

**OPINION 8**  
TRIBALS AND THEIR  
DIVINITY CONCEPT

**WORLD 11**  
JOINT EFFORTS ONLY WAY  
TO FIGHT PANDEMIC:XI

**HEALTH 12**  
BEAT THESE  
MYTHS

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY JANUARY 18, 2022; PAGES 14 ₹3



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## Covid vaccination for 12-14 yrs from March

Drive to vaccinate 15-18 yrs with both doses to accomplish by Feb end, 3.45 cr kids given first shot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India may begin inoculating children in the 12-14 age group against Covid-19 in March by when the 15-18 population is likely to get fully vaccinated, said Dr NK Arora, chairman of the Covid-19 working group of National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI), on Monday.

Of the estimated 7.4 crore (74,057,000) population in the 15-18 age bracket, over 3.45 crore have received the first dose of Covaxin so far, and their second dose is due in 28 days, he said.

"Adolescents in this age group have been actively participating in the inoculation process, and going by this pace of vaccination, the rest of the beneficiaries in the 15-18 age group are likely to be covered with the first dose by January-



Workers make face masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits inside a manufacturing unit in Ahmedabad, Monday. PTI

and subsequently their second dose is expected to be done by February-end," he said, adding, there is an estimated 7.5 crore population in the 12-14 age group.

The Government has begun vaccination for teenagers between 15 and 18 years of age from January 3, 2022.

Continued on Page 6

### Govt bans Azithromycin, Favipiravir, Ivermectin for Covid

**New Delhi:** The Union Health Ministry and ICMR have jointly released revised clinical guidance for the management of adult Covid-19 patients according to which drugs Azithromycin, Favipiravir, and Ivermectin have been banned for symptomatic management of mild infection. These medicines were being blatantly used by many doctors resulting in serious side effects in Covid patients. The guidelines came days after a group of doctors wrote to the Government expressing concern over the unwaranted testing, medication, and hospitalisation.

## 2 Indians among 3 killed in Abu Dhabi 'drone' attack

**Iranian-backed Houthis claims responsibility**

AP ■ DUBAI

A suspected drone attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeting a key oil facility in Abu Dhabi killed three people and sparked a separate fire at Abu Dhabi's international airport on Monday, police said.

Police in the United Arab Emirates identified the dead as two Indian nationals and one Pakistani. It did not identify the wounded, who police said suffered minor to moderate injuries at an industrial area where Abu Dhabi's state-owned energy company runs a pipeline network and an oil tanker storage facility.

Three transport tankers caught fire at the facility, while another fire was sparked at an extension of Abu Dhabi International Airport.

Police said that while an investigation was underway, preliminary findings indicated there were small flying objects, possibly belonging to drones, that fell in the two areas and may have caused the explosion and fire. They said there was no significant damage from the incidents, without offering further details.

Meanwhile, Yemen's



In a satellite photo by Planet Labs PBC, Abu Dhabi International Airport is seen Dec 8, 2021. AP

Houthi rebels claimed they were behind an attack targeting the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday, without immediately elaborating. The Iranian-backed Houthis have claimed several attacks that Emirati officials later denied took place.

The incident comes as Yemen's years long war rages on and as an Emirati-flagged vessel was recently captured by the Houthis. Although the UAE has largely withdrawn its own forces from the conflict tearing apart the Arab world's poorest nation, it is still actively engaged in Yemen and supports local militias there fighting the Houthis.

The UAE has been at war in Yemen since early 2015, and was a key member of the Saudi-led coalition that

launched attacks against the Houthis after the group overran the capital of Yemen and ousted the internationally backed government from power.

The Houthis have come under pressure in recent weeks and are suffering heavy losses as Yemeni forces, allied and backed by the UAE, have pushed back the rebels in key southern and central provinces of the country, dashing Houthi efforts to complete their control of the entire northern half of Yemen.

Yemen's government-aligned forces reclaimed the entire southern province of Shabwa from the Houthis earlier this month and made advances in nearby Marib province.

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India's growth in 25 years will be clean, green, sustainable, reliable: Modi

**New Delhi/Davos:** Asserting that India is making its policies today while focussing on requirements for not just the present but also for the next 25 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said this period of growth would be "green and clean" as well as "sustainable and reliable".

In a special address at the World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda 2022 summit, Modi said India has set goals of high growth as well as saturation of welfare and wellness for the next 25 years.

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### CAPSULE

#### 'RDX TIMER FOUND IN IED IN GHAZIPUR MKT'

**New Delhi:** The NSG has informed the Delhi Police that the IED recovered recently from the Ghazipur flower market had a timer device attached to it and had ammonium nitrate and RDX as its components, official sources said on Monday.

#### SC: TAKE CARE OF ZOROASTRIAN BELIEF

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Centre that it may consider tweaking the protocols for the burial of dead bodies of Covid-19 victims in a way that essential tenets of the Zoroastrian belief are also taken care of.

## EC defers Punjab polls to Feb 20 for Ravidas jayanti

Parties had urged EC to put off Feb 14 election date as Guru anniversary falls on Feb 16

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Assembly polls in all 117 constituencies of Punjab have been rescheduled and will be held on February 20. The single-phase polls were earlier slated for February 14. The polls have been deferred by six days in view of the birth anniversary of Guru Ravidas, which will be observed on February 16.

The Election Commission's decision comes in the wake of demand by political parties seeking deferment of polls because thousands of voters could go to Varanasi for Guru Ravidas Jayanti on February 16. Ravidass community constitutes a major vote bank in Punjab politics. A well-known temple dedicated to Guru Ravidas is located in Varanasi.

In a statement, the EC said, "After consideration of all facts made available, Election

Commission has announced 2022 General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of State of Punjab on January 8, 2022 under which notification for the election is to be issued on January 21 and poll is to take place on February 14."

In view of Ravidas Jayanti, Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi had urged the EC to defer the polls by six days. Other parties, including the BJP, the Punjab Lok Congress, the AAP, and the BSP too made similar requests.

As per the new schedule, the date of notification will be on January 25, while the last date of nomination will be February 2. The applications will be scrutinised on February 2, while the last date of withdrawal of application is February 4. Counting would be held on the same day as before — March 10.

"Commission has received several representations from State Government, political parties and other organisations drawing attention regarding movement of a large number of devotees from Punjab to Varanasi for participation in Sri Guru Ravidas Ji Jayanti celebrations, which is observed



on February 16. They have also brought to the notice that a large number of devotees start moving for Varanasi around a week before the day of celebration and keeping the poll day on February 14 will deprive a large number of electors from voting.

In view of this, they have requested to shift the poll date few days after February 16, 2022," it added.

In his letter to the EC, Channi, a Dalit leader, said some representatives of Punjab's Scheduled Castes have demanded that the polls be scheduled in such a way that they are able to visit Banaras, Guru Ravidas's birthplace, during February 10-16 and also participate in the polls.

Continued on Page 6

## Akhilesh is worse than BJP for Muslims, vote for Cong: Bareilvi Cleric

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW

Noted Muslim cleric Maulana Tauqir Raza Khan, who is also Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IMC) Bareilly president, on Monday called the Congress as true "secular" and claimed that Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav is more dangerous for Muslims than the BJP.

Khan, who called the Muslim Parliament of Religions in Bareilly, made above comments while addressing the media here at UPCC headquarter giving his full support to the Congress in elections for all the five States, including Uttar Pradesh. National Convener of Congress Minority Department Azam Baig and State Congress president Ajay Kumar Lallu were present.

Khan, who belongs to Ala Hazrat of Bareilvi sect, said that it is wrong to think that Muslims have left the Congress.

"The reins of the State cannot be handed over to Akhilesh Yadav as he is irresponsible and worse than the BJP for Muslims. We asked Akhilesh Yadav to rectify the mistakes made by his Government in 2012, but we found him irresponsible," he asserted while appealing to the Muslims to strengthen the hands of the Congress.

Instead of Yadavism and Jatavism, humanism is necessary for the State, Khan said.

"I discussed the problems of Muslim society with the leaders of all the political parties involved in the elections and asked them to reflect on these problems in their manifesto and in the party meetings. But apart from the Congress, no political party thought it appropriate to talk openly on these problems. After meeting Priyanka Gandhi I realised that the future of this country and the State, communal harmony and constitution can be safe in their hands," claimed Khan.

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## Balyan meets Naresh Tikait, fuels speculation

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI



In a bid to reach out to farmers of west Uttar Pradesh, Union Minister of State and Muzaffarnagar MP Sanjeev Balyan on Monday held a surprise meeting with the national president of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) Naresh Tikait.

Balyan, who is busy campaigning, visited Naresh Tikait's house in Sisauli fuelling political speculation.

The first and second phase of elections on February 10 and February 14 are mostly in western UP, where farmers and Jats have a dominant say in deciding the outcome.

It is conventionally held that performance in the western UP sets the trend for the rest of the State Assembly elections.

It is understood that Union Home Minister Amit Shah may also meet Jat leaders during his visit to Uttar Pradesh. The meeting between Balyan and Tikait in this context assumes significance.

Balyan could not be contacted for his comments on the issue. Both Naresh Tikait and Balyan belong to Muzaffarnagar and also come from the same Khap. It is being said that Naresh Tikait had an operation a few days ago and Balyan had gone to his house only to enquire about his health.

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## SP offers ticket to sitting BJP MLA from Yogi's seat

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the Bharatiya Janata Party deciding to field Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath from his home turf Gorakhpur (Urban) assembly seat in the assembly polls, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday sought to woo the sitting BJP MLA Radha Mohan Agarwal by offering him his party ticket for the seat.

"If you (reporters) can establish contact with him and speak to him, the ticket will be announced and he will get the ticket," Yadav was speaking to reporters at his party headquarters here on the occasion of 'Am Sankalp Divas'. Agarwal has been the MLA from Gorakhpur Urban seat since 2002.

"I remember the oath-taking ceremony of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. I had seen Radha Mohan Agarwal on the occasion. He was not able to find a seat and had to keep standing. He has been insulted the most in the BJP government," Yadav said.

On a question about BJP's disgruntled MLAs, Yadav had earlier asserted, "We cannot give seats to everyone. The BJP can distribute its tickets. We cannot take anyone into the SP now," But,

as soon as Agarwal's name was mentioned, he said he would give him the ticket.

Dismissing speculation about his younger brother's wife Aparna Yadav joining the BJP, Akhilesh Yadav said, "The BJP is more concerned about my family than me. Are you asking the question after being inspired by the BJP?"

Aparna Yadav had contested the 2017 UP assembly elections on SP ticket from Lucknow Cantonment but lost to BJP's Rita Bahuguna Joshi.

On a question on Azad Samaj Party chief Chandrashekhar Azad, the SP chief said, "I had said the SP had given respect to the people of the alliance and had also sacrificed to cement the alliance. At this point of time, whatever sacrifices have to be made should be made."

"The SP is making sacrifices. As far as Chandrashekhar (Ravan) is concerned, I had given him seats. If he wants to help as a brother, he can do so," Yadav added.

"Chandrashekhar had initially accepted two seats, but he said later that his organisation could not agree on it. In this scenario why the SP should be blamed?" he asked.

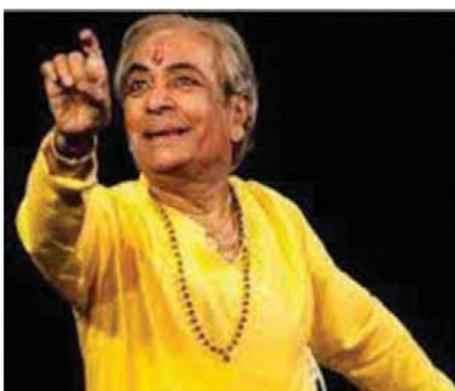
## Birju Maharaj bids adieu to world

**New Delhi:** Legendary Kathak exponent Birju Maharaj, who took the traditional Indian dance form to the world, died at his home here in the early hours of Monday, his granddaughter said. He would have been 84 next month.

Maharaj-ji, as he was popularly known, died surrounded by his family and disciples. They were playing 'antakshari' after dinner when he suddenly took ill, Ragini Maharaj told PTI.

Birju Maharaj, one of India's best known and most loved artistes, was from Lucknow's Kalka-Bindadin Gharana. He is survived by five children, three daughters and two sons, and five grandchildren.

He had been suffering



from a kidney ailment and was under dialysis treatment

for the last month due to high diabetes. He probably died of

a cardiac arrest, his granddaughter said.

"He was with us when this happened. He had his dinner and we were playing 'antakshari' because he loved old music. He was lying down... and suddenly his breathing became uneven. We think it was cardiac arrest as he was also a heart patient.

"This happened between 12.15 and 12.30 am. It must have been just a minute or so. We rushed to the hospital but unfortunately, we could not save him. He died before reaching the hospital," Ragini said.

Ragini, a Kathak dancer herself, said the only solace for the family is that he did not suffer too much in his last moments.

"Two of his disciples and

his two granddaughters, my younger sister Yasvashwini and me, were with him when this happened. He was laughing and smiling in his last moments," she said.

Condolences poured in as news of the death of the Kathak maestro, who would have been 84 on February 4, came in.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his death is an "irreparable loss" to the entire art world.

"Deeply saddened by the demise of Pandit Birju Maharaj ji, who gave Indian dance a special recognition world over. His passing is an irreparable loss to the entire art world. My condolences to his family and fans in this hour of grief," the Prime Minister said.

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## 75 jets in biggest R-Day fly past in 75th year of Independence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Republic Day parade at the Rajpath this year will see the biggest fly past ever with 75 aircraft taking part in it to mark the 75th Independence year. The latest induction, Rafale fighter jets, along with aircraft from the three Services, will enthrall the audience.

Giving details of the planned celebrations, IAF spokesperson Wing Commander Indranil Nandi said here on Monday the fly past will be the "grandest and largest" to mark the "Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav". The fly past will conclude with several Jaguar fighter aircraft flying in the "Amrit" formation to



commemorate the 75 years of Independence.

"The fly past this year will be the grandest and largest with 75 aircraft from IAF, Army and Navy flying during the Republic Day parade. This is in line with the Azadi Ka Amrut

Mahotsav celebrations," he said.

The fly past will include Tangail formation — a tribute to the Tangail air drop operations in 1971 War — will have one Dakota and two Dornier flying in Vic formation.

Continued on Page 6

# UPTET to be held on Jan 23

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Dismissing uncertainty over holding UP Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) amid rising COVID-19 cases, the Uttar Pradesh government announced to conduct it as per schedule on January 23.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday directed the officials to take stock of the preparation and ensure tight security arrangements for the TET. He also asked the additional chief secretary (home) and ADG (law and order) among others to monitor every arrangement through video conferencing.

Presiding over a high-level Covid review meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath told the officials that while allocating the examination centre, past records of the institute must be taken into consideration. "Institutions with tainted or suspicious images should be avoided," he said.

To conduct fair and transparent examination, the additional chief secretary (home) and ADG (law and order), principal secretary (basic education) along with district magistrates, basic education officers, and other officers related to the examination, should monitor the arrangements through video conferencing, the chief minister instructed.

The chief minister further instructed the officials to take precautionary measures maintaining Covid safety protocols. "Ensure that the examination centres have adequate availability of masks, sanitizers, infrared thermometers," he added.

Uttar Pradesh Teacher Eligibility Test (UPTET) 2021 will be conducted in two shifts. The first shift exams will be held from 10:00 am to 12:30 am, and will be a preliminary level exam. The second shift exams will be conducted from 2:30 pm to 5:00 pm. This will be an upper primary level exam.

The Uttar Pradesh government had already announced to give free bus travel to TET candidates. For this, they have to show their admit card and they will be able to travel by bus for free.

"The Transport department has issued instructions in this regard," a government official said.

The UPTET, earlier scheduled to be held on November 28, was cancelled after the question paper leaked. Five people have been arrested for the paper leak and have been booked under the National Security Act (NSA).

# SP has shown its true colours in ticket distribution: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a scathing attack on Samajwadi Party, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that by giving tickets to criminals and history-sheeters responsible for mass exodus of Hindus from Kairana as well as the Muzaffarnagar riots, the party's leadership had shown its true colours.

"Once again the SP has proved that social justice to it means shielding and providing shelter to mafia and gangsters who forcibly capture properties of the poor and the downtrodden, the small traders and the respectable citizens," the chief minister said.

However, Yogi Adityanath added, his government created a scare among the mafia and criminals in the last five years and kept them on the run throughout and would carry on this crusade against them further when the Bharatiya Janata Party returned to power with people's blessings in the coming election.

Chief Minister Yogi said that



Yogi Adityanath said that by giving tickets to criminals and history-sheeters responsible for mass exodus of Hindus from Kairana as well as the Muzaffarnagar riots, the party's leadership had shown its true colours.

the opposition party concerned had already sensed trouble and, therefore, it was shying away from releasing its list of candidates.

Addressing a press meet after a visit to Santosh Hospital at Ghaziabad to take stock of its preparations to tackle the third wave of the novel coronavirus outbreak, the UP chief minister said that the state had set a model within the country, as India had globally under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in terms of protecting lives and livelihood of people throughout the

ongoing pandemic.

Yogi said: "India has set a record by administering 157 crore doses of Covid vaccine since January 16, 2021, when the vaccination drive was launched while UP has given the highest 23.15 crore doses in the country. In Uttar Pradesh, 94 per cent of the population has received the first dose whereas 60 per cent has been given the second dose of the vaccine. In Ghaziabad alone, 98 per cent of its population has been given the first dose while 69 per cent has received the second dose also."

According to the chief minister, 13,000 youths aged 15 to 17 years had been given the first dose of the vaccine in the district. Yogi said that precautionary doses were also being given to frontline health workers.

Yogi Adityanath added that the third wave, though seemingly not as dangerous as the second, could prove to be risky particularly for the elderly, women and children, and that people must avoid crowded places and wear masks to keep

the virus away.

The chief minister said that an awareness programme was also being run in UP to motivate people to follow the Covid protocol and those aged 15 years and above who had not taken the vaccine, to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

The chief minister added that the government was monitoring the situation closely and the CM Helpline as well as the Integrated Covid Command and Control Centre were making 50,000 calls daily to keep track of suspected cases even as the state had more than one lakh active COVID-19 cases of which over 10,000 were in Ghaziabad alone. The chief minister, however, added that less than one per cent of the active cases in UP were in hospitals.

He thanked the prime minister for giving two vaccines against COVID-19 within a very short period of time, a feat appreciated across the world, adding that the malicious campaign of the opposition against the vaccines was an "inhuman" act.

# UP govt violating model code: AKY

Lucknow (PNS):

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday demanded the intervention of the Election Commission of India, alleging that the UP government was violating the model code of conduct by adopting intimidatory tactics against his party. He alleged that the police had been deployed around the SP office.

"Movement of people around the Samajwadi Party office is being restricted by the police while the Bharatiya Janata Party leaders are flouting the Covid protocol and model code of conduct. I urge the Election Commission to intervene and ensure a free and fair election," Akhilesh Yadav said.

Seeking to make an issue of the Lakhimpur firing incident in October last year, Akhilesh Yadav said that the party had taken 'ann sankalp' to defeat the BJP in assembly polls.

Tejinder Singh Virk, a farmer of Lakhimpur who was injured in the Lakhimpur incident in October was also present in the press conference of Akhilesh Yadav.

The SP chief said the BJP

leaders had hatched a conspiracy to kill the farmers by crushing them under the wheels of an SUV. He said Tejinder Singh Virk was seriously injured in the incident and he had now recovered.

"Tejinder Singh fought for the farmers, forcing the Narendra Modi government to repeal the three agriculture related laws. Several hundred farmers died on Delhi borders while a large number of farmers were framed in fake cases," Akhilesh Yadav said.

Claiming the repeal of the agriculture laws as a victory of the farmers Akhilesh Yadav said, "Till the other day the BJP leaders were projecting the three laws as beneficial for the farmers and now they have taken a U-turn and claim that the laws had been repealed in the interest of the farmers."

Promising to give priority to farmers' interests in his party manifesto, Akhilesh Yadav said, "The SP will ensure MSP for all agriculture crops and payment and its government will ensure payment to sugarcane farmers within 15 days and set up a revolving fund for the purpose."

# AAP launches song as part of poll campaign

Lucknow (PNS): Aam Aadmi Party launched a song as a part of its campaign in the UP assembly election on Monday.

While launching the song, AAP Rajya Sabha member and UP incharge Sanjay Singh said the song 'Rajinito ko badalne AAP aaye hai...' (AAP has come to change the political spectrum...) said they would clean the "garbage" from the UP. He said the song would be played in all the 403 constituencies all across the state. He said the song was written by pres-

ident of AAP cultural cell in Bihar, Lokesh Singh, while famous singer Antara Singh had sung it. He said the song contained the party theme of providing free supply of electricity, education, unemployment allowance and Rs 1,000 to women/girls on being voted to the power in UP. Singh said this was AAP's campaign song for the election 2022 and would reach door to door in UP soon.

He said the party had another song for Purvanchal (east UP), 'Sara system me sudhar

aa jai jab bane aam admi ki sarkar. He said those who wanted 300 units of free supply of electricity should vote for AAP. Singh said there was nothing new in the list of the candidates of other political parties.

"All of these candidates are old faces who miserably failed in performing as per the expectation of the people in UP and the people have raised questions on their selection for the election in the past several elections and were raising questions this time also," he said.

**CLASSIFIEDS**  
AUCTION NOTICE

दिनांक 03.02.2022, अपराह्न 3:00 बजे सुप्रीम कोर्ट ऑफ इंडिया के आउटरीचिंग बँक लि०, मुख्यालय-3-बाबूजी मार्ग, लालबाग, लखनऊ में निम्नोद्योग घोषित सामग्रियों की नीलामी, सिक्योरिटी रु० 2,000/- नगद जमा अपराह्न 2:30 बजे तक/आई.पी. सिंह एण्ड सन्स

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I the Undersigned, Mohammad Ali Samashad Ali Shaikh S/o Samashad Ali Shaikh, Ro-VIII and Post-Kathraon, Varanasi, Solemnly Declare that I have lost my Passport at Cantt Depo Bus Stand, Varanasi, on 11.01.2022. Passport Details are follows Passport No. P9617625, Date of Issue 01.02.2017 at Mumbai.

**NOTICE**

My Army No -15424875-P Hav/Dvr (MT) VEERAPATHIRAN K S/o KARUPPIAH R/o AMC service Record's of Lucknow-226002 at Present posted at Unit No.1TT Wing AMC, C & C/o 56APO at Lucknow cantt, in my service record my mother name is wrongly mention VASKHAL. While her correct name is VASANTHAL in all future purpose.

**सूचना**

सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरे एनटीपीसी सेवा अमिलेखों में मेरे दोनों पुत्रों के नाम क्रमशः PRIYANSHU और PIYUSH अंकित हैं। जो अपूर्ण और असत्य हैं। जबकि अन्य अमिलेखों में मेरे पुत्रों के नाम PRIYANSHU NIGAM और PIYUSH NIGAM हैं। जो सत्य व पूर्ण हैं। अतः मेरे पुत्रों को उनके नाम के NIGAM दाखिल के साथ जाना पहचाना व समझा जाए। अमरनाथ पुत्र स्व पन्नालाल निगम निवास- टाईप दक्तीय -397 एनटीपीसी कलोनो ऊंचाहार - रायबरेली

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is reported to the general public that the original copy of Lease Deed of Preeti Rastogi, Resident-D-91, Vignyanpuri Mahanagar Extension Lucknow has fallen on the way. If any gentleman receive the same, then inform the following address. Use of the said Lease Deed will be considered invalid.  
Rakesh Kumar Resident-D-91, Vignyanpuri Mahanagar Extension Lucknow, Mob.: 7052344091

# RLD announces two more candidates

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Rashtriya Lok Dal, on Monday, announced two more candidates for UP assembly elections after being given two more seats by alliance partner Samajwadi Party under the seat-sharing formula.

RLD leader Veerpal Rathi will contest from Chhaprauli constituency while Jai Veer Singh Tomar of RLD will contest from Baraut seat, both in west UP.

Team RLD national convener, Anupam Mishra said the party had announced 28 contestants as of now and they hoped to get more seats under the seat-sharing formula.

The RLD has intensified its campaign in west UP where SP-RLD alliance candidates are in the fray. Mishra said the party was taking help of its team which had expertise in the digital world.

"Social media activists who worked for parties like Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress in the past are in our contact. Some others who earlier were part of the team of famous poll strategist Prashant Kishor have also expressed their willingness to work for RLD in the UP assembly election 2022," he said.

Mishra said the RLD had not new to the use of social media and it had exposure of working even in the rural areas where digital literacy among the voters was low.

"We are doing door to door campaigning and are also planning to get RLD connected with the masses in west UP," he said.

Mishra said the RLD had an edge over other parties in west UP because of farmers' agitation over the repealed farm laws. "The farmers are well acquainted with the RLD for always voicing their struggle and their woes. Besides, the RLD has a rich legacy of late leaders Chaudhary Charan Singh and Chaudhary Ajit Singh while party supremo Jayant Chaudhary always was vocal during the farmers' agitation and had raised their plight in a strong way and had strong affection and support of the farmers in west UP," he said.

The party sources said the RLD hoped to get a total of 38-40 seats under the seat-sharing formula from the Samajwadi Party.

# Cong to field brother of journalist killed in Kheri violence

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With an eye on the coming assembly election, Congress gave entry to Pawan Kashyap, brother of journalist Raman Kashyap who was killed along with farmers in the October 3 violence in Lakhimpur Kheri, in the party and is likely to field him from Nighasan assembly constituency of Lakhimpur Kheri.

Pawan joined the Congress in the presence of senior party members.

Raman was allegedly mowed down by the convoy of Union Minister Ajay Misra Teni's son Ashish Misra while he was covering a farmers' agitation in the Tikunia area in Lakhimpur Kheri on October 3, last year.

Pawan is likely to contest the assembly polls on a Congress ticket from the Nighasan constituency.

Pawan told reporters that he was hopeful that farmers and others would vote for him in the memory of his dead brother.

"We are victims of violence and persecution, and there are many people like us who have lost their loved ones in a similar way. I can feel their pain. If I win, I will focus on law and order and find ways to control violence in the state. I am also a farmer, so I can empathise with them. I will work towards improving their condition," he said.

He said that the Congress leaders asked him if he wanted to contest the Nighasan seat and he gave his consent. It may be recalled that days after the Lakhimpur Kheri violence, a video had gone viral in which Raman can be seen doing his job as a journalist when suddenly a speeding vehicle runs over him along with several farmers. Four

# IMC chief backs Congress in assembly elections Says SP more dangerous for Muslims than BJP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Noted Muslim cleric Maulana Tauqir Raza Khan, who is also the president of Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IMC), Bareilly, on Monday said Congress was a true secular party and claimed that Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav was more dangerous for Muslims than Bharatiya Janata Party.

Khan, who called the Muslim Parliament of Religions in Bareilly, made this comment while addressing media persons at UP Congress Committee headquarters here while extending his full support to the party in assembly elections in all the five states, including Uttar Pradesh. He extended support to the Congress in the presence of Congress Minority Department national convener Azam Baig and UPCC president Ajay Kumar Lallu.

Khan, who belongs to Ala Hazrat in Bareilly, said that it was wrong to think that Muslims had left the Congress and said that they found Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to be true secularists.

"The reins of the state cannot be handed over to Akhilesh Yadav as he is irresponsible and worse for Muslims than BJP. We asked Akhilesh Yadav to rectify the mistakes made by his government in 2012, but we found him irresponsible," Khan asserted while appealing to the

Muslims to strengthen the hands of the Congress.

"For the betterment of the country, it is necessary for the Congress to come to power. The BJP has to be stopped from coming to power. Instead of Yadavism and Jatavism, humanism is necessary for the state," Khan said.

"I discussed the problems of Muslim society with the leaders of all the political parties involved in the elections and asked them to reflect on these problems in their manifesto and in the party meetings. But apart from Congress, no political party thought it appropriate to talk openly on these problems. I also met Priyanka Gandhi regarding all my demands and discussed them in detail with her. After meeting her I realised that the future of this country and the state, communal harmony and Constitution can be safe in the hands of those who and whose families have sacrificed their lives for the unity and integrity of the country," Khan claimed.

It may be mentioned that in response to the recent Dharma Sansad held in Haridwar, on behalf of Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IMC) the Muslim Religion Parliament was convened at Islamia Grounds in Bareilly by Tauqir Raza Khan. Welcoming his support, UPCC president Ajay Kumar Lallu said that this support would play an important role in forming the Congress government in the coming days.

farmers were killed along with Raman that day. The main accused in the case Ashish Misra and 12 others are now in jail for what a special investigation team probing the case said was a 'pre-planned conspiracy'.

Nighasan is an OBC-dominated constituency from where Shashank Verma of the Bharatiya Janata Party is the sitting M.L.A. Ajay Misra Teni was trying hard to get a party ticket for Ashish and there were

posters and banners of him everywhere in Nighasan. Ashish was considered a strong contender for the seat until the Lakhimpur Kheri violence happened.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had recently promised to field those candidates who had been victims of violence in the BJP regime and were "ready to struggle for justice". The Congress has named Asha Singh, mother of rape victim in

Unnao, as its candidate.

Ritu Singh, who was allegedly disrobed during the panchayat elections, is the Congress candidate from Mohammadi, and Poonam Pandey, who was beaten with shoes in front of the chief minister, is the party candidate in Shahjahanpur. Sadaf Jafar, who was jailed for participating in anti-CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) protests, is the Congress candidate in Lucknow Central.

# CITY BRIEFS

**MOU SIGNED**

The College of Arts and Crafts of Lucknow University, led by Vice-Chancellor Prof AK Rai, and principal Alok Kumar Kushwaha, signed an agreement with Bath Spa University, UK, on Monday. DSW Poonam Tandon said that Daniel Allen from the Bath Spa University joined the partnership discussion virtually. Dean, Academics, Rakesh Chandra welcomed the dignitaries and on behalf of the VC, he gave an introduction of Lucknow University and its history. Similarly, Daniel Allen introduced Bath Spa University and its Art Academics. Kushwaha also introduced the College of Arts and Crafts in context with historical perspective and its contributions in contemporary Indian art. Rajan Shripad Fulari, who has been deputed as a liaisoning officer on behalf of the College of Arts and Crafts, pro-

posed various introductory activities between the two universities. Meanwhile, the preparations for Republic Day celebrations have started at Lucknow University. As many as 250 NCC cadets are receiving training for the Republic Day parade and flag hoisting.

**ADMISSION OFFER**

Akshat Mathur, a student of City Montessori School, Aliganj Campus I, has been offered admission by three prestigious universities of USA and Australia, bringing laurels to the city. These universities are Arizona State University of USA, University of Melbourne and Monash University of Australia. CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi congratulated Akshat on his achievement and wished him success in future endeavours.

# 36 nominations filed so far

Lucknow (PNS): A total of 36 nominations have been filed so far for the first phase of assembly polls in 58 constituencies of western Uttar Pradesh. The Election Commission of India said here on Monday said 34 nominations were filed on Monday whereas two nominations were filed earlier. Three nominations each have been filed for Sahibabad, Chhatta and Mathura assembly constituencies and two each for Noida, Dadra and Jewar seats. January 21 is the last date for filing nominations for the first phase where polling is scheduled on February 10.

# Nepalese Tantrik duping people in held in Bijnor

Lucknow (PNS): The Bijnor police have arrested a 'tantrik' from Nepal for allegedly duping people on the pretext of solving their problems through black magic.

A sum of Rs 5.32 lakh, gold and silver jewelry worth lakhs and an Aadhaar card were recovered from him at the time of arrest, police disclosed on Monday. A case was registered against him in this regard and he was sent to jail.

Bijnor Superintendent of Police Dharamveer Singh said investigations revealed that Mohammad Islamuddin, 51, was from Nepal. He had lived in Bihar's Champaran area for the past few years but fled to evade arrest as several cases were lodged against him. He had managed to procure an Aadhaar card in Bihar.

The SP said Islamuddin was residing in a colony located on Seohara-Dhampur road in Bijnor for the last one month. He said several people had complained against him for duping them and after

learning of his criminal activities, two teams were formed which finally arrested the tantrik on Sunday. A case has been registered against him under Indian Penal Code sections 420 (cheating), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), 471 (using as genuine a forged document), 406 (criminal breach of trust) and 411 (dishonestly receiving stolen property). The Bijnor police are now contacting their counterparts in Bihar to get more information about the accused, the SP added.

**PARADIP PORT TRUST**  
**e-TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
Name of the Work : 'Construction of Retaining Walls in the Stack Yard (MCHP area)'. EMD Cost : Rs.21,30,174/- . Last Date and time of submission of Bid : Dt.07.02.2022 up to 17:15 Hrs. For details please refer our Website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>  
Executive Engineer  
Harbour Works Division No.1  
PPT/PR/139/21-22 Dt-17.01.22

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
E-Procurement Tender Notice No.: 22/03 Date: 14.01.2022  
**E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE**  
On behalf of the President of India, The Principal Chief Materials Manager, North Central Railway, Prayagraj (An ISO 9001:2015 Certified Unit) invites the following E-Procurement Tenders.  
S.N. Tender No. Short Description Qty. Tender Opening Date  
1 70212401 EXPANDED METAL SHEET STEEL 1031 SQM 14.02.2022  
2 80211326 PAD RULED FOOLSCAP WHITE SIZE - 21 X 29 CM X 100 LEAVES 9024 Nos. 15.02.2022  
Note: The complete information of above tenders can be seen and downloaded from IREPS website i.e. <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. 51/22 (A)  
North central railways [www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in) @CPRO NCR

**Notice Inviting e-Tender**  
No. SSA/Esst/EPB/II/2021-22/470/2021/8526 Date: 17.01.2022  
Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam (Samagra Shiksha) invites tender from reputed exercise book manufacturers through e-Tendering process for the supply of Evaluation and Practice Books for class-I & II (Four Line and Square Line).  
To participate in this tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves. The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.  
Sd/-Mission Director  
SSA, Assam  
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19  
Janasanyog/CF/2908/21

# 2716 test +ve, 1,420 recover

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As many as 2,716 people tested positive for coronavirus infection in Lucknow while 1,420 patients recovered in the last 24 hours. The active cases in the city as on Monday were 17,658.

CMO office spokesperson Yogesh Raghuvanshi said that maximum cases emerged from Aliganj (384), followed by 344 from Chinhath, 317 from Alambagh, 229 from Silver Jubilee, 205 from Sarojinagar, 203 from Indiranagar, 163 from NK Road, 110 from Tudiaganj, 97 from Aishbagh, and 78 from Red Cross. The fresh cases included 202 travelers, 1,013 contacts of previous cases and 66 health workers.

Meanwhile, doctors warned that RT-PCR results could well be false negative.

"If a person is symptomatic but is testing negative, he or she should still take precautions because it could be false negative as RT-PCR is spike-based and the spike has already mutated in the virus," a senior doctor said. He said that there could be other reasons for RT-PCR negative. "If a person has taken a gargle or a hot drink before the collection of sample, or the samples which have been taken are less, the result could be negative," he added.

However, he also pointed out that the false negative in Omicron is barely 5% because it is an upper respiratory tract infection and highly infectious while in case of Delta, it was 30% false. If you are symptomatic, it is better to isolate yourself," he said.

Meanwhile, Gurudwara Naka Hindola has started vaccinations for the 15-18 years category and booster shots will also be given there soon.

Meanwhile, District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash



Covid protocols going for a toss at the crowded Aminabad market on Monday

Pioneer

## Sharp increase in recoveries

Lucknow (PNS): A sharp increase in recovery of COVID-19 cases has brought cheers as Uttar Pradesh recorded 15,622 fresh novel coronavirus positive cases while 12,402 people recovered from the infection during the same period while a day earlier 8,802 people had recovered from this disease.

Additional Chief Secretary (Medical and Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said here on Monday that 2,16,152 samples were tested in the state out of

which 15,622 tested positive for coronavirus infection in the last 24 hours. He said that in the last 24 hours, 12,402 infected people were recovered taking the tally of those cured of COVID-19 to 17,20,077 in the state. He said there were 1,06,616 active cases in the state at present.

Prasad said that Covid vaccination was going on and 24,46,794 doses had been given in a day in the state on January 16. In the case of people above 18 years, at least 13,84,16,514

were given at least the first dose of the vaccine which is 93.89 per cent of people. He said the second dose had been given to 8,72,52,393 people which is 59.18 per cent of the people above 18 years of age. Prasad said that people should get the Covid vaccine because the infection was not completely over yet. "Be sure to follow the Covid protocol even after vaccination. In case of any problem, contact the Covid Helpline 18001805145," he added.

felicited the principals of ten schools for achieving 100% Covid vaccination target in the 15-18 years category. The principal were given a cash prize each of Rs 1,100 from the Red Cross Society.

The schools included

Trivedi Inter College, SR Global School (BKT), Bal Nikunj Inter College (Mohibullapur), Rashtrapati Smarak Inter College, City Convent School, Bal Vidya Mandir, Mahatma Memorial School (Thakurganj), Mahabali Memorial School and

Bhagwan Bux Singh Inter College.

The DM also declared the principals as Covid champions. The principals said they made groups of teachers who collected the list of students, encouraged them through all means.

## Communal tension over molestation of minor girl

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Communal tension prevailed in Baghatpat after a Class IX student was molested by two youths belonging to a particular community. The local residents staged a protest and threatened "to teach a lesson" to the accused for daring to attack the modesty of a minor girl. They demanded immediate arrest of both the accused and stern action against them. The demand for opening a police post in the village was also raised. Later a case was registered against the accused youths and efforts were on to nab them.

Reports said that a resident of Chhaprauli locality of Baghatpat alleged that his 16-year-old daughter, a student of class IX, went about 300 metres from the house to dump cow dung on Sunday and on the way, two youths of a particular community intercepted her and molested her.

On being informed about the incident by the daughter, her father called senior residents and disclosed what happened after which both the accused were summoned and asked to apologise and not indulge in such activity in future. The accused, however, refused to tender an apology and even threatened the family with dire consequences if they dared to raise their voice. This led to communal tension between the two communities and the local villagers staged a demonstration seeking immediate arrest of the duo.

Meanwhile, in a painful accident in Rampura village under Elau police station of Mainpuri, a 3-month-old infant was burnt alive after an LPG cylinder caught fire while cooking on Sunday night.

The infant was sleeping near the cooking gas cylinder when the incident took place. The infant was badly burnt. The family members rushed the infant to hospital but he died before reaching there.

Reports said that Arvind Pratap, a resident of Rampura village had a three-month-old son identified as Karthik. On Sunday night, Arvind's wife was cooking on a gas stove when the incident occurred.

## Lucknow Gharana poorer without Birju Maharaj

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Age had never dulled his ability to laugh and the twinkle in his eyes always brought the feeling of the way he lived and the manner in which he celebrated life. When he danced, his audience held their breath for the manner in which he made his movements with grace. He gave a classic touch to Kathak.

He was known to have taken the Lucknow Gharana to levels which no other artist could have done, giving it a visual component, enhancing the musical element, adding value to the content and doing wonders with the costume.

Lucknow lost one of its biggest icons as legendary dancer Birju Maharaj passed away on Monday morning. The last amongst the well-known from the Kalka Bindadeen family, young Birju left Lucknow early in his life to Delhi from where he took a leap in his career that would take pages to be documented.

Kum Kum Dhar, the well-known exponent of Kathak from the Lucknow Gharana, had learnt it from Birju Maharaj's paternal uncle. She said that as an artist, the loss was the biggest for the city. "The Kalka Bindadeen Gharana is what is called the Lucknow Gharana. Kalka Maharaj had three sons — Achhan Maharaj, Lachhu Maharaj and Shambhu Maharaj. Birju Maharaj was the son of Achhan Maharaj and since I was learning from Lachhu Maharaj, he was like my 'guru bhai' and would often tell me that I had a right over him since I was the disciple of his 'chacha'. We met regularly on innumerable occasions as he would come regularly to the Kathak Kendra in the last 40-50 years," she said.

She said that he had a big influence in Kathak whether anyone was from his gharana or not. "The grandeur which Kathak carries today and the prestige with which it is seen is because of the manner in which Birju Maharaj developed it and made it extremely aesthetic. He was born in Lucknow but was invited to Delhi and started teaching at the young age of 14. He taught at the Kathak Kendra for years together, giving it the aura which it carries today, and even after retirement both in the country and across the



## Governor, CM express grief

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath have expressed grief at the death of Kathak maestro Pandit Birju Maharaj in Delhi late Sunday night. In her condolence message, Governor Anandiben Patel on Monday morning said that Pt Birju Maharaj had spread his talent in the entire world and his death would create a vacuum in the art fraternity. The governor, while praying for the peace of the departed soul, said God should give courage to the family members to bear the loss.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath too mourned the demise of the Kathak maestro. In the condolence message, the chief minister said that Pt Birju Maharaj had enhanced the pride of the country and the state in the whole world with his art and talent. He said Pt Birju Maharaj was a leading dancer of Lucknow Kalka-Bindadeen Gharana of the classical Kathak dance. "It is difficult to compensate for the loss in the art world," he added.

globe, he carried out extensive work in the form of dance programmes and workshops," she said. He standardised the art and there are no two opinions that he was the ultimate guru, she added.

"His father died early so his learnt kathak from his uncles and then picking up from what he had been taught by his two uncles and adding to that his own hard work and thought process, he made Lucknow Gharana the most exquisite one in the world," she added. Filmmaker Muzaffar Ali, who has collaborated several times with Birju Maharaj, said the latter was the choreographer for his film 'Jaan Nisar'.

"He was the king of his medium and was incomparable. The manner in which he used to think and the way he used to improvise the art and the expressions, I think he was second to none. Lucknow has been fortunate enough to receive him in great measure and something needs to be done to celebrate his talent, art and memory," Ali said.

He added that Birju Maharaj gave Kathak a new fil-

lip and boost. "Talking about him is like showing light to the sun. When I was working with him in 'Jaan Nisar', I understood how lyrics changed into movements, expressions and body language. As an artist to artist connection, it was truly an eye-opener. He gave a classic touch to Kathak," Ali said.

Secretary, Sangeet Natak Akademi, Tarun Raj said Birju Maharaj gave the Lucknow Gharana of Kathak a global platform. "He was felicitated by Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1974-75 and then given the 'Ratna' membership in 1988. From 1992 to 1996, he was the chairman of Sangeet Natak Akademi," Raj said.

"His dedication as an artist could be seen from the fact that he would perform at Ravindralaya and then board the Lucknow Mail at 10 pm in his costumes and make-up. He would ask me to arrange for taxis that could drop him at the station," Raj said.

He added that Birju Maharaj was such a simple man that once he broke his slipper at Sangeet Natak Akademi and went back to hotel barefoot.

## Third wave peak in UP to be smaller in comparison to other states: Dr Dhiman

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

The third wave peak in Uttar Pradesh, which is expected by the end of this month, will be much smaller than that in Mumbai, Delhi and other states of the country, according to SGPGI director Dr RK Dhiman.

Explaining why the peak will be smaller in UP, the SGPGI director that 80-85% of the people in the state achieved natural immunity in the second wave. "Whenever there is exposure to natural infection, the immunity gets stronger and longer. If a similar virus comes again, the effect will be low. In addition to this factor, vaccinations are also underway for additional immunity. If we

combine the natural immunity with that induced by vaccinations, it would be about 90-95 percent of the population," he said.

He further said that if the infection takes place with a mild virus, it would definitely lead to the scenario in which hospitalisations would be low and there would be very few deaths and serious patients needing ventilatory support.

"If the immunity in the state is high, the peak will also be low, which we had predicted earlier. It will not go up to that extent of what we have seen in the other states," he said, adding the wave would recede by the first half of February.

"For the next week or so, there will be a rise but not exponential. Earlier, we had thought

that there could be 50,000 daily cases, but now it should be 25,000 to 30,000," he said.

Asked if there is a possibility of official figures being low and cases being under-reported, Dhiman said the official figures are correct because UP is still testing 2.5 lakh people daily like earlier.

"Despite the Central government guidelines that testing should be reduced, UP is conducting the tests. If the tests were being done as per the recommendations of the Central government, there would have been less than 50,000 tests on a daily basis," he said.

The SGPGI director further said that it is important to evaluate the characteristics of the virus considering three factors. "First, the transmissibility

of this virus is 3-5% more than that of the Delta variant, hence the spread is fast. It will achieve the peak faster and will go away faster too. Second, is this virus as dangerous or lethal as the previous one? The answer is no, because it is causing very mild disease. Over the last 10 to 15 days, the patients getting admitted to SGPGI are very mild cases, and they are recovering. Very few patients are requiring oxygen. They have been shifted from other wards where they were on ventilatory support and became Covid positive. Another factor is the immune status of the patient which is responsible for keeping the disease at bay. It is responsible for the different results in different parts of the country," he elaborated.

## Focus will be on entrepreneurship dev: AKTU VC

Lucknow (PNS): Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University Vice-Chancellor Prof PK Mishra held a virtual meeting with the directors of all the state and constituent institutions on Monday. The purpose was to discuss the issues hindering the progress of the state and constituent institutions of the university.

"A scholarship scheme will soon be started for M.Tech and PhD students of state and constituent institutions. A common online platform will also be developed by the university for state and constituent institutions. Information about the excellent work of all the institutes will be made available on this platform," he said, adding

that the emphasis would be on entrepreneurship development.

"Work will be done in all the institutions in a planned manner to develop the ecosystem for entrepreneurship development," he said. Mishra said that initiatives would be taken for agro-incubation to promote rural and agricultural entrepreneurship.

"Personality development programmes will be conducted for soft skills and personality development of the students of government and constituent institutions. Along with this, the internal relations of the industry-institute will be improved for the upgradation of the knowledge of students and faculty members," he said.

## Case registered against former minister, others

Lucknow (PNS): An FIR was registered against former minister in the erstwhile Samajwadi Party government Abhishek Mishra and others for violation of Section 144 of CrPc and under Epidemic Act and Hasanganj police station. Earlier, the Gautampalli police had registered a case against SP leaders and workers for violating Covid protocols and the Guatemala SHO was suspended on the recommendation of the Election Commission.

In the Hasanganj case, sub-inspector Abhay Kumar Singh said two videos went viral on WhatsApp groups. "The video was live telecast on Instagram from the ID of Razi Hasan Samajwadi. In the video, 15-20 bike-borne people were seen heading towards Daliganj crossing from Niralaganar and to Pucca Pul from Sitapur road. None of the participants were wearing masks. The youths were taking out the rally to show the might of their party and their act could spread coronavirus infec-

tion," the SI said. He said those spotted in the video were identified as former minister Abhishek Mishra, Razi Hasan, Raghvendra Bajpai, Viabhav Mishra, Tanvir Ali of Jankipuram and Vaibhav Bajpai of Triveni Nagar. "Other 10-12 persons could not be identified and police are making efforts to identify them," he said.

Earlier, the police had registered a case against SP leaders and workers who had thronged the party office. After a video went viral and came to the notice of the EC, the SHO was suspended. Interestingly, the police could not get a whiff of the rally of the SP workers. Sources said the police have formed WhatsApp groups for different areas to keep a close watch on day-to-day developments. "The police have added several locals to the groups. However, the group members respond belatedly to the developments, especially those having political ramifications," the sources said.

## Stolen gold, diamonds recovered; 2 arrested

Lucknow (PNS): A team of Hazratganj police, led by inspector SB Shukla, recovered the gold and diamonds worth lakhs of rupees, which were stolen from the delivery van of a private courier firm on December 30 last year. Two accused were arrested late on Sunday night. They were identified as Raju Tiwari and his brother Shubham Tiwari, both of Sitapur.

Raju Tiwari used to work as a loader in the courier firm from where he got the information about the packet in which gold and diamonds were kept and were supposed to be delivered to customers. In his confession, he said his eyes lit up with greed and he involved his brother Shubham in the diabolic plot. Raju left his job in December to chalk out the heist. He knew that valuables were being shipped through the courier company to a prominent jewellery store in Hazratganj. Raju told the police that on December 30, the delivery van was parked outside a shopping mall in Hazratganj area. He, along with Shubham, reached the scene. Two deliverymen were inside the shopping complex to deliver the goods while the driver was all alone. Due to his acquaintance with the driver, Shubham engaged him in a conversation while Raju entered the van and stole the parcel.

## RWA members urged to help increase voting percentage

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash held a meeting with all members of the Residents' Welfare Association online on Monday and informed them that the voting percentage of Lucknow in the previous elections was 56-57%, which should be increased to 70% with the help of awareness activities. "The Election Commission of India has decided to allow people aged above 80 years, those down with Covid and differently-abled to vote through the postal ballot. People in these three categories can avail of this facility with the help of block-level officers through an application to the returning officer," he said.

There are 4,018 polling booths at 1,526 polling centres in Lucknow and selfie points are being there. The first 11 best selfies will be shortlisted and these voters will be felicitated by the district administration. The DM said that 41 polling booths for women and 'zero pollution' booths will be made which will have solar panels and golf carts. He said they have come up with the tagline, 'Ab ki baar, sattaar ke paar aur corona ki haar'. The DM also discussed with the members of Residents' Welfare Association measures which could be taken to check the spread of Covid. "We have already achieved 100% target in the first dose while 71% of the eligible people have been fully vaccinated. Vaccination of adolescents is also underway," the DM pointed out. He urged them to ensure the vaccination of their respective society members along with Covid-appropriate behaviour.

## Family evicted from house

Lucknow (PNS): Gun-wielding men, said to be realtors, evicted a poor man and his family from their parental house in Indiranagar at the gun-point. Police did not note of the incident, forcing the victim to petition his case to senior officers. It was only after the local police were pulled up by senior officers that they registered a case against the accused, four months after the incident took place.

Kanhaiya Yadav of Faridpur village said they reared cattle there and had made troughs to feed the livestock. I, along with my mother Shivpatti and brother Sanjeet, were at our house when Neeraj Yadav and his brothers — Sooraj Yadav, Pramod Yadav and Gajendra Yadav — and ten other unidentified people

reached there. They held us at the gun-point and asked us to vacate the house. As we argued that it was our parental land, one of them, Manish, told us that he had purchased the land from Neeraj's father. We contested how Neeraj's father could sell the land which did not belong to him," he said.

The victim said the attackers threatened to kill him and his family and bury them all there. According to the victim, the attackers told him that the police were with him and they (the victim and his family) would not get any help from the cops. "Their claim seemed genuine to us as the police opted for dilly-dallying tactics. That incident took place on September 10, but the FIR was registered on January 15," he said.

**Notice Inviting e-Tender**

No.SS/ESst/EPB/III/IV/2021-22/471/2021/8527 Date: 17.01.2022

Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam (Samagra Shiksha) invites tender from reputed exercise book manufacturers through e-Tendering process for the supply of Evaluation and Practice Books for class -III&IV (Single Line & Plain).

To participate in this tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

Sd/-Mission Director  
SSA, Assam  
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/CF/2908/21

**Indian Overseas Bank**  
(A GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNDERTAKING)

**E-Auction Notice**

RO: Lucknow | CO: Chennai

**Date & Time of E-Auction-17.02.2022 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM,**  
(With Auto extension of 10 minutes each till sale is completed)

**Last Date for submission of online application for BID with EMD-16.02.2022 upto 1:00 PM**

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

**E-Auction Sale Notice for the Sale of immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rules 8(f) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.**

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) Mortgagor(s), Guarantor(s), Director(s) and Legal Heir(s) that the below described Immovable Property Mortgaged/charged to the Secured creditor, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Overseas Bank (Secured creditor), will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" and "WHATSOEVER THERE IS" on above mentioned date of sale, for recovery of mentioned below amount & future interest and other charges due to the Indian Overseas Bank (Secured creditor) from mentioned below Borrower(s) Mortgagor(s), Guarantor(s), Director(s) and Legal Heir(s). The reserve price and earnest money deposit amount is mentioned below. The sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Web Portal <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi>.

Name & Address of Borrower/ Guarantors/ Mortgagors/	Description of Immovable properties	Outstanding Amount	Reserve Price EMD Bid increase Amt.
<b>Branch-Mall Road Branch, 17/9, Garg Naronha Complex, Mall Road, Kanpur-208001, E-mail : iob0478@iob.in, Ph. No. : 0512-2333058, 2365565</b>			
<b>Mr. Himanshu Gupta</b>	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Flat (Borrower) & No. F-2, on 1st floor 'Akash Tower', Plot No. 1/37 A (Mortgagor) & Mrs. Block - E, Sujan Gani, Shyam Nagar Kanpur Nagar	Rs. 38,46,886.13	Rs. 4,45,000/-
<b>Apoorva Gupta</b>	Boundaries of Flat- North-Plot No. 1/38, South-Plot (Borrower) & No. 1/37A, East-Balcony thereafter Plot No. 1/43, West-Mortgagor) Both R/d/Flat No. F-1 thereafter 12.19 mt. wide govt. road, Flat No. 302, Silverline Boundaries of entire Building: North-Plot No. 1/38, Apartment, Plot No. 9 South-Plot No. 1/37A, East-Plot No. 1/43, West-12.19 C-Block, Shyam Nagar mt. wide govt. road	Rs. 10,000/-	Rs. 10,000/-
Built up Area is 112.00 Sqmtr. & undivided Proportionate share in land is 33.44 Sqmtr.			
<b>EMD Remittance A/c Details-A/c Name -Armb Lucknow Emd Account, A/c No. 25940200000814, IFSC Code: IOBA0002594, Branch Code: 2594</b>			
<b>*Bank's dues have priority over the Statutory dues.</b>			
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the service provider's link <a href="https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi">https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi</a> or bank's website <a href="http://www.iob.in">http://www.iob.in</a> .			
For Properties inspection or Participating in bid of the above properties for any clarification interested purchaser may contact above mentioned Branch Manager/Authorised Officer.			
Date: 15.01.2022	Place: Kanpur	Authorised Officer, Indian Overseas Bank	

# Seer Govardhan may become a political hotspot on Ravidas Jayanti

RAMESH K SINGH ■ VARANASI

With the acceptance of requests from various political parties to shift the date of assembly elections in Punjab from February 14 to 20 by the Election Commission of India (ECI) on the ground of Ravidas Jayanti, falls on the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima on February 16 this year, the political activities at birth place of Sant Ravidas at Seer Govardhan in Varanasi have already started gearing up. As thousands of followers of this great medieval period saint who will attend the festival, may miss the polling in Punjab where the dalit voters are in a sizeable number, the ECI had taken the decision. As assembly elections are round-the-corner in five states, especially in UP and Punjab, Seer Govardhan will, definitely, become a political hotspot this year. For the last three decades, Seer Govardhan always remained an attractive political centre where almost all the political party leaders had tried to reach in order to woo the dalit voters.

In the recent few years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself visited the temple on many occasions including prior to the last parliamentary elections in 2019 and assembly polls in 2017. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also visited there on many occasions and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led central and state governments had also announced several projects for the areas. In the last visit here, the PM had also inaugurated newly-constructed Langar Bhawan at Seer Govardhan apart from widening and repairing some roads. Still some projects are going on there. It is expected that both Modi and Yogi will also visit the place on February 16 this year to woo the dalits, especially the Sikh dalits who may play an important role in deciding the political fate of the



PM Narendra Modi at Sant Ravidas temple prior to 2019 Lok Sabha elections. (FILE PHOTO)

party in Punjab also. Besides, the top leaders of other parties are also expected to visit there this year and seek the blessings of Sant Niranjan Das of Sachkhand Ballan Dera (Jalandhar) and chief of Sant Shiromani Janamsthan Mandir, who come here from Punjab every year, along with his thousands of followers by a special train.

Not only the BJP's leaders but also the bigwigs of all other major parties frequently visited there. On Sant Ravidas Jayanti last year, Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi, Samajwadi Party (SP) chief and ex-CM Akhilesh Yadav visited there, apart from many others including Bhim Sena President Chandrashekhar and Union Minister and BJP's Election In-charge of UP Dharmendra Pradhan. Prior to 2017 assembly elections in Punjab, even Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, who was foreseeing a good prospect of his Aam Aadmi

Party (AAP) there, visited here and there will be a little surprise that he will visit this time also. Former CM and supreme of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Mayawati visited there on many occasions.

When Mayawati became the CM for first time in UP in mid-1990s, she had announced several projects for Seer Govardhan which was strongly protested by the local SP workers led by Satish Fauzi of Seer Govardhan, forcing the then Mayawati government to shift its park site to Nagwa and hostel to Badalalpur. Besides, due to a strong objection from Banaras Hindu University (BHU), the site of Sant Ravidas Gate was shifted from one corner to another in the Lanka area.

Earlier, there was a proposal to construct the gate near the statue of Bharat Ratna Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya at BHU's Main Gate. Last year, Akhilesh Yadav visited there along with Satish Fauzi and

other party leaders.

The city has two temples of Sant Ravidas located in the southern and northern parts of the city. Apart from this important janmasthan temple in the south, there is also a temple at Bainsasur Ghat near Rajghat in the north, where Modi not also attended Dev Deepawali function in 2019 but also this year while going to inaugurate Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham on December 13 last by cruise. The temple near Rajghat was built with the support of former Union Minister Babu Jagjeevan Ram.

His daughter and ex-Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar visited almost every year there on the occasion of Sant Ravidas Jayanti. In the mid-1990s, there were also some differences between Punjab Sikh and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) groups to hold command over janmabhoomi temple at Seer Govardhan but later on, Sikh groups succeeded in dominating the battle.

# SP condemns action against party leaders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Continuing its drive against the alleged continuous violations of the model code of conduct by the BJP leaders, the Samajwadi Party (SP) strongly criticised the administration for lodging cases against the party workers. They said when some party workers were distributing blankets among the poor on the birthday of former party MP Dimple Yadav in the Maidagan area, the local administration had lodged a case against them.

City SP president Vishnu Sharma lodged several complaints with the officers against the alleged continuous violations of the model code of conduct by the BJP recently. He said that recently he was informed by the party's former corporator Shankar Vishlani that the food items were being distributed in packets having pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief



SP leaders submitting a memorandum to ADM (Admn) in Varanasi on Monday.

Minister Yogi Adityanath openly by the BJP workers in Shivala ward.

In this direction, a delegation of SP led by Sharma met the ADM (Administration) Ranvijay Singh and lodged its complaints against distribution of food items in packets having pictures of Modi and Yogi. Along with registering a written complaint, Sharma claimed that he had also handed over the photographs, on which the ADM (Administration) had assured

him of constituting an inquiry committee to look into the matter. The SP also expressed its concern over the presence of pictures of the CM at women's help desk at various police stations and outposts, terming the same as also a violation of the model code of conduct and demanded an early removal of these pictures.

Meanwhile, the SP delegation also met the ACP Subhash Chandra Dubey and raised objections regarding the case lodged against former state

secretary Raju Yadav and other SP workers and demanded immediate withdrawal of the same. The others who were also present in the delegation were city general secretary Jitendra Yadav, Raju Yadav, Yuvjan Sabha national secretary Vikas Yadav, Bharat Yadav and city spokesperson Sandeep Sharma.

Earlier, City SP Chief claimed that before the upcoming assembly elections in Varanasi, many leaders had started switching sides. He said that expressing faith in the SP, many leaders from the city to the rural areas joined the party. He said that Dr Virendra Vishwakarma, an eye specialist, who has a stronghold in Vishwakarma society, left the BJP and joined the SP in the presence of District SP president Sujit Yadav.

Besides, Congress block chief of Phoolpur under Pindra assembly constituency Anil Upadhyay also joined the SP.

# BHU scientists carry out studies in curing chronic wounds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A team of scientists in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) have conducted an important study that would greatly benefit those suffering from chronic wounds, particularly with diabetic foot ulcers. The team led by Prof Gopal Nath of Department of Microbiology, Institute of Medical Sciences, BHU, in its study found out that wounds that took months to years to heal could be cured in a matter of days to months. The findings of study have been published in the National Centre for Biotechnology Information, National Institutes of Health, United States.

A wound is defined as a breach in the skin or other body tissues due to injury. An acute wound is defined as a recent break that is yet to progress through sequential stages of healing. Those wounds where the normal healing process is stalled either due to underlying pathology



Prof Gopal Nath at lab in IMS BHU

(vascular and diabetes etc.) or infection beyond three months is defined as a chronic wound. While chronic wounds always get infected, contaminated/dirty wounds are reasonably susceptible to infection. Infection with antibiotic-resistant bacteria and biofilm formation are critical factors halting the standard healing process.

Traditional chronic wound treatment strategies (compression, warming, vacuum-assisted closure device, irrigation) are often successful in healing wounds. Still, many wounds have been observed recalcitrant

to these treatments, leading to persistence and recurrent infections. Both infections (caused by multidrug-resistant strains) and subsequent biofilm formation are the primary cause of the persistence of the wounds because conventional antibiotic therapy does not work. These wounds cause significant psychological and physical morbidity, that is increased pain leading to loss of function and mobility; distress, anxiety, depression, social isolation; and amputation, even death. Chronic wounds are considered a global problem. The direct medical cost of skin infections only in the United States (US) is approximately 75 billion US dollars, whereas US\$25 billion of this amount is used for chronic wound treatment.

The scientists carried out phage therapy of acute and chronic infected wounds in animals and clinical studies. It was shown efficacy against Pseudomonas aeruginosa in a mice wound model.

Furthermore, they evaluated the efficacy of phage cocktails in animal models' acute and chronic osteomyelitis caused by methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus. Moreover, they also observed biofilm eradication from K wire in rabbits' wound infection model.

Clinical trials are necessary to demonstrate the safety and efficacy of data generated in the preclinical experiments before getting translated reliably into clinical practice. Clinical trials of phage therapy initiated by the BHU have reported the efficacy of topical phage in healing chronic wounds in three prospective exploratory studies and no adverse events mimicking the results in vivo animal models. The team involved in the clinical studies carried out at IMS BHU comprised of Prof Gopal Nath, Prof SK Bhartiya, Prof VK Shukla, Dr Pooja Gupta, Dr Harishankar Singh, Dr Dev Raj Patel, Rajesh Kumar, Dr Rina Prasad, Subhas Lalkarn etc.

# People of UP unhappy with BJP govt: Tikait

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

National spokesman of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Tikait faction) Rakesh Tikait said Yogi Adityanath went from where he came, that is, Gorakhpur. Addressing the farmers, he said that the people of Uttar Pradesh are unhappy with the BJP government. He said that we are not supporting any political party in the elections.

Tikait is in Prayagraj these days. On Monday, he attended the three-day Chintan Shivir of BKU organized at Parade Ground here.

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait said that no government has done any work for the interest of farmers. Be it the central government or the state government, there were problems of the farmers. He said that dues of sugarcane farmers in the state were not cleared. Electricity rates have not come down whereas farmers should have been given free electricity.

Rakesh Tikait said that the people of the state are not happy with the present government. Along with the problems of the farmers, the general public is troubled by inflation.

On Monday, Samajwadi Party leader Richa Singh met



National spokesperson of BKU Rakesh Tikait speaking to mediapersons in Mela area at Sangam.

Rakesh Tikait at the Chintan Shivir. At the same time, Tikait held discussions with the farmer office-bearers in the Chintan Shivir. Also he discussed further strategy.

Tikait had arrived at Prayagraj on Sunday evening. A three-day Chintan Shivir of BKU is being organised at the Parade Ground located at Magh Mela. He had said on the first day that it is necessary for Yogi Adityanath to win for a strong opposition in the state.

"The opposition should be strong. There is no development issue in the state. The government also does not want to talk about the issues of farmers," he said.

He said that the politics of caste and religion dominates the issues of farmers in the state. "The farmers are also divided on the basis of caste and religion. The game of Hindu, Muslim and Jinnah is being played, but it will remain till March 15 only. After that it

will all disappear. The PM does not utter a word for farmers. Why is a guarantee law not being made on MSP? Why are farmers not being given relief in paddy procurement?" he said.

Tikait said that the upcoming assembly elections have nothing to do with Chintan Shivir. Since the beginning, the Chintan Shivir of BKU has been held in Magh and Kumbh Mela. The same has happened this time as well. In this, discussions will be held on the issues of farmers, their interest as well as how to strengthen the organisation further. In the Chintan Shivir, the agenda of the movement will be decided, not the election. The public will decide the election.

In the states where elections are going on now, after the formation of the new government, talks will be held to fulfill the demands. Pressure will be put on the government so that the farmer can be happy. Tikait further said that he will chalk out an effective plan to raise farmers' issues and added that the minimum support price (MSP) will also be discussed. He was given a warm welcome by the local members of Bharatiya Kisan Union at several places in the city on his arrival.

# Atique's family enters poll fray

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Mafia-turned politician Atique Ahmed's family has once again entered the electoral fray from the City West assembly seat. This time Mafia's wife Shaista Parveen will contest the elections. She has been declared as its candidate by the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM).

With Shaista Parveen entering the field, the match here is likely to be very interesting. At the same time, speculations are also being made of breaching the traditional Muslim vote of the Samajwadi Party.

The city is believed to be the stronghold of Atique Ahmed. His clout here can be gauged from the fact that in 1989, 1991, 1993, he entered the fray as an independent and became an MLA. In the year 1996, Atique fielded on Samajwadi Party ticket and defeated Tirathram Kohli of BJP by 35,099 votes. After this, in the year 2002, Atique Ahmed joined Apna Dal and reached the assembly after hitting the ground from here. Atique defeated Gopal Das Yadav of SP by 11,808 votes.

In 2004, Atique Ahmed



contested from the Phulpur Lok Sabha seat and reached Delhi. Here, in the same year, a by-election was held in the city west. Atique fielded his younger brother Ashraf, but Ashraf was defeated by Bahujan Samaj Party candidate Raju Pal. Raju Pal, who became an MLA in January 2005, was openly riddled with bullets. Many accused including Atique Ahmed, Ashraf were made in the case. By-election was again held on this seat and Atique again fielded Ashraf. Ashraf

won this time. However, in the elections held in 2007, the BSP government was formed and Raju Pal's wife Pooja Pal defeated Ashraf and won.

After that this seat was never occupied by the mafia. He and his family members kept on fighting and losing. On the one hand, after the murder of MLA Raju Pal, the political ground of the mafia kept slipping. Younger brother Ashraf is currently lodged in Bareilly Jail, while Mafia himself is behind bars in Gujarat jail.

Elder son Umar is being searched by CBI Lucknow and STF. Younger son Ali has been named in Kareli police station some time back. The police are actively searching for him too. In such a situation, the biggest crisis in front of the mafia was about who would enter the election. Keeping all these things in mind, Atique decided to field his wife Shaista Parveen in the election field. The wife was included in AIMIM and then on Sunday, the in charge of Prayagraj division, Afsar Mahmood, announced the name of Shaista Parveen. He said that the party has declared Shaista Parveen as the candidate from the city western assembly seat. It is almost certain that the BJP will field minister Sidharth Nath Singh from here. On the other hand, the Samajwadi Party can bet on backward or can give this seat in the alliance. For now, the election here is likely to be interesting. SP's Muslim vote is likely to be affected due to Shaista Parveen's entry. However, SP district president Yogesh Yadav said that there will be no impact on Muslim votes. All are with SP. AIMIM does not exist. It operates as B party of BJP.

# Paush Purnima: Lakhs of devotees throng ghats in Sangam area

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Lakhs of devotees thronged ghats in the Sangam area on Monday to take a dip in the holy waters on the occasion of Paush Purnima.

Those who stay in the Sangam banks for a month long Kalpavas, began their routine from Monday a day before the beginning of the month of Magh.

The next and the biggest bathing of Magh Mela will be of Mauni Amavasya on February 1.

Though the Makar Sankranti bathing gave a kick start to mela, the actual Magh Mela starts with the Paush Purnima bathing, and people from far and near distances arrived here in trucks, tractors and other mode of rural transportation with their belongings to stay here for a month and dedicate themselves to religious activities—daily Sangam bathing, visiting saints at different tents to seek their blessings, listen to religious discourses on a regular basis, and taking simple meals. The Government has passed a budget of Rs 59 for this 47-day mela. Earlier seven pontoon bridges were proposed on the Ganga, but only five have been given shape. The huge mela area has been divided into five sectors for better management. Twelve bathing ghats have been prepared for the convenience of the devo-



tees. Twenty main roads have been prepared besides several connecting roads, and 190 km long pile lines have been laid to ensure availability of drinking water in the mela area. Power is being supplied through 23 sub-stations, and over 18000 street lights have been fitted on poles to glow the entire mela area. Vehicles are not allowed to enter the mela on main bathing occasions, so eight parking lots have been developed. Health department has established two 50 bedded hospitals besides health centres in every sector.

Departments engaged in mela include police, health, jal nigam, irrigation, nagar nigam, power corporation, PWD besides general administration.

Though kalpavas will conclude on February 16 on Maghi Purnima day, mela will contin-

ue up to Shivratri, falling on March 1.

**322 MORE TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID:** As many as 322 more people tested positive for Covid-19 infection in the city, taking the number of active cases to 2,940 in Prayagraj district. The list was updated following results of 51 antigen, 261 RT-PCR and 7 Truenat tests. Nodal officer (Covid 19) and Additional CMO Dr Rishi Sahai told reporters that apart from five persons who tested positive for Covid infection on mela campus, including one pilgrim, one kalpvasi and three policemen, as many as 317 persons also tested positive for Covid-19 infection in the district.

He added that the sampling exercise has been intensified in the mela campus as well as the city and over 8,000 samples are being collected daily on an

average. The department has also focused on the 3T formula of testing, tracking and treatment to check the spread of the disease. Meanwhile, the city reported the death of a patient, who was admitted to the hospital after sustaining severe head injuries in a road mishap. The sample of this patient was taken during admission in the hospital.

**4,312 COVID CARE CARDS DISTRIBUTED:** As many as 4,312 Covid care cards (CCCs) have been distributed among seers, saints and kalpwas camping on Magh Mela ground in a bid to help health authorities track their health status. Magh Mela, which began on January 14, will end on March 1. The Health department aims to distribute around 30,000 cards during the mega religious event. Nodal officer (Covid 19) and additional chief medical officer (ACMO) Dr Rishi Sahai said that each individual/organisation camping on the Mela ground will be allotted a CCC carrying all their required details, including name of the individual or the name of the organisation they represent, permanent address, temporary address, name of the head of the organisation, mobile number, date of arrival on the Magh Mela ground, status of Covid report of the past three days, pre-existing medical conditions and details of Covid testing.

# Shekhar inaugurates Parivartan Bird Park

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, while inaugurating the Parivartan Bird Park at district courts compound on Sunday, said the focus of the people was always on stray dogs and stray cattle and they ignored the fact that birds too needed human care so that they could find shelter, food and refrain from falling prey to predators.

He appreciated the initiative taken by Parivartan to set up a bird park. He said the district administration would take up the initiative and ensure funds for the bird park and its expansion as part of the Smart City Project. He said soon the administration would sign a memorandum of understanding with Parivartan.

He said in the last 25 years, the rapid urbanisation had resulted in a diminishing number of beautiful birds and this could not be ignored. He said Kanpur Nagar had grown as an industrial hub and above all the increase of the number of vehicles and the dangerous spurt in vehicular pollution had somewhere subtly harmed the bird populace in the city.

He said it was the duty of every individual to lend a supporting hand to further this project. He said urbanisation induced changes at ecosystem could be felt at different segments of the ecosystem, the strongest being on land and its inhabitants, wherein birds were



Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar inaugurates the "Parivartan Bird Park" at district courts.

Pioneer

one of the worst sufferers in Kanpur Nagar agglomeration focusing on different aspects along a forest to urban gradient.

He said there was a need to choose three different sites on the basis of density of forest areas. He said hundreds of birds of 92 species were recorded during a survey. He said mainly affected was bird density which necessitated a thorough review of the existing plans and framework in urban areas so as to incorporate inclu-

sive ecological management in urban areas.

He said researchers had suggested that noise pollution affected birds' behaviour, their fitness, breeding and growth, and often led to chronic stress. He said as per scientists, constant noise may form an acoustic blanket muffling the audio cues birds rely on to detect predators, competitors and their species.

He said Parivartan Bird Park was dedicated to the city and was like an oasis in desert.

He said beautiful pictures of various birds adorned the back walls of the park and a wide variety of flowering and other plants added charm to this park.

He said this setting would attract birds, bees and butterflies to the park.

The architects of this Bird Park are Bharati Garg, Suchitra Singh and Raghav Tripathi, while Manju Saraf Devendra Pareek, Anoop Dwivedi and Sandeep Jain have played an important role in developing it.

## 3 youths held with 4 looted mobile phones

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The SWAT team of DCP South and Kidwai Nagar police arrested three scooter-borne criminals from Sanjay Van road late Sunday night and recovered four looted mobile phones from them.

The accused were sent to jail on Monday.

Addressing media persons, DCP South Ravina Tyagi said on a tip-off, the SWAT team and Kidwai Nagar police arrested the criminals, identified as Aman Savita, Deepak alias Aryan of Yashoda Nagar and Aryan Yadav of Deoki Nagar, Naubasta.

Aman and Deepak are natives of Sarai Meera in Kannauj, while Aryan belongs to Ikorapur village in Dibiyaapur, Auraiya. They all used to loot people passing through isolated spots in the city. Police recovered four looted mobile phones and one scooter from their possession.

Kidwai Nagar Station House Officer Vineet Kumar said the accused confessed to looting mobile phones from people in Saket Nagar, Barra, Babupurwa and Chakeri during January.

Earlier, Aman and Deepak had looted a cell phone in September last year in Kidwai Nagar police station area. While Aman was arrested, Deepak managed to escape and was absconding since then. After getting bail from court, Aman had again started looting people with the gang members.

Accused confessed to their involvement in five loots during past 16 days of January, the SHO said.

# NER running many schemes for welfare of employees

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Indian Railways is constantly working for the interests of its employees and their families. In this sequence, many schemes for welfare of employees are being run in North Eastern Railway (NER), Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. Under it on the occasion of retirement of employees timely payment of all dues, compassionate appointment, financial assistance for serious diseases and technical vocational education of children etc are included. Appointments on compassionate grounds are being done on a priority basis. In the year 2021-22 so far, the dependents of 268 deceased employees have been appointed in NER.

Due to special monitoring on compassionate appointments, its work is being completed within 90 days. Compassionate appointment and final settlement of dependents of deceased employees was done on priority basis even during the Covid-19 infection period. Recently, Lucknow division of North Eastern Railway has developed 'Sahyog' app to inform the dependents of deceased railwaymen about the final settlement and compassionate appointment. Financial assis-

## Lucknow Jn-Kasganj special cancelled from Jan 18 to 23

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

In context of the doubling work between Alamnagar-Transport Nagar of Northern Railway (NR) due to the block non-interlock/non-interlock the cancellation of trains will be as follows, Chief Public Relations Officer Pankaj Kumar Singh said.

### CANCELLATION

The 05380 Kasganj-Lucknow Jn special train to depart from Kasganj from will be cancelled from January 17 to 22. On the other hand, the 05379 Lucknow Jn-Kasganj special train to depart from Lucknow Jn will remain cancelled from January 18 to 23.

tance of ₹49,92,467 was given to non-gazetted railway employees in difficult situations, diseases etc. A total of ₹1,45,25,297 was paid in North Eastern Railway this year from the Employees' Welfare Fund as a scholarship for technical/vocational education to the children of railway employees. The final settlement of all retiring employees from the month of July is being done through HRMS portal. All retiring employees are paid their dues on the last working day itself. Pension Adalat was organised on December 15 last year in order to resolve the pension related

problems of the retired employees. On the other hand, in total 105 cases in favour of dependents of railway employees who died in the Covid-19 pandemic financial assistance of ₹2,00,000 was given to the dependents of each deceased from the Employees' Welfare Fund. Keeping in view the third wave of Covid-19 pandemic, including the Lalit Narayan Mishra Railway Hospital (LRMRH) at the headquarters, in all three divisional hospitals oxygen plant has been made functional. Besides, oxygen plant was also established in the sub-divisional hospital in Gonda too.

# Amlohri Area of NCL signs MoU for electrification

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Amlohri Area of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Miniratna company of the Government of India, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) worth ₹25.13 lakh with the district administration for electrification of Mada Eco Park. The MoU was signed by General Manager, Amlohri, Satish Jha, on behalf of NCL and DFO, Singrauli, Madhu V Raj, on behalf of the district administration. With this fund given under NCL CSR, sports and entertainment activities available for tourists visiting Mada Eco Park besides other facilities can be made more effective and better, which will increase the number of tourists. Not only this under CSR for the convenience of the visitors to the



park in this financial year two unit portable toilet and three unit e-rickshaw will also be provided. It is worth mentioning that recently for promoting eco tourism in Singrauli region NCL signed MoU with Madhya Pradesh

Tourism Development Corporation (MPTDC). Along with developing three eco parks in this area, NCL is also making the tourists aware about Singrauli eco tourism circuit and the cultural and tribal diversity of this area.

## 11 flour mills to be set up

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

A total of 11 flour mills will be set up in five gram panchayats of Singrauli by the Block B Area of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL) under CSR soon. Under it two flour mills each will be set up in Gondvali, Kasar, Semuar

and Karela and total three in Birkuniya which will be operated and maintained by women's self-help groups (SHGs). All mills are semi-automatic and can grind 60-80 kg of flour in an hour. Through all the 11 SHGs for the operation of mills, livelihood will be created for more than 100

women and it will also inspire other women towards self-reliance. Significantly, all SHGs will basically include women from tribal, economically and socially backward classes and families living below the poverty line (BPL), whose uplift will lead to a better life for the whole family.

# Two killed in accident

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

In a tragic incident two persons lost their lives in a road mishap which took place in an area under Padari police station on early Monday morning. As per the reports, driver, Ranjeet (26), a resident of Darhigram Bantarwaan under Madhihan police station, was changing the tyre of his truck on the service lane near Mohanpur village under Padari police station when he was hit by an unidentified vehicle as a result of which he died on the spot. However, helper, Vikas (25), who had sustained serious injuries was brought to the hospital by the police but he too died during treatment. Padari police took the bodies of the victims into custody for completing the legal formalities.

**THREE ARRESTED:** A joint team of state excise department and Dehat Kotwali police have arrested three accused and recovered material of making liquor items worth about ₹15 lakh on Sunday. Giving details at Police Lines, Additional Superintendent Police (ASP/City) Sanjay Kumar said on being tipped off by an informer police swung into action and raided the house of Babun Saroj in Chandaipur village under Dehat Kotwali police station recovered 100

litres of spirit, 1625 bottles of adulterated liquor, 9640 empty bottles, 210 stickers of a distillery, two rolls of QR code, 750 ml of chemical, 160 caps of the bottle printed with a branded liquor and other items. The ASP further said that the cost of the recovered material was about ₹15 lakh. He said three accused were nabbed from the spot who said that they were working for Sanjay Jaiswal, a resident of Katra Bajirao under Katra Kotwali police station. After registering a case in this connection the police sent the accused to jail. The accused were identified as Babun Saroj, a resident of Chandaipur village under Kotwali Dehat police station, Ajay Kumar alias Monu, a resident of Rukhadghat under Katra Kotwali police station and Rajesh Sonkar, a resident of Anantram Ki Gali Imambara under Katra Kotwali police station. The team was led by Station House Officer (SHO) Dehat Kotwali Vipin Kumar Singh and excise inspector Vivek Dubey, the ASP further added.

**POLLING BOOTHS:** On the approval of election commission of India, 17 polling booths have been changed due to their dilapidated condition and other reasons. Deputy Election Officer Shiv Pratap Shukla said there are 2,268 polling booths at 1,336 polling stations in which four booths have been changed under City Assembly constituency, one under Chhanbey constituency and 12 under Chunar constituency. Under Mirzapur city constituency the booth of Parmhans Junior High School has been shifted to St Xavier School, Ratanganj and three polling booths of Bal Bharati School have been changed to Agrasen Glorious School, Ramaipatti. Under Chhanbey constituency the polling booth Panchayat Bhawan, Madaavan has been changed to primary school, Rannopatti. Under Assembly constituency Chunar Nagar Palika school first, Ramllela Maidan, changed to Nagar Palika School first, Chunar, polling booth primary school Bagahi first to Arya Kanya Vidyalaya, Bagahi, primary school Pratappur room No 1 to room No 2, Panchayat Bhawan, Khirodi Asharabad, to Junior High School Asharabad, Primary School Meerpur, Dhara to primary school Dhara first and from Primary School Dhara first to Primary School Meerpur. Under other changes the polling booth of primary school Sikandarpur first has been changed to primary school Jamalpur first and the polling booth of primary school Jamalpur got shifted to the primary school Sikandarpur.

# Cong believes in secularism and equality: Mansoori

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Congress north unit president Naushad Alam Mansoori, while addressing a meeting at Union Club Grounds, said there was a need to bring people with clean image into politics.

He said the Congress always hinged on the principle of secularism and equality and thus at the threshold of the Uttar Pradesh elections, the party had decided to field Pramod Jaiswal as its candidate for Arya Nagar constituency.

He thanked Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for giving top priority to people with clean image, youth and women to bring back Congress in UP after several decades. He said from the time Congress was voted out of power, there had been a sharp decline in development of UP and this had brought down the image of the most populous



Congress city president (north) Naushad Alam Mansoori addressing a meeting at Union Club grounds.

Pioneer

state. He said Congress had never stoked communal passion for political gains and added that it always believed in taking every segment of the people together. He said only unity could strengthen the UP which was the biggest state on which hinged the politics of the country.

He said Jaiswal had a

proven record in politics and had a clean image and thus he was given a green signal to contest the election from Arya Nagar constituency. He said today there was a need to strengthen the hands of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to ensure that the party surged ahead in full transparency and formed the government.

He said today other polit-

ical parties stood exposed before the electorate and people had to decide rationally which party should be voted to power for the development of the state. Prominent among those present in the meeting were Hafiz Omar, SD Mishra, Nizamuddin Khan, RK Yadav, Zeeshan Ansari, Mahesh Meghani, Sohail Ahmed, and Zareena Khatoun,

# Goldiee felicitates its distributors, sellers

KANPUR (PNS): Leading manufacturers of spices Shubham Goldiee Masale Pvt Ltd, felicitated its distributors and sellers at a function organised at Barotiwala, Himachal Pradesh. The function was inaugurated by manager (sales) at Kanpur, Ramji Agarwal, who first performed Ganesh puja and then lighted the ceremonial lamp. He then handed over the keys of motorcycle to the winners through lucky draw of 'Ham Sab Ek Hai' scheme.

Agarwal advised the directors, distributors and employees to work hard to provide the best quality with competitive prices in the fast changing technology, product distribution, marketing and advertisement which was the mantra of success. He said since the beginning till date the company had kept the customer interest on top priority and as a result of this Goldiee today was a famous established product.

Addressing the session sales manager Neeraj Sharma said Goldiee Group had won many awards from Central and state governments, prominent among them being Self Entrepreneurship Award, Lab Test Award, Udyog Ratna



Goldiee Masale held its lucky draw function at Barotiwala, HP.

Pioneer

Award and had won the National Excellence Award of the Gramin Udyog Ministry.

He said the company had kept itself at par with marketing system for its distributors and thus carved its image. He said in addition he discussed in details the products packaging, manufacture, networking and discussed the future plans and said strategies were being adopted to spread the fragrance of Goldiee spices not only in India but abroad as well.

He then handed over the motorcycle won through lucky draw in the Ham Sab Ek Hai scheme to Empire Stores

Panipat.

He said today the Goldiee products were the pride of pure taste and best quality and the company had spread its branches all over the country, prominently in UP, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa. He said crossing the Indian boundaries, Goldiee products had reached Japan, the US and Arab countries. He added that Goldiee had bagged ISO

22000:2005 certification.

He then handed over merit certificates to the shopkeepers for outstanding sales.

Sales officer Radheyshyam said this company was established 40 years ago as a small industry but with time it had become a major company of the world and had millions of distributors, super distributors and retailers. He said with the support of its distributors, retailers it was heading to create records in Panipat.

The welcome address was delivered by Shyam Lal Chaudhary from Vishal Trading Co.

# Netaji's legacy partly exploited: Daughter

## Subhas Chandra Bose's daughter expresses shock over R-Day 'Bengal tableau row'

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for reconsidering his decision to exclude Bengal's tableau on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in the Republic Day parade, the legendary freedom fighter's daughter Anita Pfaff too expressed her concern at how her father's legacy was only 'partly exploited' for political reasons.

Pfaff told an Indian news agency "I have heard about it. I don't know under what circumstances it happened and why the tableau was not included. There might be some reasons. We can't imagine that the Republic Day function in the year when my father would have turned 125 is being held and his tableau was not included, it seems very strange."

Expressing her astonishment about how celebrations on Netaji was opened with much fanfare last year only to get a subdued response in 2022 she said "and last year, the opening of the anniversary year was celebrated in a bigger way, of all places in Kolkata, (it) had something to do with election and election prospects in Bengal. The fact that nothing happened this year...certainly the issue is not as important as last year."

Pfaff's comment came almost in tandem with a second request from none other than senior BJP leader and former Meghalaya Governor Thagath Roy who too urged the Prime Minister to reconsider his decision.

Roy a former Bengal BJP president wrote in tweet "we have appealed to the Prime Minister to allow the tableau of

West Bengal to participate in the Republic Day celebrations. The tableau focuses on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Netaji's organization, the INA, which undermined the confidence of the British. That's why the British forced him to leave the country so soon."

The Chief Minister earlier wrote to the Prime Minister expressing her "profound shock and hurt" by the "abrupt" rejection of the proposed tableau.

She wrote, "the tableau was commemorating the contributions of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his INA on his 125th birth anniversary and was carrying the portraits of some of the most illustrious sons and daughters of the country --- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Sri

Aurobindo, Matangini Hazra, Nazrul, Birsu Munda and many patriots." She urged the Prime Minister to "reconsider" his decision so as to pay a befitting respect and homage to the freedom fighters of the country.

Subsequently the Trinamool Congress too attacked the BJP Government even as its portal wrote "Ridiculous how the BJP India led Central Government repeatedly & systematically insults our history, culture and pride. By rejecting Netaji's tableau, they have once again laid bare their hypocrisy. Absolutely unpardonable."

Roy's tweet was taken as a shot in the arm by the TMC leadership with one of its MPs Shantanu Sen wondering how "the BJP on the one hand tells the country to remember Netaji's contribution as the

pioneer of Indian freedom struggle and on the other it throws out a tableau containing a theme basically on this great freedom fighter."

The Congress too hit out at the BJP Government and wrote a letter to include the tableau in the Republic Day parade. In a letter written to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Congress Lok Sabha Leader and Bengal Pradesh Congress president Adhir Chowdhury said, "This is an insult to the people of West Bengal, our cultural heritage and our great hero Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Netaji is not only the pride of West Bengal, but the entire nation." Meanwhile, the Bengal BJP evaded response on the issue saying the Prime Minister "the supreme administrator of the country. When the matter is in his eyes, he will be the one to say it best."

# Fate of late stalwarts' wards to be keenly watched in UP polls

Lucknow: With several political stalwarts of Uttar Pradesh no longer on the scene, it will be keenly watched how their children lead at the hustings this time without their formidable presence.

Be it former Chief Minister Kalyan Singh, Rashtriya Lok Dal's Ajit Singh, BJP leader Lalji Tandon or Samajwadi Party leaders Amar Singh and Beni Prasad Verma, all of them have commanded the State's politics over several decades and will be missed in the high-stakes Assembly polls to be held between February 10 and March 7.

All of them died in the last two years.

Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav too has largely stayed away from the hurly-burly of electoral politics due to ill health and is rarely seen in public.

"Actions and words of these stalwarts had political meaning and were keenly watched by rivals to formulate their strategy. But this time these stalwarts will not be there in the poll battle physically and will be missed by the electorate in Uttar Pradesh. Now it will be for the generation next to prove themselves in their absence," political analyst J P Shukla said.

These leaders could sway people and communities and rearrange political alignments. BJP leader and Hindutva poster boy Kalyan Singh, who passed away on August 21, 2021, managed to unite non-Yadav OBC castes for his party in the state.

He had a good presence and acceptance in western Uttar Pradesh and his "blessings" ensured victory of his grandson Sandeep Singh in the last assembly election in 2017 from Atrauli seat in Aligarh

district. Kalyan Singh's son Rajveer Singh is a BJP MP from Etah seat.

The defining moment of Kalyan Singh's life was the fall of Babri mosque in 1992 and his quitting as chief minister owning its moral responsibility. His death is termed a big loss to the BJP.

"Kalyanji was one of the senior most leaders of the party. Obviously his absence will be felt in the election. But the party is there with his family and has already declared ticket for his grandson Sandeep and his victory is certain," a BJP spokesperson said.

In the RLD, it will be the first election Jayant Chaudhary will be leading his party without his father and former Union minister Ajit Singh, who died on May 6, 2020.

Though Ajit Singh tasted defeat in the 2014 and 2019 parliamentary elections, his hold over the Jats in the western region of the state was admired even by his rivals.

"The people of West UP have respect for Ajit Singh ji. This time they will pay him tribute by establishing the leadership of Jayant Chaudhary and ensure that the next government is formed with SP. There is a wave for RLD in the region," RLD national secretary Anil Dubey told PTI.

The RLD has forged an alliance with the Samajwadi Party this time.

Former Bihar governor Lalji Tandon, once considered close to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and a prominent BJP face in Lucknow, too will be missed this election. He died on July 21, 2020 and his son Ashutosh Tandon, who is a minister in the Yogi Adityanath govern-

ment, will have to contest the election in his absence.

In the Samajwadi Party, the baton has now moved to Akhilesh Yadav, the son of Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Due to health concerns, Mulayam Singh Yadav is practically indisposed.

"Netaji (Mulayam) comes to meet us at party office frequently and guide us. With his training and guidance, the party is going to form the next government under the leadership of Akhileshji," SP MLC Rajpal Kashyap said. The party will also miss its leaders Amar Singh and Beni Prasad Verma. Singh died on August 1, 2020, while Verma passed away on March 27 that year.

When the Samajwadi Party went through a bitter power struggle before the 2017 assembly polls, Amar Singh had sided with Akhilesh Yadav's uncle Shivalp Yadav and the fight went to the Election Commission. Ultimately, Akhilesh Yadav won the battle and the party symbol.

Beni Prasad Verma left the SP in 2009 but rejoined it in 2016 and was made a member of the Rajya Sabha. His son Rakesh Verma is in active politics and is a prospective SP candidate from Barabanki. Another stalwart and known face of Raebareilly, Akhilesh Singh, died on August 20, 2019.

In his absence, his daughter Aditi Singh is carrying forward his political legacy. Aditi Singh, who left the Congress to join BJP, represents Raebareilly Sadar in the assembly now.

A five-time MLA, Akhilesh Singh was considered as the "Robin Hood of Raebareilly" and was popular among a large number of its residents.



Full moon on 'Poush Purnima' in Prayagraj on Monday

PTI

# Snow in Valley lowers temp

Srinagar: Fresh snowfall in some parts of Kashmir led to a dip in the maximum temperatures but overnight cloud cover has resulted in higher than expected minimum temperatures across the valley, officials said on Monday.

Light to moderate snowfall was reported from many places in north Kashmir, including Lolab, Kupwara, Sopore and Baramulla, they said. Some parts of Srinagar witnessed sleet - a mixture of snow and rain -- very briefly, they added.

The precipitation has resulted in the mercury falling during the day. However, overnight cloud cover ensured that the temperature settled around the

freezing point in most parts of Kashmir last night, they said.

The mercury in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, settled at a low of 1 degree Celsius - over two notches up from the previous night's minus 1.2 degrees Celsius, officials said.

Gulmarg, the famous ski resort in Baramulla district of north Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 4.6 degrees Celsius - up 2.4 degrees from the previous night. Pahalgam in south Kashmir Anantnag district, which serves as the base camp for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low of minus 3.6 degrees Celsius - two degrees up from the previous night, they

said.

According to officials, Qazigund, the gateway town to the valley, recorded a minimum of minus 1 degree Celsius, while the nearby south Kashmir town of Kokernag recorded a low of minus 2 degrees Celsius.

The mercury in Kupwara in north Kashmir settled at a low of 0.5 degrees Celsius.

The meteorological office said under the influence of a feeble western disturbance, the weather is most likely to remain generally cloudy with possibility of very light to light rain/snow in the plains till Wednesday and light to moderate snowfall over the higher reaches.

PTI

## FROM PAGE 1

### COVID VACCINATION FOR 12-14 YRS FROM MARCH

Data shows that children are as susceptible to catching infection as adults are. The vaccine protects against severe disease.

"These older teenagers are quite socially active and so are at a higher risk of catching the virus as compared to younger kids. By vaccinating them, we are not only safeguarding them but also stopping the chain of transmission to a great extent," said Dr Praveen Kumar, associate professor, pediatrics, Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi.

Presently Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, an inactivated virus vaccine, is being used to inoculate children.

"It's a time-tested technology which is both safe and efficacious," says Dr Manju Puri, consultant gynecologist, Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi.

"These vaccines have been in use for about a year now. No major side effects have been reported. In fact, we were so confident about their safety that we even gave them to pregnant women and lactating mothers," she said.

However, doctors add that children, like adults, may experience mild side effects of the vaccine such as pain at the vaccine site, fatigue, mild fever, for a few days.

On the overall vaccination status of the country, a senior official from the Union Health Ministry said that with the administration of more than 39 lakh Doses (39,46,348) vaccine doses in the last 24 hours, India's Covid-19 vaccination coverage has exceeded 157.20 crore (1,57,20,41,825) as per reports till 7 am on Monday.

### 2 INDIANS AMONG 3 KILLED IN ABU DHABI ATTACK

They were aided by the UAE-backed Giants Brigades and had help from Saudi airstrikes.

The airport fire in Abu Dhabi was described by police as "minor" and took place at an extension of the international airport that is still under construction. For years, the airport home to Etihad

Airways has been building its new Midfield Terminal, but it was not clear if that was where the fire took place.

Ethad Airways said "precautionary measures resulted in a short disruption for a small number of flights" and that airport operations have returned to normal. Abu Dhabi Airports did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The other blast struck three petroleum transport tankers near a complex for the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. In the Musaffah industrial area. The company describes it as a pipeline and terminal facility located some 22 km (13 miles) from the centre of the city of Abu Dhabi, where 36 storage tanks also supply transport trucks carrying fuel. It is also a short distance from Al-Dhafra Air Base, a military installation that hosts US and French forces.

The location of the ADNOC facility where the tankers caught fire is approximately 1,800 km (1,100 miles) northeast of Saada, the Houthis' stronghold in Yemen. While Emirati troops have been killed in the war in Yemen, the conflict so far has not directly affected daily life in the wider UAE, a country with a vast foreign workforce that is also home to Dubai, a glitzy city of sky scrapers and five-star hotels.

The incident comes as South Korea's President Moon Jae-in is visiting the UAE. During a meeting with Emirati Prime Minister and Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum on Sunday, the two countries reportedly reached a pre-

liminary deal valued at some \$3.5 billion sell mid-range South Korean surface-to-air missiles to the UAE.

At an event attended by the South Korean president earlier in the day, Emirati Energy Minister Suhail Mazrouei declined to comment on the explosion at ADNOC's facility, saying only that police would provide updates on their investigation.

The Houthis have used bomb-laden drones to launch crude and imprecise attacks aimed at Saudi Arabia and the UAE over the course of the six-year-long war. The group has also launched missiles at Saudi airports, oil facilities and pipelines, and used booby-trapped boats for attacks in key shipping routes.

Though there have been civilian deaths in Saudi Arabia from some of these attacks, the overwhelming number of civilian deaths in the conflict have been in Yemen. The war has killed 130,000 people in Yemen - both civilians and fighters - and has exacerbated hunger

and famine across the impoverished country. Torbjorn Soltvedt, an analyst at the risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, noted that while the Houthis have claimed responsibility for an attack on the UAE, Iraqi-based militias have also threatened the Emiratis with attacks.

"Today's attack comes only days after Iran-backed groups threatened to strike against Abu Dhabi in response to alleged Emirati interference in Iraqi politics," he said. He said the attack highlights the missile and drone threat faced by the UAE and the region's other main oil producers. He said unless

### AKHILESH IS WORSE THAN BJP FOR MUSLIMS: BAREILVI CLERIC

It may be mentioned that in response to the recent Dharma Sansad held in Haridwar, on behalf of Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IMC) the Muslim Religion Parliament was convened at Islamia Ground in Bareilly by Tauqir Raza Khan. "I want to tell the Hindu brothers who was Ravana? Was Ravana a Muslim? Krishna killed Kansa? Was Kansa a Muslim? Pandava killed Kauravas. Were Kauravas Muslims? I want to tell the Hindus which book you have been taught, in which it is written that Hindus and Muslims should fight. I want to tell the Hindu society that what was named Dharma Sansad was not actually a Dharma Sansad. It is not taught in any religion to start killing people," Khan said during the Muslim Religion Parliament session. Welcoming his support, Congress State president Ajay Kumar Lallu said that this support will play an important role in forming the Congress government in the coming days.

### EC DEFERS PUNJAB POLLS TO FEB 20 FOR RAVIDAS JAYANTI

Channi's move testifies to the growing influence of the Ravidassia community, followers of Guru Ravidas, on the politics of Punjab which accounts for about 32 per cent Dalit population, highest in the country in percentage terms.

After Channi, Punjab BJP general secretary Subhash Sharma wrote to EC seeking postponement of the Assembly polls on the same ground, saying the State has substantial population of followers of Guru Ravidas ji, including the SC community which is about 32 per cent of the population of Punjab."

Guru Ravidas Jayanti is a festival that is popular among the Dalit community, which makes up more than 30 per cent of Punjab's electorate at the

coming elections. Around 20 lakh devotees are expected to travel to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh between February 10 and 16 to celebrate the day. Political parties feel that they would not be able to cast their votes due to this.

According to a 2018 report by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, there are 39 sub-castes among Dalits in Punjab. However, five sub-castes constitute more than 80 per cent of the Dalit population. Mazhabi Sikhs comprise the largest share of 30 per cent, followed by Ravidassias (24 per cent) and Ad Dharmis (11 per cent). Dalits are concentrated even more in Punjab's Doaba region, where the Ravidassia community's largest Dera (religious place), Dera Sachkhand, is based in Ballan village. Dera Sachkhand Ballan has lakhs of followers around the world. In Punjab, it has about 15 lakh followers, mostly from the Doaba region.

The EC noted that it has also taken inputs from the State Government and Punjab's Chief Electoral Officer in this regard. "After considering these new facts emerging out of these representations, inputs from the State Government and Chief Electoral Officer, past precedence and all facts and circumstances in the matter, now the Commission has decided to reschedule the General Elections to Legislative Assembly of Punjab," it said.

### BIRJU MAHARAJ BIDS ADIEU TO WORLD

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman described the artiste as a "legend of performing arts".

Fondly called Pandit-ji or Maharaj-ji by his disciples and legions of followers, he had said the younger generation has many more opportunities to learn than in his time.

In his last interview with PTI in December, Birju Maharaj had said the future of Kathak, one of the most graceful classical dance forms, was bright in India with the new generation taking the tradition forward.

"Artists who passionately work towards carrying the tradition forward are the right torchbearers of an art form and its legacy. It takes a lot of work and dedication to stay true to a mighty tradition such as classical dance," the Padma Vibhushan awardee had said.

Brajmohan Maharaj or Birju Maharaj was a descendant of the Maharaj family of Kathak dancers. He trained under his father and guru Achchan Maharaj and uncles Shambhu Maharaj and Lachhu Maharaj.

Singer Durga Jasraj, daughter of the late Pandit Jasraj, called Birju Maharaj's death "a monumental loss to Indian performing arts".

"Legendary Pt Birju Maharaj ji's departure has left us poorer, shattered. Pray Maharaj ji's soul rests in rhythmic peace. Deepest condolences to his family, disciples and fans across the world. Om Shanti," she wrote on Twitter.

Composer Adnan Sami said, "We have lost an unparalleled institution in the field of the performing arts. He has influenced many generations through his genius."

### 75 JETS IN BIGGEST R-DAY FLY PAST IN 75TH YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE

There will also be Meghna formation of 1 Chinook and four Mi-17s.

The fly past will begin with "Dhwaj" formation with four Mi-17 aircraft, followed by "Rudra" and "Rahat" formations with 4 and 5 Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) respectively.

Among the other aircraft that will display their

might at the parade are Rafale, Indian Navy's MiG29K, P-8I surveillance aircraft and Jaguar fighter jets.

The Navy's P 8 I long range maritime reconnaissance aircraft that were deployed in Ladakh and earlier in Doklam to pick up Chinese activities will also be part of the fly past. The P8I will fly with the Navy's two MiG 29K aircraft in a formation called Varuna.

In keeping with the theme of "Azadi ka Amrit Mohatsav", the spectacular fly past will include fighter jets, combat helicopters and transport aircraft representing all three forces.

The event will include 39 fighter jets, 28 helicopters and eight transport aircraft of the IAF, Army and Navy flying in various formations.

The Rafale will be seen in three formations. The Vinash formation will have five Rafale jets, Baaz formation will have one Rafale, flanked by two Jaguars, two Su-30s and two MiG 29s.

The fly past will take place in two phases - the first before the parade and the second after the marching contingents have gone past Rajpath.

The first formation before the parade starts will be the Dhwaj with 4 Mi 17 V5 helicopters. The first will have the national flag and others will display the flags of the Army, Navy and Air Force.

This will be followed by four Rudra combat helicopters. In the second phase, there will be 13 formations with different aircraft used by the three forces. The final formation, Amrit, will comprise 17 Jaguar fighter jets, commemorating 75 years of Independence.

### BALYAN MEETS NARESH TIKAIT, FUELS SPECULATION

After the meeting, Naresh Tikait said that Sanjeev Balyan is "our family man, and everyone has the right to come here, anyone belonging to any political party. People have been coming here to seek blessings since the time of Tikait Sahib (Mahendra Singh Tikait)".

Naresh Tikait is the elder brother of Rakesh Tikait who had staged a sit-in for more than a year at Ghazipur border in protest against the farm laws.

Naresh Tikait is also the national president of the BKU, one of the major force behind the over year-long agitation which was withdrawn after the Government scrapped the three contentious farm laws. He had also recently announced his support to the candidates of the SP-RLD alliance, although he later took a U-turn.

Western UP has around 150 seats and overwhelmingly voted for the BJP in 2017 Assembly elections as also in Lok Sabha polls in 2019.

The farmers agitation is seen to have turned tide against the BJP in the Jat region where SP-RLD combine is perceived to be cashing on the "renewed" Jat-Muslim equations which had fallen apart following 2013 riots.

The BJP has already announced names of candidates for 57 out of the 58 seats in UP which will go to polls in the first phase on February 10, and 48 out of 55 seats which will vote in the second phase on February 14. Remaining seats are meant for the NDA allies.

### INDIA'S GROWTH IN 25 YEARS WILL BE CLEAN...

He also said India is fighting another COVID-19 wave with full alertness and caution while also maintaining economic growth. Modi said India is focused on reforms in the right direction and the global economic experts have praised India's decisions. "We will fulfil all the expectations that the entire world has from us," he said.

# HC denies bail to Maha BJP MLA & Narayan Rane's son

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday refused to grant an anticipatory bail to Maharashtra BJP MLA and Union Minister Narayan Rane's son Nitesh Rane in an alleged attempt to murder case.

After hearing pre-arrest bail pleas made by Nitesh Rane and others, a single bench of HC justice C.V. Bhadangi also refused relief to another accused Sandesh alias Gotya Sawant, while he granted bail to co-accused Manish Dalvi. Dalvi's name does not figure in the complaint filed in the case. Nitesh has been charged with Sections 307 (attemp to murder), 120-B (conspiracy) read with 34 (common intention) of the IPC.

Nitesh has been named as the key conspirator behind an attempt to murder Shiv Sena leader Santosh Manohar Parab, who was knocked down from behind by a car on December 18, 2021, while he was returning home by a motorcycle at Kankavali in Sindhudurg district which is Rane's political bastion.

The prosecution's case that a conspiracy was hatched in which one Sachin Satpute was entrusted "to assault and criminally intimidate the complainant/injured", Satpute (A6) with the help of Dhiraj Jadhao who is bodyguard of Sachin Satpute) and accused Sneha Chavan, Dnyaneshwar @ Mauli who were part of the conspiracy. Both Nitesh and Gotya Sawant are alleged to have hatched the conspiracy to make an attempt o the life of Parab.

Among other things, the Prosecution opposed the anticipatory bail being granted to Nitesh and Gotya Sawant on the ground that there were all five cases against Applicant number one (Nitesh) and 26 cases against Applicant No 2. The Prosecution also told the court Nitesh was arrested by the Kankavali police under Section 353, 332, 342, 324, 147, 143, 148, 149, 323, 504, 506, 109 and 120-B of IPC and Section 3 of the Damage to Public Property Act.

On his part, Nitesh's senior counsel Niteen Pradhan requested the court to extend his clients protection from arrest for another week to enable them to decide on future course of action.

However, Special Public Prosecutor Sudeep Pasbola told the court that there was no interim protection either before the Sessions Judge or before this Court operating in favour of the Applicants.

However, the Investigating Officer had made a statement that no coercive or precipitative steps shall be taken against the Applicants, during the pendency of the application before this Court. The Special Public Prosecutor also assured the high court after taking specific instructions, the Investigating Officer's assurance would continue till January 27.

Meanwhile, while granting bail to co-accused Manish Dalvi, the high court directed him to remain present at the Kankavali police station on January 20, 21 and 22, 2021 between 11 am and 1 pm, and thereafter "as and when called by the Investigating Officer". The high court directed Dalvi to surrender his passport, if any, before the Investigating officer and not to leave Sindhudurg District without prior intimation to the investigating officer until further orders. The court also asked him to co-operate with the investigating agency and not to make any attempt to directly or indirectly contact or influence the witnesses, or to tamper with the prosecution evidence.

# CRPF seeks personnel's regular health screening

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned with unexpected and sudden cardiac deaths of relatively young serving personnel especially those deployed in extreme cold climates and attributable to sedentary lifestyle and stress, the CRPF medical wing have sought regular screening of such personnel and take measures to reduce stress to minimise such casualties.

The probable causes for sudden cardiac deaths identified are sedentary lifestyle/lack of exercise, faulty food habits (high salt content: over 5 gm per day and oily food in diet), addictions like smoking and alcohol consumption, stress (workplace./family-related) besides associated comorbidities like hypertension, Diabetes Mellitus among others, reads the advisory.

In addition, strong family history of coronary artery disease or sudden cardiac death has also been listed as a cause of such fatalities in CRPF ranks. Brief or prolonged exposure to cold, both affect the cardiovascular system and exercise in cold weather further increases stress on the heart and arteries, according to the advisory.

Various international studies have shown strong association of cardiovascular disease and mortality increases when the ambient temperature is cold and during cold spells.

Various cardiac/cardiovascular events like stroke, intracerebral hemorrhage, heart fail-



ure occur in winter months. Cold air usually causes a slight increase in heart rate in the range of 5-10 beats per minute. All these may contribute to cardiac events like sudden cardiac deaths in otherwise normal personnel who do not have any prior symptoms of heart disease like angina chest pain and the like.

Preventive measures like regular screening of personnel with blood pressure measurement, special attention towards personnel who have modifiable risk factors like smoking, alcohol addiction or having strong family history of sudden cardiac deaths, obesity and hypertension, it said.

As directed earlier, the Medical Directorate of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has further advised the personnel especially the high risk ones to always carry Disprin tablets (300 mg) and Sorbitrate tablets (5 mg).

The Medical Directorate further advised that the Unit

Medical Officer should brief the troops that these tablets should be taken immediately on feeling of left sided chest pain radiating to the left upper limb or shoulder/scapula/jaw with severe sweating. Such personnel should be immediately shifted to Unit hospital or nearest government hospital for further treatment.

Insiders in the paramilitary said as many as 10 per cent of the personnel are Low Medical Category (LMC) or unfit with health conditions like obesity and cardiac diseases among others.

This is reflective of the growing indiscipline in the ranks as they avoid regular exercise, a prerequisite for maintaining fitness in any uniformed service. The problem is further compounded by the provision of ration money to the tune of Rs 3,636 per personnel per month ensuring a rich diet but the lack of exercise leads to health complications," an official said.

# No one can be forced to get vaccinated: Govt to SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry in an affidavit told the Supreme Court that Covid-19 inoculation guidelines issued do not envisage forcible vaccination without obtaining the consent of an individual.

The affidavit filed on Sunday said that India's vaccination programme is the largest in the world and as on January 11, 2022, a total of 1,52,95,43,602 doses have been administered. It said that 90.84 per cent of the eligible adult population has received their first dose of the vaccine and 61 per cent has received their second dose as well.

"It is submitted that the direction and guidelines released by the Government of India and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare do not envisage any forcible vaccination without obtaining consent of the concerned individual. "It is submitted that vaccination for COVID-19 is of larger public interest in view of the ongoing pandemic situation," the affidavit filed by the

Health Ministry said.

The Ministry said that "it is duly advised, advertised and communicated through various print and social media platforms that all citizens should get vaccinated and systems and processes have been designed to facilitate the same.... However, no person can be forced to be vaccinated against their wishes," it said.

"Furthermore, a total of 23,768 doses have been administered to disabled persons who have voluntarily chosen to be identified as such by using their Unique Disability ID Card/Disability Certificate for registration at the time of their vaccination," it said.

On the issue of exempting persons with disabilities from producing vaccination certificates, the Centre told the apex court that it has not issued any SOP that makes it mandatory to carry the vaccination certificate for any purpose. The Centre said this in its affidavit filed in response to a plea by NGO Evara Foundation seeking door-to-door, priority COVID-19 vaccination for per-

sons with disabilities.

On the issue of door-to-door vaccination, the affidavit submitted that guidance has been provided to states and union territories to undertake meticulous, need-based planning so that Near to Home Vaccine Centres (NHCVCs) strategy is undertaken at block or urban area level and identification of NHCVC sites done according to guidelines. The location of NHCVCs is to be done by district/urban task forces so as to ensure maximum reach of services to the eligible population, it said.

The Health Ministry stressed on the need for continuing the use of face masks or face covers, and said the "Har Ghar Dastak Abhiyan" was being followed for door-to-door vaccination of eligible beneficiaries, including persons with disabilities. It also apprised the apex court that such persons not having ID cards are also eligible for vaccination since the CoWIN website provides the facility for creation of special vaccination sessions for this purpose.

"It is submitted that the

CoWIN public interface is available in 11 regional languages in addition to English. It is also submitted that open files of awareness materials

have been shared with the states for translation, publication and dissemination in any language/accessible format," the affidavit said.

# E-cigarette users who test positive are more likely to experience Covid symptoms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Users of electronic cigarettes who get afflicted with Covid-19 have a higher frequency of experiencing Covid symptoms such as nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea, and loss of the sense of smell or taste, compared to non-vapers, according to new research from Mayo Clinic.

The study, published in the Journal of Primary Care & Community Health, found that symptoms also include headaches, muscle aches and pain and chest pain.

The study said that people who vape and also smoked tobacco, and tested positive for Covid, complained of laboured breathing and had more frequent emergency department visits than those who did not vape.

"The study was designed to compare the frequency of common Covid-19 symptoms, such as loss of taste or smell, headache, muscle aches and chest tightness in Covid patients who vaped, compared with those who were not vapers," said David McFadden, from Mayo Clinic.

The team interviewed more than 280 Covid-positive vapers and compared them with 1,445 Covid-positive people of the same age and gender, and who don't vape.

All of these common Covid symptoms were reported more frequently among people who vape, the researchers said.

Use of e-cigarettes has grown significantly over the past decade, especially among high school students and young adults, though the short- and long-term health effects of e-cigarettes are unknown.

"There are a lot of studies that have shown that e-cigarette use may be associated with inflammation in the lungs and also may cause



severe lung injury in certain users, causing a condition called e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury," said Robert Vassallo, a Mayo Clinic pulmonologist and critical care specialist.

"Our research was not designed to test whether e-cigarette use increases the risk of acquiring Covid infection, but it clearly indicates that symptom burden in patients with Covid-19 who vape is greater than in those who do not vape," he added.

The increased inflammation of lung tissue promoted by Covid-19 infection and the inflammation induced by vaping may worsen the likelihood of systemic inflammation, with an associated increase in symptoms such as fever, myalgias, fatigue and headache, the study noted.

"During a pandemic with a highly transmissible respiratory pathogen like SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes Covid-19), it is highly advisable to reduce or stop vaping and e-cigarette use, and minimise the potential for increased symptoms and lung injury," Vassallo said.

Yet another study which tested more than 4,300 young people for the coronavirus found that those who vaped regularly were five to seven times more likely to test positive. There is evidence that vaping harms the lungs, which might increase the risk of coronavirus infection or a more serious case of Covid-19.

# 84% households' income declined due to Govt's bad policies: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday alleged that due to the Centre's bad economic policy, unemployment rate in the country has gone up to 7 per cent, wholesale inflation rose to 13.56 per cent, Rupee fell to 74+ against the US dollar, income of 84 per cent households declined in 2021 while the wealth of some individuals multiplied nine times.

The Opposition party demanded that like corporate tax was slashed from 30 per cent to 22 percent thus similar reliefs should be provided to the middle and lower-income groups. It also sought from the Modi government that it should reduce petrol and diesel prices by Rs 25 per litre, while GST rates on essential items should be either exempted or rationalised as high rates on these items are 'regressive'.

"The income of 84 per cent of the households in the country declined in 2021, but at the same time the number of Indian billionaires grew from 102 to 142 (39 per cent growth). The richest 98 Indians own the same wealth as the bottom 55.2 crore people. During the first two waves of the pandemic, the wealth of Indian billionaires increased from Rs 23.14 lakh crore to Rs 53.16 lakh crore. This growth in the wealth of billionaires (Rs 30.02 lakh crore) is 86 per cent of the Union Budget for FY 21-22 (Rs 34.83 lakh crore)," Congress spokesperson Gaurav Vallabh said at AICC Press conference.

# CSIR likely to approach ECI to use its UV-C tech to limit Covid spread

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's premier research body, CSIR may soon approach the Election Commission of India (ECI) to use its UV-C technology for mitigation of airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 during indoor meetings with limited capacity for the ensuing Assembly polls in five poll bound States in the wake of ban on physical rallies and roadshows.

This was informed by Union Minister of Science & Technology Dr Jitendra Singh at an event after releasing the CSIR Guidelines on Disinfection Technologies for Mitigation of SARS-CoV-2 Transmission.

The CSIR-CSIO's (Central Scientific Instruments Organisation) newly developed disinfection technology is being installed to combat pandemic in railway coaches, AC buses, closed spaces and even the Parliament House, pointed out the Minister adding that it is totally effective for mitigation of airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and will also remain relevant in post-Covid era.

The technology will soon be open for general roll-out for use by common masses, he said.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, the technology has been developed according to the requirements for deactivation of SARS COV-2 virus contained in an aerosol with necessary ventilation measures, necessary safety and user guidelines and tested Bio-safety standards etc.



UV-C deactivates viruses, bacteria, fungus and other bio-aerosols etc. with appropriate dosages using 254nm UV light.

He said, UV-C air duct disinfection system can be used in auditoriums, large conference rooms, class-rooms, malls etc. which provides a relatively safer environment for indoor activities in the current pandemic.

The Minister commented on the legacy of CSIR in scientific pursuit and urged the scientists to highlight the role played by the organisation in different segments of the day-to-day life of the common man. Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) Manoj Joshi said on the occasion that CPWD will work along with CSIR for wider dissemination and adoption of UV-C air duct disinfection systems in Government and private buildings.

A.K Malhotra, Executive Director, Railway Board informed that the UV-C Disinfection Technology has been successfully tested for one month in Railways coaches from Bandra to Chandigarh covering a distance of 1000 kilometers. He said RDSO (Research Designs and Standards Organisation), Lucknow has recommended the use of this technology in all Railways coaches in a phased manner.

# India records slight fall in new Covid infections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's Covid-19 infections at 12,58,089 in the past 24 hours was slightly lower than Sunday, but the death numbers at 385 were higher, as per the Union Health Ministry data. Registering an increase of 6.02 per cent in a day, Omicron cases in India have gone up to 8,209.

Active Covid-19 cases now stand at 16,56,341, while the recovery rate is 94.27 per cent. The number of active Covid-19 cases has increased to 16,56,341, the highest in around 230 days, while the death toll has climbed to 4,86,451 with 385 daily fatalities, the data updated at 8 am stated. The active cases account for 4.43 percent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has decreased to 94.27 percent, the ministry said.

An increase of 1,05,964 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

India's Omicron tally has risen to 8,209. The cases have been detected across 29 states and union territories, out of which 3,109 have recovered or migrated," said a senior official from the Ministry.

Maharashtra, one of the worst-hit states by the Covid pandemic, recorded 41,327 new coronavirus infections, 1,135 less than the day before, and 29 deaths. The overall caseload now stands at 72,11,810 and the death toll at 1,41,808. Eight new Omicron cases have been reported in the state, raising the tally of such infections to 1,738.

Delhi on Sunday reported 18,286 COVID-19 cases and 28 deaths, while the positivity rate dropped to 27.87 per cent from 30.64 per cent a day ago, according to health department data. State Health Minister Satyendra Jain has said that the city is conducting three times more diagnostic

tests than the number recommended by the ICMR.

Active coronavirus cases in Andhra Pradesh crossed the 30,000 mark to reach 30,182 on Monday as 4,108 fresh positives were added in the state. In the 24 hours ending 9 am today, 22,882 samples were tested, which turned a positivity rate of about 19 per cent, a four per cent rise over Sunday.

Kerala on Monday recorded 22,946 new Covid-19 cases with a test positivity rate of 33.07 per cent. The state also reported 18 related deaths. The state currently has 1,21,458 active cases.

The new fatalities include 158 from Kerala and 36 from West Bengal. Of the total deaths reported so far in the country, 1,41,808 are from Maharashtra, 50,832 from Kerala, 38,431 from Karnataka, 36,989 from Tamil Nadu, 25,363 from Delhi, 22,963 from Uttar Pradesh and 20,088 from West Bengal.

# Severe cold conditions continue in Punjab, Delhi, UP, HP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Severe cold day conditions continued in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi NCR on Monday. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the cold day to severe cold day conditions over Northwest and Central India will continue during the next 24 hours and gradually abate thereafter.

Meanwhile, fresh snowfall in some parts of Kashmir led to a dip in the maximum temperatures but overnight cloud cover has resulted in higher than expected minimum temperatures across the valley.

The IMD said cold wave conditions over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan during the next two days. It may abate only after that. Fresh active Western Disturbance will affect Northwest India from Jan 21.

For Delhi, the cold day conditions continued for the



fifth consecutive day on Monday. On Monday, the maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to settle around 17°C and 8°C, respectively. The respite is mainly due to the back-to-back western disturbances (WDs) forecast to affect the Western Himalayan Region from Tuesday onwards. As per

IMD, a fresh WD is likely to affect Western Himalayan Region from January 18 onwards, followed by another one from Friday, January 21.

Dr RK Jenamani, senior IMD scientist, said, "The condition of fog has improved in Delhi, Punjab and Haryana today. There will be light rain-

mixture of snow and rain -- very briefly.

The mercury in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, settled at a low of 1 degree Celsius -- over two notches up from the previous night's minus 1.2 degrees Celsius. Gulmarg, the famous ski resort in Baramulla district of north Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 4.6 degrees Celsius -- up 2.4 degrees from the previous night.

Pahalgam in south Kashmir Anantnag district, which serves as the base camp for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low of minus 3.6 degrees Celsius -- two degrees up from the previous night. The mercury in Kupwara in north Kashmir settled at a low of 0.5 degrees Celsius.

Cold conditions prevailed in parts of Rajasthan where Fatehpur recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 1.8 degrees Celsius on Sunday night. A slight increase in minimum temperature was recorded at most places in the state.

# Banking, financial institutions struggling to deal with increasing fraud incidents: Deloitte survey

New Delhi: In the wake of Covid-19 and new digital operations, banking and financial institutions have been struggling to deal with an increasing number of fraud incidents and the trend is expected to continue, a Deloitte India survey said on Monday. Key reasons identified for the increase in fraud incidents over the next two years include large-scale remote working models, increase in customers using non-branch banking channels and the limited/ineffective use of forensic analytics tools to identify potential red flags, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP (DTTL) said.

About the survey, Deloitte said it gathered the views of 70 key C-suite stakeholders/senior management responsible for compliance and fraud risk management, audit/finance, asset recovery from varied financial institutions based in India. Banks and financial institutions which participated in the survey included private, public, foreign, co-operative and regional rural banks in India.

"In the wake of COVID-19 and new digital operations, banking and financial institutions have been struggling to deal with an increasing number of fraud incidents," the Deloitte India Banking Fraud Survey said. PTI

# DISQUALIFICATION OF MUKUL ROY

## SC hopes WB Assembly Speaker will decide plea within two weeks

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday expressed hope that the West Bengal Assembly Speaker will decide within two weeks a plea seeking disqualification of Mukul Roy, who defected to the TMC from the BJP after the state polls.

A bench comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao and B V Nagarathna adjourned the matter to the second week of February.

Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for the Assembly Speaker, urged the bench to post the matter for hearing in the third week of

February as it would be impractical to put a tight deadline.

The apex court, however, adjourned the petition for hearing to the second week of February, and said that it expects a decision by that time.

"We will give them two weeks. List it for the second week of February. In the meanwhile please ensure it is completed, we are not saying that in the order," the bench observed.

The apex court was hearing two separate appeals filed by West Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee and its

Secretary and the Returning Officer against the Calcutta High Court's order.

The high court had asked Banerjee to take a decision on the petition for disqualification of Roy as a member of the House by October 7.

BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari, leader of the Opposition, on June 17 had filed the petition before the Speaker seeking Roy's disqualification. PTI

# SC bench irked over disruptions during online hearings due to use of mobile phones by lawyers

New Delhi: A Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) N V Ramana on Monday expressed unhappiness over repeated disruptions during virtual hearings due to the use of mobile phones by several advocates, and said it may have to ban participation through mobiles.

A bench comprising the CJI and justices A S Bopanna

and Hima Kohli was unhappy over the fact that it had to adjourn the hearings in as many as 10 cases listed on Monday due to disruptions in either audio or visual or both from advocates' end during the proceedings.

"Lawyers are appearing using their mobile phones and are not visible. We may have to ban this mobile business. Mr counsel, you are now practising in the Supreme Court and appear regularly. Can't you afford to have a desktop to argue," the bench observed in one of the cases.

During the hearing of another case, the bench took note of poor internet connectivity at the lawyer's end and

said, "We have no energy to hear cases like this. Please devise a system by which we can hear you. Ten matters are over like this and we are shouting." The top court has been hearing cases through video-conferencing since March 2020 due to the pandemic and has been relaxing or tightening the conditions from time to time keeping in mind the changing pandemic situation.

The apex court, on January 2, took note of a sudden spike in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country and decided to hear all matters in virtual mode and from January 7, the benches are sitting at the residential offices of the judges. PTI





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Shadowboxing

### A section of population feels that the jab drive violates human rights and personal freedom

Strangely, the exit of Novak Djokovic from Australia saw more anti-vaxxers getting angry than tennis fans. An anti-lockdown and anti-vaccine group quickly surfaced in Australia wondering if the tennis great was the "beacon of hope" to lead the fight against vaccination. Such segments of population exist across the world today. To them, it is not a question of an unvaccinated person posing a risk to oneself and family and friends and colleagues. Refusal to vaccinate is for them a political issue, largely the right-wing variety. Western anti-vaxxers link their hesitation to growing distrust in Government institutions and policies. People's frustration has generally mounted since 2020 because of lockdowns and restrictions turning their routines topsy-turvy. Their frustration often extends to vaccination campaigns to control the transmission of the Coronavirus. It is also true, however, that absence of scientific rigour in a few past cases of inoculation has made some Europeans wary of public health programmes. The pro-Djokovic camp in Turkey is an anti-vaccination party that fears vaccination guidelines violate human rights and personal freedom. A party in Austria is gaining popularity for a similar stand. In the United States, the Republicans are against vaccination, in contrast to the Democrats. Some countries like Russia, vexed with the anti-vaccination politics, want to bring in a QR code system to prevent the unvaccinated from accessing public places. France has a Government divided on the issue. President Emmanuel Macron raised a storm by making public his displeasure against the anti-vaxxers.



But his Sports Minister strangely said he would allow an unvaccinated Djokovic to play in the French Open. The vaccination drive is now stuck in a political row. India is not unaffected by the global movement. The opinion is sharply divided on Djokovic's stand. The Indian Government, for the first time, clarified its stand when it told the Supreme Court that "no person can be forced to be vaccinated against their wishes". It will also not make it mandatory to carry vaccination certificates for any purpose. The statement comes in the wake of some States and private businesses wanting to disincentivise people refusing to get vaccinated. To be sure, the unvaccinated are a risk to themselves and others. But one should notice a fundamental difference between the anti-vaxxers in India and the west. The Indians in this group are vaccine-hesitant, not anti-vaccination as such. They are not, as of date, part of a political movement like in Europe. Concerns of safety, side effects, rushed vaccine approvals, quick human trials and scientific scepticism are some of the factors that hold them from taking the vaccine. Hesitancy has reduced where their concerns have been redressed. The sudden onslaught of the highly transmissible Omicron variant made them quickly change their mind about vaccination. The priority is a trust-building national campaign to personally reach out to the unvaccinated. Prefer reason over a rule.

ment. The opinion is sharply divided on Djokovic's stand. The Indian Government, for the first time, clarified its stand when it told the Supreme Court that "no person can be forced to be vaccinated against their wishes". It will also not make it mandatory to carry vaccination certificates for any purpose. The statement comes in the wake of some States and private businesses wanting to disincentivise people refusing to get vaccinated. To be sure, the unvaccinated are a risk to themselves and others. But one should notice a fundamental difference between the anti-vaxxers in India and the west. The Indians in this group are vaccine-hesitant, not anti-vaccination as such. They are not, as of date, part of a political movement like in Europe. Concerns of safety, side effects, rushed vaccine approvals, quick human trials and scientific scepticism are some of the factors that hold them from taking the vaccine. Hesitancy has reduced where their concerns have been redressed. The sudden onslaught of the highly transmissible Omicron variant made them quickly change their mind about vaccination. The priority is a trust-building national campaign to personally reach out to the unvaccinated. Prefer reason over a rule.

### PICTALK



Locals look on as workers clear water hyacinth from the Powai lake, in Mumbai

# Tribals and their divinity concept



SARADINDU MUKHERJI

## Contrary to perception, tribals in India have a belief system which is no less profound and spiritual than other religions practised in the country

Former Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Kishore Chandra Deo, had in the last week of December 2021 said: "Tribals are not born into any religion and are treated as indigenous entities. Therefore, when certain sections of the Scheduled Tribes choose to practice any religion — say, Christianity or Buddhism in the Northeast, or Islam in places like Lakshadweep, or Hindu, Sikh or any other religion — it is never a case of religious conversion because, since the tribals are not born into a religion, there can't be a case of them converting to a religion." This, incidentally, is the opinion of an important politician who also belongs to the tribal community; this was said in the context of the Karnataka Anti-Conversion Bill.



LM Shrikant, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, had pointed out on February 21, 1952, in a note that tribals in India have three common features: a) Tribal origin; b) Primitive way of life and habitation in remote and less accessible areas; and, c) general backwardness in all respects. He discovered after extensive travel all over India how the tribals lived in semi-slavish conditions, amidst abysmal poverty. He also noted the harm caused by the Criminal Tribes Act of 1926. In various reports, no one has ever mentioned that tribals lack a 'belief system' or religion.

Now, let us examine whether the tribals have a "religion" as described by Kishore Chandra Deo. The concept of dharma is different from religion, as we all know. Even to assume that tribals have no religion is historically wrong. Here, I have just picked a few examples from the Santal segment of the tribal population. Surely, this is true of other tribal societies, too.

All human beings are born without a 'belief system' or religion is true but they embrace the practices, rituals and the overall religio-cultural traits from their parents and the immediate neighbourhood. Like picking up the mother tongue, it happens effortlessly and without any tutoring. One can assert that trib-

als in India have a belief system which is no less profound and spiritual than other religions/dharma that are practised in India. As Suniti Kumar Chatterjee had pointed out: "All the Austric tribes in India had just a little oral literature, handed down from generation to generation, consisting of their mythological and semi-mythological legends and traditions, and some folk poetry, partly relating to their religious ceremonies ('The Cultural Heritage of India'; Vol 5, p.670)." Chatterjee had further observed: "In Bengal, there is a sizeable Santal population following its own traditional religion, which is in a way akin to Puranic Hinduism. Being within the orbit of Brahmanism, the Santals have been very largely influenced by Hindu notions (p.671)."

Chatterjee also complimented Ramdas Majhi Tudu for his *Kherawal-Vamsa* (or *Dharam-puthi* or 'The Sacred Book of the Kherawal race') which contains the traditions of his people "and their religious and social culture" (p.672). He has also referred to Sadhu Ramchand Murmu Thakur, described as a "religious reformer and teacher of the Santal philosophy of religion" (p.673). There is no



THE ORIGINAL 'BELIEF SYSTEM' OF HUMANKIND HAS REVOLVED AROUND NATURE WORSHIP — THE RIVERS, MOON, TREES AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP. ALL THESE ARE IMPORTANT INGREDIENTS IN THE TRIBALS' PERCEPTION OF THE DIVINE

dearth of examples to show how the tribals were never devoid of religion.

The original 'belief system' of humankind has revolved around nature worship — the Sun, the Moon, rivers, mountains, trees and ancestor worship. All these are important ingredients in the tribals' perception of the Divine. Unfortunately, the conventional view of religion is based on a division of humanity into "believers" and "non-believers" where the conquest of "the other" is the *sine qua non*. The belief systems manifest in the Sanatan Dharma, paganism, animism and Shintoism across the continents are what the tribals in India consider sacred.

As Iravati Karve had pointed out, the "cultural compromise" that goes on in India was made possible because it was helped by "polytheism and its logical concomitant — an attitude of tolerance towards other gods, other creeds and other customs". All scholars who have studied India's tribal society — like Nirmal Bose, Ghurye and Kumar Suresh Singh — have also expressed similar views. James Cowan, writing on the aborigines of Australia, had observed that they "represent

the conscience of us all as they recognise and acknowledge at all times the metaphysical origins of the human spirit".

We end this short essay with an anecdote. This was in 1902 at the Belur Math, where Santal labourers used to come for work. Swami Vivekananda liked their company immensely. Not only did he give them meals, he also took care that it was without salt. It happened because he had been told by them that they don't take food that has salt in it or has been touched by others. Swamiji observed: "You are Narayans, God manifest. Today, I have offered food to Narayan." After the Santals had retired for rest after the meal, Swamiji told his disciples that he found the Santals to be a "veritable embodiment of God" ('The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda', Vol 7, p.244-245). Perhaps this incident would prove once again how the tribals are to be judged regarding their 'belief system' and, that too, by one of the greatest Indians of all times and a true Hindu.

(The writer is an academic and historian. A former Member of ICSSR, he is currently Member, the Indian Council of Historical Research. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### PT BIRJU MAHARAJ WILL BE MISSED

Sir — Padma Vibhushan awardee and legendary Kathak dancer Brij Mohan Nath Mishra, alias Pandit Birju Maharaj (83), died at his home in Delhi. Though he was best known as a Kathak dancer, he was also a singer par excellence, having command over *thumri*, *dadra*, *bhajan* and *ghazal*. He composed and sang two sequences in Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* and also choreographed for *Devdas*, received the Filmfare Award for Best Choreography for *Mohe Rang Do Lal* from *Bajirao Mastani*, and was noticed for *Gadar*, *Vishwaroopam* and *Deh Ishqiya*. The versatile Kathak legend was also a superb drummer, playing nearly all drums with ease and precision; he was especially fond of playing the *tabla* and *baal*, besides being a poet and painter.

As per media, Panditji was also a master storyteller; he interlaced his performances with incidents from his life, narrated to captivate the audience. It will be great if some of his disciples carry forward his legacy beyond the heights he himself achieved. Such a great humble personality, Birju Maharaj never ran behind fame and that is the reason everyone has a lot of respect for him. We have lost one of India's biggest traditional dancers of our era. May your soul achieve solace! Heartfelt condolences to his family, fans and disciples.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

### BAD NEWS FROM CHINA

Sir — The companies are bracing for another round of potentially debilitating supply chain disruptions as China, home to about one-third of global manufacturing, imposes sweeping lockdowns in an attempt to keep the Omicron variant under control ahead of the Winter Olympic Games and the Asian Games, 2022. At least 20 million people, or about 1.5 per cent of China's population, are in lockdown, mostly in the city of Xi'an in western China and in the Henan province in north-central China.

The country's zero-tolerance policy has manufacturers — already on edge after spending the last two years dealing

### Implement the poll rally ban



The Election Commission has extended the moratorium on open public rallies, except indoor meetings with 300 people or 50 per cent of the hall capacity can be held with COVID protocols. The onus of following the norms shall be on the political parties. The purpose of public rallies is to convince floating/undecided voters to vote for them. But most of the 300 people allowed will be dedicated party workers and the undecided voters will still remain out of reach. However, it is a welcome move by the EC to safeguard public health, which has been prioritised over

campaigning. Extending the ban on political rallies till January 22 would definitely be frustrating for major players and their over-eager candidates.

Contrary to the obvious dejection of the political class, all those citizens who fear mass gatherings would whole-heartedly welcome the EC's decision for no right-thinking person would be happy at the prospect of deterioration in the already scary pandemic situation. Similar to all virus containment measures, effective enforcement of the ban would depend on the due diligence of officials who are entrusted to ensure compliance by the political parties. Unlike in the past, the upcoming elections would test the resilience and efficiency of the EC as the task ahead is not only limited to facilitating smooth transition of power in the five States but also ensuring compliance of all directions related to the poll code.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

with crippling supply chain woes — worried about another round of shutdowns at Chinese factories and ports. Additional disruptions to the global supply chain would come at a fraught moment for companies, which are struggling with rising prices for raw materials and shipping along with extended delivery times and worker shortages. If lockdowns become more widespread, their effect on supply chains could be felt across the United States. And major new disruptions could exacerbate inflation, which is already at a 40-year high.

MR Jayanthi | Mumbai

### NEW ISRO CHAIRMAN AT THE HELM

Sir — The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has been blessed with yet another stalwart in space science in the form of S Somnath, who recently assumed charge as its chairman. The timing is crucial as India opens its space sector to private firms and startups to build rockets and satellites for both domestic and global markets. When the privatisa-

tion reforms got underway with the launch of the New Space India Limited (NSIL) in March 2019, ISRO's commercial arm was even more firmly established. Somnath has worked as Director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC). An alumni of the Indian Institute of Science, he was instrumental in developing India's most powerful rocket, GSVL Mk 3, which can be an asset for our human space mission. He has also worked on the Cryogenic PSLV rocket.

Like the success stories of the Mars Orbiter Mission and Chandrayaan 2 had ignited new hopes and aspirations, his tenure will see the launch of Gaganyaan, the human space flight, considering that India aims to send astronauts into space on its own by 2023. He has its task cut out in terms of increasing the agency's output, especially in the times of the COVID crisis.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Naimital

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

I don't know under what circumstances it happened and why the tableau was not included. There might be some reasons.



Netaji Bose's daughter — Anita Bose-Pfaff



This (Texas synagogue attack) was, quite simply, a hate crime and an act of anti-Semitism.

British Prime Minister — Boris Johnson

Looking forward to bringing to the audience the story of India's most beloved *Funkaar*, Kapil Sharma.



Film director — Mrighdeep Singh Lamba



He (Virat Kohli) told us in a meeting that he will be stepping down from the Test captaincy.

Indian pacer — Jasprit Bumrah

I assure you that the roads will be smoother than the cheeks of film actress Kangana Ranaut.



Jharkhand Congress MLA — Dr Irfan Ansari

## A curious move

### If Punjab poll date can be deferred, why not delay this entire round owing to Omicron?

At the outset, let it be made very clear that this write-up seeks to cast no aspersions on the intent of the Election Commission of India, which is an autonomous body established by the Constitution. If anything, it only tries to assess whether the deferment of the Punjab Assembly election date is a case of double standards or even misplaced priority. The point is pertinent because all the major political parties in the fray in Punjab had in one voice demanded that the election date be put off in view of the Guru Ravi Das Jayanti celebrations, which would be celebrated on February 16. They said a large number of people were expected to move from Punjab to Varanasi



for participating in the celebrations. The Election Commission acquiesced and has postponed the date to February 20. Now, the development spawns a couple of related questions. One, aren't the parties clearly in a game of upmanship here to woo the electorate by showing how much they care for the latter's religious sentiments? And, isn't the poll panel looking like it is playing into their

hands rather than diligently fulfilling its constitutional mandate?

Two, is the issue of celebrating Guru Ravi Das Jayanti, or any other religious or community-based festival for that matter, is of bigger importance than the collective health and well-being of our nation's people? Because, admit it or choose to ignore it at your own peril, the truth of the matter as bright as daylight is that the Omicron-led third wave of the pandemic is well and truly upon us. Highly transmissible as this COVID-19 variant is, our population is contracting it left, right and centre, as is evident by the skyrocketing number of the people contracted thus far. Also, by the parties' own admission, lakhs of devotees would travel from Punjab to Varanasi for participating in the celebrations. Isn't it a logical corollary and real and present risk that they could transmit the highly infectious virus to other, unaffected people on their two-way journey? And if the decision has come about for considerations other than a prominent sect's religious sentiments, then why not extend the same yardstick to the other four States too that are going to polls in February and March? After all, by any measure, safety and good health for all citizens take precedence any day over a region- and religion-specific demand, isn't it?



## FIRST COLUMN

## SOCIALISING DIGITAL BRAND COMMUNICATION

Digital avatars and 'phygital' communication are the new drivers



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY



SANTOSH K BISWAL

In the wake of technological upgradations, the space of media and communication is getting re-defined. Digital capital, digital representation, leap-frogging, technological determinism and communication revolution are the new buzz words. Narratives of digital marketing communications are changing fast. The advent and proliferation of 5G, increasingly adoption of popular culture and technological determinism have become the new landmarks of brand communication. There is no novelty in digitalizing the brand communication. However, socializing the digital platforms is the fad in the world of brand communication. Digital avatars, 'phygital' and immersive communication are the new explorations which have started influence the world of brands. Digital humanism is the larger talking point. Keeping Metaverse, social commerce and personalisation in their kitties, brand communicators are going to actualize the alternate digital realities in the dominant ecosystem of digital marketing space.



Metaverse espousing the unique digital articulations and communication will eventually shape up the influencer marketing. This new shift taking place in the business world must be reckoned with varied yardsticks. Content creators, brands and advertisers have come forward to capitalize on Metaverse. It is going to retell the narratives of advertising through immersive storytelling. Immersive storytelling through immersive communication is amultichannel, multisensory experience - what you can see and hear. It is non-linear and exploratory in which the audiences are free to interact with whoever they want to interact with or consume content and take full control over it. It is suitable for adding gamification and interaction. The frequency of inventions and upgrades in the technological world for the last few decades enriches the platform of the metaverse and one after one technical organisations eventually incorporate them. It has been observed that metaverse is one of the significant platforms for achieving success in executing the brand strategies.

Brands are now-a-days creating immersive experiences for their consumers. They are hiring metaverse engineering directors and utilising augmented tools to simultaneously collaborate on fashion, entertainment, and gaming innovations. Metaverse also opens up opportunities to involve consumers with the platform. Value creation is one of the key aspects of this platform. Metaverse has attempted to create a new universe of fashion. Fashion is an important aspect for the human for its self-expression and also beneficial for them to create identity like the way in real life. The new virtual digital platforms open the opportunities to experience a newly three-dimensional experience. However, various studies propose that fashion will top the virtual world than the physical world because of the involvement of metaverse in the daily lives of humans.

Digital avatars are the animated or photographic images, that web surfers use to identify themselves and communicate on the online platforms. Avatars tend to enhance the entertainment and information value and improve the overall satisfaction of web-based activities. Digital representation is getting more apparent. Apart from content creation, there is also the facility of interacting live with an audience using an avatar. Studies find that in high-involvement situation, the consumers are more likely to contemplate the content of an argument. That's why, avatar-mediated platform is providing Philip to business, branding and communications. Tellingly, metaverse will influence traditional jobs or activities including business activities. Its impact on human especially human and society in overall will be significant. Immersive, interactive, and collaborative form of communication is going to be next level order.

(Chakraborty and Biswal teach at Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow and Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune, respectively. The views expressed are personal.)

## Delink disinvestment &amp; budgetary exercise

The lengthy and cumbersome process of approval and bureaucratic red tape undermines the disinvestment process



UTTAM GUPTA

With the financial year ending in two months, the Government is no close to meeting the target of ₹175,000 crore from disinvestment of Central Public Sector Undertakings set in the Union Budget for 2021-22. It has so far realized less than ₹10,000 crore. Even after adding around ₹100,000 crore, being the expected proceeds from sale of its 10 percent shares in Life Insurance Corporation of India, (on the premise that it goes through before the year-end), there will be a whopping shortfall of ₹65,000 crore. This is not new.

It is a continuation of a trend seen during the previous six years under the Modi dispensation when in all years except during 2017-18 (in that year, the proceeds from disinvestment of a little over ₹100,000 crore were slightly higher than the target; courtesy, sale of its 51.11 percent shareholding in oil downstream CPSU Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited to another CPSU in the upstream segment, ONGC), the collection was far short of the target.

During this period, the Government laid greater emphasis on 'strategic' disinvestment (a sophisticated nomenclature for share sale that reduces its holding in the PSU to below 50 percent). On this front also, the outcome has been disappointing. For instance, during 2015-16, proceeds from sale through this route were 'nil' against budget provision of ₹28,500 crore. For 2016-17, the target itself was reduced from ₹20,500 crore to ₹5,500 crore.

In the following two years, the target for 'strategic' disinvestment could be met largely because of the sale of Government's majority holding in one PSU to another: 51.11 percent shareholding in HPCL to ONGC in 2017-18 and 52.63 percent stake in the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) to Power Finance Corporation (PFC) in 2018-19. During 2019-20, 100 percent of its shareholding in NEEPCO and 75 percent in THDC India Limited were sold to National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) - another CPSU in the power sector.

These sales can't be termed as strategic as the purchaser being another PSU namely ONGC/PFC/NTPC, the Government continues to have effective ownership and control over the divested entity viz. HPCL/REC/NEEPCO/THDC.

A number of major strategic sales such as Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited or BPCL (53.29 percent); Container Corporation or ConCor (30 percent); Shipping Corporation of India or SCI (63.75 percent) planned during 2019-20 besides Air India or AI (and its subsidiaries) - a carry forward from the previous year - didn't materialize. These sales didn't happen during 2020-21 also. While, AI et al were sold in September, 2021, sale of BPCL/SCI are unlikely to get



IN THE BUDGET FOR 2021-22, THE FINANCE MINISTER ANNOUNCED THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO PRIVATISE ALL CPSUs IN NON-STRATEGIC SECTORS AND UNDERTAKE PRIVATISATION EVEN IN THE STRATEGIC SECTOR WITH A RIDER OF RETAINING AT LEAST ONE UNDERTAKING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR. THESE EFFORTS WILL BEAR FRUIT ONLY WHEN THE PROCESS IS UNSHACKLED FROM BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE AND BUDGET-MAKING

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



consummated even during the current FY.

An overarching reason as to why the actual proceeds from disinvestment have fallen short of the target has to do with the very premise of treating these as a source of revenue (albeit for plugging fiscal deficit) which is flawed. Unlike tax revenue, which can be projected with a degree of certainty, the same cannot be said about proceeds from disinvestment. In this case, a lot depends on the market scenario and, in particular, the perception of investors about the PSU in which share-sale is contemplated.

In cases, where strategic sale is mooted, the Government faces a bigger challenge as apart from a favorable market, it needs bidders with deep pockets. For instance, in case of BPCL (disinvestment in the oil behemoth was originally planned for 2019-20), it needed a strategic investor who could pay around ₹60,000 crore (prevailing share price multiplied by the number of shares corresponding to 53.29 percent holding).

The lengthy and cumbersome process of approval and bureaucratic red tape further undermines the chances of the Government kicking the ball rolling just around the time when the strategic investors are ready to put in their bets.

The NITI Aayog identifies companies for divestment which are then considered by the Core Group of Secretaries on Divestment (CGD), a long-drawn process by itself, which takes it to the Alternative Mechanism (AM) - a group of ministers including finance, road transport & highways, administrative reforms et c-

for approval. After AM's approval, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) moves proposal for in-principle approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA). All put together, strategic divestment involves around 12 steps.

This leads to delay and by the time, all approvals are in place, the market scenario becomes adverse. In case of BPCL, during 2019-20, the international price of crude oil (fortunes of oil companies move in tandem with it) was hovering around \$70 per barrel. But the bureaucrats were not ready. During 2020-21, COVID-19 spoiled the party as the average crude price declined to just about \$40 per barrel (in April 2020, it had plummeted to a low of \$20 per barrel). During the current year, even as the price recovered ruling above \$70 per barrel most of the time, the officials are not ready yet again leading to deferment of its divestment to 2022-23.

In the past, successive governments used PSUs as milch cows to serve their budgetary needs. While, extracting high dividend, special dividend, bonus has been a standard practice, during 2004-2014, the then UPA - regime went a step ahead during the time to extend petroleum subsidies (for instance, ONGC was asked to give discount on crude supplies to Indian Oil Corporation or IOCL, BPCL and HPCL to enable the latter keep the price of diesel, petrol, LPG, and kerosene low; ONGC gave a total discount of over ₹200,000 crore during this period). The same mindset drives them to look for revenue even while divesting shares of these undertakings. The

ball does not stop here.

The official think tank is ever keen that even after completing the strategic sale, the Government remains in the driver's seat. A clear indication of this was given by the FM in her Budget speech for 2019-20. She had stated the intent was to change the existing policy from "directly" holding 51 per cent or above in a CPSU, to one where-by its total holding, "direct" plus "indirect", is maintained at 51 per cent. Such a signal deters potential investors.

To conclude, the government should delink disinvestment from budgetary exercise. In other words, while projecting its revenue receipt, the Government should not include any contribution from disinvestment proceeds.

For the purpose of executing share sale, it should set up a holding company on the lines of a bank investment company recommended by the RBI committee under P Nayak for public sector banks - where all its shares in the PSUs be vested. The HC to be manned by eminent professionals should be fully empowered and given freedom to take all decisions - in consultation with the management - in regard to valuation, quantum of shares, timing of sale, etc., keeping in mind the market conditions.

In the budget for 2021-22, the finance minister had announced the government's decision to privatize all CPSUs in non-strategic sectors and undertake privatization even in the strategic sector with a rider of retaining at least one undertaking in the public sector. These efforts will bear fruit only when the process is unshackled from bureaucratic red-tape and budget-making.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

I'M HURT BY THE DECISION OF THE GOI TO ABRUPTLY EXCLUDE WEST BENGAL'S PROPOSED TABLEAU WITHOUT ANY REASON.  
—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER  
MAMATA BANERJEE



THE TMC GOVERNMENT PURPOSELY MAKES SUCH TABLEAUX WHICH GET REJECTED, SO THEY CAN DO POLITICS OVER IT.  
—BJP NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT  
DILIP GHOSH

## Readying India for the mammoth vaccination drive

A first-person, behind-the-scenes account straight from the trenches

Score: 156 crore vaccines. Pitch: Pandemic, War: Team Health India vs Covid-19. One year, 156 crore vaccinations. Roughly 42 lakh vaccinations plus daily. The story of the unparalleled journey of an extraordinary achievement of "Team Health India".

Before the world's largest vaccination drive was launched, several experts expressed doubts based on course of their experiences, facts, and hypotheses. Will we be able to make vaccines available as per the nation's needs? Do we possess storage capacities for such huge numbers? Do we have the necessary transport arrangements and trained manpower?

It will take too long to ready the manpower to vaccinate such a large population. Until now, the country has never vaccinated the adult pop-



MANOHAR AGNANI

ulation. We have not even digitized information on children's vaccination. How will we address vaccine hesitancy among people? How will vaccine reach timely and safely to far flung regions? Who will vaccinate them?

Amid this environment of criticism, "Team Health India" counted on known strengths:

- ◆ Decades of running our National Immunization Programme.
- ◆ Over 25 years of administering polio drops to almost 10 crore infants.
- ◆ Vaccinating over 35 crore children upto age 15 against measles and rubella.
- ◆ Experience of storing vaccines in 29,000 cold chain points and sending to far flung areas.
- ◆ Monitoring storage and distribution through e-Vin (Electronic Vaccine Intelligence



Network).

◆ Implementing 'Mission Indradhanush' to vaccinate left-out children and expectant mothers.

The most important reason behind this self-confidence was the unshakable conviction of the Prime Minister in the hidden potential of the citizens of our country, which became the greatest strength of "Team Health India".

The team first focused on resolving the doubts raised by the experts. So began an endless marathon of meetings on the vaccination drive. It was exact-

ly a year ago from today, before the launch of the world's largest vaccination drive by the Prime Minister, that we finalized the basic guidelines and completed necessary trainings.

"Team Health India" had the following ready much before January 16, 2021:

- ◆ Operational guidelines for Covid vaccination.
- ◆ Identified manpower for the drive and training them.
- ◆ Systems for transporting vaccines and extra storage capacities.
- ◆ Communication strategy for vaccine hesitancy, Covid Appropriate Behaviour.
- ◆ The CoWIN platform to enable vaccination in a digitized system.

A dry run was carried out in all States and UTs. The night of January 15 was a night to

remember, with chilling cold and nail-biting suspense to resolve a technical glitch CoWIN faced. Thousands were awake fixing the snag. Being the nodal officer for the National Covid Vaccination Programme, I too was present in the headquarters. I remember feeling like scientists sitting in a command centre about to experience the launch of a space shuttle. Words fail me in describing those moments of anxious anticipation or the deep sense of satisfaction on resolving the glitch. CoWIN was successfully kickstarted on time and we are all witness to the many benefits of the extraordinary Indian digital platform, which has continuously adapted to the evolving requirements of the programme.

This was just the beginning. In the first phase, vaccine avail-

ability was limited, and expectations were many. Rationalized distribution of the limited number of vaccines was a big challenge and criticism was inevitable. "Team Health India" worked on with virtual meetings for hours on end every day with vaccine manufacturers, vaccine transport agencies, storage centres, cold chain points and Covid Vaccination Centres with the singular aim-optimal use of every drop of the vaccine.

Next, imagine how the vaccines reached our remotest corners. Where there were no roads, cycles were used; in the deserts, camels helped; boats carried them across rivers; in the hills, vaccines were carried on backs. People were invited for vaccination with offerings of turmeric rice. For the vaccine hesitant, doors were knocked under 'Har

Ghar Dastak'. All this while, we didn't follow any western model; it bore the unique stamp of India's ingenuity.

The preparations required were enormous and time too little. We kept learning from experiences gathered from the field. In this pursuit, "Team Health India" neglected their personal needs, families, dreams; many even lost their loved ones to Covid. Despite that, there was an indescribable pride "Team Health India" felt in serving the nation in this once-in-a-century crisis. What I saw or write, is just the tip of the iceberg. For "Team Health India", there would be countless such moments of struggle and satisfaction, examples that are symbols of humanitarianism, examples that impart a sense of deep gratitude and hope.

Mcap of BSE-listed companies jumps to all-time high of over ₹280 lakh cr

New Delhi: Market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped to an all-time high of over ₹280 lakh crore on Monday as benchmark indices bounced back after taking a breather in the previous trade.

The 30-share BSE benchmark gained 85.88 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 61,308.91. During the day, it jumped 162.45 points to 61,385.48.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms reached a lifetime high of ₹ 2,80,02,437.71 crore on Monday. Sensex and Nifty broke their five-day rising streak to close with slim losses on Friday.

"Markets started the week on a flat note amid mixed global cues. As the day progressed, high volatility was witnessed but the benchmark traded in a positive range for most of the session," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Ultratech Cement was the biggest gainer among the Sensex shares, with a gain of 2.78 per cent, followed by Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Steel, TCS, L&T and SBI. In the broader market, BSE midcap index rose by

0.23 per cent while smallcap index gained 0.61 per cent.

Sensex, Nifty edge higher on gains in auto, energy stocks

Mumbai: Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by 85 points on Monday following gains in auto, IT, energy and FMCG stocks amid a firm trend in European markets.

In a largely range-bound session, the 30-share index ended 85.88 points or 0.14 per cent higher at 61,308.91. Similarly, the NSE Nifty advanced 52.35 points or 0.29 per cent to 18,308.10. Ultratech Cement was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging nearly 3 per cent, followed by M&M, Maruti, Tata Steel, TCS, L&T, SBI and HUL.

On the other hand, HCL Tech, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Tech Mahindra, PowerGrid, and Sun Pharma were among the laggards, falling up to 5.89 per cent.

Rupee slips 9 paise to close at 74.24 against US dollar

Mumbai: Declining for the second straight session, the rupee on Monday fell 9 paise to close at 74.24 (provisional) against the US dollar as muted domestic equities and elevated crude oil prices weighed on investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 74.18 against the American currency and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.16 and a low of 74.36 during the session. The rupee finally settled at 74.24, down 9 paise over its previous close of 74.15 against the greenback. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent down at 95.11.

"Weaker economic data, higher bond yields, a surge in crude oil prices and state-run banks dollar buying on behalf of importers weighed on rupee for the second day in a row," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Sebi examines alternate dispute resolution mechanism for investors, regulated entities

New Delhi: To provide efficacious mechanism for resolving disputes between investors and regulated entities, capital markets regulator Sebi is examining introducing an alternate dispute resolution mechanism, a release said on Monday.

Sebi in November 2021 published the 'Investor Charter' for securities markets to further augment its efforts to protect investors' interests, promote transparency in markets and enhance awareness, trust and confidence among investors. Since then, various steps have been taken to implement the charter, the regulator said.

Separate charters regarding investor-related activities of various intermediaries have been developed by Sebi in consultation with the respective entities.

The charter contains information related to details of various services provided by the intermediaries to investors, their timelines, importance of preservation of relevant documents by the investors, investor grievance redressal mechanism, etc.

As for Sebi's own charter, efforts have been taken to enhance the effectiveness

of investor grievance redressal mechanism. It has been publishing the status of disposal of investor grievances received in SCORES (Sebi Complaints Redress System) on its website on a monthly basis, the regulator noted.

Also, details of investor grievances, which are pending for more than three months with different intermediaries, are also being published. "In case Sebi receives a large number of/repeated complaints on any issue, the root causes are analyzed and if required, appropriate policy changes are made to address the issue," the regulator said.

Some of the recent policy initiatives taken by Sebi, after conducting such an analysis, include amendments pertaining to the Investor Protection Fund or Investor Service Fund and its related matters to expand the scope of dispute resolution.

In addition, "Sebi is also examining, in consultation with regulated entities, the possibility of introducing alternate dispute resolution mechanism in various agreements (wherever possible) between the regulated entities and their clients," the regulator said.

India's overall economic activity remains strong, says RBI article

Mumbai: India's overall economic activity remains strong, driven by an upbeat consumer confidence and uptick in bank credit, and expectations that "flash flood rather than a wave" have further brightened the prospects, according to a RBI article.

"On the vaccination front, India has made rapid strides. On the Omicron variant, the recent data from the UK and South Africa suggest that such infections are 66 to 80 per cent less severe, with a lower need for hospitalisation," the article on the state of economy published in the RBI Bulletin said on Monday.

Amidst upbeat consumer and business confidence and an uptick in bank credit, aggregate demand conditions stay resilient while on the supply front, rabi sowing has exceeded last year's level and the normal acreage, it noted.

Noting that manufacturing and several categories of services remain in expansion, the article said, "overall economic activity in India remains strong, with upbeat consumer and business confidence and upticks in several incoming high frequency indicators."

"Expectations that Omicron may turn out to be more of a flash flood than a wave have brightened near-term prospects," it said.

The central bank said the views expressed in the article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

There are indications that supply chain disruptions and shipping costs are slowly easing, although the waning of inflation may take longer.

This provides a window of opportunity to focus all energies on accelerating and broadening the global recovery, the article said.

Over 16 crore more people forced into poverty in two years of pandemic: Oxfam

New Delhi/Davos: The first two years of the Covid-19 pandemic saw incomes of 99 per cent of humanity fall and over 16 crore people were forced into poverty even as the world's ten richest men saw their fortune

more than double to USD 1.5 trillion (over ₹ 111 lakh crore) at a rate of USD 1.3 billion (₹ 9,000 crore) a day, a new study showed on Monday. In its report titled 'Inequality Kills' released on the first day of the

World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda summit, Oxfam International further said inequality is contributing to the death of at least 21,000 people each day, or one person every four seconds.

This is a conservative finding based on deaths globally from lack of access to healthcare, gender-based violence, hunger, and climate breakdown, it added. The world's ten richest men saw

their fortunes grow at a rate of USD 15,000 per second during the first two years of the pandemic and if these ten men were to lose 99.999 per cent of their wealth tomorrow, they would still be richer than 99 per

cent of all the people on this planet. "They now have six times more wealth than the poorest 3.1 billion people," said Oxfam International's Executive Director Gabriela Bucher. "It has never been so

important to start righting the violent wrongs of this obscene inequality by clawing back elites' power and extreme wealth including through taxation — getting that money back into the real economy and to save lives,"

she said. According to Oxfam, billionaires' wealth has risen more since COVID-19 began than it has in the last 14 years. At USD 5 trillion, this is the biggest surge in billionaire wealth since records began.

Table with columns: SCRIP, OPEN, High, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Lists various stock indices and their values.

BSE 500

Table with columns: Script, Open, High, Low, LTP. Lists top 500 stocks and their current prices.

NIFTY NEXT 50

Table with columns: SCRIP, OPEN, High, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Lists Nifty Next 50 stocks and their values.

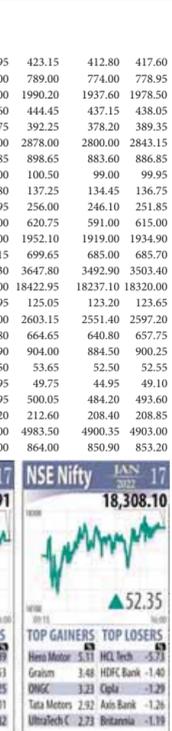


Table with columns: TOP GAINERS, TOP LOSERS. Lists top performing and underperforming stocks.

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# Joint efforts only way to fight pandemic: Xi Jinping

**Blame game will delay our response: Chinese premier**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/DAVOS

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday called for joint efforts to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring fair distribution of vaccines and expedited inoculation across the world, even as he warned against any blame game and the Cold War mentality in an apparent reference to the US. He said that holding each other back or shifting blame would only lead to a needless delay in the response and also distract us from the main objective.

In a special address on 'state of the world' on the first day of the week-long online Davos Agenda summit of the World Economic Forum, he said that humanity will certainly move on but the world needs to jointly defeat the pandemic.

"A giant ship is brave enough to brave the storm. Pandemic is proving to be a protracted one. It impacts health and the economy.

Holding each other back and shifting blames, will only shift our objectives," he said.

Favouring further opening up of the world economy and greater cooperation, he said, "We should remove barriers, not erect walls. We should open up, not close off. We should seek integration, not decoupling. This is the way to build an open world economy."

"If major economies slam on the brakes or take a U-turn in their monetary policies, there would be serious negative spillovers. They would present challenges to global economic

and financial stability, and developing countries would bear the brunt of it," Xi said. He said we need to discard Cold War mentality and seek peaceful coexistence and win-win outcomes. "Our world today is far from being tranquil; rhetorics that stoke hatred and prejudice abound. Acts of containment, suppression or confrontation arising thereof do all harm, not the least good, to world peace and security. History has proved time and again that confrontation does not solve problems; it only invites catastrophic consequences," he said.

In an apparent reference to the US, the Chinese President said protectionism and unilateralism can protect no one as they ultimately hurt the interests of others as well as one's own.

"Even worse are the practices of hegemony and bullying, which run counter to the tide of history. Naturally, countries have divergences and disagreements between them," he said, while calling for new drivers of economic growth to promote steady and robust global economic recovery.

The Chinese president said some developing countries have fallen back into poverty due to the pandemic while some developed countries are also facing hard times.

"Developed nations need responsible economic policies, should control spillover effects of policies to avoid impacting developing countries," he said while asserting that China will continue to open up and is committed to economic and market reforms. He also called for global rules on the digital economy and greater information sharing across the world. "The world is undergoing

major changes, unseen in a century and how to beat the pandemic and build a post-COVID world are a common concern for people around the world," he said while addressing the summit through video conferencing. The deadly virus, which was first reported in Chinese city Wuhan in late 2019, has so far seen over 32 crore confirmed cases globally with more than 55 lakh deaths. The international community has fought a tenacious battle against COVID-19 and the concerted efforts of the international community mean major progress has been made in the global fight against the pandemic, Xi said.

Emphasising the importance of vaccines, he called for ensuring their equitable distribution, accelerating vaccination and closing the global immunisation gap.

The World Health Organization has also been criticising the unequal distribution of vaccines and has been asking manufacturers and other countries to contribute to COVAX, an UN-backed programme for supplying vaccines to poor countries. So far, it has delivered 1 billion doses.

According to WHO, 36 of its 194 member countries have vaccinated less than 10 per cent of population and 88 have inoculated under 40 per cent.

According to latest Chinese government data, China's economy grew 8.1 per cent in 2021, exceeding its own target of 6 per cent, despite challenges, including epidemic resurgence and a complicated external environment. The Chinese economy, which was first to be hit by coronavirus and early to recover from the pandemic had grown by 2.3 per cent in 2020, the lowest annual growth rate

in 45 years. In his address at the WEF event, Xi said China will provide another one billion COVID-19 vaccine doses to African countries and 150 million doses to ASEAN countries. He said China will celebrate the advent of spring in the lunar new year, the Year of the Tiger, in two weeks' time. "In Chinese culture, tiger symbolises bravery and strength, as the Chinese people often refer to spirited dragon and dynamic tiger, or soaring dragon and leaping tiger.

To meet the severe challenges facing humanity, we must add wings to the tiger and act with the courage and strength of the tiger to overcome all obstacles on our way forward," he said. He said facts have shown once again that amidst the raging torrents of a global crisis, countries are not riding separately in some 190 small boats, but are rather all in a giant ship on which our shared destiny hinges.

"Small boats may not survive a storm, but a giant ship is strong enough to brave a storm. Thanks to the concerted efforts of the international community, major progress has been made in the global fight against the pandemic.

"That said, the pandemic is proving a protracted one, resurging with more variants and spreading faster than before. It poses a serious threat to people's safety and health, and exerts a profound impact on global economy," he said. He said acts of single-mindedly building "exclusive yards with high walls" or "parallel systems", of enthusiastically putting together exclusive small circles or blocs that polarise world will gravely undercut global efforts to tackle common challenges.

**Unlikely that people will move around with masks on forever: Fauci on 'new normal'**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/DAVOS

Warning that the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over and Omicron would not be last variant, global health experts on Monday said a lot would depend on transmissibility and severity of next mutants of deadly virus.

Speaking at a session on COVID-19 on first day of World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda summit, famous American immunologist Anthony S Fauci also said while it was difficult to predict as yet what could be new normal, he does not think that people will roam around with their masks on forever.

"Omicron is highly transmissible, but apparently not very pathogenic. While I hope that remains case, but that would depend on what new variants emerge going forward," he said.

He also said there is a great deal of 'disinformation' around and that is entirely destructive to a comprehensive public health endeavour. He said endemicity means 'a non-disruptive presence, without elimination', but it cannot be said as yet whether an endemic stage is underway.

"It is very difficult to predict what new normal would be like. I do not think people would be walking around with masks on forever, but one normal I would hope for is greater solidarity with each other. I also hope new normal

would include a strong memory about what a pandemic can do to us," he said. Fauci is the Chief Medical Advisor to the President of United States and one of most prominent faces in world's fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

He is Director of National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAD) and serves as one of the key advisers to White House and Department of Health and Human Services on global AIDS issues, and on initiatives to bolster medical and public health preparedness.

He was joined in the panel discussion by Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovations (CEPI) CEO Richard Hatchett and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's Professor of Emerging Infectious Diseases Annelies Wilder-Smith. Wilder-Smith said Omicron will not be last variant. "We are not out of pandemic just yet," she warned. The worldwide spread of deadly virus, which was first reported

in China's Wuhan in late 2019, has seen more than 32 crore confirmed cases globally and over 55 lakh deaths so far. The emergence of its fast-spreading Omicron variant, resulting in reintroduction of national lockdowns, travel bans and quarantines in various parts of world, has reinforced uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Russia denies looking for pretext to invade Ukraine

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia's top diplomat on Monday angrily rejected US allegations that it was preparing a pretext to invade Ukraine as Russian troops have remained concentrated near border.

The White House said Friday that US intelligence officials had concluded that Russia had already deployed operatives to rebel-controlled eastern Ukraine to carry out acts of sabotage there and blame them on Ukraine in a "false-flag operation" to create a pretext for possible invasion.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dismissed US claim as "total disinformation." He reaffirmed that Russia expects a written response this week from the US and its allies to Moscow's request for binding guarantees that NATO will not embrace Ukraine or any other ex-Soviet nations, or station its forces and weapons there.

Washington and its allies firmly rejected Moscow's demands during last week's Russia-US negotiations in Geneva and a related NATO-Russia meeting in Brussels, which were held as an estimated 100,000 Russian troops with tanks and other heavy weapons are massed near Ukraine in what West fears might be a prelude to an invasion. A delegation of US senators is visiting Ukraine to emphasise US support for country. "Our bipartisan congressional delegation sends a

clear message to global community: the United States stands in unwavering support of our Ukrainian partners to defend their sovereignty and in face of persistent Russian aggression," Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a New Hampshire Democrat, said in a statement.

Speaking Monday on a visit to Kyiv, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock warned that "any further escalation would carry a high price for Russian regime - economic, political and strategic" and emphasised need to continue negotiations.

"We are prepared to have a serious dialogue with Russia, because diplomacy is only way to defuse this highly dangerous situation at moment," she said.

Baerbock said Germany has offered to send cybersecurity specialists to Ukraine to help investigate last week's cyberattacks, which Ukrainian authorities blamed on Russia. At same time, she noted that Germany hasn't changed its refusal to provide it with weapons.

"We made clear that we will do everything to avoid escalating crisis," she said. Ukrainian officials have warned that Russia could launch an attack from various directions, including from territory of its ally Belarus. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has increasingly relied on Kremlin's support amid Western sanctions over a crackdown on domestic protests, said that Russia and Belarus will hold massive military drills next month.



People go for a walk as snow falls in Nolensville, Tenn. AP/PTI

# UK PM wife Carrie apologises amid partygate scandal

PTI ■ LONDON

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's wife, Carrie, was on Monday forced to apologise for "momentary lapse" over COVID-19 lockdown rules during a friend's party in 2020, even as the so-called partygate scandal continues to pile pressure on her husband's leadership prospects.

The 33-year-old mother of Johnson's one-year-old son Wilfred and one-month-old daughter Romy was pictured hugging her friend during an engagement party at a private members' club in London in September 2020.

The social distancing rules in force at the time called for staying two metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or one metre if meeting outdoors.

Mrs Johnson was one of a group of six seated outside, celebrating a friend's engagement, a spokesperson for Carrie Johnson said, with reference to the photograph that emerged in The Sunday Telegraph.

Mrs Johnson regrets the momentary lapse in judgment in briefly hugging her friend for a photograph, the spokesperson said.

It is the latest in a string of revelations in the past few weeks that exposed gatherings at Downing Street in apparent

breach of lockdown rules. Some of these were attended by Johnson, who issued a formal apology in the House of Commons last week for things we simply did not get right.

It has triggered calls from the Opposition and a growing number of members within his own Conservative Party for him to step down as leader.

Johnson's supporters have dismissed such demands and called for patience until a senior civil servant concludes an internal investigation into such gatherings held in Downing Street and across other government departments during lockdown.

UK Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi defended his boss to say "he's human and we make mistakes" as he insisted that Johnson's position as Prime Minister is not under threat. "He came to the despatch box and apologised and said he will absolutely submit himself to Parliament, because that's our parliamentary democracy," Zahawi told the BBC.

Meanwhile, The Daily Mirror reports on yet another party that Johnson allegedly attended a farewell before Christmas 2020 to mark the departure of a defence adviser.

Downing Street is yet to comment on this gathering, where the Prime Minister is said to have given a speech.

# From oil-rich UAE, South Korea president vows climate action

AP ■ DUBAI

The president of South Korea on Monday vowed to world leaders that his fossil fuel-dependent country and the oil-rich United Arab Emirates would jointly expand their investments in renewable energy to tackle climate change. During his visit to the UAE, President Moon Jae-in reiterated Seoul's commitment to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, slash methane emissions and boost renewables as the nation known as one of Asia's biggest greenhouse gas emitters comes under growing pressure to combat climate change. "Climate change is becoming a stern reality before our eyes," he told officials and business leaders gathered at a sustainable conference in Dubai. "I hope that UAE and South Korea's hydrogen cooperation will bring forward carbon-neutral, sustainable futures.

"South Korea imports fossil fuels from the Persian Gulf, including from Abu Dhabi, to power its manufacturing-dependent economy. But in public remarks during his trip to Dubai this week, President Moon has largely avoided discussing the nation's deep cooperation in the oil and gas industry, instead stressing their advances in hydrogen technologies and renewables.

South Korean contractors built the UAE's Barakah nuclear power plant, the first on the Arabian Peninsula and Seoul's first attempt to build an atomic reactor abroad.

# Turkish court rules to keep philanthropist Kavala in prison

AP ■ ISTANBUL

A Turkish court ruled Monday that prominent Turkish civil rights activist and philanthropist Osman Kavala should stay in prison, despite his more than four years in pre-trial detention.

The hearing took place as a Council of Europe deadline that could trigger infringement procedures looms. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2019 that Kavala's rights had been violated and ordered his release. But Turkey has repeatedly refused to do so.

Kavala, who is in Silivri prison on outskirts of Istanbul, did not participate in hearing in line with an October statement that he would no longer attend trials via video conference because he didn't have faithcourt would deliver a fair trial. Kavala, 64, is accused of financing nationwide anti-government protests in 2013, attempting to overthrow government by helping orchestrate a coup attempt three years later and espionage. He denies the charges, which carry a life sentence without parole. He was acquitted in February 2020 of charges in connection with the 2013 Gezi Park protests. As supporters awaited his release, Kavala was rearrested on new charges.

The acquittal was later overturned and linked to charges relating to the 2016 coup attempt, which the Turkish government blames on the network of US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, who denies any ties to the coup.

That trial is now part of a merged case involving 51 other defendants, including fans of the Besiktas soccer club who were acquitted six years ago of charges related to the Gezi protests before that decision also was overturned. Kavala is the only jailed defendant.

Kavala's lawyer, Koksul Bayraktar, had demanded his release. "His continued imprisonment for 1,539 days is the continuation of lawlessness identified by the European Court of Human Rights," Bayraktar said.

"End this lawlessness today so our client gets his freedom." Taksim Solidarity, a group defending the small Gezi Park in central Istanbul, said before the third hearing that the peaceful 2013 protests, which were based on constitutional rights allowing citizens to demand democracy, couldn't be tarnished through the judiciary.

In October, Kavala's case also caused a diplomatic crisis between Turkey and 10 Western countries, including the United States, France and Germany, after they called for his release on the fourth anniversary of his imprisonment.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan openly disdains Kavala, accusing him of being the "Turkish leg" of billionaire US philanthropist George Soros, whom Erdogan alleges has been behind insurrections in many countries. He threatened to expel Western envoys for meddling in Turkey's internal affairs.

# China's population grows by less than half-a-million in 2021; birth rate falls for 5th consecutive year

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's population grew by less than half a million last year to 1.41 billion as the birth rates fell for the fifth consecutive year, stoking fears of a looming demographic crisis and its adverse impact on the world's 2nd largest economy. At the end of 2021, China's population on the mainland grew to 1.4126 billion from 1.4120 billion in 2020, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said on Monday.

China's population increased by 480,000 in a year-on-year comparison from 2020 down from 12 million, as per NBS data. The figure does not include Hong Kong and Macao residents and foreigners who live in mainland's 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities, the NBS said. The number of newborns in 2021 in world's most populous nation stood at 10.62 million, according to NBS data, with birth rate at 7.52 per

thousand, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The national death rate was 7.18 per thousand last year, putting the national growth rate at 0.34 per thousand.

Experts have warned that a demographic turning point may be just around the corner in the world's most populous nation, and some say it threatens to erode the foundation of China's booming economic growth over the past 40 years, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported. In such a situation, the ratio of people in the workforce and dependent persons (retired with pension and other benefits) may be adversely affected, straining the economy, they said.

"The most shocking part of the data released today is that the natural growth of the population has dropped to 0.34 per thousand, the first time below 1.0 since data became available," Zhang Zhiwei, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management said.

# Imran Khan praises Russian president for 'emphatic statement' against Islamophobia

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday spoke to Vladimir Putin and exchanged views on bilateral cooperation as well as regional and international issues and also appreciated the Russian President's "emphatic statement" that freedom of speech could not be a pretext to abuse Prophet.

During a telephonic conversation with President Putin, Prime Minister Khan said he has regularly highlighted appalling rise in Islamophobia and associated hatred in his addresses to UN General Assembly, pointing towards its serious ramifications, the Foreign Office said in a statement.

He "appreciated President's Putin statement that insulting Holy Prophet Muhammad does not count as an expression of artistic freedom," it said.

Khan in a tweet said he spoke to Putin "primarily to express my appreciation for his emphatic statement that freedom of speech could not be a pretext to abuse our Prophet". He (Putin) is first Western leader to show empathy & sensitivity to Muslim sentiment

for their beloved Prophet," said Khan, who frequently faces wrath of hardline Islamists in country over offensive caricatures of Prophet in some western publications.

Khan said they also discussed ways to move forward on trade and other mutually beneficial cooperation between Pakistan and Russia and invited each other to visit their respective countries.

During conversation, the two leaders exchanged views on bilateral cooperation as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest, the Foreign Office statement said.

Khan underscored that Pakistan's bilateral relationship with Russia was on an upward trajectory, with an increased focus on trade and economic ties and energy cooperation, it said.

He reiterated government's resolve for early realisation of Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline Project, which is being developed with Russia's aid. Khan and Putin agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation in different areas, hike high-level exchanges, and remain in close contact on matters relating to Afghanistan, statement said.

# Philippine dictator's son survives disqualification bid

AP ■ MANILA

The son of former Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos defeated on Monday a bid to disqualify him from the May 9 presidential race but still faces other petitions from human rights victims and others who have raised alarm over atrocities under his late father's rule.

The Commission on Elections rejected a petition arguing that Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. Should be barred from public office for having been convicted of failing to file income tax returns from 1982 to 1985 and stating in his candidacy papers that he had never been found guilty of a crime.

The ruling is appealable. "Respondent did not deliberately attempt to mislead, misinform or deceive the electorate," the ruling said.

Marcos Jr. Has led in popularity polls ahead of the election. "This is one challenge down," commission spokesman James Jimenez told reporters. "But there are other challenges still pending."

He said there five other petitions against Marcos Jr.'s candidacy, three of which have been consolidated into one case. Marcos Jr.'s name will be included on the ballot, which will be printed soon, despite the pending petitions, Jimenez said.

Marcos Jr.'s camp thanked the elections commission "for upholding the law and the right of every bona fide candidate like Bongbong Marcos to run for public office free from any form of harassment and discrimination."

The elder Marcos placed the Philippines under martial rule in 1972, a year before his term was to expire. He padlocked Congress and newspaper offices, ordered the arrest of political opponents and ruled by decree.

He was toppled in an army-backed "people power" revolt in 1986. He died in exile in Hawaii three years later without admitting any wrongdoing, including accusations that he and his family amassed an estimated USD 5 billion to USD 10 billion while he was in power.

A Hawaii court found him liable for human rights violations and awarded USD 2 billion from his estate to compensate more than 9,000 Filipinos who filed a lawsuit against him for torture, incarceration, extrajudicial killings and disappearances. His widow, Imelda Marcos, and her children were allowed to return to the Philippines in 1991.

**GetVaccinated**

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday said that India's vaccination programme is "in fact" a role model for the global community. "It is because of Jan Bhagidari that India was able to achieve this feat," he said



**DOCYARD**  
DR SUSHRUT GANPULE

Consultant — Pulmonologist

JUPITER HOSPITAL, PUNE



## Lung infections can be dangerous



Lungs play an important role in our body hence it is necessary to prioritize lung health. Very often we tend to take them for granted; however, like other parts of the body, they age with time. They lose their strength and become less flexible which results in breathing difficulty.

While our body does protect the lungs by keeping dirt and germs at bay, we can maintain the health of our lungs and reduce the risk of lung disease by adopting certain healthy habits.

**Stay away from smoking**

Never smoke and stay away from secondhand smoke as well. Smoking is known to be a leading cause of lung cancer and lung diseases like COPD. Furthermore, it is never too late to quit smoking as lungs begin to heal almost immediately once a person quits the butt. The risk of acquiring lung cancer reduces to almost half to that of a current smoker, ten years after quitting smoking.

**Control your exposure to pollutants**

Avoid exposure to indoor and outdoor pollutants as it can damage your lungs and accelerate aging. Lungs can easily stay strong against toxins when they are young and strong, however, with age, they are more susceptible for the damage and become more vulnerable to the disease. Its best to reduce exposure to outdoor pollutants as much as possible including:

- ♦ Avoid being out of home during peak air pollution times.
- ♦ Avoid exercising near heavy traffic.
- ♦ Take possible safety precautions when exposed to pollutants at work.
- ♦ Wear a mask whenever and wherever possible to filter out toxic particles.
- ♦ Indoor air pollution is reported to be worse than outdoor, take adequate steps to reduce indoor air pollution such as:
- ♦ Keep your homes as clean as possible to keep dust, mold and other pollutants away.
- ♦ Make use of natural products to clean the house.

**Smoking is known to be a leading cause of lung cancer and lung diseases like COPD. Lungs can easily stay strong against toxins when they are young and strong, however, with age, they become more vulnerable to the disease**

Keeping your home smoke-free is equally important to avoid secondhand smoke exposure.

♦ Avoid exposure to biomass which is commonly seen in rural areas. Use LPG or natural gas instead. Use masks wherever exposure is unavoidable.

♦ Ensure appropriate ventilation inside homes.

♦ Avoid exposure to chemicals like benzene and formaldehyde found in synthetic air fresheners, perfumes and joss sticks (agar-batti).

**Regular exercise**

Exercise plays an important role. Staying active keeps your lungs healthy and even improves the symptoms of some long-term lung conditions.

Do any form of exercise like walking, jogging or hitting the gym for a minimum of 30 minutes, five days a week to create strong, healthy lungs. However, if you have pre-existing breathing problems, make sure to talk to your concerned healthcare professional. In these cases specific exercises are required to relieve breathlessness.

**Prevent infections**

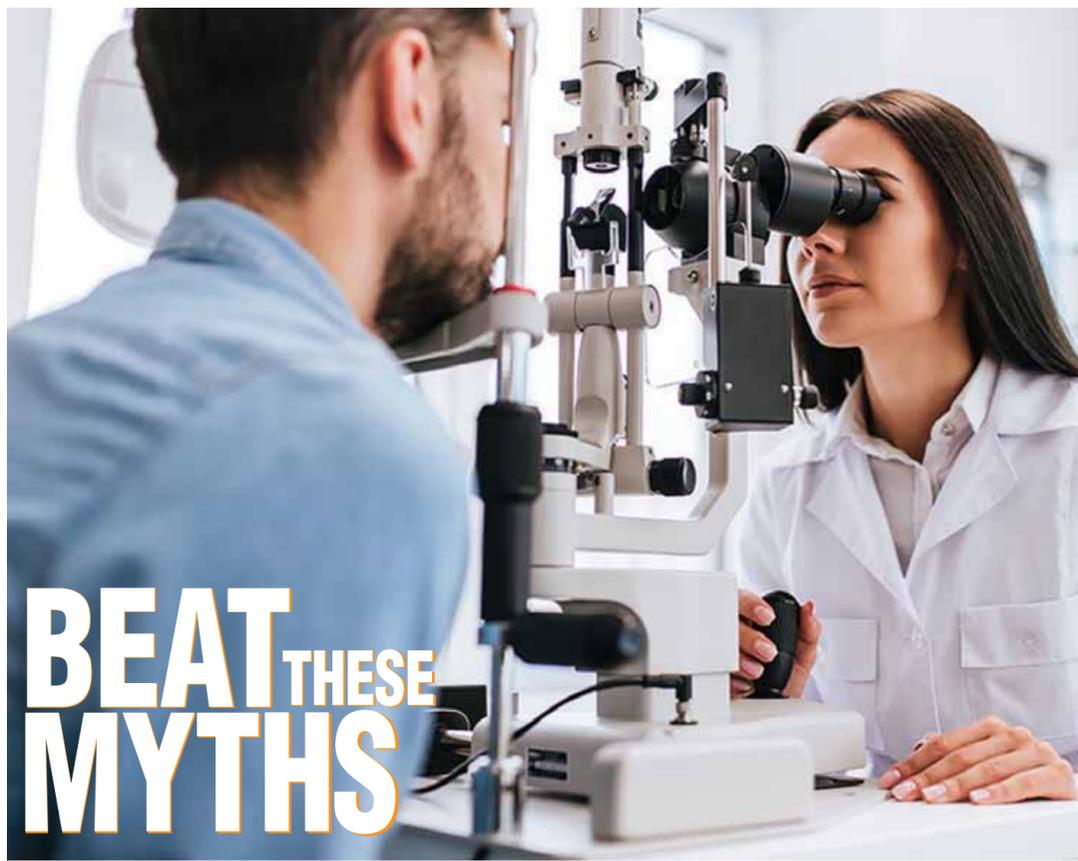
As we age, any lung infection can be dangerous. It is a common cause of death in elderly. There are certain steps which can be taken to avoid serious lung infection. Keep your hands clean by washing them regularly with soap and avoid touching your face. Avoid crowded places, take appropriate precautions in social gatherings and stay away from sick people. Staying hydrated when sick helps your lungs to work better. It is important to visit a healthcare professional as soon as possible, in case one has fever, Chest pain and phlegm.

**Get vaccinated**

All individuals with age more than 65 years should receive a pneumococcal vaccine, people who have other comorbidities can take it earlier. Everyone with a pre-existing lung condition or has a high risk of developing complicated flu should receive flu shot every year.

**WARMFOOD**

**RADISH:** Antioxidants including catechin, pyrogallol, vanillic acid, and other phenolic compounds are abundant in radishes. Vitamin C, which functions as an antioxidant to protect your cells from damage, is high in these root vegetables. Chemical compounds found in radishes, such as glucosinolate and isothiocyanate, can help manage blood sugar levels. Radishes include indole-3-carbinol and 4-methylthio-3-butenyl-isothiocyanate, among other chemicals, which assist the liver to detoxify and recover. These same molecules aid in the elimination of toxins via the kidneys. Antioxidants and minerals like calcium and potassium are abundant in radishes. These nutrients work together to lower blood pressure and lower the risk of heart diseases.



## BEAT THESE MYTHS

According to the World Health Organisation, glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world. There are plenty of misconceptions surrounding the disease that can leave patients misinformed, says DR SHEFALI PARIKH

In India, glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible blindness with nearly 12 million people affected and nearly 1.2 million people blind from the disease. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world. Glaucoma can affect people of every age however, the risk of the disease increases with age. Glaucoma happens to be a common eye condition that affects the optic nerves of the eyes. These optic nerves are responsible for carrying information from the eye to the brain to get it processed. Thus, when the optic nerves get damaged, it leads to vision loss, and in severe cases, irreversible vision impairment. Unfortunately, there are plenty of misconceptions surrounding the disease that can leave patients misinformed.

**5 of the most common glaucoma myths**

**Glaucoma only affects the elderly**

While it is certainly true that people above the age of 60 have greater chances of developing glaucoma as compared to people in their 40s, it can also affect people aged 20-50 as well as infants. For instance, some babies can have glaucoma by birth (called congenital glaucoma), while other children have other eye diseases that lead to secondary glaucoma.

The same is true for adults—one can have an eye condition, for example, uveitis, diabetes which results in secondary glaucoma.

Other types of glaucoma can often manifest in patients between ages 20 and 50 like pigmentary glaucoma.

**Symptoms are visible during the early onset of glaucoma**

Open-angle glaucoma, which is the most common form of glaucoma, doesn't exhibit any signs or symptoms until the later stages when vision loss sets in. Even though people may think that the increased eye pressure causes pain, it doesn't. Also, as peripheral vision is generally first compromised very slowly, one may not recognize vision loss until the vision has become significantly impaired. The only way to detect glaucoma is to undergo a comprehensive eye exam.

**Glaucoma can't be prevented**

Routine and regular eye exams can certainly aid in the prevention of glaucoma related blindness. While it is true that vision loss due to glaucoma can't be reversed, having regular eye exams by an ophthalmologist that include measurements of the eye pressure can certainly go a long way in preventing blindness due to disease. According to the Glaucoma Experts, it is important to have an exam every two years beginning at age 40 if there are no glaucoma risk factors, and every one year if one is at high risk or over 65.

**Glaucoma testing can be painful**

Testing for glaucoma is not at all painful. There are different



Dr Shefali Parikh, Glaucoma Specialist at Shreeji Eye Clinic, Andheri, Mumbai

**Glaucoma happens to be a common eye condition that affects the optic nerves of the eyes. These optic nerves are responsible for carrying information from the eye to the brain to get it processed**

types of tests for glaucoma. There's also a test known as Goldman appplanation tonometry where patients receive a painless eye drop in each eye. The ophthalmologist then directs a blue light onto each eye and looks into an instrument that precisely measures intraocular pressure. This test is also quick and painless. Angle assessment with lenses called gonioscopes is very important to differentiate between two most common glaucoma prevalent in Indian scenarios. Other tests include testing of visual field with perimeter, and scanning of the optic nerve with imaging technology.

**Glaucoma is inherited**

Certain types of glaucoma are hereditary, and a family history of glaucoma is a risk factor no doubt. But there are many glaucoma patients who are the only ones in their families who are diagnosed with the disease.

It is also possible that there does not appear to be a strong family history because not every family member has been appropriately examined. Thus, it is important that patients with glaucoma should share their diagnosis with their family members and ask them to have a dilated eye examination.

Stop believing in the myths surrounding glaucoma and work with your eye doctor to preserve and protect your eye health. Glaucoma cannot be cured but definitely the blindness due to glaucoma can be prevented if early diagnosis.

## Get rid of joint pain this time

Low temperature exacerbates joint pain. Now that the weather is getting colder, it's more necessary to pay attention to your bones, says DR VIVEK MAHAJAN

The number of patients diagnosed with arthritis increases during the winter. It's defined as the swelling of one or more joints, with joint discomfort being the most common symptom, which often gets worse as you get older. The two most common types of arthritis are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

**Knee Pain**

Chronic knee pain is caused by a lack of ligament in the knee bone and bone wear. Knee discomfort is more common in adults over the age of 50. People who are overweight have a higher risk of developing this condition. It is an illness that will be passed down through the generations. Women are more likely to have this condition as compared to men.

**Joints stiffness**

In chilly conditions, muscle spasms are more prone to occur, resulting in greater joint discomfort and

stiffness. Cold weather decreases blood circulation in the fingers and toes, exacerbating arthritic discomfort. Low temperatures can cause the joint fluid to thicken, making the joints stiff and difficult to move. Vitamin D levels drop as a result of less sunlight throughout the winter, which can lead to brittle bones and joints.

**Prevent arthritis pain**

**Vitamin D:** Joint discomfort might worsen in the winter due to a lack of sunlight, which reduces the body's ability to synthesise vitamin D. It is therefore important to take adequate sunlight even during the winters. If you intend to take Vitamin D capsules, make sure to consult your doctor first.

Exercise on a regular basis: During the winter, people's fitness regimens tend to stall. This can not only cause you to gain weight, but it can also lead to other problems.



Dr Vivek Mahajan Orthopedic and Joint Replacement Surgeon Indian Spinal Injuries Center, New Delhi

Consult your doctor before beginning a fitness programme to alleviate the pain of arthritis. Make it a point to exercise for at least 30-40 minutes every day. In addition, get a good night's sleep of around 8 hours per day.

Dress warmly: Dress appropriately with extra layers of clothing to keep yourself protected. Sitting on a

chilly floor is not recommended by doctors because it may aggravate the pain. Avoid taking the stairs as well, as it puts additional strain on your joints. Even if you're at home, don't walk around without warm socks. Woollen socks should always be worn to protect your feet. Use hot water to relieve arthritis pain.

**Healthy diet:** Try to eat more fruits and vegetables than you normally do throughout the year. Consume only fresh fruits and vegetables. Vitamin B12, found in eggs, yoghurt, and many types of fish, has been shown to help lower homocysteine levels. Homocysteine levels in the blood have been linked to an increased risk of developing cardiovascular complications.

Similarly, vitamin B6 may aid in the reduction of joint inflammation. Carrots, spinach, sweet potatoes, and bananas are just a few of the

many common vitamin B6-rich foods. If you're thinking about taking vitamins or supplements, talk to a doctor first because everyone's needs are different.

It is also critical to avoid alcohol and refined sugars while following a healthy diet. If these things are consumed in large quantities during the winter, it can aggravate the pain.

**Stay hydrated:** Water consumption decreases during the winter. This can cause issues for arthritis patients. Drinking enough water is critical for your body's proper functioning. Being adequately hydrated may help regulate your body temperature, aid digestion, and boost your immune system, among other things.

Furthermore, the extra walks to the bathroom as a result of drinking more water are an easy way to add a little more movement to your day.

## Make healthy resolutions



With the excitement of the holiday season over, now is the time for us to prioritise a healthy beauty

regimen. DR SACHIN PAWAR shares six resolutions for healthy hair and skin

**Build a good sleep habit**

The New year is the perfect time to resolve to develop proper sleep hygiene. Not only does it keep you well rested, getting a good night of sleep is beneficial for both your hair and skin. As you sleep, your body boosts blood flow to the skin, preventing it from sagging and giving a healthy glow. Lack of sleep can also cause hair loss, breakage, damage, and affects hair growth. 7 to 9 hours of sleep every day can help you develop a radiant complexion.

**Vitamin E intake is Vital**

Traditionally, festive seasons especially New Year's Eve is all about getting decked up and feasting. Well, make-up may give you the glam look, but there are chances that your skin may end up looking dull if you have not maintained a balanced and healthy diet. For a solution that works from the inside to renew your look on the outside, include a daily dose of Vitamin E. Though Vitamin E is widely available in everyday foods, you can also strengthen the cellular health of your skin and hair by adding Vitamin E supplements like Evion® Forte to your daily routine. The natural antioxidants work at the cellular level to repair, restore, and revive your cells, thus, protecting your skin from damage and supporting the microcirculation and oxygenation of the scalp. Its anti-inflammatory properties can protect your skin from the harsh effects of the sun.

**Sun and Heat Safety**

External stresses cause your body to produce free radicals that attack collagen, the protein that allows your skin to stay young and beautiful. This imbalance caused by free radicals is known as oxidative stress. It damages and weakens your skin cells, which leaves your skin looking tired and worn out. Having a skincare routine becomes even more important during this time. Likewise, hair damage—hair that is thin, brittle, dull, or flat—can result from many factors, including environmental factors like UV radiation and pollution. Make sure you prep your tresses with a good heat protectant. The key to having strong and glossy hair, perfect for your new year avatar is combining good hair care with healthy habits.

**Hydrate and Nourish your body**

The more hydrated you stay, the fewer wrinkles and improved complexion you'll see. Drinking enough water can help you combat a variety of skin issues and give you glowing skin. A hydrated body also results in hair growth as it reduces dryness in the scalp and promotes the growth of hair from the roots. Let's not forget the importance of nourishment to your body. A healthy body and mind require consuming a daily dose of nutrients, including vitamins and minerals. One of the easiest ways to ensure youthful skin and rejuvenated hair is by incorporating Vitamin E-rich foods into your diet.

The writer is MD Head—Medical & Technical affairs — India Cluster, Procter & Gamble Health Limited

**INBRIEF**

First Closed Loop Artificial Pancreas Insulin Pump installed

India's first automatically adjustable, *The MiniMed™ 780G system* which is the world's first Advanced Hybrid Closed Loop (AHCL) system, was successfully delivered and fixed on a 7-year-old boy with type 1 Diabetes at Dr Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre, one of the healthcare groups in Asia devoted to the treatment of Diabetes and its complications. The patient recently diagnosed with type 1 Diabetes is the first one to get the advanced and automated insulin pump fixed in India. *Medtronic's MiniMed™ 780G* made its first ever launch in India, at the hands of Dr V Mohan, Chairman & Consultant Diabetologist, Dr Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre.

Commenting on the first successful delivery of the device, Dr V Mohan said, "It's extremely difficult to manage blood sugar levels in children and teenagers with Type 1 diabetes because of their high activity levels, constantly fluctuating hormones and ongoing growth and development. The 7-year-old boy who was recently diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, was also struggling with blood sugar control with several high sugar and low sugar episodes. The device automatically adjusts and corrects insulin levels 24/7, every 5 minutes, as needed. It also anticipates insulin needs and adjusts insulin delivery, while also correcting highs automatically and protecting from lows."

# KALEIDOSCOPIIC VIEW

PANKAJ KUMAR travels to Guwahati and trains his lens on the North East Festival to give a glimpse into the rich culture, varied dance traditions, sustainable crafts and foot-tapping music from the region



Apparao Gallery's exposition of Sohan Qadri's works on paper, on the TAP India platform, has about it the feel and expression of an artist who delighted in creating works in solitude. Qadri, the poet and Tantric guru, was an internationally acclaimed artist who was deeply engaged with spirituality and yoga. The famed art critic Donald Kuspit hailed Qadri to be "the pre-eminent aesthetic mystic of modernism."

These works on paper embrace your being like tableaux of luminous colour and viscosity; they also recall the lush palette of life in the rustic villages of India. Qadri, who in an interview at Kumar Gallery, told me "I am a dot, abandoned abstract representation in his search for transcendence. These works have about them an evanescent grace of a floating object."

Qadri's process of using paper and dye was unique and rare in terms of artistic exploration. He would bathe the paper in liquid and carve it in several stages while he applied inks and dyes with a brush. These works are at once imbued with vibrant and subtle hues. Qadri's greatest insignia with the paper was the serrated surfaces that had about them an aura of energy and resilient rhythm. In the hands of Qadri, the seer and the thinker, the very nature of paper would be transformed into a three-dimensional medium.

His many years in the West gave him a practise and deeper understanding of abstraction than most Indian artists, who merely think it is representation. For him, the swathes of colour, deep folds and hints of a tiny dot somewhere in its domain had about it a spiritual fervour both rare and unseen. Most of his collectors were Europeans who understood the dynamics of design and often said he was India's Rothko.

The largest number of Qadri's shows were held by Kumar

## A lush palette

There is a tranquil coexistence of binary opposites in SOHAN QADRI's work displayed at Apparao Gallery, says UMA NAIR



Gallery in Delhi and Sundaram Tagore in New York. There is a tranquil coexistence of binary opposites in Qadri's work — male and female, known and unknown,

physical and spiritual. It is more than a literal translation of the symbols of Oriental philosophy. When Qadri paints, he explains, "First I empty my mind of all images. They dissolve into primordial space. Only emptiness that I feel should communicate with the emptiness of the canvas."

Born into a Hindu-Sikh family, Qadri's art was deeply influenced by a spiritual journey that began at a young age. He was initiated into yogic practice at the age of seven. As a teenager, he ran away to a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in search of higher truth. He spent days on end in remote temples in the Himalayas and Tibet. The isolation, he experienced at that time, was one of his influences to paint. Later in life, he became fascinated with Sufism and Vajrayana Buddhism, which became potent sources of inspiration for later works.

The exhibition can be viewed at [www.theartplatform-mindia.com](http://www.theartplatform-mindia.com)

The National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi celebrated Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav with Kala Kumbh — artist workshops for painting scrolls measuring approximately 750 metres, representing the tales of valour of unsung heroes of India's freedom movement.

These scrolls analyse the potential of art as a means to express national pride and excellence with varied forms of art from diverse geographical locations of the country. The celebration of the true essence of *Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat* was visible in these workshops where the rich diversity of our country in its cultural aspects was witnessed while portraying the heroic lives and struggles of unsung heroes of India's freedom movement. These have been diligently researched upon and painted enthusiastically by more than 500 artists spread over two locations, Odisha and Chandigarh.

Aligning with the flagship programme of the Ministry of Culture, the aspect of collaborations and collective work has been outlined in these workshops. At Odisha, the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi collaborated with Kalinga Institute of Technology and Silicon Institute of Technology in Bhubaneswar between December 11 and 17 and, at Chandigarh, the collaboration was done with Chitkara University from December 25 to January 2.

Kala Kumbh-Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav reflects the essence of unity in diversity while also commemorating 75 years of India and the glorious history of its people, culture and its achievements. The scrolls painted in these workshops may be seen as an embodiment of all that is progressive about India's socio-cultural identity which has been imparted prominence on the large scale scrolls as per the artistic vision of Adwait Garanayak, director-general, NGMA and mentored by eminent senior artists.

Ten gigantic scrolls of approximately 750 metres portray the tales of valour and the legacy of the

## Scroll of freedom

The National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi celebrated Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav with Kala Kumbh artist workshops. By TEAM VIVA



unsung heroes of India's freedom struggle. Inspiration has also been drawn from the creative illustrations in the Constitution of India wherein the artistic elements painted by Nandalal Bose and his team have imparted a distinctive appeal along with several representations from the indigenous arts of India. These represent and showcase the rich cultural heritage of India along with the insights of struggles undertaken by the unsung heroes for achieving India's freedom.

At Bhubaneswar, the narratives have reflected the tales of valour and historical elements of India's

movement of freedom struggle focusing on Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bengal, northeastern parts of India and Andhra Pradesh with artistic expressions reflecting the indigenous forms of art such as Pattachitra, Talapatra Chitra, Manjusa, Madhubani and Jadu Patua to name a few.

At Chandigarh, the narratives have been a reflection of the tales of valour of unsung heroes from Ladakh, Jammu, Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan with artistic expressions reflecting the indigenous forms of art such as Phad, Pichwai, Miniature, Kalamkari, Mandana, Thangka and Warli.

Students visited both venues. NCC cadets have also witnessed the creative representations of India's unsung heroes of freedom struggle at Chandigarh. Lt Gen Devendra Sharma, SM, Chief of Staff, HQ Western Command, Lt Col Abhinav Navneet, PRO (Defence), DPR, Major D P Singh (Retd) along with other officials from the Ministry of Defence also visited the workshop at Chandigarh.

The closing ceremony of Kalakumbh- Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav at Chandigarh was graced by Banwari Lal Purohit, Governor Punjab and Administrator of UT Chandigarh and at Bhubaneswar by Member of Parliament, Dr Achutya Samanta who is also the founder of KIIT and KISS. Series of cultural programs were held in the evenings during these workshops, reflecting upon the rich traditions of folk and indigenous performing arts of India in collaboration with Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre and Northern Zonal Cultural Centre.

In the next phase, these scrolls will be placed artistically at Rajpath for the celebrations of Republic Day. The strategic location of these scrolls would serve as an open gallery for all the citizens and it is intended to inspire people about the rich national heritage and legacy of Bharat in its true sense.

### TRANSPIRING THE LANGUAGE OF BEING

The solo show by EH Pushkin has pieces that originate from the profound inner space for humanity and love. The use of primary colours and a constant brooding nature of the magnified objects cape with elongated shadows, oblong acrylic figurations, backdrop doubling up as a post-figurative floating surface and self-referential iconic titles of the works on the futility and inevitability of market-driven isolation of identities make this exhibition a compelling view.

Where: Gallery 1000A -210 D, Old M B Road, Lado Sarai, New Delhi 110030.  
 When: Till January 29



### THE 2022 AUROVILLE FILM FESTIVAL



The online edition allows people to continue enjoying great films while reaching those who cannot travel to Auroville during the pandemic. This year features films in two categories. The international category of films that develop the theme of human unity contains 35 films from 18 different countries. The Aurovillians category has 36 films from 14 Aurovillians and residents of the bioregion, including one student. These give a taste of the creative life in the Auroville area.

Where: <https://auroville.shift72.com>  
 When: January 18-23

### THE FIFTH EDITION OF THE JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL (JFF) 2022

The digital edition will screen 20 globally popular Japanese movies of varied genres and styles. The two-week festival will kickstart from February 14. Celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Japan and India, this festival will focus on its diverse lineup of acclaimed, highest-grossing and award-winning films such as *Under the Open Sky*, *It's a Summer Film*, *Mio's Cookbook*, *Masked Ward*, *Under the Open Sky*, *Awake*, *Aristocrats*, *Time of Eve*, *Ito, Patema Inverted*, *Sumodo - The Successors of Samurai*, *The God of Ramen*, *Rashomon*, *The Floating Castle*, *Happy Flight*, *Oz Land*, *Until the Break of dawn*, *Her Love Boils Bathwater*, *The Chef of South Polar*, *Bread of Happiness* and *ReLIFE*.

Where: <https://jff.jp/online2022/india/>  
 When: February 14-28



### MAKING OF AN IDEAL CITIZEN

Professor Nivedita Menon, Professor, Centre for Comparative Politics & Political Theory, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University; Dr Gautam Bhan, urban researcher and writer; Dr Ghazala Jameel, assistant professor, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Dipta Bhog, journalist and activist will discuss what makes for an ideal citizen. Prof Apoorvanand, Department of Hindi, Faculty of Arts, University of Delhi, will chair the discussion.

Where: [https://zoom.us/join/register/WN\\_mQqMJ1nRpOQE2xa\\_5Jsw?\\_x\\_zm\\_rtaiid=sqYjYvsxTGie1UbWZr3mbA.1642425112178.fddb39df7ed364db04a5b44ba3d213d&\\_x\\_zm\\_rtaiid=362](https://zoom.us/join/register/WN_mQqMJ1nRpOQE2xa_5Jsw?_x_zm_rtaiid=sqYjYvsxTGie1UbWZr3mbA.1642425112178.fddb39df7ed364db04a5b44ba3d213d&_x_zm_rtaiid=362)

When: January 18 at 03:00 pm



# If given an opportunity, it will be an honour to captain India: Bumrah



PTI ■ PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA)

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Monday said he is not averse to leading the national team if an opportunity comes knocking at his door in the near future.

With Virat Kohli's captaincy tenure in all formats coming to an end following his resignation from Test leadership, there are questions about who could be his long-term successor considering that Rohit Sharma will be 35 next year. "If given an opportunity, it will be an honour and I don't see any player (who) would say no and I am no different," Bumrah, who is KL Rahul's deputy for the ODI series against South Africa, replied to a query from PTI in a press conference ahead of the three-match rubber starting Wednesday. "Be it any leadership group, I always look to contribute however I can, to the best of my abilities," he added.

Bumrah said taking responsibility and helping teammates comes naturally to him.

"I look at this situation in the same manner... Taking responsibility and helping them out has always been my approach and it will

always be my approach going further keeping any situation in mind."

The India pace spearhead believes that there would be no tangible change in his role although he is the vice-captain now. "Having post or not doesn't matter. I always focus on how I can contribute," he said.

"For me, the role doesn't change at all. I have to do my job first, isn't it? Trying to contribute as much as I can and then helping KL if he needs any assistance on the field and sharing a bowler's mindset on what kind of fields you can keep that I always look to do," Bumrah said. In fact, he has done all this and more even when he wasn't appointed the vice-captain.

"Even when I am not vice-captain, I try to talk to some of the younger guys, have a lot of discussions on what kind of fields that need to be set and the same role I will try to do that again as well."

"No specific role or added pressure I am going to take. Yes, helping KL in any way possible and trying to keep a calm head."

New Team Management? "Change is the only constant" The Indian team manage-

ment, following Virat Kohli's complete exit from captaincy roles across formats, bears a new look but Bumrah doesn't see "anything weird" and believes that one needs to respect the new set-up that's in place and start moving ahead.

"I can't speak for everyone but I can say that for me, it doesn't really make much of a difference. I am here to help all in whatever way I can. All the players are responding to the changes that have and everybody is respectful and understand how the processes are going."

"Change is the only constant and we are happy everybody is contributing and we are getting (acquiring) a lot of knowledge and trying to contribute to that. I don't think anybody is facing a problem or is in a weird space with the change that is happening," Bumrah spoke for himself.

Acceptance is key and that's what Bumrah expects from everyone. "Everybody understands change and have played enough cricket to understand that this is the way the game goes and this is how you move forward. So everyone in the team is quite positive and eager to contribute."



## Rohit close to getting match-ready

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's white ball captain Rohit Sharma is recovering well from his left hamstring injury and has a bright chance of making a comeback for the six-match home white-ball series against the West Indies next month.

Rohit, who was also the designated Test vice-captain for the tour of South Africa, sustained a left-hamstring strain during a net session just prior to the team's departure for the tour and had to pull out.

He was subsequently also forced to skip the ODIs in South Africa, starting this Wednesday, as he couldn't attain full fitness before the selection committee announced the team.

"Rohit's rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy

is going pretty well. He is expected to be okay for the West Indies series.

It's still close to three weeks from now before the first ODI is played in Ahmedabad from February 6," a BCCI source privy to developments told PTI on conditions of anonymity. The series against the West Indies comprises three ODIs and as many T20 Internationals. The one-dayers will be played February 6 to 12, followed by T20Is from February 15 to 20.

"For Rohit, the hamstring has been a recurrent problem which also forced him to miss the first two Test matches as well as the white-ball leg of the tour of Australia in 2020-21.

He did make a comeback for the final two Tests after serving a two-week hard quarantine in Sydney for the last two Test matches.

## Lakshya, Saina withdraw from Syed Modi meet

SHALABH SAXENA ■ LUCKNOW

In a major blow to the organisers, newest badminton sensation and winner of the recently-concluded Indian Open Lakshya Sen and ace women shuttler Saina Nehwal withdrew their names from the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournament which will kick off in Lucknow on Tuesday.

Lakshya, who shocked the world champion, Loh Kean Yew of Singapore, in the final of the Indian Open, was seen as the main attraction of the tournament after some big names had already pulled out due to the coronavirus spread.

In a letter to the organisers of Syed Modi International, 20-year-old Lakshya cited fatigue as the main reason for his withdrawal. "My sincere apologies for withdrawing from the event on short notice. I believe you will understand my position, and appreciate your support in this matter. I hope the tournament goes off smoothly," he wrote in the letter.

Saina Nehwal, along with her husband P Kashyap, cited a personal reason for not coming to Lucknow. Indian Open's doubles winner Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also opted out of the tournament in view of the upcoming long season.

Kidambi Srikanth, Ashwini Ponnappa and Manu Attri also withdrew after they tested Covid positive last week. All of them didn't take part in the Indian Open either.

Meanwhile, the only star attraction left is two-time Olympic medal winner PV Sindhu, who will look to end her title drought after she nearly



missed back-to-back titles.

Sindhu will get a strong challenge from Commonwealth Games silver medallist Michelle Li from Canada Jordan Hart of Poland, Iris Wang of the USA and Evgeniya Kosetskaya of Russia. Sindhu will start her campaign against Tanya Hemant. In the men's category, two-time champion Sameer Verma will look to repeat his performance of 2017 and 2018. Sameer will take on Nhat Nguyen of Ireland in his first match. The tournament will be played behind closed doors as no spectators are allowed inside the tournament hall of UP Badminton Academy.

## England register win over Bangla

PTI ■ BASSETERRE

Defending champions Bangladesh suffered a seven-wicket loss against England in a lop-sided contest to make a poor start to their campaign at the ICC U-19 World Cup here.

Opting to bat, Bangladesh were bundled out for a paltry 97 by England, who then returned to overhaul the target in 25.1 overs.

England produced a lethal bowling effort to reduce Bangladesh to 51 for nine in the 25th over at Warner Park in the Group A match. No.11 Ripon Mondol hit 33 not out in a spirited last-wicket stand of 46 with Naimur Rohman (11) to drag Bangladesh close to the 100-mark.

Left-arm pacer Joshua Boyden was the pick of the bowlers for England with figures of four for 16, while right-arm fast bowler Thomas Aspinwall scalped two wickets, giving away 18 runs.

Besides, Tom Prest (1/5), Fateh Singh (1/29) and James Sales (1/29) took a wicket each. In reply, England lost opener George Thomas (15) and captain Tom Prest (4) but Jacob Bethell (44) and James Rew (26 not out) put on 65 before the former was run out just shy of the finish line as England cruised to victory.

Earlier, Bangladesh's decision to bat first backfired as they lost wickets at reg-



ular intervals and slumped to 26 for five by the 14th over.

Bangladesh made a slow start to their innings before losing their fifth wicket -- Mahfijul Islam -- in the fifth over. Bangladesh's struggle from the onset can be gauged from the fact that only four of their batters managed double digit scores, with last man Mondol top-scoring with a 41-ball unbeaten knock which was studded with five boundaries and one six.

Chasing the total, England got off to a slightly nervy start as Bethell survived a run-out scare when SM Meherob could not gather the ball at the stumps with only five on the board. He survived a close lbw appeal off

Ashiqur shortly after before opening partner Thomas began to up the ante after a cautious start. But having hit three fours, Thomas perished for 15 when he miscued another attacking shot off Ripon to leave England 20 for one in the ninth over.

That breakthrough gave Bangladesh a small glimmer of hope but when the English captain Prest nicked one behind off his counterpart Rakibul for four soon after, the game was very much on.

However, Rew joined hands with Bethell and together they batted superbly, counteracting the Bangladesh spin attack to alleviate any potential English nerves.

## Ireland's historic ODI series win over West Indies

AP ■ KINGSTON

Ireland achieved a historic series win over the West Indies after winning their deciding one-day international by two wickets at Sabina Park.

The 2-1 come-from-behind series victory from the third ODI gave Ireland a first ODI series win away from home against a full member.

This also was only its second series win against a full member, after Zimbabwe at home in 2019.

After bowling out the West Indies for 212 inside 45 overs, Ireland reached a winning 214-8 in the 45th.

It was a remarkable end to a COVID-19-disrupted two-nation tour which began with Ireland's own historic loss to a hosting United States in a Twenty20.

An over-eager William Porterfield was lost to the first ball of Ireland's chase on Sunday but the batting was mainly patient and practical.

The poised top order did its job. Stand-in captain Paul Stirling, dropped before he scored by Jason Holder in the slips, made 44 off 38 balls with five boundaries and a six. Stirling was out at 73-2. No. 3 batter Andy McBrine, after taking four wickets, scored 59 off 100 balls before he edged behind. He was out at 152-3 and eventually given a second straight man of the match



award. That also earned him man of the series. His offspin earned 10 of the West Indies' 30 wickets in the series.

No. 4 Harry Tector notched a third half-century in three matches with his 52 off 76 balls. Tector lifted Ireland to the brink of victory when he was out at 197-6 in the 42nd over.

Two wickets in three balls by Akeal Hosein added some late drama, but tailender Craig Young completed Ireland's triumph with a boundary for the match and series with 5.1 overs to spare. The West Indies won the first ODI by defending 269 runs, lost the second on Thursday after making 229.

## Djokovic heads for Belgrade after deportation from Australia

AP ■ DUBAI

Novak Djokovic was heading home to Serbia on Monday after his deportation from Australia over its required COVID-19 vaccination ended the No. 1-ranked men's tennis player's hopes of defending his Australian Open title.

An Emirates plane carrying him from Australia landed in Dubai early Monday, and Djokovic was later seen on board a plane due to land in the Serbian capital of Belgrade at 12:10 CET. His lawyers had argued in an Australian court on Sunday that he should be allowed to stay in the country and compete in the tournament under a medical exemption due to a coronavirus infection last month. Djokovic has won nine Australian Open titles, including three in a row, and a total of 20 Grand Slam singles trophies, tied with rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal for the most in the history of men's tennis. Federer is not playing while recovering from injury, and Nadal is the only former Australian Open men's champion in the tournament that began Monday.



Djokovic's visa was initially canceled on Jan. 6 by a border official who decided he didn't qualify for a medical exemption from Australia's rules for unvaccinated visitors. He was exempted from the tournament's vaccine rules because he had been infected with the virus within the previous six months.

He won an appeal to stay for the tournament, but Australia's immigration minister later revoked his visa.

## Osaka, Nadal advance in Australia

AP ■ MELBOURNE

The first test of Naomi Osaka's new approach to tennis might have been when she completely whiffed an overhead to give her opponent a break point on Day 1 of the no-Novak-Djokovic Australian Open.

Osaka didn't chuck her racket. She didn't roll her eyes. She smiled. "There are situations where I previously would get upset. But at this point in my life, like, I'm here because I want to be here and because I find that it's fun for me," Osaka said.

"Might as well enjoy it while I still can."

In Osaka's mind, the drama involving nine-time champion Djokovic's deportation on the eve of the Australian Open was something for the players in the men's draw to worry about. Her title defense began smoothly enough: She won the first five games on the way to a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Camila Osorio on the



main court.

With so much attention on the 11-day saga of Djokovic's attempt to participate in the year's first Grand Slam tournament, and bid for a fourth consecutive title at Melbourne Park, the returns of Osaka and Rafael Nadal have been overshadowed.

Osaka wasn't bothered by that. Nadal didn't seem to be put off by it, either, renewing his bid for a record 21st Grand Slam singles title with a 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 win over Marcos Giron.

## Real Madrid top Athletic 2-0 to win Spanish Super Cup

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid won't be going for a second consecutive season without a title.

After failing to lift a trophy under Zinedine Zidane last season, Carlo Ancelotti's Madrid secured the Spanish Super Cup with a 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao on Sunday in Saudi Arabia. Luka Modric and Karim Benzema scored a goal in each half of the final as Madrid comfortably defeated the defending champions to reinforce its status as the top team in Spain this season.

Madrid has already beaten Barcelona twice — including in the Super Cup semifinals — and Atlético Madrid once, and is more than 15 points ahead of

both rivals halfway through the Spanish league season. Ancelotti has also led Madrid to the knockout stage of the Champions League.

Madrid went without a trophy for the first time in more than a decade last season under Zidane.

"This is motivation for us to keep going," Ancelotti said. "We have to keep competing like this."

Madrid's 12th Super Cup title moves the club only one behind Barcelona, the competition's most successful team. Athletic was seeking its fourth Super Cup trophy.

It was Madrid's second Super Cup title since the competition was moved to Saudi Arabia in 2020. It had won the



first edition of the tournament in the Middle East country by beating Atlético in the final.

The Super Cup returned to Spain in 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Spanish soccer federation has

had to defend itself from criticism from human rights groups for its decision to play in Saudi Arabia in a deal reportedly worth 30 million euros (\$34 million) a year through 2029.

Athletic was seeking its second consecutive title after defeating Barcelona in last year's final. It beat Atlético in this year's semifinal in the revamped "Final Four" format.

Modric opened the scoring with a curling shot into the top corner after being set up by forward Rodrygo just inside the area in the 38th minute. Benzema added to the lead by converting a 51st-minute penalty kick after a handball determined by video review.

Athletic had a chance to move closer in the final minutes but Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois saved Raúl García's penalty kick with his left foot. Madrid defender Eder Militão was sent off for the handball

that prompted the penalty.

"We could have gotten back into the game but Courtois ended our chances with that save," Athletic defender Oscar de Marcos said.

"It's a shame but we have to be proud. It's not easy to make it to these finals. We competed against great teams." Madrid's triumph gave veteran Brazil defender Marcelo a record-tying 23rd title with the club since he arrived in 2006, joining Paco Gentó. It moved him ahead of former central defender Sergio Ramos, who is now with Paris Saint-Germain. It is Marcelo's fifth Spanish Super Cup title. He entered the match as a substitute in the 86th and lifted the trophy as team captain.

### Notice Inviting e-Tender

No. SSA/Esstt/EPB/III/2021-22/474/2021/8530 Date : 17.01.2022  
Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam (Samagra Shiksha) invites tender from reputed exercise book manufacturers through e-Tendering process for the supply of Evaluation and Practice Books for class-VIII (Single Line, Plain and Graph).  
To participate in this tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves. The Bidder who have downloaded the tenders schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.  
Sd/-Mission Director  
SSA, Assam  
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19  
Janasanyog/CF/2908/21