to do so for the T20 captain and will continue to do so for the T20 team as a batsman moving forward," he further added.

The decision, Kohli said, was taken after consulting head coach Ravi Shastri, his heir apparent Rohit, BCCI President Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah. The T20 World Cup starts on October 17 and Kohli will be under intense pressure to deliver the trophy. "Of course, arriving at this decision took a lot of time. After a lot of contemplation and discussions with my close people, Kohli's future as white-ball captain especially in the backdrop of Rohit's brilliant track record of winning five IPL titles for Mumbai Indians.

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