

OPINION 8
THE NATIONAL
THEATRE OF ABSURD**WORLD 11**
TAIWAN DRILLS MILITARY AS
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LUCKNOW, THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3

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Govt OK's big telecom reforms

Allows 4-year moratorium on dues, 100% FDI, PLI scheme for auto, drones

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved major reforms in telecom sector by handing out a four-year moratorium on payment of dues. The Cabinet also approved 100 per cent FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in telecom via the automatic route. The Government also came out with a ₹26,058 crore production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for auto, auto-components and drone industries.

The four-year moratorium in the AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue) dues is a major relief to telecom players Vodafone-Idea, facing acute financial problems, and Airtel. They have a combined dues of more than ₹80,000 crore.

The Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi also approved a slew of measures in spectrum usage charges, sharing of spectrum and 100 per cent FDI in telecom sector.

Briefing reporters on the decisions taken by the Cabinet, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said nine structural reforms for the telecom sector were approved. The definition

of AGR, which had been a major reason for the stress in the sector, has been rationalised by excluding non-telecom revenue of telecom companies.

AGR refers to revenues that are considered for payment of statutory dues.

The Minister said spectrum user charges will also be rationalised. In other measures expected to ease the cash flow issues being faced by most big telcos.

The FDI easing rule will apply to all areas of telecom, including the manufacture of infrastructure. Earlier, 100 per cent FDI was allowed in telecom equipment manufacturing and provision of IT-enabled services, but only 49 per cent came under the automatic route.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said that ₹26,058 crore production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for auto, auto-components and drone industries will enhance India's manufacturing capabilities. The PLI scheme will incentivize the emergence of advanced automotive technologies' global supply chain in India, added Thakur.



Union Ministers Anurag Thakur and Ashwini Vaishnav during a Press briefing on the Cabinet decisions at National Media Centre in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

MAJOR REFORM PUSH

► The four-year moratorium in the AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue) dues is a major relief to telecom players Vodafone-Idea, facing acute financial problems, and Airtel. They have a combined dues of more than ₹80,000 crore

► In another significant decision, the Cabinet cleared 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in the telecom sector through automatic route, which will encourage greater participation of players. However, all safeguards will apply, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said

► The Cabinet also rationalised definition of AGR by excluding non-telecom revenue of



telecom players from payment of statutory levies

► Bank guarantees have also been rationalised, while interest rates too have been modified with removal of penalties

► For future spectrum auctions, no bank guarantees will be needed. Also the spectrum tenure has been increased from 20 years to 30 years. Surrendering of spectrum will only be allowed after 10 years, the Cabinet decided

India assails 'failed State' Pak, OIC for Kashmir rant at UNHRC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday castigated Pakistan and the OIC for raising the Kashmir issue at the UN Human Rights Council, saying it does not need lessons from a "failed state" and the "epicentre of terrorism" and chided the 57-nation bloc for "helplessly" allowing itself to be held "hostage" by Islamabad.

At the 48th session of the UNHRC, India mounted a blistering attack on Pakistan, saying it has been globally recognised as a country openly supporting, training, financing and arming terrorists including UN proscribed terrorists as a "matter of state policy".

India's response was delivered by Pawan Badhe, the first secretary in its permanent mission in Geneva.

Exercising the right to reply to comments made by Pakistan and the Organisation



of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Kashmir, Badhe said India does not need lessons from a "failed state" like Pakistan which is the "epicentre of terrorism and worst abuser of human rights".

He also said the OIC has helplessly allowed itself to be held hostage by Pakistan, which holds the chairmanship of their Geneva Chapter, to "subserve its own agenda".

Badhe said it has become a habit for Pakistan to misuse the platforms provided by the council to propagate its "false and malicious propaganda" against India.

"The council is aware of

Pakistan's attempts to divert the council's attention from serious human rights violations being perpetrated by its government, including in the territories occupied by it," he said.

"India, as not only the world's largest democracy but a robustly functional and vibrant one, does not need lessons from a failed state like Pakistan which is the epicentre of terrorism and worst abuser of human rights," he said.

The Indian diplomat said Pakistan has failed to protect the rights of its minorities, including Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and Ahmadis.

"Thousands of women and girls from minority communities have been subjected to abductions, forced marriages and conversions in Pakistan and its occupied territories," Badhe said in his statement.

Continued on Page 11

Stage set for GST meet in Lucknow

Food delivery aggregators may be taxed

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the first physical meeting since COVID-19 pandemic broke out in March 2020, the 45th meeting of the Goods and Service Tax Council in Lucknow will be presided over by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and some crucial issues are likely to figure prominently in it.

The 44th GST Council meeting took place via video conferencing on June 12 wherein some key issues were addressed and GST rates on several items crucial in the fight against the pandemic were slashed till September 30.

The GST Council meeting in Lucknow, starting on Friday, is likely to take up the issue of tax evasion by restaurants and online food delivery operators and these firms may have to pay GST on services supplied by them. As per

the estimates of the fitment committee of the GST Council, Rs 2,000 crore in 2019-20 and 2020-21 were evaded by these firms and the panel recommended food aggregators be classified as e-commerce operators and pay GST on behalf of the restaurants concerned.

The fitment panel suggested that the changes come into effect from January 1, 2022, and food delivery aggregators be allowed to make suitable changes in their software.

The other key issues that the GST Council will take up would be related to compliance and may be taken up notifying a common comprehensive e-portal gst.gov.in for registration, paying tax, and filing returns.

Apart from this, the GST Council is expected to consider Sikkim's proposal of 1 per cent cess on intra-state supplies

Continued on Page 11

PM to visit Lucknow on Sept 28

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Lucknow on September 28 and hand over the keys of the completed houses to 75,000 beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban during the last day of the three-day flagship projects programme. The programme is proposed to be held at Indira

Gandhi Pratishthan from September 26 to 28.

Earlier, Modi was scheduled to come to the state capital to inaugurate the three-day programme of the Union Urban Development Ministry on September 26 but due to his visit to the US, he is now likely to come to Lucknow to attend the function on September 28.

UP Urban Development Minister Ashutosh Tandon had recently met Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in New Delhi to finalise the prime minister's programme.

In the three-day event, an exhibition of positive reforms, changes and achievements in urban areas of all the states will be displayed.

India records 11.8% rise in cybercrimes in 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India recorded 50,035 cases of cybercrime in 2020, marking 11.8 per cent surge in such offences in contrast to 2019.

As many as 578 incidents of "fake news on social media" were also reported, according to official data released on Wednesday by the National Crime Records Bureau.

Among the States, the maximum 11,097 cybercrime cases were reported in Uttar Pradesh followed by Karnataka (10,741), Maharashtra (5,496), Telangana (5,024) and Assam (3,530), it showed.

However, the crime rate was highest in Karnataka with 16.2 per cent followed by Telangana (13.4 per cent), Assam (10.1 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (4.8 per cent) and Maharashtra (4.4 per cent), the data revealed.

The rate of cybercrime



(incidents per lakh population) also increased marginally from 3.3 per cent in 2019 to 3.7 per cent in 2020 in the country, according to the NCRB data.

In 2019, 44,735 cases of cybercrime were recorded, while the figures stood at 27,248 in 2018.

In 2020, 4,047 cases of online banking fraud, 1,093 OTP frauds and 1,194 credit/debit card fraud were reported. A many as 2,160 cases related to ATM were reported in 2020.

There were also 578 cases of fake news on social media,

972 related to cyberstalking or bullying of women and children, 149 incidents of fake profile and 98 of data theft in 2020, the data suggested.

In terms of motive, the maximum 60.2 per cent cyber crimes lodged in 2020 were done for fraud (30,142 out of 50,035 cases), the NCRB, which functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs, stated.

It was followed by sexual exploitation with 6.6 per cent (3,293 cases) and extortion 4.9 per cent (2,440 cases), the data showed.

The national Capital Delhi recorded 168 such cases during

the year with a crime rate of 0.8 per cent.

The NCRB, which is responsible for collecting and analysing crime data at the pan-India level as defined by the Indian Penal Code and special and local laws in the country.

80 murders a day in India in 2020: NCRB

New Delhi: India reported an average 80 murders daily in 2020, totalling 29,193 fatalities over the year, with Uttar Pradesh topping the chart among States, according to the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data issued on Wednesday.

I-T Dept raids six premises of Sonu Sood

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Income Tax (IT) department on Wednesday conducted searches at six locations linked to Bollywood actor and philanthropist Sonu Sood in connection with allegations of tax evasion in a deal struck between the actor's company and a Lucknow-based real estate firm. The simultaneous searches were conducted in Mumbai and Lucknow.

Coming on the heels of Sood's meeting with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who declared him the brand ambassador for his Government's mentorship programme for school students in the Capital, the searches by the IT officials raised eyebrows in the political circles.

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 speculation about his joining the AAP and contesting the Punjab Assembly polls.

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UP government fixes MSP for paddy

Lucknow (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh government has fixed the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy at Rs 1,960 per quintal besides approving a proposal to set up 16 medical colleges under the public-private participation (PPP) model in districts which do not have medical colleges. The government has also decided to set up an office of Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) in Mau. The decision regarding this was taken in the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath here.

A government spokesman said that the support price of the common variety of paddy had been fixed at Rs 1,940 per quintal and the support price of Grade-A at Rs 1,960 per quintal.

"In Kharif marketing year 2021-22, the period of purchase of paddy in Lucknow division's Hardoi, Lakhimpur and Bareilly, Moradabad, Meerut, Saharanpur, Agra, Aligarh, Jhansi divisions would be October 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022, and Lucknow division's district Lucknow, Sitapur, Rae Bareilly, Unnao, and Chitrakoot, Kanpur, Ayodhya, Devipatan, Basti, Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Varanasi, Mirzapur and Prayagraj divisions from November 1, 2021, to February 28, 2022," he said.



NOTICE

I have changed my son's name from Heramb Yadav to Arnab Yadav. In future he will be known by same name. Ajay Yadav, 27, Murari Nagar, Indira Nagar, Lucknow.

NOTICE

Notify that I have changed the name of my daughter Najida Farozan to Najida Farozan Khan for all purposes & records. Tariq Anwar Khan F 11/77 Rajajipuram, Lucknow.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohd.Naseem to Mohd. Naseem Farooqui for all future purpose, Mohd. Naseem Farooqui s/o Mohd. Mobeem Farooqui R/O Ampur Peeng Kunda, Pratapgarh UP.

सूचना

मैं बेबी मिश्रा पत्नी श्री रवि शंकर मिश्रा निवासिनी-22 गौराबाग सेन्ट मेरी हॉस्पिटल के सामने कुर्सी रोड, लखनऊ, मैंने अपना नाम बेबी मिश्रा से बदलकर नीलम मिश्रा रख लिया है, अतः भविष्य में मुझे अब इसी नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाय।

NOTICE

I have lost my original allotment letter (D/16/MIG-1/AA/2002) dated 05-01-2002 of Plot No-17, Block No. MIG-1, Mahabalipuram Kalyanpur some where. Avanih Kumar Pandey S/o - Deo Krishan Pandey R/o Keshav Puram Kalyanpur, Kanpur.

NOTICE

Be it Known to all that earlier my name was ISHTEKAR ALI MUNNER ALI which is Changed to ISTKAR ALI. In future I shall be known as ISTKAR ALI. ISTKAR ALI S/O MUNNE ALI Gauhar ali Dandi Bazar Mahewa Patti, Purab Upahar, Agriculture Institute Allahabad.

NOTICE

I No.15590171A Rank Hav name Ranjeet Yadav presently residing at VPO Petraha Tehsil Motipur (Mihinpurwa) District Bahraich (U.P.) have changed my brother his old name Shany Yadav date of birth 14/12/2003 to his new-name Shani Yadav date of birth 08/12/2003 vide affidavit dated 27/08/2021.

Yogi to lay foundation stone of Britannia plant

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will lay the foundation stone of Britannia Industries plant in Barabanki on Thursday. The plant will give a boost to the food processing industry in the state.

With an investment of Rs 340 crore, confectionary major Britannia will be setting up a Greenfield unit under mega plus category in Barabanki. Uttar Pradesh is the biggest market for the products of Britannia.

The company has purchased 30.34 acre land in Barabanki and all pre-con-

struction approvals have been obtained. The estimated capacity of the unit is 1,25,000 tons per year.

The plant will manufacture a variety of confectionary products, including bread, biscuits etc.

The project will generate direct and indirect employment opportunities for over 1,000 people, and enrich the local supply chain of sugar and flour, which are available in abundance in the state. Products manufactured from the Greenfield unit will be serviced largely in the state of UP. The project will favourably impact the farmers in the state

and will create a better socio economic infrastructure in the state

Britannia Industries, being one of India's oldest existing companies, is an independent listed company and is the number one biscuit company in the country.

The company has about 90 manufacturing units across the country and its products reach about 18 crore households.

The state government has provided a conducive environment to industrialists and UP has witnessed mammoth investments in the last four-and-a-half years.

Logistics, he said.

In another decision, the cabinet approved a proposal for financial and non-financial assistance to private sector units for setting up medical colleges on a public-private partnership (PPP) model in 16 districts of the state which do not have medical colleges.

It is to be noted that there is no medical college under government or private sector in Baghat, Ballia, Bhadohi, Chitrakoot, Hamirpur, Hathras, Kasganj, Maharajganj, Mahoba, Mainpuri, Mau, Rampur, Sambhal, Sant Kabir Nagar, Shamli, and Shravasti districts.

"It has been decided to open medical colleges in these districts on PPP basis," the spokesman said.

The cabinet also approved a proposal to set up an ATS office in Mau. Land measuring 3,013 square metres has been allotted to set up the office for the ATS and barracks for the ATS commandos.

He said the paddy price

of paddy procurement from farmers would be done on the basis of computerised verified khatauni, photo identity proof, and Aadhaar card.

Paddy would be procured at the purchasing centres by

biometric authentication of farmers through electronic point of purchase machines and necessary guidelines in this regard would be issued separately by the Commissioner, Food and

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Milestone: UP crosses 9 cr Covid vaccination mark

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Setting another record, UP's Covid vaccination coverage breached the nine-crore mark on Wednesday. The state has administered a total of 9.01 crore anti-COVID-19 vaccine doses so far since the launch of the nationwide vaccination drive in January.

"Uttar Pradesh is racing past other Indian states in attempting to mitigate the anticipated third wave of COVID-19 through vaccination," a government spokesman said here on Wednesday.

UP administered over 3,61,787 doses of vaccine by 7 pm on September 15 taking the total tally to 9,01,51,915. The focused Covid vaccination drive in the state has ensured that more than 1,53,61,007 people are fully vaccinated in the state while more than 7,47,90,908 people have taken the first dose .

Uttar Pradesh took almost 100 days to touch the figure of one crore vaccinations. It then took 45 days to cross the two-crore mark and 59 more days to reach five crore. The state then took 14 days to reach six crore vaccination mark and



then 11 more days to cross seven crore vaccinations on August 28. It took just nine more days to go past the eight-crore mark on September 7.The state crossed the landmark of administering nine crore Covid vaccine doses on September 15.

Meanwhile, UP reported 19 fresh coronavirus positive cases on Wednesday as 34 districts became free of the deadly virus with no fresh or active case and only nine out of the 75 districts witnessing fresh cases in the last 24 hours.

No fresh and active case in Aligarh, Amroha, Ayodhya, Azamgarh, Ballia, Balrampur, Banda, Basti, Bahraich, Bhadohi, Bijnor, Bulandshahr, Chandauli, Chitrakoot, Etah, Farrukhabad, Fatehpur, Gonda, Hamirpur, Hardoi, Hathras, Kanpur Dehat, Kasganj,

Mahoba, Moradabad, Pilibhit, Pratapgarh, Rampur, Saharanpur, Shamli, Shravasti, Siddharth Nagar, Sultanpur and Sonbhadra indicates complete elimination of the fatal virus from nearly 45 per cent of the state.

"Despite fresh cases being the state with the highest population density in the country, the Yogi-led state has also been registering a steady decline in the number of active Covid cases in comparison to several other sparsely populated states such as Delhi, Maharashtra, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. The active caseload in Uttar Pradesh stands at 182," a government spokesman said here on Wednesday.

Becoming self-reliant in terms of producing the life-saving fluid, as many as 409 of the 555 oxygen plants have been established and are functional while work on the rest is going on in Uttar Pradesh. Twenty-five oxygen plants were already functional in the state before the government took the step of setting up more at a rapid pace to ensure the availability of sufficient medical oxygen in view of any possible future requirement.

Two intruders held at Lok Bhawan

Lucknow (PNS): The security staff of Lok Bhawan nabbed two intruders when they were entering the building while impersonating the representatives of Union minister Kaushal Kishore. Those arrested were identified as Pankaj Gupta and Mazhar Amir Farooqui, both of Para police station area. The accused entered the Lok Bhawan in a car and claimed to be representatives of the minister. They also showed a letter to the security staff but it was found to be fake. Inspector Anil Singh said the accused were challaned under Section 419/186 of IPC (cheating by impersonation and for voluntarily obstructing public servant from discharging duty).

As per reports, two youths entered the Lok Bhawan in the morning. The security staff spotted them on growing suspicious and interrogated them. The youths tried to impress upon the cops by dropping the name of the minister and also showed his letter head.

The security staff called the police and a team reached the scene. The police interrogated the accused who were later taken into custody for the offence. The security officer of the Lok Bhawan lodged a case in this connection.

However, the incident exposed the loopholes in the security arrangements at the Lok Bhawan. Sources said the youths entered the Lok Bhawan but they were not questioned at the gate. However, they were later spotted and quizzed. "The accused told the police during interrogation that they were not stopped at the gate. It shows that they were frequent visitors to the Lok Bhawan," one source said.

Meanwhile, taking a strong note of a viral audio in which a police outpost incharge in Banthra was heard settling an issue related to a group clash by asking a group to give money to the other party, Commissioner of Police DK Thakur removed the S-I and asked the ADCP to take up the probe. S-I Rajesh Mishra, who was holding the charge of Harauni police outpost, was heard talking to a youth, identified as Chamka. The S-I asked him to get the issue resolved if Rs 15,000 was paid to the opposite party. The issue came to the notice of the CP and he asked his subordinates to initiate action. Subsequently, the S-I was removed from his post. A spokesman said the probe of the case was given to the ADCP (Central).

Team of incident commanders to check spread of dengue

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash has constituted a team of 24 incident commanders to contain the spread of dengue in Lucknow where 23 fresh cases were reported on Monday.

The DM said the incident commanders would work in the offices of their respective areas, commercial shops and residential quarters and take action against the property owners if larvae were found.

The DM said SOPs have been formed for detection and treatment of dengue and the

same would be circulated to all the health centre incharges.

He said all the soft copies of the SOPs would be collected from the district surveillance officer by the incident commanders and given to all the clinics, nursing homes, hospitals and medical practitioners in their respective areas, and they must ensure that the treatment is carried out as per the SOPs.

"Intense inspection will be carried out by the teams that will submit the report of the work done on September 18. They will be held responsible for any kind of laxity," the DM

said. Aedes mosquitoes, responsible for dengue, breed in clean water and bite in the day time. The patients suffer from high fever, abdominal pain and vomiting. Patients with these symptoms need to be tested for dengue immediately.

The DM said if any patient tests positive, the treatment should be started immediately and if the platelet count goes down, platelet should be transfused and in case of internal bleeding, arrangements should be made for blood transfusion. The DM said no laxity in treatment would be tolerated.

Four arrested for duping job-seekers

Lucknow (PNS): With the arrest of four accused, including two women, on Wednesday, the Krishna Nagar police claimed to have busted a gang that had duped several people of huge amount of money, while impersonating CBI officers.

Those arrested were identified as Rahul Singh aka Aryan of Krishna Nagar, Mukesh Tiwari of Aliganj, Kavita Nayal Joshi of

Gomtinagar and Priya Verma of Aliganj.

The police recovered two fake ID cards of CBI, a pistol, eight mobile phones, documents, a US dollar and Rs 2,610 in cash. The team was led by inspector Alok Rai. The arrests were made following the investigation of a case in which a job-seeker was duped in recent past. The police said the accused used to contact people through social media

platforms while impersonating CBI officers. They would ask people not to share the chat with any other person. Once they trapped a gullible person, they would take money from them for providing them jobs.

The police said the accused knew about the heads of different departments and the recruitment process, using which they would win the trust of their targets.

Pain mgmt key while dealing with child cancer patients at RMLIMS

Lucknow (PNS): Pain management has become the focus while dealing with child cancer patients at Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences and there are various therapies being practised for the same.

Paediatric surgeon Dr Shrikesh Singh that in the old school of thought, pain management was not given so much attention but now they dealt with it quickly. He said that they use infusion therapy which was giving paracetamol in high doses and local anaesthesia. "This was the main focus in the west and now it has become a part of the treatment in north India. Pain is the only memory a child has and hence it is important to treat it," he said.

Regarding the emotional handling of the child cancer patient, he said parents' counselling is very important. He said RMLIMS is the only institute with all the facilities of cancer treatment. "We have a linear accelerator, surgical oncology and provisions for chemotherapy. We can treat all the patients, whether medical, surgical or those requiring radiotherapy. So as far as treatment is concerned, we can treat a complete spectrum of cancers," he said.

He added that at RMLIMS, they are operating all kinds of cancers such as kidney cancer & blood cancer, and there is a multimodality of treatment like in some of the cases surgery is followed by chemotherapy while in others, chemotherapy is good enough. He further said that if the child cancer patients arrive at an early stage, the success rate is almost 100 per cent. "If there is a lump in the abdomen and there is a tumour in any part of the body, it can be treated in time. The non-malignant tumour, if not treated properly within a certain time, can turn malignant. The message we give to the society is that there are symptoms which are not normal such as constant fever, rapid weight loss, rapid weight gain, vomiting and blood in the stool. If these symptoms appear, a paediatrician should be immediately contacted so that proper investigations can

ABMU to conduct entrance tests for nursing students

Lucknow (PNS): Atal Bihari Medical University (ABMU) will conduct the entrance tests for nursing students for the first time in the state. Giving this information, Vice-Chancellor AK Singh said the entrance examination is being conducted to regulate the standard of students going to nursing colleges. "We are focusing on nursing and have taken a decision to have a test for all the nursing colleges. The forms are available and 9,000 aspirants have already registered for both government and private nursing colleges. We expect around 15,000 candidates to apply and the minimum academic qualification for them is Intermediate with Physics, Chemistry and Biology," he said. He added that the university was given the charge because it is the academic controlling authority for all the colleges. The examinations will be held in the first and second week of November this year.

"There are entrance examinations for all courses and hence the aim is to have more meritorious students joining and not extraneous factors," he said.

Meanwhile, he said the university has given its consent to over 600 courses, giving it to new colleges and starting the process of affiliation to the university. Regarding the infrastructure development of the university, he said the building is coming up in Chak Ganjaria and the construction of basement has started. "It is an affiliating university and in the second phase, the medical colleges will start the classes. The purpose of affiliating medical colleges, dental colleges and paramedical colleges is to streamline education and have a certain minimum standard," he added.

Cash, valuables stolen from house

Lucknow (PNS): Cash and ornaments worth several lakh were stolen from a house in Thakurganj police station area. As per reports, Nafis Ahmad of Baraura Husainbadi, along with his family, had gone to Hardoi for some work after locking his house on September 11. Nafis said he returned home on September 12 and found the house burgled. "The locks were lying broken and articles were strewn across the floor. The thieves decamped with all the valuable items and cash," he said.





Government of Uttar Pradesh extends a hearty Welcome to Hon'ble Chairperson Esteemed Members and Delegates

of

45th MEETING

of

THE GST COUNCIL

Date : 16th-17th September, 2021

Venue : Hotel Taj Mahal, Vipin Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow

Organised by : Department of Commercial Tax, Uttar Pradesh



CM launches participatory rural development model

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aiming to strengthen participatory rural economy and infrastructure, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced the launch of a unique 'Uttar Pradesh Matrabhumi Yojana' which will make the common man a direct participant in the development works of the state.

"Under this scheme, every person will get a chance to directly participate in various works of infrastructure development in villages. The state government will bear 50 per cent of the total cost of the project while the remaining amount will be contributed by interested people. In return, the project can be named after relatives of the collaborators as per their wish," the chief minister said in Lucknow on Wednesday while inaugurating and laying the foundation stones of various roads under the PM Gram Sadak Yojana and district panchayats using hot mix and full depth reclamation (FDR) method. Uttar Pradesh is the first state to use FDR technology in the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). The chief minister also asked the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj departments to submit an action plan for the formal launch of the innovative scheme.

Yogi said that continuous work was being done by the Central and state governments for the overall development of villages. He said the Uttar Pradesh Matrabhumi Yojana could be a good attempt for the establishments of health centres, Anganwadi, library, stadium, gymnasium, open gym, cattle breed improvement centre, fire service station, among



PROJECTS INAUGURATED

- Construction work of 6,208.45 km long 886 rural roads at a cost of Rs 4,130.27 crore under PM Gram Sadak Yojana started.
- Inauguration of renovation work of 1,930 km-long 692 rural roads at a cost of Rs 155 crore.
- Inauguration of 537.82 km-long 509 rural roads at a cost of Rs 195.07 crore to be constructed using hot mix method under district panchayats.
- Foundation stone laid for 14 rural roads of 48.62 km-long at a cost of Rs 33.75 crore to be constructed using hot mix method under district panchayats.

others, in villages.

While interacting with the chairpersons and members of gram panchayats, kshetra panchayats and district panchayats, the chief minister said that panchayats needed to be self-reliant and with sufficient available resources, they should make efforts for self-reliance by adopting innovations. He further said that for the betterment of panchayats, a healthy competition should be encouraged and their innovations

should be rewarded.

Stressing on rural development, Yogi said that roads were not just a means of transport but also a powerful means of strengthening the rural economy.

"Countries with developed infrastructure are also economically prosperous. In a state like Uttar Pradesh, about 80 per cent of the population lives in rural areas. To strengthen the rural economy, good roads and better connectivity

are essential which is being done continuously through PMGSY. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, which was started by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2000, is today becoming a medium for progress of villages," he added.

he chief minister expressed happiness for the construction of roads in Azamgarh and Jaunpur district panchayats through the FDR method as a pilot project.

Citing recent actions against corrupt officers and employees, Yogi warned against delay in payment of dues to contractors without any concrete reason. He also directed zila panchayat chairpersons to make physical verification of construction works.

Rural Development Minister Rajendra Pratap Singh, Panchayati Raj Minister Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) Upendra Tiwari and Minister of State Anand Swaroop Shukla also expressed their views in the programme.

Keshav kicks-off drive to make roads pothole free

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Wednesday hailed the services of the engineers of the Public Works Department (PWD) and claimed that their sincere efforts had taken the department to new heights.

Speaking soon after inaugurating Visvesvaraya Gate outside Visvesvaraya Auditorium on occasion of Engineers' Day celebrated all over the country on the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna great engineer Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya, the deputy chief minister said that the development work taken up by the PWD even during the lockdown during COVID-19 pandemic had boosted the economy and attracted many investors to come and invest in UP.

Maurya also threw light on the life of Bharat Ratna Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya in his address and announced that a huge statue of the great engineer would be installed on his birth anniversary.

He said that the days when the political leadership of our country was agitating for independence, in those days engineer Visvesvaraya was struggling alone for the growth of the country economically and industrially. "He was such a person who made a valuable contribution in nation building through engineering," he said.

In his address, the deputy chief minister also called for following the ideals of Visvesvaraya. He said that to remember the contribution of Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya, Engineer's Day celebrations were held on his birth anniversary every year.

Announcing the start of the drive to make all the roads 'pothole free' by October 15, Maurya asked the engineers to closely monitor the work as well as making surprise inspections to ensure that the work was completed in time maintaining a good standard of work.

He also highlighted the work done so far by the PWD to boost the infrastructure of the state.

BKU apparently rattled by Owaisi's entry in UP's political scene

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The battle for poll-bound Uttar Pradesh is getting murkier by the day. After the 'abbajaan' jibe by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath now Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait has called the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi 'chacha jaan' and a team of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The AIMIM criticised Tikait and sought to give the issue a communal twist to the issue saying "those calling their parents abbajaan never send their elders to old age homes".

"BJP's chacha jaan, Asaduddin Owaisi has entered Uttar Pradesh. If Owaisi will abuse them (BJP), they will not file any case against him. They are a team. The BJP will take his help, farmers need to understand their moves," Tikait warned.

The BKU is apparently rattled by the entry of Owaisi in UP's political scene as it could hamper its anti BJP campaign in the state.

"Tikait worked for the BJP in the last couple of elections to Lok Sabha and state assembly and it is unfortunate that he is targeting AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi," said AIMIM state president Shaukat Ali.

He added, "Abbajaan is a respected word not an affront, those calling their parents

'abba' and 'ammee' never send the elders to old age home."

CM Yogi Adityanath landed the 'abbajaan' punch against the rival Samajwadi Party on September 12. Soon after Owaisi conducted three-day tour of state earlier this month, he has been facing accusations from anti-BJP groupings that he is the B-team of the BJP who is trying to "divide Muslims" in order to dent "the traditional vote base" of Samajwadi Party and dismantle the Yadav-Muslim combination.

A Samajwadi Party leader said, "The Muslims of UP should learn from the experience of West Bengal where the Muslim voters were not influenced by Owaisi."

He claimed that the AIMIM has announced to contest assembly election in UP only to benefit the BJP by dividing the Muslim votes.

This is not the first time the four-time Lok Sabha MP from Hyderabad has faced such allegations. He was "single-handedly" held responsible for the defeat of the grand alliance in Bihar in 2020. The grand alliance comprising Lalu Yadav led RJD, Congress and Left parties. Right at the beginning of his political campaign in UP, Owaisi said that he had come to UP "to defeat the BJP" and has been attacking SP for "cheating Muslims in the name of secularism". AIMIM is preparing to contest 100 of the 403 assembly seats in UP.

AAP releases first list of 100 probable candidates

Lucknow (PNS): The Aam Aadmi Party released its first list of probable candidates for the UP assembly elections in 2022, upping the pressure on its rival political parties on Wednesday. The party issued a list of 100 AAP leaders who are likely to contest the elections. This is the first list of the candidates and it has 35 per cent candidates from OBC category. The list was released by AAP Rajya Sabha member and UP incharge Sanjay Singh.

In a press conference, Singh announced the names of the AAP probable candidates and said they would be the assembly constituency incharges also. He said the selected candidates would conduct the campaigns of the AAP and they would be given tickets depending on their performance in their constituency. He said the party had decided to give a big representation to OBCs by selecting 35 candidates from this category. There are 20 Brahmins, 16 Dalits and five Muslim candidates in the list. The candidates include doctors, engineers, advocates, graduates and post-graduates, farmers and youths.

In Lucknow, Nadeem Asraf Jaisi is the probable candidate from Lucknow Central, Amit Srivastava from Lucknow North, Rajeev Baxi from Lucknow West, Durgesh Singh from Lucknow Cantonment, Rohit Srivastava from Sarojini Nagar, Baliram Verma from Bakshi Ka Talab and Sooraj Kumar from Mohanlalganj.

Mayawati hits out at UP govt over poor condition of roads

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati charged on Wednesday that the condition of roads in Uttar Pradesh was as bad as the state's law and order and health systems and was proof of the Yogi Adityanath government's failure.

The former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh noted that the roads were directly connected to development and said that despite tall claims of the Bharatiya Janata Party government, the condition of roads was very bad.

"Like the law and order and

health system in Uttar Pradesh, the bad condition of roads has led to suffering of the public. Newspapers are filled with news of road accidents and painful deaths due to water-filled potholes. It is difficult to decipher if there are potholes on roads or roads on potholes. This is most unfortunate and a living proof of the failure of the government," the BSP chief tweeted on Wednesday.

"Roads are specially related to the basic needs of the people and development and whatever slogans and claims the government might make, the condition of the roads in Uttar Pradesh has become so

bad that people are unable to understand if there is a pothole on the road or a road in the pothole. The UP government needs to pay attention," Mayawati added.

Interestingly, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya announced a new 'gadha-mukt sadak' (pothole free road) campaign from Wednesday.

Pothole-free roads was one of the key promises of the BJP government which has been taken up by various government agencies but it has not yielded the desired result in the last four-and-a-half years of BJP rule in the state.

Cong starts second phase training of Parakrama Mahaabhiyan

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amidst controversy over direction to all ticket seekers to deposit Rs 11,000 along with application, Uttar Pradesh Congress on Wednesday started the second phase of its 'Training to Parakrama Mahaabhiyan'.

In this phase, 30,000 Congress workers and leaders would be trained at around 100 training camps from September 15 to 30. These training would be imparted by a special training task force set up at the headquarters level in July last, disclosed Congress spokesman Amarnath Agarwal here on Wednesday.

In the first phase, 25,000 Congress workers were trained in districts in July-August and

the training continued for 11 days by seven master trainers. These trainer teams trained district and city committee members, block, ward and nyaya panchayat chiefs and other members. UP Congress has fixed a target to train over two lakh party workers and leaders through 700 training camps in four phases. The training programme involves 5-point agenda of booth management, intensive use of social media, party ideology, truth of Bharatiya Janata Party-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and present scenario of UP which includes how BJP, Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party governments spoiled the state.

Meanwhile, Congress asked the ticket aspirants to submit Rs 11,000 with application. Those

wanting to contest UP assembly elections have to deposit a fee of Rs 11,000 along with their application, according to a memo from Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee president Ajay Kumar Lallu. The directive invited the ire of many ticket seekers though sources confirmed that such a move was also made when Shree Prakash Jaiswal and Balram Yadav were UPCC president. The decision was taken in the meeting of the election committee of the party under the leadership of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. The fees will have to be deposited in the account of UP Congress president.

"Sanjay Sharma and Vijay Bahadur have been authorised to collect the applications for the upcoming assembly elections.

The applicants can submit their application to the aforementioned people till September 25 along with Rs 11,000 through RTGS, demand draft or pay order. The bank details for the purpose of submitting the amount have also been attached to this letter. This arrangement starts with immediate effect," the party memo said.

Congress also made guidelines for scrutiny of applications for selecting deserving candidates. The applications will be cross-checked by nyaya panchayat and gram sabha chiefs who have been appointed for this process. Thus, Congress will not directly select the candidates based on the applications. The nyaya panchayat and gram sabha chiefs have been authorised to collect information

about the candidates from their respective constituencies. A candidate's local popularity and clean image will be prioritised in ticket distribution rather than his or her political experience.

Naseemuddin Siddiqui, chairman of Congress election committee, said a maximum of 10 and a minimum of three applications were received from each constituency of Uttar Pradesh. Siddiqui said the applications would be checked and discussed by nyaya panchayat and gram sabha chiefs before being tabled before Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Siddiqui said the party had appointed 50,000 nyaya panchayat and gram sabha chiefs to provide information on the ticket aspirants.

कार्यालय—महाप्रबन्धक, चित्रकूटधाम मण्डल जल संस्थान,
(भूरागढ़), बांदा।

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

पत्रांक 728 /विज्ञापन/ 03

दिनांक— 15.09.2021

चित्रकूटधाम मण्डल जल संस्थान अन्तर्गत जनपद-बांदा चित्रकूट हमीरपुर एवं महोबा की नगरीय एवं ग्रामीण पेयजल योजनाओं के अन्तर्गत सबमर्सिबिल मोटर पम्पों एवं हैण्डपम्पों के माध्यम से पाइप लाइन के द्वारा आम जनमानस को पेयजलापूर्ति की जाती है उक्त मोटर पम्पों एवं हैण्डपम्पों द पाइप लाइनों की मरम्मत एवं संचालन के लिए निम्नांकित सामग्री की आपूर्ति हेतु वित्तीय वर्ष 2021-22 के लिए निर्माता फर्म/अधिकृत फर्म/ ठेकेदारों से तकनीकी बिड एवं वित्तीय बिड के रूप में ई-निविदायें दिनांक-23-09-2021 के अपराह्न 14:00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। निविदा प्रपत्र उत्तर प्रदेश के ई-प्रक्रोयमेन्ट की वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर दिनांक-16-09-2021 के अपराह्न 14:00 बजे से देखे एवं प्राप्त किये जा सकते हैं तथा चित्रकूटधाम मण्डल जल संस्थान की वेबसाइट www.cdmisbanda.com पर भी देखे जा सकते हैं। अन्य नियम व शर्तों का विस्तृत विवरण निविदा फार्म पर उपलब्ध होगा के अतिरिक्त कार्यालय दिवस में भी देखे जा सकते हैं। निविदा खोले जाने की तिथि, को किसी कारणवश अवकाश होने पर निविदा तिथि अगला कार्यदिवस मानी जायेगी। निविदा स्वीकृत/अस्वीकृत करने का अधिकार महाप्रबन्धक चित्रकूटधाम मण्डल जल संस्थान (भूरागढ़) बांदा को सुरक्षित होगा। निविदाएं बिना कारण बताये अस्वीकार की जा सकती हैं। अन्य नियम व शर्तों का विस्तृत विवरण निविदा फार्म पर उपलब्ध होगा।

निविदा डाउनलोड करने की तिथि निविदा प्रकाशन होने के उपरान्त दिनांक-16-09-2021 के अपराह्न 14:00 बजे से दिनांक 23-09-2021 के अपराह्न 14:00 बजे तक।

तकनीकी बिड से सम्बन्धित समस्त प्रपत्र व जमानत की धनराशि कार्यालय महाप्रबन्धक, चित्रकूटधाम मण्डल जल संस्थान, (भूरागढ़) बांदा में जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि 23-09-2021 अपराह्न 14:00 बजे तक।

निविदा डाउनलोड करने की अन्तिम तिथि 23-09-2021 अपराह्न 14:00 बजे तक।

निविदा खोलने की तिथि 23-09-2021 अपराह्न 14:00 बजे।

“राष्ट्रहित में पेयजल का अपव्यय न करें।”

क्र०	सामग्री का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत जी०एस० टी० सहित (रु० में)	घरोहर धनराशि (रु० में)	निविदा फार्म का मूल्य (जी०एस०टी० सहित)
1	मोटर पम्पों में प्रयोग होने वाली विभिन्न साईज की वियरिंग की आपूर्ति	3,79,456.00	7,589.00	रु० 295.00
2	हैण्डपम्प स्पेयर पार्ट्स एवं सामग्री की आपूर्ति	59,431.00	1,189.00	रु० 295.00
3	विभिन्न क्षमता के सबमर्सिबिल मोटर पम्प की आपूर्ति	9,28,135.00	18,583.00	रु० 295.00
4	विभिन्न साईज के सबमर्सिबिल कॉपर केबिल (हैवेल्स मेक) की आपूर्ति	4,43,798.00	8,876.00	रु० 295.00
5	विभिन्न साईज के सी०आई० पाइप डबल फ्लैंज आईएस०आई० मार्क की आपूर्ति।	51,390.00	1,028.00	रु० 295.00

सचिव
चित्रकूटधाम मण्डल जल संस्थान,
(भूरागढ़), बांदा।

CITYBRIEFS

HISTORY FESTIVAL

The three-day international history festival, "The Relic International 2021", being organised by City Montessori School, Aliganj Campus I, was inaugurated online by Swami Prasad Maurya. Student teams from the USA, England, UAE, Australia, Canada, Brazil, Russia, Nepal, Vietnam, Peru, Ukraine, Belgium, Sri Lanka, Germany, Mauritius, Algeria and different parts of India are participating in the event. The inauguration saw scintillating educational-cultural performances by CMS students.

VISIT

Member of National Scheduled Caste Commission Dr Anju Bala visited the office of Divisional Railway Manager of Northern Railway (Lucknow division) on Wednesday. She met the officials and office-bearers of All-India SC/ST Railway Employees' Association. ADRM (Administration) Dr Veena Kumari Verma and ADRM (Operations) Ashwini Srivastava welcomed Dr Anju Bala. She discussed various issues related to the welfare of the employees with the railway officials. She asked the administration and employees' association to work in sync for progress. She later had a meeting with the office-bearers of the employees' association and heard their problems.

FELICITATED

Managing director of UPMRC Kumar Keshav felicitated the winners of various competitions organised on Wednesday. An award ceremony was

organised at the administrative office in Gontinagar where Keshav presented a certificates of appreciation and cash prizes to the awardees in the presence of other senior officials of UPMRC. He congratulated all the awardees for their exemplary services and skills. "Hindi is our identity and we should proudly speak Hindi in public. I congratulate every awardee for their enthusiastic participation," he said.

CONFERENCE

The annual conference to address important developmental issues of all the Cantonment Boards of Surya Command was organised in the Central Command Headquarters in Lucknow through video conferencing. The conference was chaired by Lt Gen Yogendra Dimri, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Central Command, and attended by all officers involved in the management of Cantonments. The conference focused on rationalisation of the budget estimates of all the Cantonment Boards and reviewed the ongoing development projects. Pragmatic measures to ensure all-inclusive and holistic development of Cantonments with improved financial self-sufficiency of the Cantonments Boards were also charted out.

Implementation of COVID-19 protocol in Cantonments, improvement in hygiene and sanitation, ecological and green solutions to reduce consumption of fossil fuels, creation of Swachh Bharat amenities and incorporation of the best practices of urban town planning were other key issues discussed.

Addl SP suspended in Banda for abetting illegal mining

Lucknow (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh government, late on Tuesday night, suspended Additional Superintendent of Police in Banda, Mahendra Pratap Chauhan, with immediate effect on charges of inefficiency in preventing illegal mining activities and instead abetting it under his jurisdiction. Addl SP in PAC, Sitapur, Laxmi Niwas Mishra has been posted as the new Addl SP in Banda.

Earlier, the district magistrate of Banda was also transferred on similar charges.

The Government Order said, "On the basis of the review of works done by Mahendra Pratap Chauhan, he was found to be inefficient in tackling crimes and criminals, in his state, illegal mining and transportation mafia in particular. 'Maurang' extracted from Madhya Pradesh was being transported illegally

through Uttar Pradesh and vehicles carrying it passed through Banda, a district under Chauhan's jurisdiction. The officer was involved in various meetings regarding the passage of these vehicles through Banda. Had he taken proper action against the illegal mining and transportation mafia, such serious facts would not have come to light. It reflects his carelessness and poor supervision during his work."

Make all roads pothole-free by Oct 20: Tandon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

UP Minister for Urban Development and Minister In-charge of the district Ashutosh Tandon has instructed all the departments concerned to make the roads pothole-free (Gaddha-Mukt) by October 20 in every condition. Tandon was reviewing the progress of making the roads pothole-free at Circuit House here on Wednesday.

As many as 12 departments including four units of PWD apart from Varanasi Development Authority (VDA), Mandi Parishad, Zila Panchayat, Municipal Corporation, Bridge Corporation, Awas Vikas and Ganga Pollution Control Unit are engaged in the work and in the district, 505 roads with a total length of 860.399 km have been identified which would be made pothole-free with the cost of ₹ 17.92 crore. Out of these, a maximum number of 355 roads with a length of 771 kms would be made pothole-free by the four units of PWD, which had already claimed to have completed work on 70 kms roads.

Besides, Mandi Parishad would make 91 roads with a length of 153.10 kms pothole-free while Municipal



UP Minister Ashutosh Tandon reviewing development work in Varanasi on Wednesday

Corporation 49 roads (29.81 kms). The Municipal Commissioner informed the Minister that the tender process had already been done and work would be started soon. In reply, the Minister Ashutosh Tandon instructed the officers of various departments to make roads potholes free by October 20 in every condition. He said that the PWD had already received the first installment. He directed the District Magistrate to ensure regular inspection into the work so that

the work can be completed on time maintaining their quality. The VDA would do the work on two roads, while Zila Panchayat on seven and Ganga Pollution Control Unit on two.

The Minister expressed his displeasure over the slow progress in repairing the leakages of water supply pipes by the Jal Nigam in the city and directed the concerned department to repair the leakages immediately. 'If leakages are found to occur repeatedly at one place, then the quality of

work will be considered as faulty and action will be taken against Jal Nigam for laxity in work and lack of quality', warned Tandon.

In the meeting, MLA (Rohania) Surendra Narayan Singh, City BJP President Vidyasagar Rai, District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, Municipal Commissioner Pranay Singh, Secretary of VDA Sunil Kumar Verma and officers of various departments were also present.

GM honours 30 Corona Warriors in BLW

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

General Manager (GM) Anjali Goyal honoured 30 Corona Warriors of Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) on Tuesday for their excellent work done during the pandemic period. During the second wave of COVID-19, the necessary parameters were strictly and carefully followed by the BLW when the entire campus was divided into five parts and medicines, essential items of daily use were made available to the corona affected railway employees and their families. Besides, the oxygen supply in the hospitals was maintained normal and on the other hand the employees and their families were motivated for corona testing and vaccination. As a result, apart from 100 per cent vaccination to the BLW employees and their families, a total of 1,00,000 (one lakh) vaccine doses were administered among the beneficiaries includ-



GM Anjali Goyal felicitating a Corona Warrior at BLW in Varanasi on Tuesday.

ing non-Railway employees. Meanwhile, Rajbhasha Pakhwada (fortnight) concluded with Hindi Diwas celebrations at BLW. Presiding over the function, Anjali Goyal, while discussing the role of Hindi in the freedom movement, said that in a multilingual country like India, Hindi has united the entire public, which has helped in awakening the independence movement. 'It is very necessary to connect the offi-

cial language with technology for the progress of the nation. The simpler we make the official language, the more it will develop and spread,' she said.

Chief Rajbhasha Officer Pramod Kumar Choudhary, in his welcome address, said that efforts are being made for the implementation of Rajbhasha even in the central government offices located in the city. At the beginning, a

lamp was lit in front of the idol of Goddess Saraswati. Junior translator Dr Shashi Kant Sharma presented Saraswati Vandana and then the messages of Union Home Minister and Railway Minister were read.

After that, senior poet of BLW Karuna Singh recited her original poems in Hindi, while Vikas Kumar Pandey presented his poems on BLW. The GM also released BLW's half yearly home magazine (e-magazine) 'Bareka Darpan' through online medium. In the ceremony, recently received Railway Minister Rajbhasha Shield to BLW was presented to the GM.

In addition, Chief Electrical Engineer (S&P) Manoj Kumar Gupta, who received the Railway Minister's Rajbhasha Silver Medal, was given a citation by the GM. The function was conducted by Senior Rajbhasha Officer Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh.

SP leader flays govt for price-rise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former City President of Samajwadi Party (SP) Dr OP Singh strongly criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led central and state governments for skyrocketing prices of not only petrol, diesel and LPG but also of almost all the essential items. Talking to the reporters at Paradkar Bhawan here on Wednesday, he said that recently, during his padyatra under party's 'Apna Booth Sabse Majboot' in more than a dozen wards of the city, he found that the residents are suffering a lot due to wrong policies of the government.

According to him, due to digging of roads and streets, the rain water was filled there resulting in mosquito menace causing outbreak of dengue, malaria, viral fever and other diseases in the city.

He said that in this direction, he submitted a memorandum to the Municipal



Senior SP leader OP Singh addressing a press conference in Varanasi on Wednesday.

Commissioner demanding for a comprehensive and transparent campaign of spraying of insecticides, fogging and cleanliness for effective prevention of various diseases. Besides, he demanded that the work of digging should be stopped immediately.

'During the padyatra I also found that the residents were unhappy as they were not receiving proper medicines and treatment. Besides, there is

resentment among them over lack of spraying and fogging in their areas,' he said, alleging that there is a shortage of test kits and beds in government hospitals while the private hospitals were looting the patients without any restrictions. 'The spread of dengue and other diseases are creating panic like a corona pandemic,' he said.

He also expressed concern over the excess power bills being given to the customers

and said that the power department was looting the customers through faulty smart meters.

'The residents are forced to pay double and triple the bill,' he said, demanding a thorough investigation into the functioning of smart meters by the technical expert committee.

Demanding immediate removal of smart meters, he said that soon a memorandum in this regard would be submitted to the Managing Director (MD) of Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (PVVNL) and an agitation would be launched by the party in this direction. According to him, during his padyatra he found that the people were not happy with the present government and they have already made up their mind to bid farewell to the Yogi government in 2022 assembly elections and bring back the SP into the power again.

Legal awareness camp held

VARANASI (PNS): What a mockery, an undertrial is still languishing unnecessary in jail despite being granted bail by the court because he is not capable of furnishing bail bonds and security bonds. The Secretary of District Legal Service Authority Kumud Lata Tripathi directed the superintendent of the district jail to submit an application in the concerned court for the bail of the prisoner. Tripathi also directed the jail superintendent to extend free legal assistance to such undertrials who could not hire advocates to pursue their cases in the court.

During the legal awareness camp organised at the district jail here by the District Legal Service Authority on the directive by UP State Legal Service Authority and District Judge/Chairman, District Legal Service Authority Dr Ajay Krishna Vishwesh, an undertrial told Tripathi that the court had granted bail to him but he is still in the jail because he has no persons who could furnish the requisite bail bonds and security bonds. Taking a serious note of it, Tripathi asked the jail superintendent to submit an application in the concerned court for his bail.

Some undertrials such as Asfaq Ali, Komal, Shivpujan, Suman, Banarasi, Shahid Ali and Sukkhu Rajbhar urged Tripathi that they have no advocate who could pursue their case in the court.

Taking it seriously, Tripathi directed the jail superintendent to forward an application immediately to the authority to provide free legal service to these undertrials. Tripathi paid attention to the problems of two female undertrials during the talks with them and apprised them of the right of free legal assistance. Tripathi discussed the daily routine

work of undertrials and asked them to follow the corona protocol to prevent the infection from the deadly coronavirus.

The Jail Superintendent Jaishankar Prasad informed Tripathi that the vaccination of all the undertrial is being made and any prisoner is lodged in the jail after his corona test. A male under trial is hospitalised in the divisional government hospital for the medical treatment while a female undertrial has been admitted in the district women's government hospital as the time of her delivery is near.

ATS now searching for Zeeshan's aides, friends

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Mohd Zeeshan Qamar, a resident of GTB Nagar of Kareli police station area in Prayagraj, was given the responsibility of blasts in many cities, including Prayagraj. He returned to the city after taking the training in Pakistan. Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and security agencies have received these and other shocking information. In such a situation, now the search has started for Zeeshan's associates, close friends and those in contact with him.

Soon, other people preparing to join Zeeshan's nefarious intentions will also be tracked. It is also being ascertained that apart from Zeeshan, who else had gone to Pakistan, when and how. Passports and other documents of suspects will also be checked. Sources said that when Zeeshan came back after 15 days of training in Pakistan, he started expanding his network under the

module. Soldiers of the Pakistan army had given him training to operate ammunition and weapons. He was also asked to deposit RDX based Improvised Explosive Device (IED), grenades, pistols and cartridges. It is believed that Zeeshan had kept the IED in a Naini's poultry farm only on the behest of his masters. He was preparing to collect more weapons. It was also said that the National Investigation Agency (NIA) officials will also interrogate him in Delhi. At present, apart from the ATS, the intelligence agency is also keeping a close watch on suspicious people in Kareli and the surrounding area.

Sources said that several devices, including a laptop, pen drive, hard disk and mobile phones, have been recovered from Zeeshan's possession. A diary has also been found, in which some mobile numbers are marked. Now the security agencies will scan the laptop and mobile phones, after which

further action will be taken. The activities of his other family members and friends are also being monitored.

Zeeshan, who lives in GTB Nagar C Block, did MBA from Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Science (SHUATS), Naini. He is the only son in the house. His father Mohd Qamar used to work in Saudi Arabia but returned a year ago. He has three sisters who are married. Relatives said that Zeeshan also went to Saudi Arabia about one-and-a-half years ago.

After coming back from Saudi Arabia, he used to sell dates online. Qamar told the police that on Tuesday morning that some soldiers came to his house in police uniform and civvies and took Zeeshan along with them. After that nothing was known about him. However, in the evening, when the information about his arrest was received, everyone from the family to locals were shocked. The family members

also distanced themselves from the media.

Police sources said that the ATS team has taken the remains of the discarded IED along with Zeeshan to Delhi. There it will be examined to assess its potential. Along with this, Zeeshan will also be questioned about when and from where the equipment was purchased for him. Along with the IED remains, Zeeshan has also been taken to Delhi by ATS.

It may be pointed out here that the ATS team raided the house of Zeeshan, a block resident of GTB Nagar. After nabbing Zeeshan from there, in search of some of his companions, the ATS went to Karamat Ki Chauki and other localities, but no one was found. Then the team returned to Wasiabad where some of the people present in the Afzalul Madrasa were quizzed. The ATS then reached the house of Maulana Dr Shamsur Rahman, a few steps away from the madrasa for further investigation.

Key accused nabbed in Bansal murder case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Shooter Mohammed Abrar Khan, yet another key accused in Dr AK Bansal's sensational high-profile murder, was arrested by the Lucknow STF under the Rambhag flyer on Tuesday. The shooter was carrying a reward of Rs 50,000 on his head.

Abrar had been abscond-

ing since January 12, 2017 when Dr Bansal was gunned down in his hospital chamber. He is a resident of Azad Nagar, Pratapgarh.

Another resident of Pratapgarh, Maksood alias Zaid, is still at large. According to the STF, Abrar was a student of KP College and during a cricket practice session, he came in contact with Shueb,

formed a gang. Abrar also confirmed that Dr Bansal had paid Rs 55 lakh to Alok Sinha to get his son admitted to a PG course of medical science. When Sinha could not get a seat for Dr Bansal's son, the doctor asked him to return the money.

Later, he lodged an FIR and Sinha was arrested. While in jail, Sinha met mafia Dilip Mishra and Akhtar Katra, and

a plan was chalked out to eliminate Dr Bansal. Akhtar Katra was given a 'supari' for Rs 70 lakh, and he gave the task to Maksood, Yasir and Shueb. Dr Bansal was shot dead at his Jeevan Jyoti Hospital on January 12, 2017. After the incident, Abrar kept hiding in different mosques and madrasas. He was in Prayagraj to meet a lawyer and was nabbed by the STF.

HC nixes PIL seeking demolition of small temples in Vindhyachal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The Allahabad High Court refused to entertain a PIL seeking stay of demolition of small temples within the campus of Maa Vindhyavasini Devi Temple complex in Vindhyachal, Mirzapur, falling within the under-construction temple corridor.

Dismissing the PIL filed by one Arun Pathak of Mirzapur, a division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Munishwar Nath Bhandari and Justice AK Ojha said, "The temples in the premises of Maa Vindhyavasini Devi Temple are private temples, thereby public interest litigation would not be maintainable."

In the PIL, the petitioner had sought from the court a direction to the state government and concerned authorities not to damage/demolish certain temples within the campus of Maa Vindhyavasini Devi

Temple.

However, the state government's counsel informed the court that in the year 2006 also, a PIL was filed, seeking similar directions restraining demolition of small temples inside the temple campus. This PIL was dismissed on March 30, 2007, while observing that the temples in the premises of Maa Vindhyavasini Devi Temple were private temples and thereby PIL would not be maintainable. The state counsel apprised the court about the previous order and the temple project and pleaded that the PIL was not maintainable.

The court said that the PIL filed earlier also was dismissed by the court on March 30, 2007, saying that the PIL against the private temple is not maintainable. On this basis, the court dismissed the petition as not admissible.

HC STAYS SECOND SUSPENSION ORDER

AGAINST DR KAFEEL: The Allahabad High Court has stayed the UP government's order dated July 31, 2019, by which Dr Kafeel Ahmad Khan, a paediatrician, was suspended on charges that he had forcibly treated patients at the Bahraich district hospital and criticised the policies of the government.

This was the second time Dr Kafeel was suspended by the state government, while he was already under suspension following the August 2017 tragedy at BRD Medical College at Gorakhpur, where 60 children had died due to alleged shortage of oxygen within a few days.

Hearing a writ petition filed by Dr Kafeel, Justice Saral Srivastava on September 9 directed to conclude inquiry against the petitioner within a period of one month. The court further directed that the petitioner shall cooperate in the

enquiry and in case the petitioner does not cooperate, disciplinary authority may proceed to conclude the inquiry ex parte. While directing to list this case on November 11, 2021, the court directed that when the matter is next listed, the respondents shall inform the court about the outcome of the enquiry. Besides, the court directed the respondent state authorities four weeks' time to file a reply (counter-affidavit).

When Dr Kafeel was suspended from service on August 22, 2017, following the death of about 60 infants in the BRD Medical College hospital, Gorakhpur due to lack of oxygen, he was attached to the office of director general medical education (DGME) office of Lucknow. Thereafter, he visited the Bahraich hospital claiming that he was called by the public to treat children affected by Japanese encephalitis.

38% of Prayagraj's targeted population vaccinated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

With over 22 lakh doses having been administered across the Sangam city so far, nearly 38 per cent of the district's total targeted population (46.10 lakh) has received at least one dose of Covid vaccine, whereas around 10 per cent of the people have been fully vaccinated.

In the 18-44 years group, over 12.45 lakh doses have been administered, including 10,59,044 first doses while 5.10 lakh doses, including 3,86,675 first doses, have been given to

those above 45-60 years. Over 3.24 lakh jabs, including 2,35,239 first doses, have also been given to people aged above 60 years.

Moreover, as many as 58,197 doses, including 34,209 first doses, have been given to healthcare workers while 68,463 doses, including 41,604 first doses, have been given to frontline workers. As of September 13, a total of 22,06,860 doses, including 17,56,771 first doses, were given in the city.

District Immunisation Officer and ACMO Dr Teerath Lal told mediapersons: "Of the

total 22.06 lakh doses given so far, around 12.45 lakh doses were given to people aged between 18 and 44 years, which was two-and-a-half times more than those given to people aged between 45 and 60 years." He added that over 56 per cent of people aged between 18 and 44 years and 37 per cent of the people aged over 45 years have been given vaccine jabs in the district so far.

"With 37 per cent of the targeted population having taken the first dose, the number of beneficiaries stands at 17,56,771. A target of immunising around 46.10 lakh people of

all age groups has been set, including 34 lakh aged between 18-44 years and 12.10 lakh aged above 45 years," he added.

With improved supplies, the pace of vaccination has also increased, particularly from the last week of August. Daily average vaccinations have improved in September and on an average, over 30,000 jabs are being given daily. Over 3.54 lakh doses were given in just 10 days of this month against a total of 5.18 lakh jabs given in August. Over 3.03 lakh and 3.42 lakh people were vaccinated in June and July, respectively.

NCR holds Rajbhasha meeting

ALLAHABAD (PNS): NCR conducted a meeting of regional Rajbhasha executive committee under the chairmanship of GM Pramod Kumar on the occasion of Hindi Diwas.

Speaking on the occasion, the GM said Hindi is a strong tool for national integration and a leading force for nationalism which has built India's global image of a strong nation.

Hindi Diwas is no less than a national festival now as usage

of Hindi has percolated in technical and miscellaneous fields — media, entertainment, trade and commerce," he said. Kumar further said that Hindi has emerged as a common tool of communication in Indian Railways when people of varied linguistic backgrounds interact at public places.

Mukhya Rajbhasha Adhikari, NCR, Ajay Mathur (also Principal Finance

Advisor) presented the current status of usage of Rajbhasha in official communications and discussed various activities planned to be undertaken as part of Rajbhasha Pakhwada. "Competitions like essay writing, debates, typing contest, shorthand, quiz, poetry competitions are planned in days to come culminating in an exhibition on documentation and dissemination of information in Rajbhasha on September

29," Mathur said. Principal Chief Commercial Manager MN Ojha presented a description on Mahakavi Tulsidas and Munshi Premchand. In an important event, 'Tippani Evam Prarup Lekhan' (notings and drafting) competition was organised in which 14 employees participated. Earlier, the 15-day carnival started with a lamp lighting ceremony and unveiling of tri-annual Hindi magazine Rail Sangam.

Shekhar finds 36 employees absent during inspection of labour commissionerate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar made a surprise inspection of the labour commissionerate on Wednesday and found that out of the total 136 employees, 36 were absent without prior sanction of leave. He said it was also found that the attendance register of the employees was not being checked and there was no checking in the last three months -- June, July and August.

He said it was also found that no weeding work had been carried out for the past over six years and old documents were lying carelessly bundled.

He said the labour commissionerate did not follow the Covid protocol and there was no help desk, thermal scanner, pulse oximeter, hand sanitiser and wearing of masks was rarely observed both for the employees and the outsiders who visited the office.

He said no particular register was maintained for tours and whatever was observed was not up to date. He said it had been directed that the attendance should be verified latest by 10:15 am and the online image of the attendance should reach the commissionerate by 10:20 am. He said this would be ensured by Additional Labour Commissioner DK Singh.

He said ironically absence



Kanpur Divisional Commissioner carried out surprise inspection of Labour Commissionerate on Wednesday.

Pioneer

of staff members was mentioned as CL, ML and EL but there was no supporting evidence in that regard. He said the nodal officer had been directed to ensure that the salaries of such staff members were stopped and they should be issued show-cause notices immediately.

He said it was decided that old documents which were capable of weeding out would be listed by September 30, 2021 and a weeding committee

would be set up at the earliest to accomplish the entire task of weeding by November 2021.

He said in the next three days Covid help desk would be established and every effort would be made to ensure that outsiders entering the premises followed the Covid protocol.

Shekhar said every department would ensure that the documents were listed and prepared in the next seven days with the title mentioned on the cover page.

He said a leave register would be maintained so that when asked by any authority it could be produced then and there.

He said the tour register would also be maintained and date, destination and purpose of visit would be written mandatorily.

He said premises were not clean and thus efforts were made to ensure the office premises were entirely neat and clean.

KDA seals unauthorised constructions in city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Development Authority has sealed the unauthorised/illegal constructions being carried out in different localities of the city.

The enforcement squad led by Executive Engineer (Enforcement) Zone 1 RRP Singh, on Tuesday, visited Plot No1098, Maharshi Dayanand Vihar, and sealed the unauthorised construction being carried out by Usha Verma/Versha Verma. The team observed that the entire plot of 30x60 square feet was covered with construction of a slab on the ground floor. Shuttering work for laying slab on the first floor was on. As the owner failed to produce the approved layout, the team sealed the construction.

Besides, on Plot Nos.104 and 105 in Chaitanya Vihar, Mamdesh Mishra had carried out construction on 11 columns on the ground, first and second floors against the approved layout. It was also sealed by the enforcement squad. As Sushila Kumar Jain of 123/731A, Fazalganj, Gadariyan Purwa, situated on plot No.131 failed to produce evidence about her ownership, the team demolished the construction and sealed the premises. During the drive, Executive Engineer AK Singh, RRP Singh, Mukesh Agarwal, Deputy Collector Vyas Narain Umrao, OSD Sat Shukla, team of enforcement/engineering department and local police force were present. Meanwhile, KDA Vice Chairman Arvind Singh has asked banks to submit an action plan for simplifying the verification of amount deposited by the allottees with them to avoid delay in execution of the registry of their properties. According to the vice chairman, the banks will provide an ID No. to allottees to deposit the installments of their properties to show the entire details of their account at one place. He said immediately after depositing the amount with the bank against a property, banks should effect quick online basic feeding and, at the same time, provide an ID or link to KDA to facilitate posting the amount in the relevant allottee's account.

3 KDA employees suspended

KANPUR (PNS): Vice Chairman of Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) Arvind Singh has ordered the suspension of three employees of non-centralised services on Wednesday for their involvement in executing registry of a fake lease deed. They included the second category clerk Shyam Lal, chief clerk Rajesh Kumar and the assistant accountant Akhilesh Mishra. VC has also directed the officials to send letter to State Avas Department recommending the suspension of the office superintendent Virendra Agarwal and initiating departmental inquiry against the retired joint secretary KK Singh of the centralised services. Besides, for their lackadaisical attitude in discharging supervisory duties, VC has directed to issue show-cause notices to the junior engineer Suresh Kumar Pandey and city planner Jyoti Prasad. He ordered to lodge FIR under the relevant sections of IPC against Kamla Singh wife of Raj Kumar Singh, a resident of EWS-316, Barra-4, Kanpur, for getting the plot No.1003, Block RN, Scheme-II, Ratanlal Nagar, freehold by submitting fake documents.

WOMAN FOUND HANGING: A newly-wed woman was found hanging in the courtyard of her house in Neuri village under Bidhnu police station on Wednesday afternoon. At the time of the incident, her husband and mother-in-law had gone to sell milk in the city. The marriage of Karan (27) son of milk trader Rajendra Nagar was solemnised with Roshni (24) daughter of Pappu of Ghatampur on May 24. Rajendra Nagar said due to illness, he was taking rest in the front side room of his house. He called Roshni for a glass of water and on failing to get any response, he moved towards the courtyard to collect water himself and found her hanging from the tin-shed angle.

Running period of Thawe-Tatanagar special train extended till January 2

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of the passengers has decided to extend the running period of 08181/ 08182 Tatanagar-Thawe-Tatanagar special train running four days a week. All the coaches in them will be of reserved class and passengers traveling in them will have to follow the norms of Covid-19 prevention guidelines, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. The 08181 Tatanagar-Thawe Puja special train already running till September 27 will be run from Tatanagar till December 31 and 08182 Thawe-Tatanagar special train already running till September 29 will be run from Thawe till January 2. This train will run as per its pre-determined route, timing and rake composition.

CHANGES IN TRAIN TIMINGS

The following changes

have been made in the timing of 05339 Bareilly City-Pilibhit and 05329 Pilibhit-Bareilly City unreserved special train already being run by the railway administration, CPRO PK Singh said. As per changed timings train No 05339 Bareilly City-Pilibhit unreserved special train will from September 14 till further advice depart from Bareilly City at 14.00 hrs, from Izzatnagar at 14.17 hrs, from Dohna at 14.30 hrs, from Bhojipura at 14.38 hrs, from Dibrnagar at 14.50 hrs, from Saithal at 14.56 hrs, from Bijauria at 15.05 hrs, from Shahi at 15.18 hrs, from Lalauri Khara at 15.33 hrs and reach Pilibhit at 15.50 hrs. Besides, as per the changed timings train No 05329 Bareilly City - Pilibhit unreserved special train from September 16 till further advice depart from Bareilly City at 10.15 hrs, from Izzatnagar at 10.32 hrs, from Dohna at 10.43 hrs, from Bhojipura at 10.58 hrs, from

Dibrnagar at 11.09 hrs, from Saithal at 11.23 hrs, from Bijauria at 11.32 hrs, from Shahi at 11.41 hrs, from Lalauri Khara at 11.50 hrs and reach Pilibhit at 12.15 hrs.

LITERARY SEMINAR ORGANISED

The Rajbhasha Week Celebration-2021 has been organised from September 13 to 20 at North Eastern Railway (NER) headquarters here. On Tuesday under the presidency of Chief Rajbhasha Officer and Principal Chief Engineer Satish Kumar Pandey, a literary seminar on Goswami Tulsidas was organised at Officers' Club. The programme started with the garlanding the picture of Maa Saraswati. Chief Rajbhasha Officer and Principal Chief Engineer Satish Kumar Pandey while congratulating everyone on Hindi Diwas in his presidential address that said that Goswami Tulsidas did not need any introduction.

Progress of works reviewed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Under its study and tour programme the second sub-committee (2019-2020) of Panchayati Raj Committee of

concerned to provide the benefit of all the schemes of the government as a strategy. The meeting was attended by all CDOs of the division, Deputy Director, Panchayat, AK Shahi,



Legislative Assembly visited the district on Tuesday and reviewed the works of the division, especially those being carried out under schemes related to Panchayati Raj and rural development. The sub-committee comprised chairman Sunil Kumar Sharma, MLAs Bhupesh Chaubey, Mukesh Verma and Hakim Lal. Chairing the meeting the chairman sought the report about the expenditure related with the fund from state finance, Fifth, 14th and 15th Finance Commission. He directed the authorities concerned to ensure utilisation of the fund without inordinate delay and as per the norms. Reviewing the progress of construction of community toilets, personal toilets, multipurpose panchayat bhawan etc the committee was of the view that the status of the ODF districts should be maintained and for it publicity and awareness programmes should be continued. Emphasising over the NRLM the committee was of the view that it should be spread to cover more population to make them financially strong to such extent that the SHGs could play a role in increasing the per capita income of the nation. Reviewing other schemes like Ayushman Bharat the committee directed the officials

DPRO Mirzapur Arvind Kumar and all officials concerned.

MEETING: SP Ajay Kumar Singh held a meeting with people's representatives at Police Lines on Tuesday. Interacting with the participants the SP urged them to inform him if any cop was found involved in any illegal activity or about the laxity of the police in any case. MLA Chhanbey Rahul Kol drew SP's attention to some problems and told him to get them solved. Apart from people's representatives the meeting was attended by the inspector LPU.

DIRECTIVE: The Electricity department has decided to ensure uninterrupted power supply in the mining area of the district. Reports said that for Ram temple construction in Ayodhya red stones are being supplied from Ahraura. However, due to rostering and power cuts cutting of stones was being affected and the matter was brought to the notice of higher authorities of the department. Taking instant action for solving the problem the MD, Power Corporation, has written a letter to EE Chunar, SE VK Pandey said officials concerned had been directed to ensure minimum rostering of feeders where cutting of stones for

Ayodhya was on.

ALLOCATED: MP of the district and Union Minister of state for Commerce and Industry Anupriya Patel has allocated ₹1.5 crore to provide solar backup system to CHCs and PHCs of the district. Through a press release she informed that after the completion of formalities the facility will be available shortly. Welcoming the initiative spokesman of Apna Dal(S) Rajesh Patel said the back up system was being provided according to the bed capacity of the hospitals in the rural aread and the solar system will be able to provide uninterrupted power supply. He said because the facility was in the pipeline through MPLAD Scheme fund so there was no chance of delay in the process.

CAMP HELD: Under the aegis of Women Welfare department under Mission Shakti drive phase-3 a self reliance camp was organised at the block headquarters of Kon on Monday. For its success the field staff related to women as well as children welfare worked hard to bring the eligible to the place to provide them benefits of government schemes. In the camp 127 were identified as eligible for Mukhya Mantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana, 11 for Bal Seva Yojana and nine for helpless women pension scheme whose husbands had died recently. After completing the application forms the officials concerned said after the sanction of appropriate authorities beneficiaries will get the facilities. Those who participated in the camp were Probation Officer Shakti Tripathi, Women Welfare Officer Manju Yadav, Child Protection Officer Dr Ramesh, Block Development Officer Ram Daras, CDO along with Anganwadi workers and personnel of block.

Hindi plays a vital role in uniting India: AK Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AURAIYA

Chief General Manager of National Thermal Power Corporation, Auraiya, AK Singh, while addressing the closing session of the Hindi Fortnight, appealed to the people to unitedly make efforts to make Hindi the first language of the country which could prove to be our identity.

He said Hindi Diwas should not be an annual feature but it should be celebrated all through the year. He said it was the duty of the Indians to ensure they made sustained efforts to spread Hindi in every corner of the world. He said all the units of NTPC devotedly celebrate Hindi Diwas in true letter and spirit in all the 14 major projects.

He said Hindi played a vital role in uniting the country and as per the official language policy, implementation of Hindi was a must in all Central and state government offices. He said the first and foremost step in promotion of Hindi was that it had to be respected, promoted and taught in schools and also be made compulsory for official use.

He said the people of the



Rajbhasha fortnight closing function being held at NTPC Auraiya.

Pioneer

country must love, own and promote and also communicate in Hindi in every possible manner. He said India was a multicultural nation and a land of many languages and promotion of Hindi language at international level in such a democratic country was necessary and it was the people of the country who could make this dream a reality.

He said if India wanted Hindi to be a global language it should start from within and begin with events that help it to grow and rise all over the world. "It can be possible

only if Hindi centres, universities, NGOs and all Hindi speakers join hands to increase the level of Hindi," he said.

He said India was a country with various diversified cultures and languages and although most of the states in India had their regional languages yet Hindi language was the most spoken language in the country. He said it was considered one of the most spoken languages as it was spoken by over 250 million people keeping in view the huge population of Indians in as well as outside of the country.

He said NTPC motivated its staff to work in Hindi and said that the purpose of conducting events in Hindi was one such effort to make people realise the importance of Hindi. He added that Hindi language was also known to be the third most spoken language in the world.

He then felicitated the winners of the various events like Hindi debate, essay writing, poetry writing, and other literary events held during the Rajbhasha Week closing function. He also gave away prizes to the winners.

Gallantt Group signs Ajay Devgan as its brand ambassador

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Gallantt Group, one of the biggest integrated steel players, signed in Ajay Devgan as its brand ambassador for the next two years and help promote its Gallantt & Gallantt advance range of TMT bars pan-India.

Gallantt Group is one of the leading Indian conglomerates with end to end annual steel manufacturing capacities of more than one million ton through their multiple state-of-art fully-integrated steel plants located at Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh and Kutch in Gujarat. Gallantt Group CMD CP Agarwal said, "We are thrilled to have Ajay Devgan on board and have no doubt that this association will increase our brand recall and strengthen the positioning of the brand in the premium category of the targeted market."

He added: "As a brand it is our belief that we are reliable, performing and honest with our commitment that we promise to our customers and these are the same traits which we admire in Ajay Devgan, who displays right balance of being a real hero to his family and rock-solid performer both in reel and real life."



Gallantt Group CMD CP Agarwal along with Ajay Devgan.

Pioneer

"Commencing on his association with Gallantt, Devgan said: "I am very proud to be partnering with Gallantt Group, I believe this is a beginning of a very exciting and memorable journey and together we can take brand to a future ready deliverance with quality standard products at its core."

The brand's new integrated marketing campaign with Devgan is strategised and designed by Liquid Loop, a Gurgaon-based integrated communication agency to further bolster company's brand recall and position it amongst end consumer and their corporate B2B clients. The campaign is slated to go on air primarily through TV and will be amplified across Print, BTL,

OOH & DIGITAL very shortly showcasing the product in a very innovative perspective.

NEP GIVES IMPORTANCE TO STUDENTS' PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE: Principal of Chitra PG College, Dr Anju Pandey, said that the new education policy gave importance to students' practical knowledge instead of just pushing them towards rote learning.

Addressing a seminar on 'New Education Policy' on Wednesday, she said it would help students to develop scientific temper from a young age. She said one positive feature of the NEP was that the assessment of the student would be done by not only the teachers, but the students would also self-evaluate them-

selves and say how they performed within the entire year and comment on their consistency.

She said not only would there be self-evaluation, but the remaining other students of the category would also evaluate their own performances. She said under the NEP the final report would consist of the attitude of the remaining classmates as this was definitely a really useful step because critical thinking may be a vital aspect to measure one's efforts and to believe what one was doing.

She said in the coming times no one would speak about one's performance so this thinking should be imparted at the first stage to the scholars to gauge themselves and to ascertain what others thought about a student and also his/her self-evaluation.

Dr Pandey said another vital amendment was the six per cent investment of India's GDP which would be spent on education, against the present 4.3 per cent, which was insufficient.

She said as compared to the other developing countries and remaining developed countries, India spent terribly less on education.

Rajbhasha Week inaugurated

PNS ■ VARANASI

Under the presidency of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), Varanasi division of North Eastern Railway (NER), Ramashray Pandey, the inauguration of Rajbhasha Week-2021 was done on the occasion of Hindi Diwas on Tuesday. Organised by the Rajbhasha department at the DRM office here, it's inauguration was done online through Microsoft Teams with the virtual meeting of Divisional Rajbhasha Implementation Committee besides the reading of messages of Union Home Minister and Railway Minister and a technical seminar. Presiding over the seminar on the occasion, the DRM said that on September 14, 1949, the Constituent Assembly accepted Hindi as the Rajbhasha. "In fact with everyone's cooperation the Varanasi division is performing commandably in the field of Rajbhasha as it received the second prize by the Town Rajbhasha Implementation Committee. The division has done exemplary work in the field of Rajbhasha by using Hindi successfully in all the works," he said. According to Pandey, this is the time of rapid change and technological development. To increase the usage of Rajbhasha in all technical fields including



website, e-mail, information technology and management works, now the option of Hindi is available in e-office. He hoped that through these works they will add an innovative dimension in the direction of use of Rajbhasha. "I am sure that all the employees will participate in various competitions to be held under Rajbhasha Week and make other people aware about Rajbhasha," he added. Additional Chief Rajbhasha Officer / ADRM (Infra) Gyanesh Tripathi, while welcoming everyone, gave detailed information about the competitions and award schemes related to Rajbhasha. He said apart from being an ancient, rich, simple and accessible language of the world, Hindi is our Rajbhasha and showing love and respect towards it is our national duty. During the week, Hindi essay and speech competitions will be organised apart from the distribution of prizes to the winners of competitions and the lecture of the Divisional Medical Officer on

Corona pandemic. Earlier, welcoming everyone, Rajbhasha Officer and Assistant Divisional Personnel Officer Ramesh Upadhyay discussed suggestions on Rajbhasha in detail and told about the improvement. During the meeting progress of Rajbhasha was reviewed, minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed and suggestions were taken for the next meeting. Ramesh Upadhyay conducted the function and proposed vote of thanks too.

TRAINING: Under the direction of DRM Ramashray Pandey and leadership of Senior Divisional Personnel Officer Sameer Paul, in the DRM office here all employees were given training to work on HRMS method. Under it information was provided regarding filling up of ePass, Employee Self Service (ESS) PF loan, confidential report etc. Divisional Personnel Officer Vivek Kumar Mishra and Assistant Personnel Officer Abhinav Kumar Singh were present on the occasion.

8TH INDIAN ARMY CHIEF'S CONCLAVE

Army top brass to discuss Af, LAC situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



tions, people familiar with the matter said.

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

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

president of Turkmenistan and other invited guests.

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

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

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

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

Rajnath urges US def industry to transfer state of technology

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Cong to raise price rise, unemployment issues through protest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, Rahul on

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

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

Members should observe discipline inside, outside legislatures: Om Birla

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Inaugurating the 81st All India Presiding Officers Conference, Birla expressed his anguish that incidents of unparliamentary behavior of public representatives have increased in recent years, which have tarnished the image of the democratic institutions.

Birla expressed his anguish that incidents of unparliamentary behavior of public representatives have increased in recent years, which have tarnished the image of the democratic institutions. Birla said that the credibility of legislatures is linked to the conduct and behavior of

their members and that is why the members are expected to observe the highest standards of discipline and decorum, both inside and outside the legislatures.

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

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

cipline and decorum, as public representatives.

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Antiviral drug Umifenovir can check Covid virus multiplication: CDRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

CDRI director Prof Tapas Kundu said, "Since Umifenovir is a broad-spectrum antiviral and is being used as a safe over-the-counter drug for influenza

and pneumonia for over 20 years in Russia, China and other countries. The first two trials were not mandatory."

The CDRI, therefore, direct-

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

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

Studies by CDRI in collaboration with CSIR-IMT, Chandigarh, also showed that Umifenovir exhibits good cell culture inhibition of SARS-Cov2, which suggests that the drug inhibits the entry of SARS-Cov2 virus into human cells.

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

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

MD of Patliputra Builders Ltd held under PMLA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Anil Kumar alias Anil Kumar Singh, Managing Director of Patliputra Builders Limited and other group companies, under Prevention of Money Laundering Act, in a cheating case. The ED initiated investigation on the basis of FIRs and charge-sheets filed by Patna Police under the sections of Indian Penal Code and Arms Act against Anil Kumar.

CAUTION NOTICE

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77 rapes reported daily in 2020: NCRB

Number of murders record a surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Of the total crimes against women last year, the maximum 11,154 were under the category "cruelty by husband or relatives", while there were 62,300 cases of kidnapping and abduction also, it showed.

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

the NCRB data showed.

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

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

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

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

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

Delhi logged 472 murder cases in 2020.

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

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

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

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

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

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Get that jab

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

As educational institutions re-open tentatively in India, parents are worried that unlike most of them, their children are not yet vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus and they may be vulnerable to infection at school. The concern is natural and understandable but clear-cut answers to their queries are not forthcoming. The States, the Centre, the state task forces, the national task force, and the host of experts need to be on the same page and clarify by when can children be expected to get the jabs, if they would be divided into age groups for the purpose, and whether the healthy among them need immediate vaccination at all. Paediatricians say healthy children are at low risk from the virus but there is no unanimity on whether it is safe for them to attend school unvaccinated. The United Kingdom is still disinclined to vaccinate healthy children in the 12-15 years age group. The doses will only offer a marginal benefit and the jabs can instead be diverted to vulnerable adults and children with co-morbidities, like chronic heart, lung and liver conditions, it argues. The British committee's hesitation arises from the concern over a rare side effect of heart inflammation from the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. In India, out of 44 crore children, around 12 crore are in the 12-17 age group. The national COVID-19 task force is of the view that children with comorbidities should receive priority jabs, meaning thereby that healthy children are not at high risk. In any case, even though over 19 States have re-opened



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

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

PICTALK



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

Taking wings

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

The Union Government has finally found bidders for the sought-after Air India disinvestment after Tata Sons and SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh submitted their financial bids to the transaction adviser on Wednesday as the process now moves to its concluding stage. The new owner will be entitled complete stake in Air India and Air India Express and a 50 per cent stake in the ground handling capacity of the Air India SATS Airport Services (AISATS). Besides, as per Air India's Expression of Interest shared in January, out of the airline's total debt of ₹60,074 crore as on March 2019, the bidder would be required to absorb the "signing debt" of ₹23,286.5 crore. The rest would be transferred to Air India Assets Holding Ltd, a special purpose arrangement. Tata Sons had in 2001 expressed their interest in acquiring the Indian Airlines which JRD Tata had founded in 1932 as Tata Airlines. The proposal was not received well by the Government back then. But times have changed and the Government now views Tata as the frontrunner in the disinvestment bid which was delayed due to the pandemic. Therefore, Union Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia had made it clear that September 15, 2021 would be the last day for submitting the bid and would not be changed.

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

The national theatre of absurd

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HEAT OF THE 'MYSTERY FEVER'

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

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

G David Milton | Maruthancode

A FUEL FOR THE FUTURE

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

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

A vision beyond religion



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

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

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

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

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

Krishna K Vepakomma | Hyderabad

TOO MANY NAMESAKES

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

Banerjee for passing of a long-pending resolution of the State Assembly to rename the state as *Bangla*, thus removing the ever-confusing prefix 'west'.

There has been gradual change in names and spellings of cities but the process still remains incomplete even after decades of independence. Distorted spellings such as *Jullender* and *Simla* by the British have been rectified to Jalandhar and Shimla. But spellings of cities like Delhi and Bareilly as per actual pronunciation are still to be modified. Delhi is a distorted version of *Dehli*, meaning entrance. Countries like Bangladesh and China have already respelled names of their capitals as per actual pronunciation. There are too many *Rampurs* and *Bilaspurs* in India which require renaming to avoid confusion. These places can be renamed after the heroic characters from India's history.

Madhu Agrawal | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

In view of the dangerous level of pollution during Diwali in Delhi, we are imposing a ban on the storage, sale and usage of firecrackers.



Delhi Chief Minister

— Arvind Kejriwal

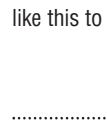


We have reaped the benefits from the membership of BRICS, most notably in the area of economic cooperation.

South African President

— Cyril Ramaphosa

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



Actor

— Ketki Dave



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

Former England cricketer

— Gautam Gambhir

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



Delhi Deputy Chief Minister

— Manish Sisodia

FIRST COLUMN

NOW IS THE NEED FOR A REALITY CHECK

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



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

There are many ways in which decision-making can be structured or planning can be done. There are many ways in which the struggle for the control of the decision-making processes takes place. Ultimately, those who emerge victors in the various competing ways of doing something carry the day. The articulate in the group become cheer leaders and those who care or dare to oppose are either eliminated or left to languish or perish. This happens in matters big and small. The last few weeks have seen the emasculation of an army which was proclaimed to be one of the finest equipped in the world. The current ruling elite in Afghanistan have made no bones about their distaste for matters such as democratically elected governance. They are in control and some of the mightiest powers in the world are ready to encourage this regime. Clearly the jury has not even convened, let alone 'be out' for a decision. The international system has yet again proved



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

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

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

Import duty cutback on Tesla is no good

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



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

India's luxury car market is relatively very small. In the year 2019-20, the total number of luxury cars sold was 40,637, which was down to 19,700 during the COVID-hit 2020-21. This is because a very small section of the population can afford these luxury cars beyond rupees ₹15 lakh or, say, \$20,000. And a very minuscule segment of the population can afford to buy cars beyond ₹30 lakh. If duty concession is given to Tesla, those who can afford will obviously buy imported Tesla electric cars and there will hardly be any incentive for the company to establish a manufacturing facility in India; and the country would be deprived of capacity creation in EVs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

nents manufacturers.

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

HOW CAN THE TMC TAKE OUT A RALLY IN TRIPURA IN VIOLATION OF THE COVID NORMS IMPOSED BY THE ADMINISTRATION?
— WEST BENGAL BJP PRESIDENT
DILIP GHOSH



THE BJP HAS LOST THE MORAL RIGHT TO TALK ABOUT THE APPROPRIATENESS OF HOLDING POLITICAL RALLIES IN COVID TIME.
— SENIOR TMC LEADER
FIRHAD HAKIM

Taxing the new-age digital companies

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

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

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

This inconsistency has led to an urgent need to amend



HIMA BINDU KOTA

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

based platforms, like Whatsapp, WeChat and Tiktok, under the ambit of Indian taxation rules, subject to their incomes or user base crossing the prescribed thresholds.

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

Overall, the business connection and significant economic presence will be applicable subject to the Double Taxation Avoidance

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

AUTOMOTIVE, DRONE INDUSTRIES

Govt approves ₹26k crore PLI scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday announced a Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the drones and drone component industries that offers an incentive of 20 per cent of the value addition made by a manufacturer of drones and drone components. The PLI scheme for drones and drone components spread over three financial years, will lead to investments worth ₹5,000 Crore, increase in eligible sales of ₹1500 crore and create additional employment of about 10,000 jobs.

Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur on Wednesday announced that the Cabinet has approved the PLI scheme for drones and drone component industries, saying that ₹120 crores to the drone industry under the budgetary provision for the PLI scheme.

“A product specific PLI scheme for drones with clear revenue targets and focus on domestic value addition is key to building capacity and making these key drivers of India’s growth strategy.

The PLI for Drones and Drone components industry, will over a period of three years, lead to investments worth ₹5,000 Crore, increase in eligible sales of ₹1500 crore and create additional employment of about 10,000 jobs,” the Government said in a statement.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation expects the annual sales turnover of the drone manufacturing industry to grow from ₹60 crore in 2020-21 to over ₹900 crore in 2023-24. According to the Ministry, the PLI scheme covers a variety of drone components which Airframe, propulsion systems(engine and electric), power systems, batteries and

associated components, launch and recovery systems, Inertial Measurement Unit, Inertial Navigation System, flight control module, ground control station and associated components.

The Ministry has notified the rules for the drone industry last month, relaxing the rules specifying no security clearance requirement before any registration or licence issuance for operating the drones.

Under the new rules, several approvals are abolished. These comprise unique authorisation number, unique prototype identification number, certificate of conformance, certificate of maintenance, operator permit, authorisation of R&D organisation, student remote pilot licence, remote pilot instructor authorisation, drone port authorisation, and import permission for drone components.

Benchmarks surge to all-time highs

TELECOM, AUTO STOCKS RALLY ON REFORMS PUSH

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex and Nifty vaulted to fresh lifetime peaks on Wednesday, boosted by telecom and auto stocks which saw brisk buying after the government announced packages for the sectors.

A rebounding rupee and persistent foreign capital inflows added to the momentum, traders said.

Rising for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 476.11 points or 0.82 per cent to close at its new all-time high of 58,723.20. It touched an intra-day record of 58,777.06.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty climbed 139.45 points or 0.80 per cent to its fresh closing record of 17,519.45. During the session, it touched an all-time peak of 17,532.70.

NTPC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying 7.16 per cent, followed by Bharti Airtel at 4.53 per cent.

HCL Tech, Titan, SBI, PowerGrid, TCS and IndusInd Bank also notched up gains.

On the other hand, Axis Bank, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Nestle India, Sun

Pharma and HDFC Bank were among the laggards, shedding up to 0.38 per cent.

In big bang reforms, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a relief package for the telecom sector that includes a four-year moratorium on payment of statutory dues by telecom companies as well as allowing 100 per cent foreign investment through the automatic route.

The Cabinet also approved a ₹ 26,058 crore production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for the auto, auto-components and drone industry to enhance India’s manufacturing capabilities.

“The measures announced for the telecom and auto industry are sweeping with potential for far-reaching beneficial impact. A four-year moratorium on dues of the telecom sector which covers AGR, spectrum dues and interest payment will bring big relief to the cash-strapped sector.

This is positive for banks, too, since banks’ exposure too will decline significantly,” said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

The ₹26,058 crore PLI scheme for automobiles, auto components and drones is a major initiative to attract advanced auto technology and supply chains into India, he noted.

“This is a timely policy when global supply chains are looking for markets outside China for shifting supply chains. The PLI scheme’s goal of investment of ₹42,500 crore in 5 years is ambitious but achievable. In brief, bold reforms,” he added.

All BSE sectoral indices closed in the green, led by telecom (3.45 per cent), utilities (2.29 per cent), power (2.01 per cent), teck (1.81 per cent), and consumer durables (1.62 per cent). In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap gauges advanced up to 0.86 per cent. On the global front, markets were weighed by weak China retail sales data amid a resurgence of Delta variant cases in the country. However, US inflation data showed a slower-than-expected rise in prices, giving room to the Fed to continue with its accommodative stance.

Relief measures will enable telecom industry to achieve Digital India goals: Ambani

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) Chairman Mukesh D Ambani on Wednesday said the latest reforms and relief measures will enable the telecom sector to achieve goals set under the Digital India mission.

The Cabinet has announced several reforms for the telecom sector, including redefining adjusted gross revenue (AGR) that will now include revenues earned only from telecom services. The government calculates various levies on AGR.

“The telecom sector is one of the prime movers of the economy and the key enabler for making India a Digital Society, I welcome the Government of India’s announcement of reforms and relief measures that will enable the industry to achieve the goals of Digital India. I thank Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) for this bold initiative,” Ambani said.

RIL’s telecom arm Jio said the government’s telecom sector reforms will encourage it to bring newer and greater benefits to the customers.

Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that as part of the reforms in the telecom sector, the Cabinet has allowed a four-year moratorium on all dues that telecom operators have to pay to the government, including annual payments of dues arising out of the AGR judgment

and spectrum purchased in past auctions excluding the March 2021 auction.

The government has given the option to telecom operators to pay the interest amount arising due to deferment of payment by way of equity.

The minister said 100 per cent FDI (foreign direct investment) in telecom via the automatic route was approved by the Cabinet. Earlier, automatic investment routes were limited to 49 per cent level and approval from concerned authorities was required for foreign investment beyond the 49 per cent level.

The Cabinet has approved the allocation of spectrum through an auction for a period of 30 years compared to the 20-year period prevalent at present.

Telecom operators will also be allowed to surrender spectrum that will be acquired in future auctions after 10 years of the lock-in period. There will be no spectrum usage charges levied for spectrum acquired in future auctions.

“We look forward to working with the Government of India and other industry players in reaching all the goals and milestones of the Digital India vision, so that we can collectively make every sector of the economy productive and enhance the ease of living for every Indian,” Jio said.

FinMin asks IBA to play pivotal role in resurgence of economy



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry on Wednesday asked Indian Banks’ Association (IBA) to play a pivotal role in the resurgence of the economy in the 75th year of India’s independence.

“At this juncture I would urge the IBA Chairman to scout for good competent resources and technology adoption for capitalisation.

IBA should not be merely an association that passes banking issues to the RBI, it must rather strive to integrate with economic reforms for boosting growth,” Financial Services Secretary Debasish Panda said. Inaugurating the Delhi office of IBA, the secretary suggested that the Association can also look at

providing training and skilling to middle management banking professionals so as to unburden banks in the same task. “IBA has a pivotal role to play in terms of research and key banking issues and a significant role to play in the resurgence of the economy in the 75th year of India’s independence,” he said.

During the occasion, IBA Chairman Rajkiran Rai said IBA’s transformation started in 2018 and is now more closely involved in the business side operations than mere advocacy. IBA is involved in finding new solutions for the customers especially during the pandemic and has come up with guidelines for the cohesive functioning of the entire banking system, IBA CEO Sunil Mehta said.

Govt to sell 5% in Hindustan Copper via OFS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government will sell 5 per cent of its stake in state-owned Hindustan Copper through an offer for sale (OFS) this week, according to a regulatory filing. The OFS will take place on Thursday and Friday through a separate, designated window of the BSE Ltd and NSE, Hindustan Copper said in a filing to BSE.

President of India, acting through and represented by the Ministry of Mines, Government of India, is the promoter of Hindustan Copper Ltd,” the filing said. The Govt will sell 48,351,201 equity shares representing 5 per cent of the total issued and paid up equity share capital of the company.

“The Promoter...Proposes to sell up to 48,351,201 equity shares of

the company (representing 5 per cent of the total issued and paid up equity share capital of the company...On September 16, 2021 (for non-retail investors only) and on September 17, 2021 (for retail investors and non-retail investors who choose to carry forward their un-allotted bids) with an option of additionally sell 48,351,201 equity shares...Through a separate,

designated window of the BSE Ltd and the National Stock Exchange of India Ltd (NSE),” Hindustan Copper said in a filing to BSE. The floor price for the offer will be ₹116 per equity share, the filing said. Hindustan Copper Ltd, a public sector undertaking under the administrative control of the Ministry of Mines, was incorporated in November, 1967.

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

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“He worked as a driver and was

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kerala logs 17,681 new Covid cases

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

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

However, 17,681 fresh positive cases, reported in the last 24 hours, out of 97,070 samples tested during the same period, gives a figure of more than 18 per cent.

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

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

Bengal extends corona restrictions till Sept 30

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

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

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

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

Didi supports farm stir, asks Centre to withdraw farm bills

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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

Speaking to a collection of Sikh gentry inside the most revered

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

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

Leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan, who had lambasted the Bishop by declaring that persons in responsible positions should not make statements that would communally divide the society, has retracted from his earlier stance

and has called a truce. Satheesan wrote a letter to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan with an offer that he was ready to mediate with the spiritual leader of the Christians in Kerala.

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

Vijayan said that he was hearing the term Narcotic Terrorism for the first time. But

Catholic leaders in both the ruling LDF and the opposition UDF called on the Bishop and expressed solidarity with the latter. P J Joseph, chairman, Kerala Congress (J) and Jose K Mani, chairman, Kerala Congress (M), though do not see eye to eye on any issues were the first ones to call on the Bishop.

The BJP, struggling to get a foothold in the State and the leaders of which are under investigation by the State Police for financial impropriety, rushed to the Bishop’s Palace in Pala and declared their support

to him on the issue.

But the activists of SDPI, an extremist outfit representing the Muslim community, undertook a procession to the Bishop’s Palace to condemn the latter’s statement. On Wednesday, the CPI(M) joined hands with the SDPI to pull down the local self government led by the UDF in Eerattupetta Municipality. Interestingly, the BJP, which had condemned the Church in the past for its support to religious conversions, has openly extended support to the Bishop for his condemnation of the Love Jihad.

Mumbai cops file supplementary chargesheet against Kundra

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

Kundra, who was arrested on the night of July 19 in connection with a complaint regis-

tered by the Crime Branch in 2021, has been booked under Sections 292, 293 (sale of obscene material) under the Indian Penal Code, Sections 66E, 67, 67A (transmission of sexually explicit material) under the Information Technology Act and provisions of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act.

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

was making an attempt to connect him with the crime.

Kundra, who is the founder Viaan Industries Ltd, and his United Kingdom-based brother-in-law Pradeep Bakshi, the Chairman of Kenrin Group, London, have been named masterminds of the porn content racket.

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

Earlier, nine persons had been arrested. They comprised television actress Gehna Vashisht (32) Yasmin Khan (40)

Monu Joshi (28) Pratibha Nalavade (33) Atif Ahmed (24), Dipankar Khasnavis (38), Bhanusurya Thakur (26) Tanvir Hashmi (40) and Umesh Kamat (39). Kundra is the owner of Viaan Industries Ltd, jointly promoted by the couple, while Bakshi — a British citizen, who is married to Kundra’s sister — is the Chairman of Kenrin Ltd., London.

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

Pakistan Govt open to pardon TTP members

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Afghan female footballers evade Taliban, reach Pak

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD



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

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

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

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

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

The move to bring the 32

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

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

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

Taiwan drills military as concerns over China grow

Jiandong (Taiwan): The F-16 screamed across the sky on Wednesday before landing on a highway cut through pineapple fields in southwestern Taiwan to refuel quickly and take off again.

The Taiwanese military exercise envisioned a Chinese attack taking out the island’s main airfields, necessitating the use of rural roads as runways to carry on the fight. War is not imminent, but as China has grown increasingly assertive in both the East China and South China Seas, Taiwan is stepping up its defense. Across the region, the United States and its allies are deepening military cooperation and strategizing

ing over an effective response.

China, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory, flies fighter jets toward Taiwan on a regular basis in an effort to warn and intimidate the island’s air force. Last month, Chinese fighter jets, anti-submarine aircraft and combat ships conducted joint assault drills near Taiwan with China saying the exercise was necessary to safeguard its sovereignty.

US President Joe Biden on Tuesday announced a meeting next week with key regional players that form the so-called “Quad” — India, Australia and Japan together with the US — for in-person talks. **AP**

ISIS bride wants chance to face UK courts, fight terror

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

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

UK bans Chinese envoy from Parl; angry Beijing condemns move

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

Khalistanis gaining ground in US: Report

India’s appeals to curb them fall on deaf ears

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FROM PAGE 1

TATA SONS, SPICEJET BID FOR AIR INDIA

Earlier in September, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia had confirmed that the deadline for financial bids for Air India will remain September 15. The strategic sale of Air India was approved by the Cabinet committee on Economic Affairs in February 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic had delayed the proposed sale of the airline.

So far, only the two bids have been made for the airlines with Tata Group being the frontrunner in the Centre’s divestment plan. This is the third attempt of the government to divest its stake in Air India after 2001 and 2017. The Tata Group was also at the forefront of buying a stake in the national carrier when the Government decided to sell its stake in 2001 and 2017 respectively.

The Government has been trying to find a buyer for Air India and earlier the Government was up for selling a 76 per cent stake. Now, the Centre is selling 100 per cent stake of Air India, including Air India’s 100 per cent shareholding in AI Express Ltd and 50 percent in Air India SATS Airport Services Private Ltd.

The stake sale process which begun on January 2020, faced delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In April 2021, the Government asked potential bidders to put in financial bids.

As per the Air India EoI floated by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) in January 2020, of the airline’s total debt of Rs 60,074 crore as of March 31, 2019, the buyer would be required to absorb Rs 23,286.5 crore. The rest would be transferred to Air India Assets Holding Ltd (AIAHL), a special purpose vehicle.

Air India has been in losses ever since its merger with domestic operator Indian Airlines in 2007. Currently, the airline controls over 4,400 domestic and 1,800 international landing and parking slots at domestic airports as well as 900 slots abroad. Currently, Air India has a debt of around Rs 43,000 crore of which Rs 22,000 crore will also be transferred to the Air India Asset Holding Limited (AIAHL). Besides, the bidder would get 100 per cent of the

low-cost arm Air India Express and 50 per cent of AISATS, which provides cargo and ground handling services at major Indian airports.

INDIA ASSAILS STATE’ PAK, OIC FOR KASHMIR RANT AT UNHRC

“Pakistan has been engaged in systematic persecution, forced conversions, targeted killings, sectarian violence and faith-based discrimination against its ethnic and religious minorities,” he said.

Incidents of violence against minority communities, including attacks on their places of worship, their cultural heritage, as well as their private property have taken place with impunity in Pakistan, the Indian diplomat said.

He said a “climate of fear” continues to drastically impact the daily lives of minorities in Pakistan.

“Pakistan is a country which has been globally recognised as a country openly supporting, training, financing and arming terrorists including UN proscribed terrorists, as a matter of state policy,” he said.

“The relevant multilateral institutions have been raising serious concerns on its failure to stop terror financing and lack of effective actions against terror entities,” he noted.

He said dissenting voices from civil societies, human rights defenders, journalists are muzzled daily in Pakistan, with the support of the government.

“Enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, murders and abductions have been used as a tool for subjugation and to muzzle any form of dissent or criticism. The impunity with which such abuses have been carried out exposes the hollowness of Pakistan’s commitment to human rights,” Badhe added.

He also slammed the OIC for raising the Kashmir issue at the council, asserting that the group has no locus standi to comment on the internal affairs of the country.

“We once again regret and reject the reference made by the OIC to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir which is an integral part of India,” Badhe said.

“The OIC has helplessly allowed itself to be held hostage by Pakistan, which holds the chairmanship of their Geneva Chapter, to subserve its own agenda. It’s for the members of the OIC to decide if it is in their interest to allow Pakistan to do so,” he said.

STAGE SET FOR GST MEET IN LUCKNOW

of pharmaceuticals for two years.

Many states are reeling under extreme financial constraints and are stretched beyond their limits and are hence pitching for an extension by another five years, thus extending the compensation cess for states beyond 2022 is something on the cards, and something concrete may come up in this regard. The states and the Centre had opted for back-to-back loans to borrow funds to meet the compensation requirement.

In addition, the Group of Ministers (GoM) has recommended the states to independently explore the proposal of 10 paise per unit of electricity consumption or sale. Also, the GST Council meeting will help in facilitating the procedure for Aadhaar authentication of existing GST users.

Besides, the GST Council is likely to send out a clarification on the interest levied on wrongful/ineligible ITC claims.

The meeting will be attended by Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary and the ministers nominated as members of the GST Council on behalf of all the states. At the meeting, senior officers of Government of India and all states concerned will also participate for the cooperation of the members of the GST Council.

UP Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna said on Wednesday that the venue of the GST Council meeting would be Taj Hotel and the proceedings would start at 11 am and important points related to GST would be discussed in detail.

Khanna said that a preparatory meeting of senior officers of the Government of India and all states would be held on Thursday at 11 am at the same venue.

Modi, Mamata, Adar among Time’s ‘most influential people’

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla have been named among the world’s 100 most influential people of 2021 by *TIME* magazine.

TIME on Wednesday unveiled its ‘The 100 Most Influential People of 2021’, a global list that includes US President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Duke and Duchess of Sussex Prince Harry and Meghan, former US President Donald Trump and co-founder of the Taliban Mullah Baradar.

TIME’s profile of Modi says that in its 74 years as an independent nation, India has had three pivotal leaders — Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Modi. “Narendra Modi is the



third, dominating the country’s politics like no one since them.” The profile written by noted CNN journalist Fareed Zakaria alleges that Modi has “pushed the country away from secularism and toward Hindu nationalism.”

It also accuses the 69-year-old leader of “eroding the rights” of India’s Muslim minority and imprisoning and intimidating journalists.

On Banerjee, her profile for the 100 most influential list says that the 66-year-old leader “has become the face of fierceness in Indian politics.” “Of Banerjee, it is said, she doesn’t lead her party,

the Trinamool Congress - she is the party. The street-fighter spirit and self-made life in a patriarchal culture set her apart,” the profile says. Poonawalla’s *TIME* profile says that from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 40-year-old head of the world’s largest vaccine maker “sought to meet the moment”

“The pandemic is not over yet, and Poonawalla could still help end it. Vaccine inequality is stark, and delayed immunisation in one part of the world can have global consequences—including the risk of more dangerous variants emerging,” it says.

The *Time* profile describes the Taliban co-founder Baradar as a “quiet, secretive man who rarely gives public statements or interviews.”

“Baradar nonetheless represents a more moderate current within the Taliban, the one that will be thrust into the limelight to win Western support and desperately needed financial aid. The question is whether the man who coaxed the Americans out of Afghanistan can sway his own movement,” says Baradar’s profile.

The list also includes tennis player Naomi Osaka, Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny, music icon Britney Spears, executive director of the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council Manjusha P. Kulkarni, Apple CEO Tim Cook, actor Kate Winslet and the first African and first woman to lead the World Trade Organization Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

SC fumes at tribunal appointments, says Govt ‘cherry-picked’ names

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a strong indictment of the Government over non-filling of vacancies at the tribunals across the country, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said the manner in which appointments have been made clearly indicates “cherry-picking” of names.

Chief Justice NV Ramana and Justices DY Chandrachud and L Nageswara Rao came down heavily on Centre and told Attorney General KK Venugopal about their displeasure on the appointments in tribunals, especially on displacing of National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) Chairperson and appointing new person and non-adherence to the apex court’s recommendations.

The apex asked the Centre to make appointments within two weeks to the tribunals which are

facing severe crunch of presiding officers as well as judicial and technical members, and apprise it of reasons if persons from the recommended list are left out in the process.

“The appointment letters which have been issued clearly indicate they have selected cherry picking three names from the select list and others from the waitlist, ignoring others in the select list. In service law, you can’t go to the waitlist ignoring the select list. What kind of selection and appointment is this?” the bench asked Attorney General KK Venugopal, who assured the bench that the Centre would make appointments in two weeks.

It will be from the list of persons recommended by the search and selection committee.

Senior advocate Arvind Datar, representing the petition-

er Congress MP Jairam Ramesh, said that for the ITAT, the search cum selection committee selected 41 people but only 13 have been chosen on basis which “we don’t know”.

“This is nothing new. Every time it is the same story,” the bench said. The CJI said the Supreme Court judges undertook an elaborate exercise to shortlist the names during the Covid and the entire efforts are going in vain.

“We travelled across the country. We spent a lot of time. During Covid, your Government requested us to conduct interviews as early as possible. We wasted so much time,” the CJI expressed exasperation. The CJI commented that as per the latest appointment the members will have tenure of only one year and said, “Which judge will go to join this job for one year?”

On the issue of non-acceptance of names recommended by the selection committee, Venugopal said the Government has the power not to accept the recommendations made. “We are a democratic country in which rule of law is followed and we are working under the Constitution. You can’t say that I don’t accept,” the CJI said.

“What is the sanctity of the process if the Government has the last word? Selection committee undertakes an elaborate process to short-list the names,” the bench said. There are around 250 posts lying vacant in various key tribunals and appellate tribunals across the country, the CJI added.

The bench expressed resentment over the “hurried” appointment of Justice M Venugopal as acting chairperson of the NCLAT.



SLUMBER, THE BEST MEDICINE

Digital health technologies are the vehicles of change and awareness for ensuring a good night's sleep, says DR SIBASISH DEY

The ongoing pandemic has spurred the adoption of digital health technologies across the country. People far and wide have resorted to online consultations and remote monitoring tools to treat diseases. The government of India also launched the National Digital Health Mission to advance the healthcare ecosystem and fuel the adoption of telemedicine and telemonitoring.

Digital healthcare tools and techniques enable remote monitoring of patients, bridging the accessibility gap between the doctor and the patient. They also help reduce the impact of the dismal doctor-patient ratio in India, which currently stands at 1:1445 (one doctor for every 1445 patients). The ideal ratio, as prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO), is 1:1000. Overall, digital healthcare and the data collected helps the medical community to predict health problems, develop effective solutions and advance medical research. Digital healthcare has also given sleep awareness an exponential boost. More people willingly are undertaking sleep tests and subsequent therapies today.

But why should sleep be monitored?

Sleep is one of the most important biological processes that help the body to function properly. It allows the body enough time to rest and aids in healing and repairing blood vessels, muscles, and even the heart. When we sleep, memory consolidation happens. Our thoughts and experiences are organised and stored in our memory for quick recall at a later stage. Productivity during the day is better, while reaction to various challenges is faster and more effective. Even though sleep has multiple benefits, a good night's sleep is not common amongst most people, given today's erratic lifestyle and working hours.



Though our work schedules and lifestyle highly impact our sleeping patterns, negligence is the biggest cause of unhealthy sleep cycles. We respect the importance of food and exercise in our lives but do not give sleep the attention it deserves. Ironically, sleep tends to be way more critical. Another vital aspect to consider here is the quality of sleep. We may sleep for over seven hours each day; still, if it is interrupted, the purpose is lost. This leads to sleeping issues such as insomnia and sleep apnea. Sleeping disorders like sleep apnea have detrimental effects on our bodies, making their diagnosis and treatment even more critical. In a country with over 1.3 billion people, sleep awareness remains an unspoken subject to date. India is the second most sleep-deprived country globally, with an average of seven hours, one minute of sleep and is only ahead of Japan.

Innovation in digital technologies

for sleep

As evident from the data above, India is a sleep-deprived country. Apart from the unimportance given to it, the primary reason is the awareness gap and unavailability of suitable infrastructure to support sleep testing. Polysomnography, the study of sleep, requires a sleep laboratory. It is expensive and a tedious process, so people do not willingly undertake it. The introduction of digital solutions for sleep disorder testing and treatment has given manageable and easy to apply devices that are now available in the comfort of our homes. They are user friendly, cost-effective, and enable remote monitoring of the patient. For example, continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) therapy has proven to be an effective connected treatment option for sleep-disordered breathing, commonly known as Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA), at home. Administered with the help of a modest size device,



it pushes air into the patient's breathing system with a calibrated pressure that opens the obstructed airway.

Similarly, testing of sleep disorders has transitioned from sleep labs to our bedrooms with simple wearable devices. The easy access and increasing awareness about overall well-being have also encouraged people to undertake sleep tests even on experiencing mild symptoms of sleep disorders. India's medical fraternity has also begun considering sleep disorders as a possible cause of multiple chronic ailments such as hypertension and cardiovascular issues and have started recommending sleep testing and therapy to their patients.

The road ahead

Even though digital healthcare solutions have pushed sleep awareness, the need of the hour is also a nationwide awareness campaign about the various types of sleep disorders and

the consequences. An erratic lifestyle and long working hours resulting from the pandemic have put our health at significant risk, making it essential to monitor our sleep hygiene.

A healthy sleep cycle impacts our overall well-being in numerous ways. Apart from keeping our productivity in check, it also improves our cardiovascular system, blood pressure, mental health, keeps obesity in check, and multiple other things. The key takeaway here is that we must practice a healthy sleep routine. If anyone experiences morning headaches, daytime fatigue, and other associated symptoms, they should consult a sleep-specialist. A night of sound sleep leads to a healthy mind and a healthy body.

(The author is the head of medical affairs at ResMed, a medical equipment company, in India and South Asia.)



Confidence and comfort over style

SIDDHARTH GROVER highlights why women's closets are incomplete without a good collection of lingerie

In the present times, modern women prefer possessing lingerie that is comfortable and size appropriate. *Passé* are the days when inner-wear was solely the dire need for females. It is no longer a dream for them to own colourful and seductive lingerie. Rather, it has now become a style quotient symbol that helps them gain happiness and confidence beyond comfort and coverage.

The consumer psyche has undergone a major shift and women prefer variety not only in clothes but in lingerie as well. Their innerwear now occupies a prominent position in their closet. In fact, they have a lingerie wardrobe that they regularly maintain and wish to own lingerie that is simple, comfortable, and skin-friendly!

The rising prominence of a lingerie wardrobe amongst females

Lingerie is now recognized as modern times' trendy underclothing product that helps boost the self-morale and enhances the beauty of a female rather than just acting as a mere coverall. Females nowadays are independent, bold, and explicitly share about their choices and preferences. Well-fitting lingerie has become their ideal companion now and hence they want nothing but the best.

Just like the branded clothes, intimate wear also has its dedicated space in the females' closets.

Rather, they now have a lingerie wardrobe that simply refers to having a variety. Women are always on the lookout for options that offer comfort and yet are voguish in design. However, they also desire to have innerwear that is vibrant, attractive, and sexy at the same time. Variety in fabric, design, style, and colors is something that they vouch for!

Since following fashion seems to be the new fad, with the change in dressing styles and fashion statements, the need for a variety of innerwear is also driven. The female community in ultra-modern times loves to experiment. They are also aware that lingerie can make or break your outfit and that the right pieces can impose a remarkable impact. Hence, they opt for matching their innerwear or contrasting it with their clothes.

Their collection now has t-shirt bras specifically for t-shirts and shirts, sports bras for workout sessions, backless and off-shoulder bras for designer tops and dresses along with a diverse variety of thongs and bikini bottoms as well as other underwear variants for special occasions. They also own innerwear in nude, white, black, along with neon and other colours that pop out and add stylish hues to their outfits. Camisoles, spaghetti, and so on, to be worn under dresses are a part of their lingerie wardrobe nowadays as well. The sole reason for this is that any single type of innerwear won't suffice their requirement and won't compliment the kinds of clothes that modern females wear. Hence, owning a lingerie wardrobe with diversity is important

Summing up

The innerwear industry is also leaving no stone unturned so as to bring about innovations and cater to the rising as well as diverse requirements of the female consumers. It is proliferating significantly in order to match up with the surging demands.

Lingerie is the first thing we put on while dressing up. A good experience with the right innerwear can be mesmerising but a bad one can turn out to be horrifying or even a nightmare. Hence, females now love their innerwear immensely. They choose the one that fits their bill of comfort, style, and fitting and are dedicating their attention towards building their lingerie closet rather than providing it a space in their existing wardrobe!

Lingerie can be of various types ranging from daily wear, bridal, nightwear, sporty, and occasional wear comprising of camisoles, bralettes, bikinis, stickies, pasties, etc. It is suggested that one should do a thorough research and select the one as per the usage and the requirement. Also one should be open to experiment and flexible enough to try out varieties. Building up your lingerie wardrobe is indeed a gradual process. Hence, one should give it time and patience.

(The author is the director of Groversons Paris Beauty, a high-end lingerie brand.)



Healthy transformation

ARJUN KAPOOR reveals how he became fit through social media chat sessions. By TEAM VIVA



Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor has been the talk of the town recently because of his physical transformation. The actor says he feels encouraged with the appreciation that he has been receiving and that it is motivating him to constantly work towards being better each day. Arjun, who has battled obesity for the longest time, wants to share the wealth of knowledge that his trainer and food-curator has to offer through his social media so that people benefit from it.

The actor confesses, "It is really encouraging to see people appreciative of the hard work that I'm putting in. It feels great to constantly try to become better. I have to give a lot of credit to my trainer Drew Neal and Akshat Arora, who has taken care of my nutritional needs with his inventive dishes, for keeping me on track. I'm really lucky that I have them to keep me focussed on my fitness goals every single day."

He adds, "A lot of people have been asking me to share how I have transformed myself and so, I'm thinking of starting chat sessions on social media with my trainer, my food curator, among others, to discuss how transformation can be achieved without pushing your body close to the edge, without doing it in a harmful way that can have adverse effects on one's body and health. One should have long-term planning to stay fit and healthy and not look at short-term results."

Arjun's social media is highly engaging as he has some unique IP's like *Arjun Recommends*, through which he suggests high content films and shows for people to enjoy. He recently started another social media property called *Bak Bak with Baba* in which he hosts fun and engaging chat sessions with his friends and colleagues. This talk show is different from the other chat shows that have existed so far as it's more personal, anecdotal and steers clear from addressing controversies.

Transforming education: One podcast at a time

DUSHYANTT KOHLI discusses the future of knowledge delivery for young and growing brains

In the older times, audio was the only means by which people learned and passed on learning. In fact, even before the TV was invented, wireless radio-communication was a part of everyday life to communicate and share information.

Can audio still play a vital role in literacy? Will listening to audio or podcasts help students become better readers? Or will it simply be a rather passive way to consume content? Currently, research highlights that a growing number of young minds are choosing to listen to audio stories or content, when travelling or in their leisure time, instead of reading books.

Having said that, now the question that arises here is, can audio learning become the future of knowledge delivery for these young and growing minds?

The fact- At present, the population of India is 1.4 billion, and 1.1 billion have mobile devices or smartphones. Out of 1.1 billion people, 622 million are active internet users. That makes 43 per cent of the population. All these people using the internet can access audio as all it requires is a basic mobile handset and minimal internet bandwidth. Considering the convenience of minimal infrastructural need to be able to consume audio content and fast-growing internet penetration in tier-3 and 4 markets of India, one can agree that the potential of content consumption through audio is better. Therefore, the possibility of audio-led digital education in our country is immense.

Let's take a look at another aspect; 850 million people are below 35 years old and 70 per cent of them live in rural India. If we talk



about educating this lot, digital mediums with a focus on audio platforms are the way forward.

Rising demand for audio content- At present, India is witnessing a rapid digital revolution. A large part of the population is getting accustomed to the use of several digital platforms. It has been flooded with a variety of content. Moreover, with the fast adaptation of digital content consumption and impressive growth of OTT platforms in the past two years, people got habitual of consuming content on their personal devices at the time of their choice.

At the same time, knowing the ill effects of increasing screen time, people are now turning to audio content especially for gaining knowledge and fulfilling their learning need through podcasts, audiobooks, and so on. In fact, India's podcast market is growing at 34.5 per cent CAGR and will continue to grow at the same rate till 2023, as per a KPMG report.

Moreover, the demand for audio content in Indian regional languages has increased considerably in the last few years. The pan-



demic-induced lockdown has been a driving factor. Now more people are opting for podcasts that offer relevant content in regional languages for e-learning and entertainment purposes.

Further, considering the bigger challenge of infrastructure and limited availability of resources to the rural population of India, audio is becoming the most convenient way of consuming content for any purpose. Similarly, for education, audio has the potential to provide maximum coverage, considering the 19,500 different languages/dialects prevalent in our country. It is because audio content is faster to create and can be accessed in a low-bandwidth area even on a basic mobile phone, unlike other mediums where the screen plays an important role.

Benefits of podcasts/audio content- So, the podcast-based platforms or audio content are addressing the digital learning need-gap with their innovation-driven approach. These are bringing about the desired change, catering to a large number of learners, especially from the rural

TRENDBLAZER



'DON'T MISUSE SOCIAL MEDIA'

Actor **ANIL KAPOOR**, who is very active on social media, during a conversation with actor-filmmaker Arbaaz Khan on the chat show *Pinch Season 2*, shared his views about the same.

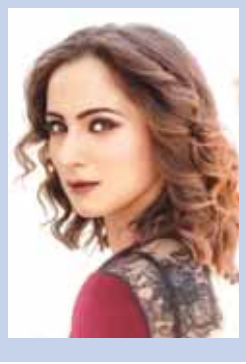
"My advice is, don't be trigger-happy, use social media positively. It can be a great platform for spreading love and positive messages. Don't exploit it for sensationalism," Kapoor cautioned. "When you don't have much knowledge about a matter, why do you comment on it? It is better to remain silent and mind your own business," he added.

fairtalk SANJAY DUTT



'I was nervous. I was a newcomer, think about the kind of pressure that was on me. The shooting of *Rocky* was in Kashmir and my first shot was to jump and scream 'help'. Mr. Suresh Bhatt (choreographer) didn't think I could pull off the stunt in one go. I assured him I can. There were some 50 to 60 people around and I was very nervous.'

dailytalk LAVINA TANDON



'I do believe in the ultimate supremacy of God, and I am a person full of faith. So, it gets easier for me to get into the emotion of the character because to play the role of Mirabai who is a devotee of Lord Krishna is a blessing. To bring out the character, I am seen in a yellow-coloured saree donned with intricate flower jewellery.'

CHALLENGES PUSH ME FORWARD: COMER

Actress **JODIE COMER** was thrilled by the opportunity to work with Shawn Levy and Ryan Reynolds in their forthcoming project. "Ryan is one of the funniest people on earth, and knowing I would mostly be doing scenes with him, working as his partner, was terrifying," she expressed.

"What I loved about *Free Guy* was the aspect of it being live-action," Comer said. Comer plays Millie, a beautiful and brilliant video-game designer and programmer who comes into Guy's life.



BEING VOCAL FOR LOCAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



public spending on rural tourism within their rural development programs. On the other hand, we have China's case where a major government policy has ensured the unhindered flow of funds and prioritisation. Now that India is heading towards strategic rural tourism, we can expect bigger gains. The strategy addresses all the pain points of tourism in India, be

it lack of coordination, work in silos, a scattered skill ecosystem, and skewed private participation. Interestingly, the strategy embeds tourism as a component of rural development. With this, we depart from the current scheme of things where random rural tourism projects are undertaken across the nation without a strategic direction or accountability for other states and

departments.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The authors are independent policy researchers.)

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

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



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

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

Alka Arora is NSIC's new CMD

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

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

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

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

PFC wins Rajbhasha Kirti award



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

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

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

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

POWERGRID's CorpCom team commended

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

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



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



Sri Lankan delegation visits NAFED to explore mutual business avenues

SRM and HCL collaboratively open an in-vitro diagnostic lab

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

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

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



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

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

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

Hindi Diwas celebrations at PNB's head office

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Working and growing together

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Virat, Rahul static at 4th & 6th



PTI ■ DUBAI

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

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

ninth in the list.

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

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

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

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

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

places to 20th) have also made notable progress.

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

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

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

Limited spectators allowed at IPL

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

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

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

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

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

"Fans can buy tickets starting September 16 for the remainder of the tournament on the official website www.IPL20.Com. Tickets can also be purchased on PlatinumList.Net," the league organisers said.



Delhi Capitals include net bowler Khejroliya in main squad

PTI ■ DUBAI

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

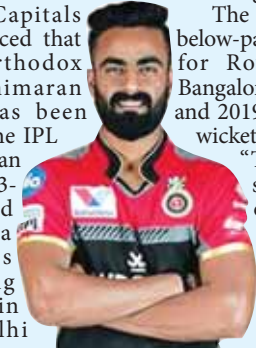
"Delhi Capitals today announced that left-arm orthodox bowler Manimaran Siddharth has been ruled out of the IPL 2021 due to an injury. The 23-year-old incurred a quadriceps strain during training in Dubai," Delhi

Capitals said in a release.

Left-arm medium fast bowler Khejroliya, who is already part of the Delhi Capitals team's bio-bubble as a net bowler, was readily included in the main squad. Khejroliya, who plays domestic cricket for the Delhi state side, has so far taken 17 wickets in 15 T20 matches at an average of 23.29.

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

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



Manika Batra not in India squad



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

of G Sathiyam (38), Harmeet Desai (72), Manav Thakkar (134) and Sanil Shetty (247).

Powerhouse China is not taking part in the event, raising medal hopes in the men's team event. Singles and doubles competitions will also be conducted. The Table Tennis Federation of India had made it clear that any player not attending the camp will not be considered for selection. The team was picked on Wednesday and was subsequently published on TTFI website.

The federation had made attendance in camps compulsory following the Tokyo

Olympics.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Will try and replicate 2017 Champions Trophy final: Hasan Ali

PTI ■ KARACHI

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ DUBAI

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

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

It will be followed by the T20 World Cup from October 17. "The tournament being in

UAE probably levels the playing field a little bit," Maxwell, who plays for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL, told 'icc-cricket.Com'.

"Probably makes it a little bit easier for there not to be as much of a home ground advantage. For the IPL to be there to have a lot of international players that are potentially going to be in that World Cup over there playing, I think it's probably levelled the playing field a fair bit."

Australia's top players, including Steve Smith, David Warner, Aaron Finch and Pat Cummins, have not competed in the last few

months and will be back in action at the IPL.

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

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

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

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

Performance in first match will set tone for DC this IPL, says Kaif

PTI ■ DUBAI

Assistant coach Mohammad Kaif reckons the first match in the second half of the Indian Premier League will set the tone for the rest of the tournament for table toppers Delhi Capitals.

The second leg of the T20 league, which was suspended in May due to the increasing COVID-19 cases in India and multiple infections in the IPL bio-bubble, is scheduled to resume in the UAE from September 19.

The Capitals are currently perched on top of the points table with 12 points from eight matches.

"There has been a big break after the first half of the IPL, but we are fortunate that most of the players have been playing international cricket regularly," Kaif was quoted as saying in a media release.

"We have a well-balanced side as there are players with international cricket experience and domestic players, who have been putting in good performances. The first match is going to be crucial for us.

"Our performance in the first match will set the momentum for us," he said.

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

PTI ■ COLOMBO

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

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

"We've spoken to the guys



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

"They'll be picking up bits of information about playing in those conditions that will really get them ready for a big tournament and if they manage themselves well and get some good time in the nets and get used to facilities it will stand us in good stead."

The IPL, which was suspended midway in May due to multiple cases of COVID-19 in its bio bubble, is scheduled to be held in the UAE from September 19 to October 15.

The T20 World Cup is slated to begin on October 17 in Oman and UAE.

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

AP ■ MALMO (SWEDEN)

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP ■ BARCELONA

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

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

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

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



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

Lewandowski capitalized on Bayern's complete control

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

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

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

Lukaku seals Chelsea win over Zenit to start CL defence

AP ■ LONDON

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

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

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

The goal showed why Chelsea invested a club-record 115 million euros (\$135 million in August) in signing from Inter Milan the player it offloaded in 2014 as a peripheral figure.

Lukaku darted into space in the penalty area, evading the defense, to meet a cross from Cesar Azpilicueta and head it into the net in the 69th minute against the Russian champions.

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

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

"We have to keep growing.

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

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



PTI ■ LAUSANNE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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