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# Investors lose ₹9L cr as markets plummet

In 2-month high drop, Sensex crashes by 1,546

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors lost ₹9 lakh crore in a day as the Indian equity market on Monday logged the steepest single-day drop in about two months. The benchmark Sensex crashed nearly 1,546 points to crack below the 58,000-level due to panic selling across counters tracking.

Tech stocks were hammered due to heavy sell-off in the US tech stocks. Pre-budget nervousness, week quarter three results, and global factors are supposed to be behind the crash. The market was also jittery with the fear of the USA's Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) taking some unpleasant decisions on the interest rate in its meeting starting Tuesday.

The BSE Sensex started the session on a weak note and got further overwhelmed by panic selling as the trade progressed and tanked over 2,050 points to touch the day's low at 56,984. Recouping some lost ground towards the tag-end, the index finally settled at 57,491.51 — clocking a massive 1,545.67 points or 2.62 per cent



drop.

Likewise, the NSE Nifty slumped 468.05 points or 2.66 per cent to settle at 17,149.10. This was the biggest single-session fall for both Sensex and Nifty since November 26 last year and also the fifth straight session of loss for the indices.

The market crash wiped out ₹9.15 lakh crore of wealth and total market cap of BSE-listed firms has slipped to ₹260.49 lakh crore. Investors have become poorer by ₹19.33

lakh crore in the market fall since Tuesday last week.

On the Sensex chart, Tata Steel was the top loser, shedding around 6 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Titan, Reliance Industries and HCL Tech.

"The Indian markets have been under significant pressure in the past few days, correcting by 7 per cent from the recent highs, after a smart pullback seen since mid-December.

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# N-W, central India to shiver for 5 days with 5°C plunge

Mercury to drop by 3 to 5 deg in central India too

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The minimum temperatures in northwest and central India is likely to drop by three to five degrees Celsius over the next five days, leading to severe cold in Delhi and parts of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra

Cold day to severe cold day conditions are very likely over parts of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat over the next two to three days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday.

Dense to very dense fog is predicted in parts of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Sikkim, Meghalaya and Tripura over the next two to three days, it said.

Meanwhile, coastal Maharashtra and Konkan region witnessed haze due to dust storms in Gujarat and south Rajasthan days after the dust storm in Karachi in



Snow-covered Salgran village following fresh snowfall in Lahaul &amp; Spiti district on Monday

PTI

Pakistan that crippled the normal life.

Due to this, Mumbai's Air Quality Index (AQI) on Monday rose to a whopping 502, as per the System of Air Quality Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR). An AQI of more than 500 indicates "severe-plus" or hazardous pollution levels and can have profound health implications.

On Saturday, the IMD forecast said that a massive dust storm headed towards Gujarat and south Rajasthan. On Saturday morning, Karachi was caught off guard when a dust storm from Pakistan's west dis-

turbed normal life, with visibility reduced to less than or about 500 metres.

On the other hand, north and north western States are reeling under cold day conditions. According to the IMD, a "cold day" is when the minimum temperature is less than 10 degrees Celsius and the maximum is at least 4.5 degrees Celsius below normal. A "severe" cold day is when the maximum temperature is at least 6.5 notches below normal.

In the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to 4 degrees Celsius. A cold wave is

also declared when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below and is 4.5 notches less than normal.

A "severe" cold wave is when the minimum temperature dips to 2 degrees Celsius or the departure from normal is more than 6.4 degrees Celsius. When visibility due to fog is reduced to the range of 0 to 50 metres, it is categorised as "very dense" fog, between 51 and 200 metres, it is "dense" fog, between 201 and 500 metres "moderate", and it is categorised as "shallow" if the visibility is between 501 and 1,000 metres.

# Modi interacts with PM Bal awardees, calls for drawing energy from past



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar awardees, through video conferencing, in New Delhi on Monday

PTI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday interacted with "Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar" awardees via video conference and called for "drawing energy from the past" and "dedicating oneself to achieving great results in the coming 25 years of the Amrit kaal".

Digital certificates were conferred on the awardees for the years 2022 and 2021 using Blockchain Technology.

This technology was used for the first time for giving certificates to awardees. Union

Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Zubin Irani and Dr Munjpara Mahendrabhai, her Minister of State, were among those present on the occasion.

Interacting with Master Avi Sharma of Indore, the Prime Minister enquired about the secret of his prolific output with regard to various aspects of Ramayana. Master Avi Sharma said he got the inspiration by the broadcasting of the serial Ramayana during the lockdown. Avi also recited some couplets from his creation.

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# Akhilesh pro-Pakistan and pro-Jinnah, says Patra

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bharatiya Janata Party national spokesperson Sambit Patra hit out at Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, terming him a pro-Pakistani and pro-Jinnah leader and alleging that he had tried to free terrorists during his tenure as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.

Addressing media in Lucknow on Monday, Patra said, "On UP Foundation Day, Yogi ji, Modi ji are congratulating all the people of the state on Uttar Pradesh's foundation day, while Akhilesh ji said in an interview in a newspaper that he does not consider Pakistan as the real enemy of India. Now you tell me who brought Pakistan and Jinnah in the election. Akhilesh Yadav must apologise for such a statement. *Jo Jinnah se kare pyaar, woh Pakistan se kaise kar inkaar.*"

Accusing the SP chief of indulging in the politics of appeasement, the BJP leader said, "The SP is giving tickets to people like Nahid Hasan. If Akhilesh ji has his way, he would have named Yakub



Memon too. Thankfully, Kasab was hanged or else SP would have made him its star campaigner and put him on campaign trail."

Training guns at the Samajwadi Party, Patra said that Akhilesh ji was not able to release the next list of his candidates because the list is full of goons, mafia like the previous one. Daring the SP chief, he asked Akhilesh to release his list of candidates and said that the list would expose him before the public.

Sambit Patra also congratulated the people of Uttar Pradesh on the 73rd founda-

tion day of the state and derved on how the state has been progressing under the double-engine government of the BJP since 2017.

"On one side there is Yogi Adityanath who is focused on development, while on the other side there is Akhilesh Yadav who is talking about Pakistan," he said.

Mounting a blistering attack on Akhilesh Yadav for

his objection to opinion polls, Patra said, "Akhilesh is saying that the opinion poll should be banned. I can say with certainty that on March 10 they will again cry over the EVMS being partisan. This election is between BJP and SP's expressways. The BJP's expressway is Ganga Expressway, Purvanchal Expressway, Bundelkhand Expressway, Gorakhpur Link Expressway while the SP's unique selling proposition have been gundai expressway, rangdari expressway and mafia expressway. People will have to choose between these two."

# Capt gets 37 seats, BJP 65 in Punjab poll deal

Third partner Dhindsa's SAD to fight on 15 seats

**New Delhi:** The BJP in Punjab will contest on 65 assembly seats, the Punjab Lok Congress on 37 seats and the SAD (Sanyukt) on 17 seats, BJP chief J P Nadda said on Monday as he announced the seat-sharing agreement between his party and its allies for the February 20 state polls.

Nadda said Punjab is a border state and security is a very important issue as far as assembly elections are concerned.

Hailing Punjab as a "leader", especially in defence and food security of the country, he said, "Today Punjab needs special attention, it needs a double engine government and a better coordination between the Centre and the State."

Nadda announced the seat-sharing agreement at a press conference here at the BJP headquarters in the presence of Punjab Lok Congress supremo Amarinder Singh and Shimroni Akali Dal (Sanyukt) Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa.

"I am announcing a broad-seat sharing agreement, BJP



will contest on 65 seats, PLC on 37 seats and SAD (Sanyukt) on 15 seats," Nadda said.

After the press conference, a BJP delegation led by Union Minister Gajendra Shekhawat met Election Commission of India officials to complain against Sidhu's principal strategic advisor Mohammad Mustafa for allegedly making communal remarks at a public meeting in Malerkotla.

The former Punjab DGP has been booked for promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race and other identity markers to score gains in election. The FIR came a day after a video showing him making the alleged remarks was circulated on social media.

We have urged the ECI to act against Mustafa for giving

a provocative speech in Malerkotla on January 20, Shekhawat said.

Addressing the conference, Singh said for the sake of national security and welfare of the state, all three parties have come together.

Expressing concern about the threat to the "hard earned" peace of Punjab, Singh said a large number of weapons for carrying out nefarious activities are coming into Punjab.

"During the course of my last four-and-half-years as Punjab chief minister, at least 1,000 rifles, 500 pistols, RDX, lakhs of rounds of ammunition were caught at the borders. The weapons were also dropped using drones... They were meant for carrying out some nefarious activity," Singh said.

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# Covid spike in SE Asia driven by India: WHO

Positivity rate in India rises to 21%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising Covid-19 positivity rate in India, the World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday noted that the increase in infections in South-East Asia is mainly driven by India, with 150 per cent increase in numbers in the last one week. To drive home its point, the WHO said that India reported 15,94,160 new cases in the week that ended on January 23 as compared to 6,38,872 cases it recorded the previous week.

On Monday, India reported over three lakh new Covid-19 infections for the fifth straight day, though in actual numbers it was almost 8 per cent less than the previous day. The daily positivity rate - the share of coronavirus tests that return positive and considered a key marker of the pandemic's status is up from 17.78 per cent to 20.75 per cent while the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 17.03 per cent.

The Omicron variant is also constantly moving northwards with infection prevalent in almost all the States. The WHO also said that the Omicron variant of coronavirus has now been reported

in 171 countries in the world.

Though the variant has a lower risk of severe disease and death following infection, the overall risk related to Omicron remains very high. INSACOG, the Government's research body has already said in its latest bulletin that the Omicron variant is in the community transmission stage in the country and has become dominant in several metros where new cases have been spiking exponentially.

"Despite a lower risk of severe disease and death following infection than previous SARS-CoV-2 variants, the very high levels of transmission

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# AI's handover to Tatas expected on Jan 27

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Debt-laden Maharaja (Air India) is expected to be handed over to the Tata group on January 27. The closing balance sheet as of January 20 was provided to the new owner (Tata Private Limited, a subsidiary of the Tata groups holding company) on Monday so that it can be reviewed.

Sources said the final handover date was not finalised but the Government aims to hand over the airline by Thursday. The remaining formalities regarding the deal are likely to be completed in a few days.

After a competitive bidding process, the Government had on October 8 last year sold Air



India to Talace Private Limited for ₹18,000 crore.

In a message to the employees on Monday, Air India's director (finance) Vinod Hejmadi said the divestment of the national carrier is now decided to be on January 27. "The closing balance sheet as on 20th Jan has to be provided on Jan 24th so that it can be reviewed by Tatas and any changes can be effected on Wednesday," Hejmadi said in the message on instant messaging platform.

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# Indian bizman blackmailed me for spot fixing: Zimbabwe cricketer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Zimbabwe cricket star Brendan Taylor on Monday came out with a shocking revelation that he was given cocaine by an Indian businessman during his India visit and was blackmailed with videos of his inebriated condition. Taylor has alleged that the businessman put pressure on him to engage in match fixing.

In a detailed four-page letter uploaded on social media, Taylor said he confessed to ICC and going to visit a rehabilitation centre.

"In late October 2019, I was approached by an Indian businessman requesting that I attend India to discuss sponsorship and potential launch of a T20 com-

petition in Zimbabwe and was advised that I could be paid US\$ 15,000 to make journey... We had drinks and during the course of the evening they openly offered me cocaine, which they themselves engaged in, and I foolishly took the bait. I've gone over it a million times since and still feel sick to my stomach reliving that night and how they played me," said Taylor.

The cricketer said next day morning "the same men stormed into his hotel room and showed video taken in the previous night and told him that if he did not spot fix at international matches for them, the video would be released to the public.

Without naming anyone, Taylor said six men threatened

him and gave him US\$15,000 and promised additional US\$20,000 after I completed the job of match-fixing."

"I took money so I could get on a plane and leave India. I felt I had no choice at the time because saying no was clearly not an option. All I knew was I had to get out of there," he said.

Taylor said that after this incident he was suffering from stress which severely impacted his mental and physical health. "The 'businessman' wanted a return on his investment which I could not and would not give. It took me four months to report this offense and interaction to the ICC," said Taylor, adding that ICC is going to impose a multi-year ban on him.



# UP celebrates 73rd foundation day

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh celebrated its 73rd foundation day on Monday with President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, UP Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath wishing the people on the occasion.

UP got statehood on January 24, 1950 and the state has been celebrating the day since 2018 on the initiative of the then Governor Ram Naik.

Due to the assembly polls and imposition of the election model code of conduct, no official function has been organised on the occasion, official sources said here on Monday. President Ram Nath Kovind in his message said: "Heartfelt greetings to all the residents of the state on Uttar Pradesh Diwas. The hardworking and talented people of Uttar Pradesh have made impressive contributions to the history, art, culture, literature and politics of India. I wish this state to continue on the path of development and prosperity."

Describing Uttar Pradesh as a state with rich spiritual and cultural heritage and an abundance of natural resources, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu said that Uttar Pradesh was playing a leading role in national development. He congratulated the people of Uttar Pradesh on the state's foundation day.

In his message, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Uttar Pradesh has set the benchmark of development in every field in the last five years. Due to this, along with making the life of the people of the state easier, new opportunities have also been created. I am sure that the multidimensional development of Uttar Pradesh will continue to play a leading role in the New India."

Modi further said, "Many wishes to all the residents of Uttar Pradesh on the state's foundation day. I wish that the development journey of this state, which is setting

new benchmarks of progress and prosperity, continues like this."

Amit Shah also tweeted and said, "Greetings to the people of the state on the foundation day of Uttar Pradesh, the land of religion, knowledge, and amazing bravery. The state has regained its glory due to the tireless efforts of the Yogi government of the state running under the guidance of Modi ji. BJP is committed to the development of Uttar Pradesh and the welfare of the people." UP Governor Anandiben Patel in her message greeted the people of Uttar Pradesh on the 73rd foundation day of the state.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath congratulated the people of the state on the occasion of Uttar Pradesh's foundation day. On this occasion, Yogi Adityanath tweeted that the symbol of the faith of the country, full of abundant resources and youthful energy, Uttar Pradesh has set out on a new journey. Yogi Adityanath said that today Uttar Pradesh was second in the country in ease of doing business and at the same time, it was playing a leading role in about 50 schemes of the Central government. He said the economy of Uttar Pradesh was now second in the country.

The chief minister also released a video message on UP's foundation day in which he said that today UP was many times safer than before. He said in five years, the Bharatiya Janata Party had tried to change many things in UP.

"In this long journey of 73 years, UP has seen many ups and downs. UP has made a lot of progress under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. UP is the faith of the country, it is the heart of the people. This state is full of youth's enthusiasm."

He said, "New India is the New Uttar Pradesh and all this has happened only because of the people of Uttar Pradesh. I thank everyone."

Uttar Pradesh was renamed in 1950. Earlier this state was known as the United Provinces.

# SP alleges Shah defied poll panel curbs during Kairana campaign



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party has filed a complaint against Union Home Minister Amit Shah with the Election Commission of India (ECI), alleging that Covid protocol and directives of the poll panel were defied during his door-to-door campaign at Kairana in Shamli district on Saturday.

Launching the BJP's poll campaign, Amit Shah had held door-to-door campaign in Kairana on Saturday. While the ECI has allowed a maximum of 10 people for any poll-related campaign, the SP alleged that the norm was thrown to the winds by the BJP stalwart in Kairana and also Covid protocol was not followed during the campaign.

On Saturday, the ECI had extended the ban on physical rallies in poll-bound states till January 30. It had increased the limit for door-to-door campaigns from five persons to a maximum of 10 people. The SP however alleged that more than 10 people had taken part in BJP's door-to-door campaign in Kairana led by Union Home Minister Amit

Shah.

Earlier on January 15, the ECI had let off Samajwadi Party with a light rap for violating Covid protocol during a function on its office premises and advised it to be careful and ensure that such breaches did not happen in the future. The ECI had issued a notice to the Samajwadi Party for organising a public gathering in the name of virtual rally at its Lucknow office in violation of Covid norms.

In another complaint to the ECI, Samajwadi Party state president Naresh Uttam demanded the transfer of Superintendent of Police of Sitapur, RP Singh, alleging that the district police chief and inspector of Kotwali Dehat were mounting pressure on the local residents to vote in favour of the BJP.

He alleged that the police officers were pressuring village pradhans, members of panchayat bodies and PDS shop owners to mobilise support for BJP candidates. He urged that ECI to ensure compliance with the model code of conduct so that free and fair poll could be held in the district.

# SP announces first list of 159 candidates

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party on Monday released its first list of 159 candidates for the assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav will contest from Karhal seat in Mainpuri district. The SP has denied ticket to son of Bharatiya Janata Party rebel and former minister Swami Prasad Maurya from Unchaahar constituency in Rae Bareilly district. SP has retained its sitting MLA Manoj Pandey from this seat. Samajwadi Party Lok Sabha MP Mohammad Azam Khan, presently in jail, will contest from Rampur.

The SP list includes 30 Muslims and 12 candidates from Yadav community.

The list of candidates: Karhal-Akhilesh Yadav, Behat-Umar Ali Khan, Nakud-Dharm Singh Saini, Saharanpur City-Sanjay Garg, Saharanpur Rural-Ashu Malik, Deoband-Kartikya Rana, Gangoh-Indrasen, Kairana-Nahid Hasan, Charthawal-Pankaj Kumar Malik, Najibabad-Tasleem Ahmed, Nagina (SC)-Manoj Kumar Paras, Badhapur-Kapil Kumar, Dhampur-Naimul Hasan, Chandpur-Swami Omwesh, Noorpur-Ramavtar Singh, Kanth-Kamal Akhtar, Thakurdwara-Nawab Jaan, Moradabad-Mohammad Nasir, Moradabad Nagar-Mohd Yusuf Ansari, Kundarki-Ziaur Rahman, Bilauri-Faheem Irfan, Chandausi-Vimlesh, Asmoli-Pink Singh, Sambhal-Iqbal Mehmood, Gunnaur-Ram Khiladi Singh, Suar-Abdullah Azam Khan, Chamarkwa-Nasir Ahmed Khan, Bilaspur-Amarjeet Singh, Rampur-Mohd Azam Khan, Milak-Vijay Singh, Dhanaura-Vivek Singh, Naugawan Sadat-Samarpal Singh, Amroha-Mehboob Ali, Hasanpur-Mukhiya Gurjar, Sardhana-Atul Pradhan, Hastinapur-Yogesh Verma, Kithaur-Shahid Manzoor, Meerut-Rafiq Ansari, Meerut (South)-Md Aadil, Sahibabad-Amarpal, Ghaziabad-Vishal Verma, Dhaulana-Aslam Ali, Garhmukteshwar-Ravindra Chaudhary, Noida-Sunil Chaudhary, Dadri-Rajkumar, Sikandrabad-Rahul Yadav, Dibai-Harish Kumar, Khurja-Banshi Singh, Atrauli-Veeresh Yadav, Charra-Lakshmi Dhangar, Kol-Shaj Istahak, Aligarh-Zafar Alam, Hathras (SC)-Brijmohan, Maut-Sanjay Lathar, Mathura-Dendra Agarwal, Etmadpur-Virendra Singh Chauhan, Agra Cantonment-Kunwar Chand, Agra South-Vinay Agarwal, Bahedi-Ataurrehman, Meerang-Sultan Beg, Bhojpur-Shahjil Islam Ansari, Nawabganj-Bhagwatsharan Gangwar, Faridpur (SC)-Vijay Pal Singh, Bithrichapur-Agam Maurya, Bareilly-Rajesh Kumar Agarwal, Bareilly Cantonment -Supriya Aaron, Aanwala-Pandit Radha Krishna Sharma, Pilibhit-Shailendra

Gangwar, Barkheda -Hemraj Verma, Purnapur-Aarti, Katra-Rajesh Yadav, Jalalabad-Niraj Nalinish, Tilhar-Roshan Lal Verma, Puwayan-Upendra Pal Singh, Shahjahanpur-Tanweer Khan, Dadraul -Rajesh Kumar Verma, Palia-Prispendra Pal Singh 'Kaku', Nidhasan-RS Kushwaha, Agra North-Gyanendra, Fatehabad-Rupali Dixit, Bah-Madhusdan Sharma, Tundla-Rakesh Babu, Jasrana-Sachin Yadav, Firozabad-Saifur Rahman, Shikohabad-Mukesh Verma, Sirsaganj-Sarvesh Singh, Kasganj-Manpal Singh, Amanpur-Satyabhan Singh, Aliganj-Rameshwar Singh Yadav, Etah-Jugendra Singh Yadav, Jalesar-Ranjeet Suman, Mainpuri-Rajkumar alia Raju Yadav, Bhogaon-Alok Shaky, Kishni-Brijesh Katheria, Bisauli-Ashutosh Maurya, Sahaswan-Brijesh Yadav, Bilsil-Chandra Prakash Maurya, Shekhpur-Himanshu Yadav, Dataganj-Arjun Singh, Gola Gokaran Nath-Vinay Tiwari, Srinagar-Ramsaran, Lakhimpur-Utkarsh Verma, Maholi-Anoop Gupta, Sitapur-Radhey Shyam Jaiswal, Hargoon-Ramhet Bharti, Bisma-Afzal Kausal, Sevata-Mahendra Singh alias Jheen Babu, Hardoi-Anil Verma, Shahbad-Asif Khan Babbu, Gopamau-Rajeshwari, Bilgram-Mallanwar-Brijesh Kumar Verma (Tillu Bhaiya), Safipur-Sudhir Rawat, Mohaan-Anchal Verma, Unnao-Abhinav Kumar, Bhagwantnagar-Ankit Parihar, Sisamau-Haji Irfan Solanki, Arya Nagar- Amitabh Bajpayi, Maharajpur-Fateh Bahadur Singh 'Gill', Ghatampur (SC)-Bhagwati Sagar, Madhoganj-Raghendra Pratap Singh, Kalpi-Sriram Pal, Orai-Dayashankar Verma, Babina-Yashpal Yadav, Jhansi-Sitaran Kushwaha, Mauranipur (SC)-Tilak Chandra Ahirwar, Garautha-Deep Narayan Singh, Lalitpur-Ramesh Prasad, Mahrauni (SC)-Pheran Lal Ahirwar, Rath (SC)-Chandrawati, Mahoba-Manoj Tiwari, Charkhari-Ajendra Singh Rajput, Tindwari-Brijesh Prajapati, Naraini-Daddu Prasad, Jahanabad-Madan Gopal, Bindki-Rameshwar Dayal Gulta 'Dayalu Gupta', Fatehpur-Chandra Prakash Lodhi, Ayahshah-Vishambhar Prasad Nishad, Husinganj-Usha Maurya, Bharthana (SC)-Raghendra Kumar Singh, Dibiapur-Pradeep Yadav, Auraiya (SC)-Jitendra Dohre, Rasoolabad (SC)-Kamlesh Chandra Diwaker, Akbarpur-Raniyar-RP Kushwaha, Bhognipur-Narendra Pal Singh, Bithoor-Munendra Shukla, Kalyanpur-Satish Kumar Nigam, Purwa-Uday Raj, Harchandpur-Rahul Shiv Ganesh Lodhi, Sareni-Devendra Pratap Singh, Unchahar-Manoj Pandey, Kaimganj-Sarvesh Ambedkar, Amritpur-Jitendra Yadav, Farrukhabad-Suman Maurya, Bhojpur-Arshad Jamal, Chhibramau-Arvind Yadav, Tirwa-Anil Kumar Pal, Kannauj-Anil Kumar and Jaswantnagar-Shivpal Singh Yadav.

# Twitter war between political parties hots up in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the Election Commission of India (ECI) restricting political parties from organising election rallies, leaders have now taken to a fierce and bitter 'Twitter war', blaming each other for the present imbroglio.

When Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath commented on former UP chief ministers for building their big bungalows instead of the houses for the poor, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati immediately retorted by commenting on the Gorakhpur Math of Yogi

Adityanath. Not to back down, Yogi's social media team hit back and even raised the issue of Mayawati's exorbitantly priced sandals.

This all started in Aligarh on Saturday, when Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the chief ministers and ministers used to build palaces for themselves before 2017, but BJP built houses for the poor.

Stung by the repartee, Mayawati attacked the chief minister in a series of tweets on Sunday, posting: Perhaps the people of western UP do not know that the monastery built

by Yogi ji in Gorakhpur, where he lives most of the time, is no less than a big bungalow."

Yogi's social media team became active after Mayawati's comment on the Math and tweeted: "On one hand, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath dedicated the state government aircraft to protect the lives of the people during COVID-19 pandemic, on the other, sandals were delivered by a government plane and state resources were misused for personal splendour.

In another tweet, Yogi's office invited the BSP chief to visit Gorakhnath Math and

posted, "Behenji (sister), memories of sages-saints and revolutionaries of freedom movement have been preserved in Sri Goraksha Peeth, the tapobhoomi of Baba Gorakhnath ji in Gorakhpur. There are temples of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. This centre of social justice is working for the welfare of all. Come sometime, there will be peace. The difference is clear!"

Continuing her attack on the BJP on Monday, the BSP chief tweeted: "It would have been better if the CM of UP, besides praising his government, had also mentioned

some works related to the public interest of the BSP government, because they should know that BSP had launched schemes of providing houses to the poor and land to the landless. The BSP government's record has been better."

She further posted, "Under Manyavar Kanshi Ram Ji Shahari Garib Awaz Yojana by the BSP government, more than one and a half lakh pucca houses were given in only two phases and many families got the benefit under Sarvaaj Hitaya Garib Awaz Ownership Scheme. Land has also been given to lakhs of landless families."

# Mayawati targets BJP govt in UP on law and order

Lucknow (PNS): Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati on Monday targeted the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Uttar Pradesh over the law and order issue, alleging that insecurity and discrimination regarding religion had increased during the saffron party's tenure.

Mayawati tweeted, "Fear, corruption, discrimination and insecurity about life and property and religion are increasing continuously in Uttar Pradesh which is a big problem, and increasing continuously. She added, "These prob-

lems are creating frustration among the people and the society and the state is lagging behind. It is very sad."

Describing the BJP's plans to provide housing to the poor as her own, she said, "In Uttar Pradesh, about 2.5 lakh poor families were provided with basic amenities under the (previous) government of BSP. And preparations were on to provide about 15-20 lakh houses, but due to the change of government, this work remained incomplete and BJP is trying to capitalise on it. What have they done?"

**NOTICE**

Poonawalla Housing Finance Ltd. It is being informed to the general public that Mrs. Shanti Devi, Mr. Khajjan Singh and Mr. Deepak Singh are residents of Tulsipatikheda, Village-Kaili Paschim, Pargana-Bijnor, Tehsil-Sarajni Nagar, District-Lucknow, Ram Kheawan, Ramshahi, Ram Singh, Sanjay Singh Yadav, Santosh Kumar Yadav, Janak Dulari, Jai, Jai Singh and Ms Garv Buildtech Pvt Ltd are co-tenure holders Khasra No. 3382 located-Village-Kaili Paschim, Pargana-Bijnor, Tehsil-Sarajni Nagar, District-Lucknow, if any other person or any financial institution or bank or co-tenure holders has any objection in the purchase, sale or mortgage of the above plot, then within 07 days the date of publication of this notice, any person/sale or any other financial institution can file an objection in writing with the relevant documents to the company's advocate after the above time period, no claim of any kind will be considered. Arun Kumar Singh Advocate Mob. 7007953358

**CLASSIFIEDS**

**NOTICE**

I have changed my name from Maryam Fatima to Mariam Fatima in all future purpose. Mariam Fatima W/o Ahmad Faraz Amin, R/o D-403, Defence Colony, Jajmau, Kanpur 208 010.

**NOTICE**

Be it known to all that earlier my name was SHETA which is changed to SHWETA SHARMA. In future I shall be known as SHWETA SHARMA. SHWETA SHARMA D/o Bir Singh Sharma, 2/88, MIG, Avas Vikas Colony, Sec-2, Yojna-3, Jhunsi, Allahabad.

**NOTICE**

My son is recorded as Raminvash Yadav on the place of Raminvash Yadav in my service records who is truth. Ramesh Kumar Yadav Rank Sep s/o Durjan Yadav Village & Post Nagpur P.S Ranipur Tahsil Mohammadabad Gohna Distt Mau State U.P.

**NOTICE**

Original sale deed dt. 30/10/1985 of H.N. 12/470 Gwalto, Kanpur in the name of Smt. Vidyanari reged as book-I Vol-4216 page 83-88 at S.N. 21863/21864 on 31/12/1985 lost. Neeraj Kumar S/o-Late Munni Lal R/o-12/470 Gwalto, Kanpur.

# BJP violating model code of conduct: Aradhana

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Strongly reacting to Bharatiya Janata Party workers pasting stickers of party symbol on houses of beneficiaries of government schemes in recent weeks, UP Congress Legislature Party leader Aradhana Mishra lashed out saying that the ruling party does not care about the model code of conduct and was treating the Election Commission of India as a frontal outfit.

"Such acts by the BJP are definitely a murder of democracy and a clear violation of the model code of conduct. The Election Commission of India should take up this matter seriously. In Prayagraj, stickers are being pasted on the houses of the beneficiaries of Central and state government schemes by BJP members without their consent. This is a clear violation of the rules," Mishra said in a statement issued in Lucknow on Monday.

The Congress leader said that if the ECI did not take action on such a serious issue, then it should be believed that the poll panel was indirectly helping the BJP and its impartiality would come under a cloud.

"It is unprecedented that a photo has been put on the help distributed among the poor by the state and Central government. The ruling party even carried out its publicity on the certificate of Covid vaccination, by affixing a picture of the prime minister. Whatever things are provided to the public by the government is not a



favour on them, it is the government's duty. It is the duty of the elected government that the tax paid by the public is properly utilised and the benefits of government schemes reach the person standing at the last rung of the society," she said.

Mishra further said, "If the BJP government is terming providing facilities as its achievement, then it should also take responsibility for the fact that 13.5 crore people have come below the poverty line during its tenure. As per a NITI Aayog report, 37.79 per cent of the people in Uttar Pradesh live below the poverty line. Besides, unemployment is at its highest level in the last 45 years. Crime, especially against women, has touched its nadir under the BJP misrule."

## CONG ANNOUNCES 30 STAR CAMPAIGNERS

The Congress party has released the names of its star campaigners for the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.

The names of 30 star campaigners include Congress president Sonia Gandhi, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Besides, the list includes the names of Ajay Kumar Lallu, Aradhana Mishra, Mona, Gulam Nabi Azad, Ashok Gehlot, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Bhupesh Baghel, Salman Khurshid, Raj Babbar, Pramod Tiwari, PL Punia, RPN Singh, Sachin Pilot, Pradeep Jain Aditya, Naseemuddin Siddiqui, Acharya Pramod Krishnam, Deepender Singh Hooda, Varsha Gaikwad, Phulho Devi Netam, Hardik Patel, Supriya Shrinet, Imran Pratapgarhi, Kanhaiya Kumar, Praniti Shinde, Dheeraj Gujjar, Rohit Chaudhary, and Tauqeer Khan.

The first phase of voting for the UP elections will be held on February 10. The nomination process for this stage has been completed.

# Shivpal Yadav to file nomination on Jan 28

Lucknow (PNS): Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) president Shivpal Singh Yadav will file his nomination papers for the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections on January 28 from his constituency, Jaswantnagar, on Samajwadi Party's 'bicycle' symbol.

Yadav shared this information on Twitter on Monday. He wrote, "I will file nomination as a candidate of the SP and PSPL alliance from Jaswantnagar assembly seat of Etawah district with Covid protocol and other guidelines issued by the Election Commission at 11:30 am on January 28."

It is worth mentioning that Shivpal's party, PSPL, recently forged an alliance with the SP.

SP president Akhilesh Yadav has given ticket to his uncle (Shivpal) from his traditional seat, Jaswantnagar. He will enter the election battlefield with SP's election symbol bicycle. Shivpal Yadav has been representing Jaswantnagar assembly constituency since 1996. Meanwhile, speculations on the fate of Samajwadi Party's sitting MLA and candidate from Kairana assembly seat, Nahid Munawwar Hasan, ended on Monday as his nomination papers were found in order during the scrutiny of papers on Monday. Nahid Hasan has been booked under UP Gangster Act and is presently in jail. Speculations were rife that his nomination paper was likely to be rejected.

The SP, as an alternative, had announced the candidature of Iqra Hasan, sister of Nahid Hasan. She has also filed her nomination as an

independent candidate. With Nahid Hasan in a fray, there is likely to be a direct contest between Mriganka Singh of the Bharatiya Janata Party and Nahid Hasan, who will be the joint candidate of Samajwadi Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal alliance. In the 2017 polls, Nahid Hasan had defeated Mriganka Singh, daughter of senior BJP leader late Hukum Singh. The Kairana has become a high profile assembly seat as Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched his UP poll campaign from Kairana on Saturday last.

**FULLERTON INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED**

Corporate Offt.: Fr 5 & 6, B-Wing, Supreme IT Park, Supreme City, Powai, Mumbai-400 076.  
Regd. Offt.: Megh Towers, Fr 3, Old No. 307, New No. 165, Poonamallee High Road, Maduraiyaval, Chennai-600 095.

**POSSESSION NOTICE ((APPENDIX IV) RULE 6(1))**

WHEREAS the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of FULLERTON INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED a Housing Finance Company [Duly registered with its Banking Book (Fully Owned by RBI)] (hereinafter referred to as "FHFC") having its Registered Office at Megh Towers, Floor 3, Old No. 307, New No. 165, Poonamallee High Road, Maduraiyaval, Chennai, Tamilnadu-600 095 under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002), and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice dated mentioned below under Section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon you being the Borrowers (Names & Addresses mentioned below) to repay the amount mentioned in the said notice and interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers mentioned herein below having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers mentioned herein below and to the Public in General that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under sub-section (4) of Section 13 of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The borrowers mentioned herein in above in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with said property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of FULLERTON INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED for an amount as mentioned herein under and interest thereon.

Sr.No.	Name of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) with Loan Account No.	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Date of Possession
1.	<b>LAN : 610507510617872</b> <b>1. Sandip Kumar Mishra, S/o. Akhilesh Mishra 2. Suneeta Mishra, W/o. Akhilesh Mishra 3. Amita Mishra, W/o. Sandip Kumar Mishra</b> <b>Add. 1 : H. No. 3/316, Avas Vikas, Hanspuram Noubasta, Nr. KPY Inter College, Kanpur, 208 021, UP; Add. 2 : 3/316, Avas Vikas, Hanspuram, Nr. KPY Inter College, Kanpur-208 021, UP.</b>	Date : 12.08.2021 ₹ 27,87,960.88 (Rs. Twenty Seven Lakh Eighty Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Sixty & Eighty Eight Paise Only)	19.01.2022 (Symbolic Possession)
2.	<b>LAN : 610507510453358</b> <b>1. Manish Kapoor, S/o. Krishna Gopal Kapoor 2. Jaipreet Kapoor, W/o. Manish Kapoor</b> <b>Add. 1 : MIG-12, SBI Colony, Barra-3, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh-208 027.</b>	Date : 15.09.2021 (Rs. Twenty One Lakh Fifty Four Thousand Twenty Seven Paise Five Only)	19.01.2022 (Symbolic Possession)

**DESCRIPTION OF SECURED ASSETS (IMMOVABLE PROPERTY) IS AS UNDER :** Plot Carved out Form Araz No. 17/7 (Admeasuring Area : 301.66 Sq. Yards) Situated At Gram : Boodhpur Machariya, Kanpur Nagar, Uttar Pradesh Boundless As Below :-  
\* Boundaries : \* East :- 30 Ft. Road. \* West :- House of Ravindra Pal; \* North :- House of Jagpal Kushwaha; \* South :- 30 Ft. Road.

**DESCRIPTION OF SECURED ASSETS (IMMOVABLE PROPERTY) IS AS UNDER :** Flat No. D-6 On Second Floor of Premises No. 177/7N/6 N Block Kakadeo Kanpur Nagar Hasing Its Covered Area 50.976 Sq. Mts. Alongwith Undivided Land Share 13.779 Sq. Mts. Boundless As :-  
\* Boundaries : \* North :- Flat No. D-7; \* South :- Open To Sky; \* East :- Plot No. 75; \* West :- Flat No. D-5.

Place : Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh  
Date : 24.01.2022

Sd/-  
Authorized Officer  
**FULLERTON INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED**



# 11,159 new cases, 10,836 recoveries across state

1,818 test +ve in Lucknow, 1,950 recover

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh reported 11,159 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours while 10,836 people recovered from the infection during this period, according to Additional Chief Secretary (Information) Navneet Sehgal.

Chairing a review meeting on Monday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that tracing, testing, treatment and vaccination policy to prevent COVID-19 was a success.

"Effective control has been made on the third wave in the state. While the number of new cases is decreasing day by day, the number of people recovering is encouraging," he claimed.

At present, there are 93,924 active cases in the state out of which 91,519 are taking health benefits at home.

In the last 24 hours, 1,86,000 samples were tested for coronavirus infection out of which 11,159 tested positive for infection. In the same period, 10,836 people recovered in hospitals or in home isolation.

So far more than 24.92 crore doses of the Covid vaccine have been administered across the state which is the highest vaccination done in any state of the country.

More than 97.78 per cent of people over the age of 18 years have received the first dose of the vaccine, while more than 65 per cent have received both doses of the Covid vaccine. Besides, more than 57 per cent of adolescents in the age group of 15-17 years in the state have been covered by the vaccine. Similarly, 60 per cent of those eligible for the booster dose have also been vaccinated.

Meanwhile, the city witnessed a decrease in the number of fresh COVID-19 cases with 1,818 people testing positive for coronavirus infection.

## UP cross 25 crore vaccination-mark



People standing in queue for Covid-19 testing at KGMU on Monday

**Lucknow (PNS):** In another victory against the COVID-19 pandemic, Uttar Pradesh crossed the 25 crore vaccination milestone on Monday.

Committed to providing protection cover to children in the age group of 15-18, the state has so far administered vaccine doses to over 57 per cent teenagers. Since the

beginning of the inoculation drive for this age bracket, more than 81 lakh teens have received their first dose of Covid vaccine within a span of three weeks.

Strengthening its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Uttar Pradesh has also administered over 8.45 lakh 'precautionary doses' to health-care and frontline workers

Jubilee, 95 in NK Road, 83 in Tudiaganj and 95 in Sarojininar. Amongst those who tested positive included 132 contacts, 372 those who had influenza-like illness, 61 pre-surgicals, 21 healthcare workers, 563 travellers and 32 who were admitted in hospitals.

Doctors said that for those testing positive, it was important to quarantine for a minimum of seven days from the day the first symptoms appeared so that they did not spread the infection.

Regarding re-infections, they said that it was unlikely for the next three months. Meanwhile Covid vaccinations will be carried out for non-school going adolescents shortly. Giving this information,

District Immunisation Officer MK Singh said that a list was specially prepared of such adolescents.

He said that they had not been able to finish the vaccinations of the adolescents because with the schools closed the children were not turning up in sufficient numbers for vaccination.

Meanwhile, District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash said that under the joint efforts of the administration, district probation department and the Health department, vaccinations were completed in protection homes in the 15-18 years category which included 190 inmates living in nine organisations and 318 adolescents living in five Rajkiya Bal Griha.

the night near Rasoolpur village in Gosainganj.

They suffered critical injuries and were rushed to a nearby hospital where both were pronounced dead by the doctors.

They were riding a scooty which did not have a registration number and were hit by a loader at around 12 in

Nagarm. Both were plumbers and were returning home after completing their work.

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**Lucknow (PNS):** Two youths were killed in a road mishap in Gosainganj police station area on Sunday night.

The deceased were identified as Shubham Sahu (23) and Ranjeet Verma (25), both of Karaura village of

Nagarm. Both were plumbers and were returning home after completing their work.

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## UP launches special focused doorstep screening drive

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Stepping up preventive measures to limit any further spread of COVID-19 across the state, the Uttar Pradesh government initiated a five-day special focused doorstep screening drive from Monday.

From January 24 to 29, healthcare workers, including ASHA and Anganwadi workers, and members of the surveillance committees will visit homes and conduct thorough screening of inmates to bring down transmission levels. If any individual is suspected with symptoms of COVID-19, he/she will also be made to undergo RT-PCR test and will

be provided with medicine kits.

In addition, a list of infants and newborn babies who have not been inoculated with essential vaccines yet, will also be prepared. Besides, people who are yet to get vaccinated against COVID-19 will also be identified.

Upgrading its guard against the highly transmissible new variant of coronavirus, the state government has initiated intensive screening of people returning from places that have been witnessing greater surge of fresh COVID-19 cases and have reported a high positivity rate.

The special focused testing

drive is divided in a way to cover the entire state in order to remove any risk of further transmission. The drive will be conducted in both rural and urban areas.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had earlier already asked officials to make special efforts to improve surveillance and keep the spread of the disease in check to restore normalcy in the state in order to save both 'lives and livelihood' of people.

Aiming to break the chain of the virus and keep the state safe from COVID-19 infection, the government has deployed more than 73,000 surveillance committees.

## 4 arrested in Para murder case, prime accused on the lam

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the arrest of three youths and a minor on Monday, the Para police claimed to have solved the murder of property dealer Sandeep Pal whose body was recovered two days back from the area.

The prime accused, Santosh Lodhi of Para, is on the lam and the police teams are hunting him.

Those arrested were identified as Manish Gautam of Kakori, Vikas Gautam and Sachin Rawat, both of Para, and the minor who also belongs to Para.

Prime accused Santosh Lodhi, who is out from jail on bail, is absconding.

The police were unclear about the motive behind the murder.

ACP (Para) Ashutosh said the murder took place on a minor verbal spat. He, however, did not clarify why a verbal spat took place between the deceased and the prime accused and what was the involvement of those arrested in the case on Monday.

Based on the confession of those arrested on Monday, the police claimed that Santosh had an enmity with Sandeep (deceased).

Police sources said Sandeep

was invited to the party by Manish at the behest of Santosh.

Police said Santosh dumped the body of Sandeep near the property dealer's rival to mislead the police investigation.

"The police, however, worked on getting the location of the mobile phones of those who associated with Sandeep on the fateful day. After Manish and others were traced the police succeeded in getting the mobile number of Santosh and his phone's location was also found at the place where he dumped the body as per his plan," the police sources said.

The ACP said the murder did not take place at the party venue. "It took place outside the party venue and we are yet to find out the place where it happened," he said while feigning ignorance about the findings of the interrogation of the accused who were arrested on Monday.

The 32-year-old property dealer Sandeep Pal was shot in the stomach and later his body was dumped at a vacant plot behind a plywood factory in Para. The incident came to light on January 22.

According to police, Santosh had some old rivalry with Sandeep which became the motive of the murder.

## Hook, outer bolts found missing from rly track

**Lucknow(PNS):** A rail accident was averted with timely detection of three hook bolts and three outer bolts missing on railway tracks over a bridge at Jalpa drain in Ayodhya. The civil police, Railway Protection Force and railway officials are working on a war footing to find out if it was an attempt of sabotage before the Republic Day.

Senior DCM, Northern Railways, Lucknow Division, Rekha Sharma, junked reports of sabotage and said a case of theft was registered by the RPF. She said the RPF was probing the case. As per reports, a railway employee spotted the missing bolts on Sunday during patrolling and informed the senior section engineer of NR who reached the scene for inquiry.

The senior section engineer later lodged a report with the police. Later the RPF also registered a case of theft of bolts and took help of the CCTVs to find out the miscreants. It surfaced that three hook bolts to connect the rail track at railway bridge number 297 at Jalpa drain were found missing initially. Later three outer bolts were also found missing. Railway officials said the bolts had a very important role in keeping intact the channel sleeper and track with the bridge and it would have caused a mishap had it remained unnoticed.

# राष्ट्रीय मतदाता दिवस

## 25 जनवरी, 2022

"Making Elections Inclusive, Accessible and Participative"

### आइए, जागरुक मतदाता बनने की शपथ लें

मतदाताओं हेतु शपथ

“हम, भारत के नागरिक, लोकतंत्र में अपनी पूर्ण आस्था रखते हुए यह शपथ लेते हैं कि हम अपने देश की लोकतांत्रिक परम्पराओं की मर्यादा को बनाए रखेंगे तथा स्वतंत्र, निष्पक्ष एवं शांतिपूर्ण निर्वाचन की गरिमा को अक्षुण्ण रखते हुए, निर्भीक होकर, धर्म, वर्ग, जाति, समुदाय, भाषा अथवा अन्य किसी भी प्रलोभन से प्रभावित हुए बिना सभी निर्वाचनों में अपने मताधिकार का प्रयोग करेंगे”।

-भारत निर्वाचन आयोग द्वारा जारी

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कोरोना से डरें नहीं, बचें

दो गज की दूरी, मास्क है जरूरी



# Two killed, several injured as bus falls into ditch in Barabanki

**Lucknow (PNS):** In a tragic road accident in Barabanki, a private bus, while overtaking another vehicle near Ghagra Ghat on Bahraich highway, fell into a ditch.

The incident took place on Monday afternoon and two passengers were killed in the mishap which left over two dozen others injured.

The local police rushed to the rescue of the passengers and shifted the injured to the community health centre in Ramnagar from where 14 of them were referred to the district hospital.

According to reports, the bus was going from Balrampur to Lucknow, and there were about 50 passengers on board. The driver-operator fled the spot after the incident.

ASP Purnendu Singh reached the spot to supervise the rescue operation.

On the information of the accident,

ARM RS Verma and ARTO enforcement officer Rahul Srivastava also reached the spot.

The injured include travelers from Gonda, Balrampur, Sitapur and Shravasti districts.

Two persons who died in the mishap were identified as Narendra, 36-year-old son of Shyamlal of Piprakhurd under Sadarpur police station of Sitapur, and 50-year-old Brijesh Kumar Tripathi of Mojni under Balapur police station of Balrampur.

Those seriously injured and shifted to the district hospital include Bittu (33) and Shuchi (36) of Bhadaura, Sitapur; Ambika Prasad's wife Usma Devi (40), son Ravi (8) and daughter Nita Devi (19), resident of Lal Bozhi in Shravasti; Girish Kumar (25) of Katra; Pradeep Kumar Dubey (42) of Balpur; Karnailganj in Gonda district; Ritesh

Kumar (30) of Katra Bazaar and his wife Jyoti (26); Ram Prasad (50); Vijay (36) of Bataura in Karnailganj; Vinod Kumar (60) of Patelnagar; Preeti Tiwari (35) of Badalpur Belsar; and Mahavir (30) of Itiyathok.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident in Piparpati locality of Ballia, the body of a newlywed was found hanging from a fan on Monday morning.

Police reached the spot and started investigation by taking possession of the body.

The deceased was married about two months back, on November 26, 2021.

Reports said that when Khushboo (28), wife of Barmeshwar Ojha of Piparpati village, did not come out of her room on Monday morning, the family members knocked on the door but got no answer. They called the

police after which the door was broken open. The cops saw her body hanging from the ceiling fan with a dupatta.

As soon as the incident came to light, a crowd of villagers gathered there. Forensic team also reached the spot and collected evidence.

On the information of Inspector Virendra Mishra, SDM of Sadar, Zubair Ahmed, and CO of Bansdih, Preeti Tripathi, also reached the spot. The local police registered a case and sent the body for post-mortem.

Inspector Virendra Mishra said that it had come to the fore that the deceased had some dispute with her husband and because of this she committed suicide.

Further investigation is going on.

The relatives of the deceased live in Delhi and they were informed of the incident.

# Minor strangled to death by father in Bijnor

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

In a shocking incident in Bijnor, a man allegedly killed his minor son after the child objected to his drinking alcohol.

Police arrested the accused father and started investigation into the matter.

The incident took place under the Haldaur police station area of Bijnor district, where Chhotay Singh, a native of Umri village, is addicted to alcohol and often drinks liquor. On Sunday, his son objected and tried to stop his father from consuming liquor after which the man lost his cool and in a fit of rage he strangled his son to death.

The family rushed the boy to the doctor but he was pronounced dead.

Station Officer of Haldaur police station, Uday Pratap, said that on the basis of post-mortem report, a murder case was registered against the father and he was sent to jail.

Meanwhile in another incident in Hardoi, an ITI student shot himself with a pistol in his room on Sunday night. When the family members reached the room after hearing the

gunshot, the student was lying in a pool of blood. The family members brought him to Trauma Centre in Lucknow but the student died. The police are investigating the matter.

Reports said that Ankit Dubey was studying in ITI in Sakrauli village of Lonar area in Hardoi. The family members said that Ankit got addicted to drugs and started smoking cigarettes.

According to the police, Ankit was smoking a cigarette on Sunday evening and his mother spotted him. The mother scolded him for smoking a cigarette and there was an altercation between the two. After this, in anger, Ankit shot him with a pistol in his room. Hearing the gunshot, the family members rushed to the room and took him to the district hospital where the doctor referred him to Lucknow.

A case was registered and further investigations were on.

In Gorakhpur, a 19-year-old youth, identified as Prashant Shukla, hanged himself after getting fed up with the beating of his father. He was a resident of Panapar and his maternal grandfather was in Bagahi. Prashant's maternal

grandfather has accused the son-in-law of assault. He said that Prashant committed suicide due to frequent beating. Police are investigating the case.

Prashant's maternal grandfather Om Prakash Pandey filed a complaint at the Bangsaon police station and said that he had married his daughter Kiran 24 years ago in Panapar. She died 15 years ago.

After that, grandson Prashant Shukla and granddaughter were living with him. When both of them grew up, their father took them with him.

On Sunday night, Prashant came and informed him that his father along with one person beat them regularly after getting drunk. After that he had dinner in the night and went to sleep in the room.

When the door of Prashant's room did not open till late in the morning, he broke the door open with the help of some people and saw Prashant's body hanging from the ceiling in the room.

Police are interrogating Prashant's father and have taken him into custody.

# TET examinee creates ruckus, arrested

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

A TET examinee created a ruckus while claiming to be a journalist outside a school in Ashiyana police station area and confronted the policemen on the duty.

He was detained and booked for hindering police in discharging its duty and on other counts.

Investigation is underway.

The accused was identified as Ravi Shastri of Tikait Rai Talab in Bazaar Khala. The police recovered his admit card and his mobile phone by which he tried to shoot the incident after he indulged in a verbal spat with the cops.

The FIR was lodged by Sub-Inspector Rajol Singh who along with a team was on duty at Swami Vivekanand Inter College

in Ashiyana.

As per Singh, the police team checked the examinees reaching to the school and the entry gate was closed at 9:30 am on Sunday.

"Around 9:50 am, some 15-20 examinees reached the school and forced the school administration to allow them entry to take the exam. On information, we reached the scene and counseled the examinees who agreed to leave the scene," he said.

He said one of the examinees, however, was adamant on being given entry in the school even though he was late and he did not leave the place.

"He started mobilising the examinees who had agreed to leave on being denied entry due to their late arrival. He provoked them to create ruckus to exert pressure on the school administration and get entry to take the exam. Not only this, he confronted the policemen and started shooting film on his mobile phone," he said.

Singh said a constable, Sachin, tried to pacify Ravi Shastri but he scuffled with him.

"He threatened to get us stripped of our uniform. We

overpowered him and made him sit in a police van. He was so angry that he hit the grille of the police vehicle and broke it," the SI said.

The police registered a case for brawl, thrashing and abusing the police against the examinee.

## INJURED

As many as 10 persons were injured when a mini truck and a loader collided in Khujauli locality of Mohanlalganj on Sunday night. Poor visibility due to fog is said to be the reason for the accident.

As per reports, the mini truck was coming from Gosainganj side while the loader was coming from Neelmatha side. Around 11 pm on Sunday, both collided and then while the mini truck ploughed into a police outpost the loader rammed into a shop selling sweets.

The injured were identified as mini truck driver Vishal of Unnao, his assistant/cleaner Dharmendra of Ayodhya, loader driver Mansharam of Barabanki, Rakesh and Saryu Prasad of Barabanki, Pawan, Manish Kumar and Raju of Nagram, Amresh and Lavkush of Loni Katra in Barabanki.

## Dense fog likely today

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

The Met department has forecast dense fog in the city on Tuesday.

The cold conditions continued to make the weather harsh in Lucknow for the denizens with the city recording a maximum temperature of 17.5 degree Celsius, which was 5.2 degrees below normal, and a minimum temperature of 13.5 degree Celsius which was 5.7 degrees above normal.

Met officials said fog was very likely in isolated pockets over Lucknow, Banda, Kaushambi, Fatehpur, Farrukhabad, Kannauj, Kanpur, Dehat, Kanpur Nagar, Unnao, Barabanki, Rae Bareilly, Amethi, Sultanpur, Ayodhya, Ambedkar Nagar, Saharanpur, Shamli, Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Hapur, Gautam Buddha Nagar,

Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Mathura, Hathras, Kasganj, Etah, Bijnor, Amroha, Moradabad, Rampur, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Sambhal, Budaun, Jhansi, Lalitpur and adjoining areas.

They said very dense fog was very likely in isolated pockets over Agra, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Etawah, Auraiya, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Mahoba and adjoining areas.

Cold day condition are likely in isolated pockets over Baghpat, Ghaziabad, Hapur, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Mathura, Hathras, Kasganj, Etah, Agra, Firozabad, Moradabad, Rampur, Bareilly and adjoining areas. Severe cold day conditions are very likely in isolated pockets over Saharanpur, Shamli, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Bijnor, Amroha and adjoining areas.

## e-challan helps cops arrest auto-lifter

**Lucknow (PNS):** An e-challan of a stolen bike helped the police in nabbing an auto-lifter in Mohanlalganj on Monday. Reports said the bike of Ganga Prasad of Samesi in Nagaram village was lifted on December 13 when he went to a fete in Karora village in the area. Prasad is a fruit seller. He had lodged a report in this regard. On January 10, Prasad received an e-challan of Rs 8,500 against his stolen bike and was surprised that the bike was challaned for violation of road rule by Mohanlalganj police on December 22. The e-challan also bore an image of the person riding the bike.

Prasad contacted the cops of Nagram police station where he had lodged the complaint.

# Man lodges report against land shark

**Lucknow (PNS):** A Gomti Nagar resident lodged a report of criminal breach of trust and criminal intimidation against a land shark on Sunday.

In his complaint, the victim, identified as Virendra Kumar Singh of Viram Khand in Gomti Nagar, alleged that he had given Rs 5.8 lakh to Dilip Singh Baphila of Indira Nagar in 2012 as loan on the promise that he would return the money in a few months.

"A few months later when he did not return the money I reminded him of the same and

he sought time to return the money. In 2018, he gave me a cheque but it was dishonoured due to lack of money in Baphila's bank account," he alleged in the report.

Singh said Baphila was sent to jail in 2021 under a drive against the land sharks in Lucknow and his payment was in a limbo.

"After he was released from jail, he came to my house on December 7 and threatened me to return the cheque which he had given to me earlier and was dishonoured by the bank,"

he alleged.

Singh further alleged that Baphila issued life threats to him and his family if the dishonoured cheque was not returned to him.

**THREATENED:** Former MP and minister in UP government and Bharatiya Janata Party leader Hari Narayan Rajbhar of Gomti Nagar lodged a report with the police stating that unidentified miscreants threatened to kill him. In his complaint, Rajbhar said he was patron of Rajbhar Sangthan located near Gayatri

Shaktipeeth close to Janeshwar Mishra Park and was a native of Ballia.

He said he got a call on January 9 from an unidentified mobile phone number when he was at his house in Viram Khand of Gomti Nagar. "The caller abused me and then threatened to kill me before disconnecting the phone," he said. Police are investigating the case. Sources said Rajbhar was a prominent leader of BJP and threat to him at the time of UP assembly election was a serious issue.

# Chikankari, zardozi workers unorganised as voters

**SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW**

Even as organisations of different hues are approaching various political parties to put forth their demands, the chikankari and zardozi workers of Lucknow still remain unorganised lot to vote as artisans and demand facilities for themselves. This inability to unite prevails even in current times when they are facing tough times in the pandemic with many of them having switched jobs to ply e-rickshaws to keep the fires burning in their homes. Those who have worked in the field with these artisans admit that though the current government has come up with schemes like ODOP, there is a lot which needs to be done for the welfare of this section of society. Padmashri Runa Banerjee, who has been associated with chikankari workers for over 40 years, said that they would vote in the forthcoming assembly elections because she had been constantly encouraging them to vote. She said that the total strength of these workers in the Lucknow district was four lakh with 99 per cent being women and men doing the printing and other jobs of the trade.

"These women are associated with shops, commercial ventures and even bring work back at home," Banerjee said. "The women are aware and also express openly that they will vote for the political party which will perform and do something for the trade from which they are making an earning but they have not approached any political party to highlight their issues," Banerjee admitted.

She said that these workers were unorganised and in the pandemic they were the biggest sufferers. "In some families there are no other bread winners and since there is little work in the chikankari business currently many of the artisans have switched over to plying e-rickshaws which are quite a few in numbers. We have tried to organise the chikankari workers and we will be doing the same with the zardozi workers," she said.

Banerjee admitted that no political party in the past had shown interest in the plight of these artisans despite the fact that they had chosen to make an iconic art of Lucknow as the means of their livelihood.

"Under the current state government there is a sanctioned project under the ODOP (One district One


Product) scheme and the work is progressing on it. This would make a difference to the women artisans but it has been given to an artisans group of 18 women. There are schemes for insurance also. However, these efforts are less and more efforts are needed in this direction. If as an artisan they are demanding that they should be given cards that identify and separate them as chikankari workers then it needs to be looked into," she said. Fashion designer Asma Hussain, who has been working with these artisans for long, said that there was no denying the fact that these artisans had faced a lot of problems during the pandemic times with many plying e-rickshaws. "There are many who are not enthusiastic to vote and say that they have not been able to do anything for themselves and what they will get by voting," she said.

Mukhtar, a chikankari artisan, said that several artisans had left their art because there was no work and no demand for chikankari clothes. "There is no association of chikankari workers for several reasons. Firstly, they will not unite and secondly they have no time to go out and meet people as they would rather spend that time doing their work," he said.

## Girl Child Day celebrated

**Lucknow (PNS):** On the occasion of National Girl Child Day, a webinar on 'Equal Chance for Equal Future' was organised by the human rights department of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow. Addressing the webinar, Vice-Chancellor of National Law University, Odisha, Prof Ved Kumari, who was the chief guest, said that even today the society was run by the patriarchal ideology where one worked according to the wishes of father or husband or brother. "Women never represent themselves. They should be given the right to take their own decisions," she said while discussing many problems related to the girl child like girl child labour, education, nutritious food and marriage at an early age. On the basis of the data, showing the male-female ratio in urban and rural areas, she said that not only education but also a change in mindset was necessary to bring change in society.

Keynote speaker, Prof Vibhuti Patel, former professor of developmental studies at TISS, Mumbai, said an intersectional perspective on girls in India pointed out that fragmenting girls' identity into categories of women and children caused girls to be overlooked in favour of those who were more visible.



**क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय,**  
**उ०प्र० प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड,**  
**162, उत्तर मोहाल (निकट चण्डी होटल), रावर्ट्सगंज, सोनमद्र।**

**पर्यावरणीय अधिसूचना दि० 14.09.2006 के अन्तर्गत 'लोक सुनवाई' हेतु आम-सूचना**

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि जनपद-मिर्जापुर में मेसर्स मां विन्ध्यवासिनी कन्स्ट्रक्शन (श्री मधुसूदन सिंह), भगौतीदेई, चुनार, मिर्जापुर में अव्ययक खनिज विलिङ्ग स्टोन (सैंड स्टोन) के खनन हेतु परियोजनाओं की लोक सुनवाई सम्बन्धी प्रस्ताव उ०प्र० प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड में प्राप्त हुआ हैं। इस सम्बन्ध में पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार द्वारा प्रख्यापित प्राविधानानुसार लोक सुनवाई की कार्यवाही जिलाधिकारी, मिर्जापुर द्वारा नामित अपर जिलाधिकारी (नमामि गंगे), मिर्जापुर की अध्यक्षता में नियत की गयी है, जिनका विस्तृत विवरण निम्नांकित तालिका में दर्शित है:-

क्र.सं.	परियोजना का नाम व पता	परियोजना का स्थल व पता	खनन क्षेत्रफल	लोक सुनवाई की तिथि एवं समय	लोक सुनवाई स्थल का नाम व पता
1.	मेसर्स मां विन्ध्यवासिनी कन्स्ट्रक्शन (श्री मधुसूदन सिंह), निवासी-प्रभापुरम कॉलोनी, उरमौरा रोड, रावर्ट्सगंज, सोनमद्र	गाटा नं०-180/2, भगौतीदेई, चुनार, मिर्जापुर	1.21 हेक्टेयर (12,100.00 घनमीटर/वर्ष)	दिनांक: 28.02.2022, मध्याह्न 12:00 बजे	प्राथमिक विद्यालय भगौतीदेई, तहसील-चुनार, जनपद-मिर्जापुर
2.	मेसर्स मां विन्ध्यवासिनी कन्स्ट्रक्शन (श्री मधुसूदन सिंह), निवासी-प्रभापुरम कॉलोनी, उरमौरा रोड, रावर्ट्सगंज, सोनमद्र	गाटा नं०-705, भगौतीदेई, चुनार, मिर्जापुर	1.01 हेक्टेयर (10,100.00 घनमीटर/वर्ष)	दिनांक: 28.02.2022, अपराह्न 01:00 बजे	प्राथमिक विद्यालय भगौतीदेई, तहसील-चुनार, जनपद-मिर्जापुर

उ०प्र० प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड द्वारा पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार द्वारा जारी अधिसूचना संख्या-एस०आ०-1533, दिनांक:14.09.2006 यथासंशोधित एस.ओ. 3067(ई) दिनांक 01.12.2009 के प्राविधानों के अनुपालन में संदर्भित परियोजनाओं की लोक सुनवाई उपरोक्त सूची में अंकित स्थान, दिनांक एवं समय के अनुसार आयोजित किया जाना प्रस्तावित है। उपरोक्त परियोजनाओं की लोक सुनवाई हेतु जनता के सुझाव, विचार एवं टिप्पणियाँ आदि आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं। परियोजनाओं से सम्बन्धित ई०आई०ए० एवं इसका संक्षिप्त अभिलेख निम्नलिखित कार्यालयों में उपलब्ध है:-

(1) कार्यालय जिलाधिकारी, मिर्जापुर (2) कार्यालय जिला पंचायत, मिर्जापुर, (3) उपायुक्त उद्योग, जिला उद्योग एवं उद्यम प्रोत्साहन केन्द्र, मिर्जापुर (4) क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, मध्य क्षेत्र, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, पंचम तल, केन्द्रीय भवन, सेक्टर-एच, अलीगंज, (5) उ०प्र० प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड, टी०सी०-12वीं, विभूति खण्ड, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ एवं (6) क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, उ०प्र० प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड, 162, उत्तर मोहाल, रावर्ट्सगंज, सोनमद्र।

अतः सर्वसाधारण को इस आम सूचना के माध्यम से सूचित किया जाता है कि प्रस्तावित परियोजनाओं हेतु प्राप्त प्रस्ताव के सम्बन्ध में पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति संबंधी प्रकरण के निस्तारण हेतु अंकित तिथि, समय एवं स्थल पर 'लोक सुनवाई' की कार्यवाही निर्धारित की गयी है, जिसमें वैश्विक महामारी कोविड-19 के दृष्टिगत सोशल डिस्टेंसिंग का पालन करते हुए उपस्थित होकर अपना सुझाव व आपत्तियाँ प्रस्तुत कर सकते हैं अथवा सुझाव/आपत्तियाँ लिखित रूप से प्रकाशन की तिथि से 30 दिन की अवधि में उपरोक्त वर्णित कार्यालयों में प्रेषित कर सकते हैं।

(डा० टी०एन० सिंह)  
क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी

संदर्भ संख्या-G-00223/PH-1386/MZP/2022, दिनांक 24.1.22



# Purvanchal may decide fate of UP

RAMESH K SINGH ■ VARANASI

The biggest but one of most backward regions of the state, Purvanchal (eastern UP) is likely to decide the political fate of the state in the 2022 assembly elections. In almost all the recent elections, this region had played a crucial role but it was virtually a neglected area except in the recent time when both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led central and state governments had not only realised its political strength but also its potential in different areas. Despite this, the long pending demands for a separate statehood to Purvanchal continued to get dust in the files. The political ambitions were also the main reason why this demand could not get public support, as the same was seen in many regions where the central and concerned state governments were forced to succumb to the people's aspirations and its recent example was the carving out of Telangana from Andhra Pradesh.

However, this Purvanchal is the region which had played a deciding role in helping the BJP come to power in UP in 2017 as it earlier supported the Samajwadi Party (SP) in 2012 and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 2007. Mayawati had realised its strength to some extent, raising the issue of division of UP into some smaller states when last time she came to power but she was in doldrums as her government could not approach the matter in a sincere way. Though the then SP supreme Mulayam Singh Yadav and its present chief Akhilesh Yadav had contested from this region (Azamgarh) in parliamentary elections, Akhilesh preferred to go to last polls five years ago, highlighting his achievements through Yamuna Expressway. Contrary to this, as both the Prime



Purvanchal Expressway

Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath selected their political fields in this region, they tried to do a lot helping it change its overall face. And just prior to going to 2022 polls, they tried to run their vehicles of achievements through newly-constructed Purvanchal Expressway but they were diverted too from this route while often going to Ayodhya and Kashi which are not directly falling on this path. They spent millions of rupees on strengthening the infrastructure in this region, right from roads to rail, air and even water transportation but failed in bringing big industries to check the migration of workers to go to Surat, Mumbai and other cities from the region.

Today, the issue of separate statehood is virtually nowhere. The matter was once strongly raised by former UP Minister Shatrudh Prakash but after joining the SP he almost remained silent on the issue for the last one decade because the SP always opposed any further division of UP. Now, Shatrudh

Prakash is in BJP, which supports smaller states but avoids raising Purvanchal issue. Through its all meetings, Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) raised the issue of Purvanchal, but not strongly due to its political compulsions as earlier it was in alliance with the BJP (NDA) and now it has joined the SP-led camp.

UP has six main regions and out of these Purvanchal is the biggest with 102 assembly seats followed by Avadh (90), Western UP (76), Central UP (64), Ruhelkhand (52) and Bundelkhand (19). Almost all the seats of Purvanchal will go to the polls in the sixth or seventh phase.

Out of these 102 seats in the last elections, BJP had won 69 seats, gaining 57 from previous polls in 2012. Besides, its partner Apna Dal (Sonelal) won five seats out of nine from this region while the then one of the allies SBSP won all the four.

The SP had received a major blow securing just 13 seats in comparison to 57 in

2012 while the BSP maintained its tally of eight with second time poor performance. This region comprises five divisions of Varanasi, Vindhyachal (Mirzapur), Azamgarh, Gorakhpur and Basti covering 17 districts which are mainly dominated by Bhojpuri-speaking people. As both Modi (Varanasi) and Yogi (Gorakhpur) 'politically' belong to the region, they will also play a key role in mobilising the mood of the people. Yogi has also decided to contest from the region (Gorakhpur Urban) while despite all speculations, Akhilesh preferred to test his fate from his own strong region.

Despite all these favourable strongholds, the BJP will face a tough challenge to play a social engineering card as smoothly as it had played in last elections, due to continuous absence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah because recently, several of its senior OBC leaders had resigned from the BJP and joined its arch rival SP camp.

# National Girl Child Day observed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana launched under 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' is playing an important role in making the future of the girls bright by strengthening them financially and socially, said Postmaster General (PMG), Varanasi Region, Krishna Kumar Yadav while speaking at a programme organised to celebrate National Girl Child Day in Cantt Head Post Office here on Monday. He also distributed Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana passbooks to girl child beneficiaries and facilitated them.

Yadav said that Sukanya Samridhhi accounts have been opened by 2.32 lakh girls in Varanasi Region so far, while 520 villages have been made Sampoorna Sukanya Samridhhi Grams by covering



PMG KK Yadav distributing Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana passbooks to girls in Varanasi on Monday.

Pioneer

all eligible girls in these villages. The PMG said that now the Aadhaar cards of girls up to five years of age can be made through the Postal Department at doorstep. Under the 'My Stamp' service, stamps with pictures of the girls can be made and given to them. Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana, which is opened in the Post Office for the girl child up to 10 years

with only Rs 250, is not only a medium of investment, but it is also linked to the bright and prosperous future of the girl child.

Assistant Director Ram Milan highlighted the importance of the day. Superintendent of Post Office (Varanasi West Division) Sanjay Verma said that the interest rate in Sukanya

Samridhhi Yojana is 7.6 per cent and there is also income tax exemption on the amount deposited and the interest earned.

A maximum of 1.5 lakh rupees can be deposited in this scheme in a financial year. Up to 50 per cent of the deposit amount can be withdrawn after the girl child attains the age of 18 years or has passed class 10th. The maturity period of the account is 21 years from the date of opening of the account, however it can be closed at the time of marriage after the girl child attains the age of 18 years.

Assistant Superintendent of Posts RK Chauhan, postal inspector Shrikant Pal, postmaster RS Verma, Sriprakash Gupta, Rajendra Yadav, Abhilasha Gupta, Ajita Kumari etc were present.

# Training programme for mushroom cultivation held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Banaras Hindu University (BHU), ICAR-IIVR and Union Bank of India (UBI) organised a training programme for the Rural Self-Reliant and Mushroom Cultivation in Sanjoi village, one of six adopted villages of the district.

Outlining the objective of the programme the Head, Department of Extension Education, BHU Prof Kalyan Ghadei said that with the inspiration of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Science and Technology, Government of India has assigned a project to the BHU under the seed programme to make rural community of the district a self-reliant and socially developed with the aim of providing extension services and entrepreneurship development. The aim of this project is to connect tribal, backward, landless and marginal farming families with advanced technology based mushroom cultivation and make them self-reliant. At the regional level, the UBI is associated with this programme as a financial partner, he informed.

Sunil Kumar, Deputy General Manager of UBI motivated the farmers who attended the training programme and assured of financial assistance at affordable rates for the people belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Marginal and landless farming families.



UBI organising a training programme for mushroom cultivation in Varanasi.

Pioneer

Among those who were present on the occasion included Sanjeev Kumar of Jansa Branch of UBI, a panel of BHU professors- Dr Keshav Prasad, Dr Virendra Kamalvanshi, Dr Sunil Goyal & Dr VK Paswan and Mushroom expert Anupama Singh. The Gram Pradhan of Sanjoi village expressed his thanks for the collaborative programme of BHU, ICAR-IIVR and UBI.

**DDEO SELECTED FOR ELECTORAL AWARD:** Deputy District Election Officer (DDEO) Rannvijay Singh has been selected for Best Electoral Practice Award. He has been selected by the Election Commission (EC) for the Annual State Award for Best Electoral Practices Award - 2022 (Election Management) on the occasion of 12th National Voters' Day-2022 on Tuesday. A letter from the EC addressed to this effect has been received by the District

Election Officer (DEO) Kaushal Raj Sharma.

The state level programme of the National Voters' Day-2022 will be organised at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan, Gomti Nagar (Lucknow), but in view of the Covid protocol, it has been decided not to organise the distribution of awards in the said ceremony. Therefore, the citation and memento of DDEO (Varanasi) Ranvijay Singh will be made available by sending it soon.

**ONE MORE DEATH FROM COVID:** One death from deadly novel coronavirus was reported on Monday and with this, the death tally increased to four in the third wave of pandemic. Though, there is relief in corona cases as 322 persons were tested positive taking the tally to 9,365. At the same time, 509 patients recovered and so, the active cases were reported as 3,509. A total of 411 people were tested

positive on Sunday. It is learnt that the first death in the third wave of the pandemic was reported on January 21 last while two deaths were reported on Sunday last. On Monday, this figure increased to four with one more death reported on Monday, as per a report made available by the Health department on Monday evening. But in positive cases, the district received some relief as 322 were tested positive which was 411 on Sunday last. With the positivity rate of 5.58 per cent, the cumulative figure of positive cases increased to 9,365. At the same time, with the recovery rate of 62.49 per cent, a total of 509 recovered from the home isolation as well as Covid hospitals taking the tally of recovered patients to 5,852. So, the active cases were reported as 3,509, as per information provided by the Health department this evening.

# ICCC monitoring health status of COVID-19 patients online

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Intensifying the fight against coronavirus, the officials of the health department are taking high-tech and paperless jobs to check the chances of errors and ensure cent percent surveillance and rapid action.

The Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) being set up during Mahakumbh 2019 has once again turned into a war hub against Covid-19 to monitor each and every Covid-19 patient, ensuring treatment and instant action as per requirement.

Additional chief medical officer (ACMO) and Nodal Officer (Covid 19), Dr Rishi Sahai told the reporters, "Since the first case was detected, we

have taken up online monitoring of each and every case and maintaining records and details of Covid-19 patients at the ICCC building." Moreover, the figures of all Covid-19 patients in home isolation as well as those undergoing treatment at hospitals are being maintained online by a dedicated team of health workers.

Dr Sahai, meanwhile, said that the department has divided the Prayagraj district into six zones including five urban and one rural for active surveillance of Covid patients, he added and deployed over 56 medical and paramedical staff to man the system.

A home Isolation Calling Centre is also set up where 12 professionals work in two shifts to call each and every

patient in home isolation twice a day to track their health status and maintain their record online till they finally recover.

As soon as we receive the report of a person testing positive for coronavirus infection, the patient is allotted a zone, the ACMO said. A zonal surveillance officer (doctor) and two team members immediately start tracking the location of the patient, decide if home isolation is allowed or admission in hospital is needed and then chalk out a treatment plan, Dr Sahai added. An SMS is sent to zonal surveillance officers, ambulance staff, sanitization, sealing and contract tracing teams, and Rapid Response Team to notify the new case and initiate required

action as per Covid-19 protocol.

All the activities are recorded on the monitoring portal in real time with time-stamping. The Rapid Response Team (RRT) visits the house of the patient seeking home isolation within an hour of testing positive to check home conditions and file the report on the app.

The ambulance staff is immediately alerted in case a patient is serious and is shifted to Covid hospital at the earliest, he added.

A zonal surveillance official has been deputed to monitor online activities. Besides, 21 Rapid Response Teams have also been engaged to track the status of patients in home isolation.

# Health teams administer over 14.65 lakhs vax doses in just 3 weeks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Breaking all previous records and achieving a new high in vaccination, the officials of the health department have administered over 14.65 lakh doses of vaccine in the Sangam city in 23 days of January.

Officials claimed that as many as 14,65,349 doses were administered to recipients, including 7,06,412 males, 7,37,509 females and 555 transgenders till January 22.

Officials said vaccination is likely to cross the 18 lakh mark this month. Interestingly, women recipients continued to lead in vaccination for the fourth consecutive month. Till January 22, a total of 69,13,827 doses were administered in Prayagraj district, including 35,04,085 males, 33,85,958 females and 2,911 transgenders.

District Immunization Officer (DIO) and additional chief medical officer (vaccination) Dr. Teerath Lal told the media persons that, over 14.65 lakh doses were administered in just 22 days this month and efforts are underway to intensify vaccination.

He further added, there has

been an active participation on the part of all eligible recipients, including teens (15-18 years), male and females (above 18) that has helped the department to achieve the target.

Figures also claimed, three months of last year (2021), including September (9.39 lakh), November (9.54 lakh) and December (9 lakh) and January 2022, registered records of administering more than 9 lakh doses among eligible recipients, whereas October 2021 also recorded 8.41 lakh doses.

Last year, November (2021) had set the milestone in administering the highest jabs in Sangam city, but January this year has broken all the previous records and recorded the highest number of vaccine doses in a single month, by vaccinating over 14 lakh recipients alone.

Health officials, meanwhile, said that dedicated work and enthusiasm of health teams have helped the department to cover the major chunk of eligible recipients.

Statistics revealed by the health department, on Sunday, also claimed that women recipients continued to maintain

their lead in vaccination in the first three weeks of this month of new year in rural and urban areas against Covid-19.

Records here claim, in December (2021), out of 9,00,679 doses, as many as 4,73,079 females received the jabs, while the number of males was 4,27,206.

Similarly, in November, out of 9,54,150 jabs administered to eligible recipients, as many as 5,01,783 females received the jabs, while the strength of male recipients was 4,52,021. Similarly, out of the total 8,41,889 doses given in October, as many as 4,40,094 doses were given to women, while 4,01,428 doses were given to men. Moreover, in September, out of a total of 9,39,300 doses given to eligible recipients, as many as 4,78,740 females and 4,60,002 males got vaccinated.

**3 DEVOTEES TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 ON MAGH MELA CAMPUS:** Three devotees have tested positive for Covid-19 infection on the Magh Mela campus. The teams of the health department continued to collect samples of devotees, including kalpawasis camping in five different sectors.

tors of Magh Mela area, with an aim to check the spread of the Covid-19 infection.

Apart from three persons tested positive for Covid-19 infection in the mela area, as many as 330 people also tested positive for coronavirus infection in the district. The Prayagraj district on Sunday recorded a total of 333 new Covid cases.

Nodal Officer (Covid-19) and Additional chief medical officer Dr. Rishi Sahai said that a total of 12 teams have been engaged to collect samples from camps of seers, saints and kalpawasis for testing. He added that around 200 samples are being collected daily from different camps on a daily basis. If any devotee tests positive, he or she is referred to Covid care hospital in the city and a 3T formula of testing, tracking and treating was followed immediately to check the spread of the disease.

Officials of the health department appealed to citizens to follow Covid-19 protocol strictly. All citizens must follow social distancing norms and use masks whenever they are out of their houses, they added.

# Apna Dal(S), Nishad Party claim tickets for several seats in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Apna Dal (S) and Nishad Party, which is contesting the assembly elections in alliance with the BJP, have claimed tickets for several seats in Prayagraj. How much the BJP has accepted it is not yet declared.

However, in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP National President JP

Nadda and other seniors in Delhi, an intense brainstorming on this issue has been. Sanjay Nishad of Nishad Party and Anupriya Patel of Apna Dal (S) were also present in this meeting. In the last elections, Apna Dal (S) had fielded candidates from Soraon, Pratappur and Handia. Of these, only the Soraon seat was won.

According to party sources, the Nishad Party, which has

entered into an alliance with the BJP in the elections for the formation of the 18th Assembly, has claimed to field candidates on its symbol for three seats in Prayagraj. These seats include Karchana of Yamunapur, Bara and Handia assembly seat of Gangapur. It is also being said that even if BJP gives seats to Nishad Party, the candidates will be of BJP, only the symbol will be of Nishad

Party.

On the other hand, there is talk of going to only two seats in the store of Apna Dal. BJP city unit President Ganesh Kesarwani said that till now no announcement has been made regarding the candidate for the seats. BJP workers will support whomever the top leadership will field whether that seat is with the candidate of the alliance or with the BJP.

# UPRTOU 16th convocation to be held on Jan 28

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The 16th Convocation of Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj will be organised on January 28, 2022 at 12 noon in the Atal Auditorium at Sarswati campus of the University. Covid-19 Protocol will be followed in toto, informed the Vice-Chancellor Prof Seema Singh.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday the vice-chancellor said, the programme will be chaired by the Uttar Pradesh Governor/Chancellor Ms Anandiben Patel. The Chief Guest of the convocation Prof Rama Shankar Dubey, Vice-Chancellor, Gujarat Central University, Gandhi Nagar will deliver the Convocation speech.

Monika Pandey of Lucknow is to be awarded the Chancellor's Medal. As many as 19151 Students are to be awarded degrees, while 21 to get Gold Medals. These Gold medals will be awarded to the students who obtained highest marks from different schools of the University out of which 10 Gold Medals will go to male Students and 11 have been bagged by female students. In this Convocation, the degrees will be awarded to the successful

students of examination of December 2020 and June 2021 Session of the University. There are a total of 19151 such students out of which 11225 are males and 7926 are females. Prof Singh told media persons that all the necessary preparations for organising convocation at Atal Auditorium have been completed. This convocation will be organized in the traditional dress. Medal winning Students will have to wear white Kurta-Dhoti/Pajama for male students and yellow sari/Salwar-suit for female students.

The VC said that in the 16th convocation the Chancellor Medal will be awarded to Monika Pandey from Lucknow Regional Study Centre of the University. Monika Pandey completed her MA Yoga in first class and obtained highest marks among all the Graduate and Post Graduate students of the all schools of the University. The Post Graduate Category Gold Medal will be awarded to the six toppers. Rajesh Kumar Ojha Students of MA (English) registered from Gautam Budha Mahavidyalaya, Phoolpur, Prayagraj Study Centre are to be awarded University Gold Medal from School of Humanities. Amar Deep Tiwari of MA (Sociology) registered from Upardaha Degree College Upardaha, Prayagraj Study Centre will be awarded the University Gold Medal from School of Social Sciences. Vishal Kumar Thakurai of MCom registered from Shiv Harsh Kisan PG College, Basti Study Centre will be awarded the University Gold Medal from School of Management. Priyanka Singh of MA (Education) registered from Harish Chandra PG College, Varanasi Study Centre is to be awarded the University Gold Medal from School of Education. Varisha Quadri of MSc (Bio-Chemistry) registered from GSA College of Education, Agra Study Centre will be awarded University Gold Medal from School of Health Science.

Similarly, in the Graduate Category Gold Medal will be awarded to the six toppers of the Schools. Ankita Yadav Students of BA registered from Shri Baba Sadhav Ram Mahavidyalaya, Koinhan, Barsara Khalasa, Azamgarh Study Centre of University will be awarded University Gold

Medal from School of Humanities. Vivek Yadav of BA registered from Ram Lagan Mahavidyalaya, Jamalpur Ghosi Study Centre will be awarded the University Gold Medal from School of Social Sciences. Kushagra Patel of BCom registered from Ram Nagina Kisan Snatkottar Mahavidyalaya, Jukhania Ghazipur, Study Centre is to be awarded University Gold Medal from School of Management. Rajat Kumar Rai Students of BCA registered from Krishana Sudama Mahavidyalaya, Mardapur, Sadat, Gazipur Study Centre will be awarded University Gold Medal from School of Education and Information Sciences. Nawal Kishor Pandey Students of BEd registered from Chaudhary Tulsiram Yadav Mahavidyalaya, Tulsinagar Prayagraj Study Centre will be awarded University Gold Medal from School of Education and Kajal Jaiswal Students of BSc registered from Shri Kedar Faujdar Mahavidyalaya, Guraini Ghazipur Study Centre of University will be awarded University Gold Medal from School of Science.

Prof. Singh further informed that eight meritorious students will be awarded Donour Gold Medals.



# Duties assigned to all officials for smooth conduct of polls: DM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The District Magistrate, City, Neha Sharma on Monday addressing the team of nodal officers and incharges at the Collectorate said duties have clearly been assigned to all the officials for the smooth conduct of election and thus all officials will have to take responsibility for acting responsibly and directed them to work as a team so that elections can be held in free and fair manner. She said all the polling centres strict COVID-19 protocol had to be maintained and advised them to with the help of voter awareness programme create required awareness among the electorate.

She said if the elections were held in free and fair manner with any fear the vote percentage can certainly go up and this was to be kept in mind. She said all the personnel who were assigned poll duty should be imparted proper training and directed that the personnel on duty should not face any problem. She said parking was a major problem and thus proper parking slots be earmarked so that the general traffic may not be put into difficulty the traffic can move smoothly. She said furniture should also be arranged at Polytechnic along with other basic necessities.

The DM said in case the roads of these places were damaged then it should be repaired on priority and said the police and excise department should work in close coordination. She said the Flying Squad should constantly be on the move can carry out combing operations. She said the prime objective was that during the elections there should be no hindrance and the poll be held peacefully strictly following the COVID-19 pro-



District Magistrate, Neha Sharma addressing a meeting on Monday at the Collectorate.

toctol. She added that review meeting will be held regularly to see the progress and that the nominations were also held without any problem. The Chief Development Officer Dr Mahendra Kumar was also present along with other officials.

The DM earlier carried out a thorough inspection of all the nomination places especially entry points in view of the nominations beginning on Tuesday. She said this time the Election Commission had placed dual responsibility, first to ensure peaceful and smooth filing of the nomination papers and peaceful polls and the second to strictly follow the COVID-19 protocol. She said

the arrangements made at all the 10 places were found to be satisfactory and said this time CCTV will closely monitor the process of filing nomination and also that there was no violation of the protocol.

After visiting the Sarsaiya Ghat and Chetna Chauraha barricading and then she went to the new Collectorate ACM building where nominations will be filed for eight assembly seats. She personally inspected the nomination places and nomination rooms and checked the CCTV cameras and expressed satisfaction that adequate CCTV cameras had been installed for the exercise. She then personally visited the Control Room to monitor its

working and directed that during the time of nomination between 11am and 3 pm there should be a magistrate constantly on duty.

Directing that COVID-19 protocol had to be strictly followed and any laxity the officials will be held responsible. She directed that the Control Room should also be equipped with PA System and said barricading should be in such a way that it facilitated the filing smoothly and did not create hindrance for the traffic on those routes. She then visited the Sadar Tehsil where nominations for two assembly seats had to be filed. She directed that proper and adequate signages should be put up so that

the people who come to file their nominations do not face any problem. She was accompanied by ADM RF ADM City, and ADM LA.

It may be mentioned here that after assuming charge of Kanpur Sharma made a spot inspection of Sarsaiya Ghat Shelter Home and took a first hand feedback and directed the caretaker to ensure that everything was arranged in a proper manner so that people who took shelter did not find any problem.

She said in view of the ongoing cold wave there should bonfires lit so that the people can keep themselves warm. She was accompanied by ADM City, Atul Kumar.

## DC reviews development work of badminton courts, TT rooms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, while reviewing the on-going development and modernisation work of the four Badminton Courts and two Table Tennis rooms at the Green Park Stadium on Tuesday said Harcourt Butler Technological University had been being nominated as technical partners along with the technical support and inputs from Sports Authority of India. He said a world class sports facilities with at par standards will be maintained at both the places. He said once the whole project was completed the entire setup will be managed by the 'Divisional Sports Promotion Committee'. He said the work was going on at a rapid pace and was expected to be complete by May 2022 and will be thrown open for the shuttlers and TT players. He said with additional four new wood floor badminton courts and six new table tennis centres will make this Green Park Stadium the most favoured sports hub in Kanpur in the coming days.

The DC said to ensure that the players of Kanpur and the neighbouring districts enjoy the world class sports



Divisional Commissioner reviews the progress of the renovation and modernisation work at Green Park Stadium.

facilities in Kanpur, the Kanpur Smart City in association with Sports Department of UP had taken up the important project of renovation and modernisation of these four Badminton courts six table tennis centres on the campus. He said to monitor the work progress and to ensure that the works were completed on time he said a regular monitoring will be carried out. He was accompanied by the Kanpur Municipal Commissioner and Deputy Director Sports.

Discussing the salient features of the project, he said the total cost of the project was around Rs 4 crore and the civil work would be Rs 2.5 crore while the equipment and fin-

ishing work another Rs 1.5 crore. He said the work took off around a fortnight back and presently it was dismantling the old damaged structures. He said once this was done there shall be four new wood-floor badminton courts and six table tennis centres.

Dr Shekhar said apart from this it would also have digital display boards and seating capacity for 100 players in total. He said the two new toilets blocks (one for men and one for women players was also in progress. He said it will have four entry and exit points. He said apart from this it will also have lockers and green rooms for changing facilities for men and women players separately.

## Nominations to be filed from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Preparations have been made for the nomination to all the 10 Assembly seats which will take off from Tuesday. The nomination forms were distributed on Monday which can be filed from Tuesday onwards. The nomination will continue till February 1, 2022 and the verification of the nominations will be carried out on February 2, while the candidates can withdraw their names till February 4. The district administration had issued stern guidelines for following COVID-19 protocol and thus there shall be no procession taken out. This directive had been issued specifically for the violation carried out by Bilhaur BJP candidate.

As per rules there should be 10 people who will propose the nomination of independent candidates, while for national parties it had to be bring in one each. The nominations will be filed Bithoo—SDM Sadar, Bilhaur Tehsildar Sadar, Ghatampur City Magistrate, Kidwai Nagar ACMI , Cantonment ACM II, Sisamau ACM III, Aryanagar ACM IV, Maharajpur ACMV, Kalyanpur ACM VI and Govindnagar ACMVII. The two reserved

constituencies namely Bilhaur and Ghatampur candidates will have to deposit their case certificates.

The candidates will have to submit their property both movable and immovable and if any criminal antecedents will have to be clearly mentioned.

This time the candidate will have to clearly mention their bank account details along with their wife, sons and daughters as well.

**CASE FILED:** The Bilhaur BJP candidate, Rahul Bachcha violated he poll norms and massive gathering came up for his Dev Darshan Programme. The Returning Officer, Laxmi N filed cases against the candidate and 60 unnamed people for their presence at the venue. The massive crowd has led to traffic jam at Chaubeypur Highway in which an ambulance was also stranded.

The massive traffic jam was videographed as evidence. Besides during his campaigning he was supported by massive crowd which was clear violation of the norms.

However the candidate had told the Returning Officer that his future poll campaign will be exactly as per the poll norms and the COVID-19 protocol.

### Election office inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kidwai Nagar election office of Bharatiya Janata Party, candidate Mahesh Chandra Dwivedi was inaugurated by Bal Chaitanya Puri Maharaj Arun Puri Maharaj on Monday. The chanting of mantras and formal cutting of ribbon was also carried out in the presence of a large gathering. Slogans of Jai Shree Ram and Modi and Yogi Zindabad was also raised. The state general secretary, Vijay Bahadur Pathak addressing the gathering said this time the BJP will make a rich haul of the entire seats and create a history. He said the reason was the massive progress work carried out in the state especially Kanpur has won the hearts of the electorate of the city. He said this was the

first time in the history that massive development works had been carried out to this extent. He said the Yogi government has planned in such a manner that all the development works these development works have reached the people at the grass-roots level. He said this was the first time that the BJP government had made every effort that the benefits of various schemes and the development works reached the common people as well and said this will act as the backbone of the victory of the Yogi government. He said this the gap between the rich and poor had been drastically reduced by offering the best social life to the people in the form of umpteen welfare schemes meant for every section of the society.

## Video surveillance system installed at 16 stations

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The North Eastern Railway Administration (NER) is continuously striving for the safety of its passengers. For monitoring the platforms and circulating area of the station North Eastern Railway (NER) integrated security system (ISS) has been installed at Gorakhpur and Lucknow stations and video surveillance system at 16 stations Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. With these security systems in the platform and circulating area along with safety of passengers undesirable activities are also effectively monitored. With it the incidents of

theft etc with the passengers on the platforms are monitored. Apart from it the process of installation of this system at 17 more stations in progress. Integrated security system has been installed at Gorakhpur and Lucknow Jn stations of passenger-oriented NER. Apart from it at 16 stations — Deoria Sadar, Siwan, Chhapra, Ballia, Ghazipur City, Mau, Azamgarh, Belthara Road, Khalilabad, Mankapur, Gonda, Basti, Sitapur, Badshahnagar, Rudrapur City and Kathgodam at a total of 576 locations IP-based high resolution cameras have been installed which can be zoomed out and zoomed in to identify undesirable elements and the system can be oper-

ated from anywhere.

It is a three-tier security system. Under it monitoring is done on the platform and circulating area from the control room of headquarters, division and station due to which the safety of passengers in stations and circulating area is closely monitored.

Besides, rail users can dial 139 for any help, complaint and information related to security and railways. The 'Meri Saheli Abhiyan' is also run by the Railways for the safety of women passengers, in which those travelling alone are made aware.

With the continuous efforts of the Railways the safety of the passengers has been strengthened.

## Purchase of ₹87.73 cr through GeM portal

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

With the objective of providing uniformity to public procurement Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal has been set up. Through this portal the facility of online purchase of goods and services in government departments is available. The main objective of this portal is to bring transparency, quality, efficiency etc in public pro-

urement. Along with it by this online business is to be promoted. This process has proved to be very useful in the difficult times of Covid-19 infection.

The Stores department of North Eastern Railway (NER) is using the GeM portal extensively, CPRO Pankaj Kumar Singh said. In the current financial year till December 2021 a total purchase of about ₹87.73 crore has been done by the Stores Department. In NER

goods and services are also being procured through GeM portal. In fact (GeM) portal is an online marketplace which is very user friendly.

In this, all purchases and payments are done online, which in itself is an indicator of transparency. As a result of this system promoting competition, the facility of buying quality goods and services at comparatively affordable rates remains available to the buyer.

## Flag marches conducted

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Under the spirit for holding free, fair and peaceful assembly election flag marches exercise were conducted under three police stations area of the district on Sunday. CO Uma Shankar took the command of the flag march taken out under Lalganj police station areas which passed through Lalganj town, sensitive localities, including Jaikar, Kothi Khurd, Ninwar, Newada and other areas. CO said an appeal was made to common people to feel fearless and follow Covid-19 guidelines. The flag march under Dehat Kotwali police station areas which was led by sub-inspectors Baali Maurya and Surendra Yadav passed through Bhataulighat, Jausara, Khutaha, Newarhia, Jignaudi, Vijaypura villages and others. Station Officer (SO) Sanjay Singh led the flag march under Ahraura police station areas which passed through sensitive parts of the town, rural areas, including Chakia Tiraha, Rudauli, Imiliachatti, Bhagawatideyi and other adjacent villages. The marches were accompanied by heavy police and paramilitary forces. Meanwhile AMA Zila Panchayat/incharge flying squad Neetu Singh Sisodiya

said said that under 395 Chhanbey assembly constituency flying squad team No 2 during its routine inspection seized 24 bottles of illicit liquor on Sunday. She said the team had informed the authorities concerned to take relevant action. An earlier report said that Halia police during routine patrolling on being tipped off by informer arrested one person and recovered 40 litres of illicit liquor from his possession recently.

**SELECTED:** Assistant Chief Election Officer, UP, AK Pandey through a letter informed DM/District Election Officer (DEO) Praveen Kumar Laxkar that he has been selected for Best Electoral Practices Award-2021. The 12th National Voters' Day is to be observed on January 25 at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan Gomtinagar, Lucknow but due to Covid protocol the award giving ceremony was not to be held on the occasion and the citation as well as the memento will be sent to him. Deputy District Election Officer (DDEO) Shiv Pratap Shukla and his colleagues have congratulated DEO Praveen Kumar Laxkar.

**13 COUPLES REUNITE:** Under Project Milan 13 couples got reunited on Sunday in Women Family Counselling Centre at Police Lines. The

counsellors present on the occasion succeeded in reuniting 13 couples who were residing separately due to some misunderstandings. The counsellors made them agree to live together and couples proceeded for their houses happily. The entire proceedings was conducted by woman head constable Shashibala and colleagues Preeti Chaubey and Kavita. Counsellors Nirmala Rai and Parvati Pandey blessed the couples and wished them a happy life.

**ACCUSED HELD:** Madihan police arrested an accused and recovered four stolen motorcycles on Saturday. Dhanvant Singh had lodged an FIR at Madihan police station on January 19 about the theft of his motorcycle. During investigation police intercepted a suspect in Chaukhada village who failed to show documents of the motorcycle. After interrogation he divulged that he was a motorcycle thief and on his identification three more motorcycles were recovered. The police booked the accused under relevant sections of IPC and sent him jail. The accused was identified as Satyaprakash, a resident of Baburahi village under Karma police station in Sonbhadra district. Meanwhile Madihan police arrested a rape accused recently.

## Netaji's Jayanti celebrated

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav the 125th birth anniversary of the great patriot and freedom fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was celebrated on Sunday morning at Rihand station of NTPC following Covid-19 prevention guidelines. Stations' Chief General Manager Debabrata Paul, who was the chief guest on the occasion in his address said that Netaji's life



inspires all of us to serve the country. General Managers of the station, heads of departments, Additional

General Managers (AGMs), representatives of various unions and associations etc were present on the occasion.

## Nutritious food given to kids

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav various projects of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Miniratna company of the Government of India, carried out many relief works under CSR in its surrounding area and distributed necessary materials recently. The CSR team of Amlohri area of NCL distributed two cupboards each in Anganwadi centres Bharuha and Amjhara. Along with this under the Transform Singrauli campaign in the anganwadis of 10 gram panchayats allotted to Amlohri area 10 clerical tables were given so that people working there could work easily. In this sequence, four desk benches were handed over to

Anganwadi in Dasauti. In the past also, the Amlohri Area has distributed necessary materials like desk bench, table, chair, carpet, water filter, children's uniform, toys, chart for reading etc. in the anganwadi centres of the said panchayats. Due to severe cold the CSR team also distributed 40 pieces of blankets to the needy people found during their tour in the surrounding rural area of Amlohri project. Jayant Project of NCL organised free nutritious food distribution camp in four anganwadis of Jaitpur village under CSR. Nutritious food, calcium and iron tablets and other health-related medicines were distributed to 223 pregnant and mothers and malnourished children up to

the age of two years during the camp. NCL's Central Workshop, Jayant distributed 200 blankets to the aged men and women/pregnant women living below poverty line in Jhagarhwa Tola village under Aigudh gram panchayat under CSR. Along with it 500 masks were also distributed to prevent Covid infection. Besides, under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav the Jhingurda area of NCL distributed shoes to 83 students and girls in the Shasakiya Poorva Madhyamik Vidyalaya, Jhingurda Basti, under CSR. Besides Block-B project of NCL distributed blankets to 150 old men and women/pregnant women living below poverty line living in its surrounding area for protecting them from increasing cold.

## NSI produces Activated Bio-char from sugarcane bagasse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The National Sugar Institute, Kanpur added another feather to its cap by successfully producing 'Activated Bio-char' from sugarcane bagasse rendered surplus by the sugar factories. Presently bagasse, the fibrous material received after crushing the sugarcane was utilised mostly as a fuel. The Institute for the last several years was continuously working on developing various value added products utilising this product so as to enhance revenues of sugar factories and 'Activated Bio-char' was another such product in the series.

The Director of NSI, Prof

Narendra Mohanon Monday informed that the product had been developed after almost 18 months of continuous efforts by Project Scientists Shalini Kumari under the supervision of Dr Sudhanshu Mohan, Jr. Scientific Officer for treatment of sugar melt and waste waters in sugar factories.

He said at present, sugar refineries use 'Ion Exchange Resins' as commercially available to de-colourise their sugar melt to produce superior quality sugar of low colour value. He said however, use of such resins escalated the cost of production, besides generation of substantial quantity of effluents.

He said the product devel-

opment and laboratory scale trials were aimed to assess possibilities of replacing 'Ion Exchange Resins' with the 'Activated Bio-char' produced from bagasse.

He said the laboratory scale trial for decolorising the sugar melt were encouraging with a colour reduction to the extent of 30 per cent.

He said the 'Activated Bio-char' from bagasse had been prepared by carrying out drying the bagasse, grinding and screening it to desired particle size, conducting pyrolysis under anaerobic conditions like in the absence of air and then activating the surface through acid treatment under controlled conditions.



# Two Hindu bodies move SC, seek to intervene as parties in Haridwar case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Two Hindu organisations "Hindu Sena" and "Hindu Front for Justice" have moved the Supreme Court seeking to intervene as parties in a pending plea in which notices have been issued to the Centre and others on allegations of hate speeches made against Muslim communities at Haridwar and New Delhi. The bench, headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana, on January 12, had sought responses from the Centre, Uttarakhand and Delhi Police on the PIL filed by journalist Qurban Ali and former Patna High Court judge and senior advocate Anjana Prakash seeking direction to ensure investigation and action against those who allegedly made hate speeches during the two events held recently in Haridwar and the national Capital.

One intervention application filed by Vishnu Gupta, National President of NGO

Member of the Central Waqf Council, under Ministry of Minority Affairs, Rais Khan Pathan has filed a complaint against Taukeer Raza Khan, who allegedly gave a hate speech against the Hindus on January 7, 2022. In his complaint at local Rakhiyal Police Station in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Pathan has requested the State Government for lodging an FIR against Taukeer for inflammatory speech

'Hindu Sena', through lawyer Barun Kumar Sinha, has sought directions to the State Governments to register FIRs against AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi and others including Taukeer Raza, Sajid Rashidi, Amanatullah Khan, Waris Pathan for allegedly making hate speeches against Hindu community and its God and Goddesses.

"The applicants herein through the present application are praying to this court to direct an SIT to investigate the hate speeches given against the members of the Hindu community, their gods and goddesses," Gupta said in the plea.

## SC to hear petition over FCRA registration

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said it would hear on Tuesday a petition which has sought quashing of the Centre's decision by which 5,789 entities lost their Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) registration.

The FCRA registration is mandatory for any association and NGO to receive foreign funding. The plea, filed by US-based NGO 'Global Peace Initiative', came up for hearing before a bench comprising Justices A M Khanwilkar and C T Ravikumar.

The bench said the matter would be heard on Tuesday.

There were 22,762 FCRA-registered organisations till December 31, 2021.

On January 1, the number came down to 16,829. These are considered "live" organisations. The officials had said the FCRA licences of 18,778 organisations were expiring between September 29, 2020 and December 31, 2021.

Out of them, as many as 12,989 organisations have applied for renewal of the FCRA licence between September 30, 2020 and December 31, 2021.

Since 5,789 organisations did not apply for the renewal of the FCRA licence, they were deemed to have ceased to be registered organisations, an official had said. In addition to them, renewal application of 179 organisations were also rejected by the Home Ministry due to different reasons.

## 50% Covid 1st wave +ve face life-long loss of smell

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

From the early pandemic days, sudden loss of smell, or an impaired or distorted perception of odours, emerged as an unusual symptom of Covid. While some people recovered, for some the sense of smell never quite returned to normal. Now a preliminary study has said that about 50 per cent of people infected with Covid-19 during the first wave of infections in 2020 may have long-term and even permanent changes to their sense of smell.

Scientists at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm found this after they ran comprehensive tests on 100 individuals who caught Covid in the first wave of infections in 2020. The findings of the yet-to-be-peer-reviewed study showed that 18 months after recovering from Covid 4 per cent people lost their sense of smell entirely.

However, a third had a reduced ability to detect odours, and nearly half complained of parosmia — where the sense of smell is distorted. The team concluded that 65 per cent of those who recovered



from Covid displayed either a loss of smell, a reduced sense of smell, or distortions to the sense 18 months after the infection, compared with 20 per cent of those who had not caught the virus, the report said.

"Given the amount of time since [the] initial insult to the olfactory system, it is likely that these olfactory problems are permanent," they wrote. According to the UK Health Security Agency, a loss of smell or taste is less than half as common with Omicron than the

Delta variant.

But there is no reliable data demonstrating that Omicron is less dangerous to the olfactory system, Johan Lundstrom, who led the research at the Karolinska Institute, was quoted as saying in the media reports.

A severe loss of smell could also lead to depression and to people changing their diets, often for the worse, causing them to put on weight, Lundstrom said.

"When you cannot smell, all you can sense is the five

basic taste qualities, tactile sensations and spices," he said. "Unconsciously, people start to add more sugar and fat, or have an increased urge for fried food for the texture, all to get some enjoyment out of eating."

Lundstrom stated that people can get help by doing olfactory training. "They might not regain 100 per cent of past performance, but most of them will, with training, get back to a point where their reduced sense of smell will not affect their lives," he said.

## Cong releases list of 30 star campaigners for UP polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Congress on Monday released its list of 30 star campaigners for the first-phase Assembly election in Uttar Pradesh, naming party president Sonia Gandhi, former prime minister Manmohan Singh, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, new entrant Kanhaiya Kumar and some of the G-23 leaders.

Former Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and former Rajya Sabha member Raj Babbar are among the G-23 leaders named as star campaigners. The group of 23 Congress leaders had earlier raised questions on the functioning of the party and sought an organisational overhaul.

Former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot, who had revolted against its own government in the state led by Ashok Gehlot, also figures among the 30 star campaigners. AICC general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot and Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel are also among the star campaigners.

The list includes state party chief Ajay Kumar Lallu, Congress Legislature Party leader in the assembly Aradhana Misra 'Mona', former union ministers Salman Khurshid and RPN Singh, and former Rajya Sabha members Pramod Tiwari and P L Punia. Party leaders Deepinder Singh Hooda, Supriya Shrinete, Imran Pratapgarhi and Kanhaiya Kumar are also among the 30 star campaigners of the Congress. In the first of the seven phases, polling will be held in 58 assembly constituencies spread over 11 districts on February 10.

The districts which are going to poll in the first phase are Shamli, Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Hapur, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Mathura and Agra. The final-phase polling will be on March 7 and the results will be declared on March 10.

## EC issues guidelines for video van campaigning

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

While allowing the political parties to use video vans for campaigning in poll-bound States, the Election Commission has made it clear that the vehicle cannot stop at any viewing point for more than 30 minutes.

It had cautioned that the video van events should not cause inconvenience to the people and should not be a hindrance to smooth flow of traffic.

After allowing use of video vans on Saturday, the Commission had issued instructions to its chief electoral officers on use of such vehicles for campaigning by parties. "The video van of the political party should be used to propagate its programme and policies to seek votes. Votes or support for any particular candidate should not be solicited," the EC letter to the Chief Electoral Officers read.

However, if the video van is used for seeking votes or support for a candidate then the expenditure of the video van should be accounted for by such candidate appropriately.

"Expenditure observers to closely monitor this," the letter underlined. The vans can only be operated between 8 am and 8 pm and these vehicles cannot be used for rallies and roadshows. The parties are barred from displaying their campaigning material through these vehicles in market areas or crowded places.

It will be the responsibility of the political party to ensure that the maximum stoppage for viewing of the vehicle at any location is not more than 30 minutes, it said.

While extending the ban on physical election rallies till January 31 to curb the spread of Covid, the EC had on Saturday allowed video vans for publicity with usual Covid restrictions at designated open spaces with a maximum of 500 viewers.

After allowing use of video vans on Saturday, the Commission had issued instructions to its chief electoral officers on use of such vehicles for campaigning by parties.

Assembly polls are scheduled to be held in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Goa and Uttarakhand.

## Poll panel to observe 12th National Voters' Day today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (EC) will observe the 12th National Voters' Day (NVD) on January 25 with the theme 'Making Elections Inclusive, Accessible, and Participative'. The topic of this year's NVD, 'Making Elections Inclusive, Accessible, and Participative,' envisions an emphasis on EC's commitment to facilitating active voter participation during elections and making the whole process hassle-free and memorable for all types of voters.

M Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President of India, has agreed to be the Chief Guest at the national occasion. However, because he will be unable to attend the celebration in person, his message will be given digitally at the event. Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister for Law and Justice, will be present at the event as the Guest of Honour. To mark the occasion, National Awards for the Best Electoral Practises for the year 2021-22 will be conferred on State and District level officers

for their outstanding performance in the conduct of elections in different spheres such as IT initiatives, Security Management, Election Management, Accessible Elections and contribution in the field of voter awareness and outreach.

National Awards will also be given to important stakeholders like government departments, EC icons and media groups for their valuable contribution towards voters' awareness. During the function, the newly enrolled voters would also be felicitated and handed over their Elector Photo Identity Card (EPIC). The Commission has recently launched a new initiative to deliver the EPIC to newly enrolled voters, along with a personalised letter and a Voter Guidebook.

An EC Publication 'Leap of Faith: Journey of Indian Elections' will be released. The book narrates India's electoral history and the growth of representative and electoral principles in India as it evolved from the nineteenth to twenty first century.

## PM, President enquire about VP Naidu's health

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among the prominent personalities who spoke with Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Monday, who has tested positive for coronavirus, and enquired about his health.

According to officials in the Vice President Secretariat, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, several Cabinet ministers, chief ministers and leaders of various political parties also spoke to Naidu, who is in home isolation in Hyderabad. Naidu had tested positive for the virus on Sunday. This is for the second time the vice president, who is also Chairman of Rajya Sabha, has been infected with the virus.

"Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, who is in Hyderabad, tested COVID positive today. He has decided to remain in self-isolation for a week. He has advised all those who came in contact with him to isolate themselves and get tested," the Vice President

Secretariat tweeted. It seems unlikely that he will participate in Republic Day celebrations on Wednesday.

Meanwhile results of 875 people, who were tested for Covid in Parliament, have returned positive, sources said days before the start of its Budget Session. The data, they said, is of tests conducted since the beginning of the third wave of the pandemic till January 20. The session is scheduled to start from January 31 and its first part will conclude on February 11.

As many as 2,847 tests have been conducted in Parliament since the starting of the third wave, and out of these results of 875 returned positive, the sources said. Out of the total tests, 915 were conducted by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and 271 samples were found to be positive for the infection, they said. According to the sources, the session will be held following Covid-related protocols.

In the wake of a spike in Covid cases, a call has to be taken whether Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will sit simultaneously or in different shifts, they said.

# ED searches premises of AJIL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has carried out search operations on at the business premises, bank lockers of Atlas Jewellery India Limited (AJIL) under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) at three places in Mumbai, Bengaluru and New Delhi and made a total seizure of Rs 26.59 crore in the form of fixed deposit, Indian currency, gold, silver and diamond jewellery.

The ED had initiated a money laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by the Kerala Police, Thrissur East Police Station, Thrissur against Atlas Jewellery, MM Ramachandran and Indira Ramachandran under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for cheating South Indian Bank, Round South



Branch, Thrissur, Kerala, the ED said in a statement.

With an intention to cheat, these accused planned and presented forged documents to the bank and availed loan worth Rs 242.40 crore during the period March 21, 2013 to September 26, 2018 and have not repaid the money.

"Investigation revealed that MM Ramachandran had invested Rs 100 crore by way of purchase of equity shares of Atlas Jewellery India Limited (AJIL), New Delhi and transferred another Rs 14 crore in the Escrow Account with Axis Bank, New Delhi," it added.

## ₹69.14 cr assets of TN bizman attached under PMLA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth Rs 69.14 crore of Dhanraj Kochar, Tamil Nadu-based businessman and his family members under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a cheating case.

The ED had initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by City Crime Branch (CCB), Tamil Nadu Police against Dhanraj Kochar, his family members and associates under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for cheating and criminal conspiracy of more than Rs 100 crore.

The ED had conducted a search operation on September

29 last year at the residential and business premises and bank lockers of Kochar and his family members and seized Indian currency and jewellery besides various incriminating documents.

Investigation by ED revealed that one MS Hameed and Kochar along with one Abdul Rawoof were the directors of a company -DR Foundations & Estates Private Limited, which was into real estate business. During 2005-06, the properties in Siruseri village under the jurisdiction of Thiruporur Sub Registrar Office, bifurcated in 20 property documents, were purchased out of funds invested by Hameed and his family members along with his business entity Paramount Builders, DR Foundations and Real Estates

Pvt. Ltd. the ED said in a statement.

These properties were clandestinely transferred to the names of Kochar and his family members and some properties were directly purchased in their names from the funds invested by Hameed in the company.

"Some of the properties have also been sold in the interregnum. In order to prevent further sale of the said properties, which are proceeds of crime and to prevent frustration of further proceedings under PMLA, 2002, immovable properties and movable assets (in the form of FDs and jewellery) to the tune of Rs 69.14 crore of Dhanraj Kochar and his family members has been provisionally attached," it added.

## National Girl Child Day: Min interacts with girl achievers in science, tech

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

On the occasion of National Girl Child Day, Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Monday interacted with girls who have excelled in the areas of science, technology and innovation.

Union Science and Technology Minister Singh said several Government schemes are instilling confidence among children to think innovatively, look for out-of-the-box solutions for different problems and to break the barriers of the past to undertake unconventional initiatives.

He stressed upon sustainable start-ups with viable livelihood linkage and new vocational opportunities.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exhortation that "innovation is the key to realising the dream of new India," Singh reiterated

all government support and help to young achievers and said empowerment of girls will lead to a better tomorrow.

During the online interaction, Digantika Bose, first-year B.Sc student from Bengaluru, said that she had developed a virus destroying mask which was preventive against the coronavirus also and the project was shared with the Department of Science & Technology. She sought the minister's help to market the mask, to which he promised her to help undertake an evidence-based trial before its marketing.

Manisha Ramola, first-year B.Sc student from Uttarakhand, has developed an AI-based solution designed to provide in-depth information on medicinal leaves and herbs with just a single image.

The minister complimented her for coming up with an innovation that combined

ancient herbal medicine knowledge of the Himalayas with the futuristic concept of Artificial Intelligence.

Nishi Goswami from Panna in Madhya Pradesh demonstrated to the minister an AI-based Chatbot that provides consultation services like a doctor and answers health or medical queries to a user.

The minister brought to her notice that she had developed an AI-based interface between the patient and doctor. The same could be extended and linked with telemedicine. Vinisha Umashankar from Thiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu presented her solar ironing cart, while Manya Joshi, Class 12 student from Delhi, initiated a forecasting project for natural disasters.

Anushka Shrivastava, Class 12 student from Bhopal, came up with an eco-friendly water bottle.

## Cong asks Govt to address income disparity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Citing a report that stated the incomes of the rich increased and that of the poor declined during the pandemic, the Congress on Monday alleged the Modi Government is for the rich and demanded that the union budget should focus on bridging the widening income divide.

"The entire country suffered during the Covid pandemic, but the poor and the middle class are also victims of the 'economic epidemic' of the Modi Government. The credit for digging this widening gap between the rich and the poor goes to the central government," former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet.

He cited a report that claimed that incomes of the poor reduced by 53 per cent while that of the rich increased during Covid times. The report showed the widening disparity in annual household incomes, with the poorest 20 per cent of the population witnessing 52.6 per cent decline in their incomes and the lower middle class comprising 20 per cent facing a decline of 32.4 per cent in their income, while the richest (20 per cent) saw 39 per cent rise in their incomes.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said at AICC press conference that the Modi government is only working for the benefit of the rich and the incomes of 20 per cent poor population have halved and the

**Supriya Shrinete said at AICC press conference that the Modi Government is only working for the benefit of the rich and the incomes of 20 per cent poor population have halved and the income of 60 per cent of the population has reduced to its lowest level during the Modi regime**

income of 60 per cent of the population has reduced to its lowest level during the Modi regime.

"We categorically and assertively insist that the union budget must focus on bridging this divide.... The union budget should only focus on increasing money in the hands of the poor. The union budget should pay attention on how urban poverty is going up many fold and rural poverty in

comparison has gone up," she said. Shrinete also demanded that the government institute a gross economic mismanagement index to know how badly mismanaged the Indian economy is.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that the "Modi government is only for the rich! It is now before us - 'The poor is poorer and 'Hum do, hamare do' is reaping silver."

## Budget Session: Rajya Sabha to sit in morning, Lok Sabha in evening due to Covid restrictions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The two Houses of Parliament will meet at separate times of the day for five hours each — Rajya Sabha in the first half and Lok Sabha in the second half — to ensure Covid distancing norms during the Budget Session beginning January 31.

Lok Sabha will meet at 11 am on February 1 for the presentation of the Union Budget and it will meet from 4 pm to 9 pm from February 2 to February 11, when the session will go on a recess.

During sittings of the Lower House of Parliament, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha chambers and their galleries

will be used for seating of members in view of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, a Lok Sabha bulletin said.

While the exact timings of Rajya Sabha are yet to be formally notified, sources said the Upper House of Parliament could meet from 10 am to 3 pm.

A final decision on timing is yet to be taken as Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu is infected with COVID-19 and has isolated himself in Hyderabad.

The budget session will begin on January 31 with the address of President Ram Nath Kovind to the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament.

## Air India to conduct pre-flight checks of cabin crew's grooming, body mass index

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Air India has decided to check grooming and measure the body mass index (BMI) of cabin crew members at the airports just before their flights, according to an official order. The carrier's two unions — Air India Employees' Union (AIEU) and All India Cabin Crew Association (AICCA) — on Monday wrote a letter to Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) Vikram Dev Dutt opposing the order on the grounds that it is dehumanising and in violation of rules prescribed by aviation regulator DGCA.

"BMI is a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in metres. A

high BMI can indicate high body fatness," stated the website of US' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The order dated January 20, 2022, has come days before Air India's hand over to the Tata group, which acquired the carrier in a competitive bidding process last year.

Cabin crew, who are well dressed and well groomed according to uniform standards and regulations, present a positive and professional image of the airline, the order stated.

"It is therefore emphasized that, all cabin crew adhere to uniform regulations communicated by the circular dated November 18, 2019," the order noted.



## Cover-up

A few Karnataka colleges are debating whether girl students should be allowed to wear hijab

The New Year is all about hijabs and saffron scarves in some parts of Karnataka. On January 1, a pre-university college in Udipi barred a few girls from attending classes for wearing the hijab in contravention to college rules. The management says the girls can wear the hijab on campus but not in class. The reasoning is the teacher should have an unobstructed view of the students' faces while teaching. The girls, unconvinced, raised a protest. They say that they need to wear the hijab to cover their hair in front of men. One argument is why object to the hijab if it only covers the hair, like a scarf. If so, why fasten it with a pin to cover the face as well, runs the other argument. Things turned political when Campus Front of India (CFI), the student wing of the radical Islamic group, Popular Front of India, intervened, claiming religious freedom was being interfered with. The situation is unresolved. In another Karnataka village, Balagadi in Koppa district, some college students wore saffron scarves to protest the management allowing Muslim girls to wear the hijab in the classroom. In the third incident in Kolar district, a Hindu group staged a protest at a Government school, claiming the principal had permitted Muslim students to offer prayers in the classroom on Fridays. The district collector is probing the matter. Slowly but surely, these incidents are not just becoming controversial but triggering a debate on whether a hijab is part of the uniform.



In India, where public display of religion is quite common, these incidents should not have received publicity at all. But what's worrisome is that such sentiments are flaring up when Karnataka is readying for two major rounds of election. Elections to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike may be held along with or close to the Zilla Panchayat and Taluk Panchayat polls. That will involve a joint electorate of nearly four crore voters. And the State Assembly elections are slated for early next year. These issues are fodder for religious groups to vitiate the secular atmosphere already burdened by the politics of polarisation. The higher judiciary has to step in to settle the issue once and for all. India is not France, where the display of religious symbols in public is disallowed. In India, everybody wears religion on one's sleeve, whether the *bindi* and bangles or the hijab, the holy cross or the Sikh *patka*. The question of discrimination should not arise at all. The Constitution allows the freedom to practice religion, but the law limits the protection to practices found essential and integral to religion. In a 2016 judgment, the Kerala High Court said that a hijab and a long-sleeved dress are an "essential part of the Islamic religion". Then the only question the judiciary should sort out is whether the "essential practice" of wearing hijab offends the social order in a classroom and hampers the teacher's duties.

## PICTALK



The snow-covered path to the shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi, near Katra in Reasi district

PTI

## Wet town

The Delhi Govt has reduced the number of dry days from the earlier 21 to just three

In a bit of good news that is certain to cheer up the Capital's Bacchus devotees, the AAP-led Delhi Government has announced its decision to curtail the number of 'dry days' this year from the earlier 21 to just three — the Republic Day, Independence Day and Gandhi Jayanti. The 21 'dry days' was one of the highest number as compared to other States and UTs in India. The official order, which was notified on Monday, is part of the city Government's new excise policy and ensures that the shutters of licensed liquor shops, bars, pubs and opium vends across the city can remain open and these can legally do business except for these three days. While the Government's decision to curtail the number of 'dry days' is welcome in the sense that it would remove the taint of 'buying liquor illegally' and instances of bootlegging in a major way, there is hardly any change in the situation expected on the ground. Just as it is a fact that the state of prohibition is a malady both for the taxpayer and for the Government's coffers, it's an open secret for decades that regular drinkers stock up their 'supply' in the days preceding 'dry days'.



Even otherwise, alcohol is available at the drop of a hat on 'dry days' if one knows his way around the city. However, the positive difference the

Government's decision would make is that a buyer won't be caught unawares if he fails to take into account in advance the closure of liquor vends to mark one leader's or another's birth anniversary. Also, in the days preceding the 'dry day/s', it's become the tendency of the salespersons to often 'push' certain brands over the counter owing to the handsome 'commission' they pocket from the distributor/manufacturer. Since the supplies run short and the queues get longer each passing minute on such evenings, the experienced buyers know that it is futile to argue with the salesperson or go hunting for his favourite tippie elsewhere. Adding another dimension to the consumer's "choice" would mean that the latter is harassed less; other such steps such as privatising the liquor vends and opening one in each ward of the Capital have already started showing results since one now does business with a courteous salesperson in a clean and not-so-shady outlet, which was invariably the case earlier.

# FSSAI GM regulation puts health in a soup

The Authority has a new scheme to mix genetically modified organisms in our foods even though the EU doesn't allow GM food on its plate



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

Careful of what you eat in 2022 as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has a new scheme to mix genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in our foods. The white and black bureaucratic-looking draft notification on GM food regulation has locked India's food fate with Big Ag. It's only a matter of time before a tsunami of GM food products floods the Indian market as the gates of our fortress have been opened from the inside.

But first, what are GM foods? These are foods that are derived from genetically modified crops. Companies like Monsanto/Bayer have developed patented crops varieties which have genes from two different life forms. For example India's only GM crop, Bt Cotton, uses a toxin producing gene from a ground bacteria, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, and combines it with a cotton plant. Some of the other popular GMOs are soybean, corn, sugar beets and canola. While some of these crops are owned by European companies, EU doesn't allow GM food on its plate. GM foods are also used for animal feed and biofuels. Apart from the EU, independent scientists have raised serious biomedical concerns, linking the consumption of GM foods leading to a plethora of health defects.

So what does the notification say? Firstly, it allows for "1 per cent and below GM content foods" to go unlabelled. But why have this 1 per cent at all? Can't India have truthful labels, where the consumers know what they eat? Perhaps aware of the risks of GM food, FSSAI regulators have clearly stated that GMOs are "not permitted in infant foods". So why the obfuscation on labelling standards and then, in the same breath, the stance on infant foods? Is there something FSSAI knows and not telling Indians?

Let's take a second and look at our past. In the late 90s, India was flooded with cheap GM soybean oil imports that not only killed small mustard farmers but also destroyed the local oilseed markets. But now, also consider, GMOs are already trickling into our *thalis* with the rampant



blending of Bt cottonseed oil in our foods. Both FSSAI and GEAC were aware about it for years; in fact, Dr Vandana Shiva and I sent RTIs to both organisations and found out, FSSAI and GEAC both treated GMO cottonseed and natural cottonseed to be the same. This was an unscientific position, conveniently forgetting the genetic modifications on Monsanto/Bayer's Bt cottonseed. On further investigation, I found that biosafety documents submitted to GEAC came from Monsanto labs. No independent biosafety data was found at GEAC for Monsanto/Bayer's Bt Cotton.

Currently, those pages are dead links on GEAC's website. In the draft notification too, FSSAI adhered to similar biosafety standards and, in some cases, allowed for the documents to be submitted by the applicant and not necessarily the regulatory authority-approved dossiers.

Now the next major confusion occurs when the notification calls for "(11) Once GMOs or Genetically Engineered Organisms or Living Modified Organisms having unique identification code provided by Biosafety Clearing House, Organisation for Economic Cooperation



INSTEAD OF DEREGULATING GM FOODS, FSSAI NEEDS TO FIRST DO HOUSE CLEANING AND TAKE COGNISANCE OF THE ILLEGAL GM FOODS THAT ARE BEING FED TO INDIANS. IF GM FOOD IS NOT SAFE FOR EUROPEAN CHILDREN TO EAT, THEN INDIAN CHILDREN OUGHT NOT HAVE IT

and Development etc, is approved by FSSAI, approval for the same will not be required for any other Food Business Operator. Approval will also not be required if it is used as an ingredient in any product."

On plain reading, this point appears innocuous. But the devil is always in the details. Given that EU doesn't allow for GM food, half of the influential countries are out. What does FSSAI mean as it wrote this point? Is it perhaps referring to the corporate food hegemony on GM standards? The US, along with many others in the Americas, is deeply entrenched in GM crops cultivation and freely allows for GM foods, labelled or unlabelled, to enter markets.

It is no surprise that US citizens along with their Latin American counterparts suffer from food-style related diseases. French scientist Eric Seralini, using peer review scientific journals, demonstrated how GM foods are harmful not only to cows but their toxicity including the pesticide/herbicide used to grow third-generations GMOs like RRF Cotton and hamper human health as well.

Monsanto/Bayer has already lost billions of dollars

to victims of Round-Up poisoning. Round-Up is a patented herbicide used to grow GM crops, and is known carcinogenic.

The parliamentary standing committee on GM crops, chaired by Renuka Chowdhary, has already pulled up FSSAI on GM food and a court order of August 2017 empowers petitioners to approach the court again in case the FSSAI rules are unsatisfactory.

**GM or not GM?** It is obvious that the FSSAI notification is doing someone else's bidding — corporates or Uncle Sam? Who knows? But as a concerned citizen, I urge them to reconsider. Instead of deregulating GM foods, FSSAI needs to first do house cleaning and take cognisance of the illegal GM foods that are being fed to Indians. We must aspire to have the most progressive GM laws on a par with EU, and not below them. For, if GM food is not safe for European children to eat, then Indian children ought not have it.

(The author writes on agriculture and environment, and is a former Director — Policy & Outreach, National Seed Association of India. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A DESPICABLE ACT

Sir — We have been routinely witnessing how the rightwing Hindutva brigade has been belittling, denigrating and tarnishing the image of Mahatma Gandhi at the fall of a hat through their manifestations, particularly by praising Nathuram Godse in tune with the ideology of their parent organisation. While the nation has been saddened by their tirade against Mahatma Gandhi, the Government for its part has now dropped the traditional Christian hymn, 'Abide with me', believed to have been a favourite of the Mahatma, from the list of songs to be played at this year's Beating Retreat ceremony. The tune has been played at the annual ceremony every year since 1950.

By doing this, the saffron outfits may be happy that they have hit both, the Mahatma and the Christian community, with their intolerant act but the entire world that has great reverence and respect for the Mahatma would have formed a poor opinion about the Government and its unpalatable act against the Father of the Nation. At this rate, one will not be surprised if the Government's next move will be to remove the title "Father of the Nation" from Gandhi's name and confer it on one of their own ideologues.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

### POISONING TURTLES HURTS US, TOO

Sir — In an unfortunate incident, dozens of turtles were found dead in a lake in Kalyan, Maharashtra. Wildlife conservationists feel that poisoning is the cause, probably by people who found that these creatures were consuming fish which they had been illegally breeding there. As freshwater turtle species are protected under India's 1972 Wildlife Protection Act, causing them harm can result in heavy penalty and punishment. The locals could have sought permission to breed fish from the authority concerned.

It is sad that most people are unaware about the usefulness of turtles in our ecosystem. They regulate the energy flow

## Honour Bose's idea of India



The nation is celebrating the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose as Parakram Diwas to acknowledge his monumental contribution. Whenever one remembers Netaji, one is reminded of his valour, courage, patriotism, extraordinary leadership skills and unflinching devotion to the motherland. In India, however, statues and streets are often named after political leaders, religious personalities, scholars, business tycoons,

of a given environment and consume and deposit seeds, which later germinate into vegetation needed for the maintenance of an area's ecosystem. No wonder they are called 'environmental engineers' and play an important role in the earth's food web. They are also vital for the health of seas, rivers, ponds and other water bodies. More campaigns must be launched to make people aware regarding the protection of such creatures.

M Pradyu | Kannur

### THIRD TIME UNLUCKY

Sir — Each cricket match is like a game of chess and, therefore, every move counts in the shortest form of the game. Having lost the Test series in a one-day fashion, we could have chalked out a strategy to erase the mistakes committed in the longest form of the game. The major shortcoming is that the so-called "strong batting" failed to live up to the

eminent sporting personalities or kings, while our soldiers are rarely mentioned. In this context, the decision to instal Netaji's statue at India Gate must be lauded. His larger-than-life legacy is enough to prove that he played a stellar role in arousing the consciousness of society.

In fact, going by the Kautilyan adage "my enemy's enemy is my friend", Bose showed solidarity with the axis powers of Germany, Italy and Japan which, he believed, could act as a counterpoise to the British imperialistic designs. Bose had a firm belief that if the loyalty of soldiers to the British Indian Army be turned around, the British would be left with no option but to leave. His militant agitation precipitated Britain's hasty withdrawal from India. Apart from being a great patriot and nationalist, it was his unwavering commitment to secularism that was destined to become the cornerstone of the Indian Republic. It was his idea of a united and inclusive India that is even more relevant in today's fractured society.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

expectations and the bowlers were put to test. In the event of a small total to defend, our strategy should be to dismiss the opposition within a low score. But to add salt to the wound, we lost both the ODIs and the T-20 World Cup chances through sheer lack of shrewd captaincy.

We had a team with the number one bowler in the world but we made him toil hard for a place in the side in England and in the T20 World Cup. The ODI and Test captain flattered to deceive. As a matter of fact, Ashwin accounted for the left-handers' wickets maximum in his international career and the captain made a mess of his role and proved unlucky for the third time and lost five out of the six games and finished the tour on a losing note.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

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

## SOUND BITE

The amendment proposal strikes at the very root of our federal polity and State autonomy.



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister —MK Stalin

My wedding will not be going ahead (as the nation imposes new restrictions to slow Omicron's spread).

New Zealand Prime Minister —Jacinda Arden

The *Eternals* are all very powerful, but they are the most powerful when they come together.



Actor —Salma Hayek

The desire to win the World Cup still gives me the motivation to be the best version of myself.

Women's team ODI captain — Mithali Raj

One thing that distresses me is that religious and cultural divisiveness take too strong a position.



Netaji Subhas' daughter — Dr Anita Bose-Pfaff



FIRST COLUMN

TRIBALS AND THEIR RELIGION

The Sanatana Dharma has ingredients of tribal worship



VK BAHUGUNA

Let us examine the theory of naming a few people as tribals by sociologists and others. The western media under the influence of Christianity has been for decades trying to declare tribals as indigenous people. The connotation of ‘indigenous’ in terms of the great Indian civilization, which grew with great saints who lived in syl-van surroundings in thick forests, is a travesty of truth. It is an insult to ancient Indian culture to call the tribals as indigenous or, for that matter, calling them tribal at all. For, the tribal traditions have great history of language, music, art, paintings, medicine and of course worship of nature in its different form which enriched the Sanatana Dharma and traditions. In fact, all Indians must have been once part of some tribe or the other and it is the lop-sided modern develop-ment which now differentiates between tribal and non-tribal people. Unfortunately, our constitution is also trapped in the tribal and non-



tribal verbosity. The raging debate that tribals have no set pattern of religion is basically a politically motivated and foreign-supported propa-ganda being launched in India by different churches thatbelieve in proselytization. The Sanatana Dharma which is now known as Hinduism has all the ingredients of tribal worship. In tribal areas most of the divinity is dominated by nature worships and many tenets and festivities of Hinduism are drawn from them. The argument by a few politicians that tribal people never had an organized religion does not hold water if we see the history of the country. The first organised census was held in 1871 - the first synchronized census was held in 1881 — in which the 95 percent tribal people have entered their religion as Hinduism. Only two percent people from the North-East declared atribal religion because of the interpretational bias during census. In 1891 only three percent were shown as following tribal religion and rest as Hindu.

In 1991 census information on sects of Christianity was also collected. In the first census after independence in 1951, 97-98 per-cent tribals had shown Hinduism as their religion. It only after sev-eral decades later when the Christian missionaries started convert-ing the tribals in central and eastern India that nature worship was systematically sought to be separated from Hinduism. In Tripura the Tripuri, Jamatias and other Tribes have been worshipping Shiva as depicted in the rock carvings. Similarly, Sarna method of divinity is focused on the worship of nature and spirits and holds all natural objects to be sacred. This belief system is followed by several trib-al groups in Jharkhand and neighbouring states, and it is fully reflect-ed in their social and cultural life. The ‘other’ category for religion in the census after independence had created this confusion because of the census staff relegating such tribal beliefs as the ‘other’. There is a well-orchestrated propaganda launched by a few political lead-ers for supremacy in the tribal belt aided and abetted by Christian missionaries and the naxalites to disconnect the tribal population from the larger part of Sanatana dharma. This writer during February 2021 has visited a tribal area in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh. In a corner of the fair, a person who spoke fluent English was sell-ing books deriding Hinduism and recommending a book, ‘Tribals are not Hindu’. I had to admonish the organizer, a foreign-funded NGO, for creating such a situation in the tribal belt. The issue today is not to interfere with religious beliefs and cultural lives of tribal people. The focus should be to bringing them to the mainstream by providing them best health, educational and livelihood and preserve their art, language, culture, and music.

(The writer is Chairman of Centre for Resource Management and Environment. The views expressed are personal.)

Fertiliser DBT stymied by lobbies for years



UTTAM GUPTA

When a subsidised product is not available in the marketplace, the dubious characters will have nothing to prey upon

It is budget time. After two years of splurge, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has alluded to a return to fiscal consolidation. A major area mer-iting attention is fertilizer subsidy which jumped from ₹80,000 crore during 2019-20 to ₹134,000 crore during 2020-21 and is likely to be ₹140,000 crore dur-ing 2021-22.

Fertilizer subsidy arises because the Union Government wants manufacturers/importers to sell fertilizers to farmers at a low maximum retail price, unrelated to the cost of production and import and distribution, which is much higher. In case of urea, it exercises manda-tory control on MRP and reimburses the manufacturers for the excess of cost over it as subsidy on a ‘unit-specific’ basis under the new pricing scheme. In case of phos-phatic and potassic (P&K) fertilizers, it fixes ‘uniform’ subsidy on per nutrient basis for all manufacturers and importers under Nutrient Based Scheme.

Subsidy per ton being the difference between cost and MRP, if the cost increas-es, MRP remaining unchanged, on each ton of fertilizer sold, subsidy will increase. On the other hand, if MRP decreases, cost remaining unchanged, then also subsidy will increase. Thirdly, for any given level of subsidy per ton, increase in the quantity of fertilizer sale results in higher total subsidy payment.

The factors impinging on the cost of urea are: cost of natural gas - feedstock/fuel used in its production andprice of import-ed urea (it accounts for 1/3rd of consump-tion). In case of P&K fertilizers, the factors are cost of raw materials, viz.,phosphoric acid, ammonia and price of imports in fin-ished form viz.di-ammonium phosphate (these account for nearly 50 percent of DAP consumption) and price of muriate of potash - entirely imported.

Given the preponderance of imports in making urea and non-urea fertilizers avail-able (even for producing domestic urea, 1/3rd of the gas requirement is met from imports), there is little that the Government can do to rein in these costs.

However, there are plant specific inef-ficiencies (besides inter-state variation in VAT on gas) that result in widely varying costs. Of around 35 million tonannual urea supply, there are tonnages supplie-dat ₹20,000 per ton, ₹25,000 per ton, ₹30,000 per ton and so on. The cost of import is even higher. During the current year, some supplies have even come at US\$ 900 per ton which works out to around ₹70,000 per ton at the farm gate.

A ridiculously low MRP of urea (cur-rently at ₹5360 per ton, it is almost the same as two decades ago) in the face of increas-ing costlies at the root of increase in sub-sidy per ton. Add to this, the quantity boost that comes from (i) excessive use: low price prompts farmers to use more than what is required by the soil; (ii) large/rich und-erserving farmersalso getting access to sub-sidized urea; (iii) large-scale diversion



THE CONTRACTION IN DEMAND FROM ALL THREE SOURCES WILL YIELD HUGE SAVINGS IN SUBSIDY (QUANTITY EFFECT). THERE WILL BE AN INDIRECT GAIN AS WELL. INDIA BEING A MAJOR IMPORTER OF FERTILISERS, A SIGNIFICANT DEMAND-INDUCED CUT IN IMPORT WILL REDUCE THE INTERNATIONAL PRICE AND, IN TURN, REDUCE THE COST OF IMPORTS

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



such as smuggling to neighboring countries, industrial use and so on - inevitable when the market price is 4-5 times higher. The outcome is ballooning total subsidy bill.

Excessive use is undesirable as it leads to imbalance in fertilizer use, erosion in soil health (this in turn, undermines the sustainability of agriculture in the medium to long-run) and adverse impact on the environment besides human health. Giving cheap urea to those (read: rich farmers) who can afford to pay more is also patently unfair. But, diversion or misuse of subsidized (albeit heavily) urea will shake the conscience of any right-thinking person. Yet, it has been going on for decades and could be as high as 30 percent.Look at the dynamics of how it is happening.

During the initial years of the subsisting scheme (it is in vogue since 1977), bulk of the subsidy amount was released to manufactur-ers on ‘dispatch’ of the material from the factory. Even as they were required to ensure that fertilizer was actually sold to farmers, there was no fool proof institutional mecha-nism to check it. Disappearance of the product at various levels in sup-ply chain viz. rail-head, stocking point in district and retailer was rampant.

Ein the early 2000s, the arrange-ment was changed to provide for payment of 95 percent of the urea subsidy on receipt of material in the district (for non-urea fertilizers, the share was 85 percent) and bal-ance 5 percent on confirmation by the state government (15 percent in case of P&K fertilizers). Under this

mechanism also, the field was wide openfor dubious players to prey on the subsidized stuff - beyond stock-ing point in the district.

From April 2018, the Modi government linked subsidy pay-ment to manufacturers to sale of fer-tilizers to farmers by retailers. Under the new scheme, manufac-turers receive 100% of the subsidy after fertilizer is delivered to the farmer and his identity viz. Aadhaar is captured on electronic PoS machine at dealer’s shop. Though a significant improvement, even this is prone to diversion albeit at retail level. This is all the more because anyone(including non-farmers) with Aadhaar unique identity num-ber can buy the subsidized product.

The government has also tried other measures. These include (i) mandatorily requiring all manufac-turers/importers to neem-coatall of urea supplies (2015); (ii) restricting purchase by each purchaser to 100 bags per transaction (down from 999 bags earlier) and capping num-ber of transactions per month (August 2020) and (iii) tracking top 20 urea purchasers in each district and initiating action against those violating purchase norms etc. These too have not delivered.

Now, the government is work-ing on a plan to cap the number of subsidized fertilizer bags that indi-vidual farmers can buy in any cropping season.But,this won’t help either.

In fact, so long as the core of the scheme, i.e., ‘routing subsidy through the manufacturers’ remains intact, there is no way it can make any dent on the scourge of diversion.

The way forward is direct ben-e-fit transfer (DBT) of subsidy. The Government should give subsidy ‘directly’ to the farmers and allow manufacturers to sell at market determined price.This will com-pletely eliminate diversion; when a subsidized product is not available in the marketplace, dubious char-acters will have nothing to prey upon.It will also curb excessive use; when, the product carries the right price tag, farmers will use it judiciously.It will also be possible to target subsidy to poor farmers only.

The contraction in demand from all three sources will yield huge saving in subsidy (quantity effect). There will be an indirect gain as well. India being a major importer of fertilizers, a significant demand-induced cut in import will reduce the international price and in turn, reduce the cost of imports. As a result, subsidy per ton will also decline.

To conclude, DBT will help fis-cal consolidation, reduce trade deficit, reduce imbalance in fertil-izer use, improve soil health, pro-mote sustainable agriculture and environment friendly. There will be losers too: inefficient/high cost pro-ducers who will have to close their shop; dubious traders and corrupt politicians/bureaucratswho make big money from leakage/diversion; rich farmers whoare major benefi-ciaries of extant scheme.

DBT of fertilizer subsidy has been on government’s radar since 2012-13. So far, its launch has been stymied due to the clout of these lobbies. Can the Prime Minister sur-mount it?

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I AM NOT SAYING THAT I AM THE CHIEF MINISTER FACE OF THE CONGRESS IN UTTAR PRADESH ELECTIONS. —CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY PRIYANKA GANDHI



THE CONGRESS IS SO MISERABLE THAT ITS CM CANDIDATE FOR UP ELECTIONS CHANGED HER STAND WITHIN A FEW HOURS. —BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF MAYAWATI

No breakthrough in military-level Indo-China talks

The stalemate will continue and about 75,000 Indian troops will continue to occupy the positions along the LAC facing the PLA

There was no break-through in the marathon military-level talks between India and China on January 13 with Beijing showing reluctance to complete troop disengagement at a fric-tion point in eastern Ladakh and refusing to discuss steps to diffuse the bigger problems of Depsang and Damchok.

The joint statement stated that “representatives from the defence and foreign affairs establishments of the two sides were present at the meeting” and they had “a frank and in-depth exchange of views for the resolution of the relevant issues” along the LAC in the Western Sector.Both sides “also agreed to consolidate on the previous outcomes and take effective efforts to maintain the security and stability on the



PK VASUDEVA

(The writer is former Senior Professor, International Trade and Member, Vivekananda International Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)

ground in the Western Sector including during winter” and to “stay in close contact and main-tain dialogue via military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable res-olution of the remaining issues at the earliest” the statement said.

However, China on January 14 said that it hopes “certain individuals” in India will refrain from making “unconstructive remarks” fol-lowing Indian army chief General M M Naravane’s remarks that the threat in east-ern Ladakh has “by no means reduced” and Indian Army will continue to deal with the Chinese military in a “firm and resolute manner”.

China is unpredictable and is now building a bridge across the Pangong Tso as well as new



roads and helpads within its territory in the region for faster troop mobility, as part of its continuing consolidation of military positions facing India amid the 20-month-long con-frontation in eastern Ladakh.

The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is further strengthening its military infra-structure with additional troop shelters, gun positions, helpads and jetties in the area between ‘Finger-8’ and its military bases to the east at Sirijap-I and II on

the north bank of the Pangong Lake. The new bridge, in turn, is coming up in the Khurnak Fort area further to the east. The bridge is being construct-ed, with prefabricated struc-tures, well within Chinese ter-ritory. But it will help the PLA move troops and weaponry much faster from the north to the south banks of Pangong Tso and vice versa. China obvious-ly wants to counter India’s quick-reaction capability that saw our soldiers take the Kailash Range heights on the south bank towards end-August 2020.

The LAC runs north to south at Finger-8 in the moun-tainous spurs region of the brackish 134-km long Pangong Tso, two-thirds of which is con-trolled by China as it extends from Tibet to India at an alti-

tude of 13,900-feet.

The PLA’s Sirijap complex is around six km east from the LAC at Finger-8, with the Khurnak area being another 20-km beyond it, as per officers who have served in the area. The PLA had captured the Khurnak area in the late-1950s, and then expanded its control westwards to the Sirijap area during the 1962 war.

With India having better connectivity between the two banks of Pangong Tso, China now wants to address the gap. Khurnak is one of the narrow-est points of the lake around mid-way during its length. Once the bridge is ready, the PLA can avoid the long loop through Rudok to reach the south bank. It will provide the PLA with an alternate route.

The subsequent troop dis-

engagement in February last year saw Indian soldiers pull back westwards to their Dhan Singh Thapa post between Finger-2 and Finger-3 and vacate the Kailash range heights. PLA troops, in turn, withdrew to their old positions east of Finger-8 to establish a buffer or no-patrol zone in-between.

China had refused to com-plete the stalled troop disen-gagement at Patrolling Point-15 in the Hot Springs-Gogra-Kongka La area during the 13th round. The standoff at ChardingNinglung Nallah (CNN) track junction at Demchok and the Depsang Plains is considered even more intractable, as was reported earlier. Consequently, the two armies continue to forward deploy around 50,000 troops

each, along with tanks, how-itzers and surface-to-air missile systems, for the second consec-utive winter along the frontier in the forbidding high-alti-tude area.

Consequently, after the 14th round of military level talks between the two giants, the stalemate will continue and about 75,000 Indian troops will continue to occupy the positions along the LAC facing the PLA. India has started constructing two-lane roads, bridges and permanent struc-tures all along the LAC so that troops movement, tanks, how-itzers and other heavy equip-ment can move smoothly to thwart any adventure of PLAand also for the sustenance of Indian troops in the extreme cold weather conditions.



# CAIT accuses Amazon of concealing facts for more retail takeover nod

**New Delhi:** Traders' body CAIT on Monday filed a complaint with the Competition Commission of India against Amazon accusing the e-commerce major of committing a fraud while seeking approval for the takeover of More Retail's stores in India.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) claimed that in case of acquiring More Retail, Amazon committed the same fraud, misrepresentation of facts, misleading the CCI in the matter too as was done in takeover of Future Retail.

"It amply exposes the sinister designs of Amazon to control Indian retail companies in a fraudulent manner to capture the physical retail trade and inventory-based e-commerce in India causing enormous harm to the traders," the traders' body alleged.

CAIT said that Amazon has taken over More Retail through Samara Alternate Investment Fund (Samara AIF) that owns 51 per cent equity in Witzig Advisory LLP that in-turn owns More Retail Limited.

It further stated that Amazon has obtained approval from CCI for the takeover of More Retail Limited "by suppression and concealment". An email sent to Amazon India did not elicit a response.

"As is the case with Future, Amazon has represented to CCI that (a) Amazon has made

# Can't accept offer until legally viable, says FRL ind director on Amazon proposal

**New Delhi:** Independent directors of Future Retail have turned down Amazon's offer of financial support to the company through a deal with private equity firm Samara Capital, saying any legally invalid offer cannot be accepted.

Future Retail's independent directors had last week asked Amazon if it was willing to give a long-term loan to avoid default on repayment of ₹3,500 crore loan due on January 29. Amazon replied to that saying it was willing to financially assist Future Retail through the Samara Capital deal but the retailer must shelve ₹24,713 crore deal with the Reliance group.

Independent directors say Amazon hasn't shown them the money that Future Retail urgently needs to stall being declared a defaulter. They want to know if Amazon can act on behalf of Samara Capital and has the authority to negotiate and finalise such transaction on its behalf.

Speaking to PTI, Ravindra Dhariwal, an independent director of Future Retail Ltd (FRL) said if Amazon wants to help FRL, it needs to show the structure through which it will put the money. "We cannot accept the offer until and unless it is legally valid and unless it comes in time. What is the point of giving an offer after 'chidiya chug gayi khet'...If you want to help, then show us the structure through which you will put the money and we have asked you in good faith to put in ₹3,500 crore now so that we can repay the bank and the company is not treated as NPA and is not liable to IBC," he said.

Amazon told FRL that Samara Capital remains interested in buying out the debt-strapped retailer's businesses such as Big Bazaar for ₹ 7,000 crore, and had asked FRL to provide its financial details to Samara Capital for the private equity fund to conduct expedited due diligence. Dhariwal expressed concern

# World shares mostly lower ahead of Federal Reserve meeting

**Bangkok:** Shares were mostly lower in Europe and Asia on Monday after Wall Street logged its worst week since the pandemic began in 2020.

Shares fell in Paris, London and Frankfurt but rose in Tokyo. Shanghai was little changed.

Investors have been growing increasingly worried about how aggressively the Federal Reserve, which holds a policy meeting this week, might act to cool rising inflation.

Historically low interest rates, dubbed quantitative easing, or QE, have helped support the broader market as the economy absorbed a sharp hit from the pandemic in 2020 and then recovered over the last two years.

"The FOMC (Fed) meeting dominates the macro calendar this week and is likely to keep risk sentiment on the hesitant side with an end to QE and imminent rates hikes likely to be announced," economists Nicholas Mapa and Robert Carnell of ING said in a commentary.

Germany's DAX shed 1.1% to 15,431.03 while the CAC 40 in Paris gave up 1.4% to 6,971.19. In London, the FTSE 100 fell 0.7% to 7,447.03.

The futures for the S&P 500 and the Dow industrials gained 0.3%.

Some economists believe the Fed and other central banks need to move faster to tamp down surging prices by raising rates.

U.S. Consumer prices rose 7% in December compared to a year earlier, the biggest increase in nearly four decades.

Rising costs are raising concerns that consumers will start to ease spending because of the persistent pressure on their wallets. **AP**

# Rupee slumps to 3-week low against US dollar on geo-political worries

**Mumbai:** The rupee on Monday slumped by 17 paise to close at a more than three-week low of 74.60 against the US dollar due to high crude oil prices, forex outflows and heavy losses in domestic equities amid growing geopolitical worries. Forex traders said

the strength of the American currency in the overseas market and weak appetite for riskier assets also dragged down the local unit. Moreover, market participants are now eyeing the US Fed's January 25-26 meeting for further cues.

"The Indian rupee has weakened amid the big crack witnessed in domestic equities in tandem with other Asian markets. The sentiments are quite fragile in the markets amid the geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe and as investors are fretting over the possibility of

a quicker pace of interest rate hikes in the US," Sugandha Sachdeva, Vice President - Commodity and Currency Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Riskier assets have come under pressure amid the prospects of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. The US and the UK have advised the families of their diplomats in Ukraine to leave the country. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 74.43 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.42 and a low

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	17,575.15	17,599.40	16,997.85	17,149.10	-468.05	
CIPLA	871.5	895	867.45	892.3	24.85	
ONGC	1652	1683	1637.5	165	1.35	
INDUSNBK	859	869.3	831.55	850.5	-3.6	
POWERGRID	2164	2175	211.5	213.5	-1.6	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3,421.00	3,454.20	3,350.00	3,390.05	-29.75	
BHARTIARTL	690.3	707	677.35	687.65	-7.6	
SBIIFE	1,240.00	1,240.00	1,205.15	1,226.95	-13.7	
IOC	121	122.45	119.9	120.2	-1.5	
AXISBANK	715	716.4	688.2	703.3	-9.2	
COALINDIA	1582	1604	1548	1565.5	-22	
HEROMOTOCO	2,740.00	2,769.40	2,667.55	2,712.00	-38.1	
SUNPHARMA	804	825	791.6	797	-11.75	
ICICIBANK	813	816.7	783.3	792	-12.5	
TCS	3,840.00	3,849.65	3,740.10	3,769.95	-63.55	
NESTLEIND	18,974.25	19,040.00	18,600.00	18,660.00	-314.25	
NTPC	133	135.25	131	131.85	-2.25	
SARIN	502.4	506.8	488	493.7	-9	
MARUTI	8,189.00	8,332.80	7,952.80	8,038.45	-151.15	
HINDUNILVR	2,338.90	2,344.95	2,266.70	2,282.00	-43.4	
HDFCLIFE	639.85	639.85	619.1	628.5	-12.95	
EICHERMOT	2,695.20	2,729.15	2,621.50	2,653.00	-58.1	
M&M	871.2	878.35	860.85	855.4	-19.8	
BPCL	381.4	383.85	370.1	373.05	-8.65	
HDFCBANK	1,509.95	1,525.25	1,467.55	1,484.60	-37	
ITC	217.05	217.15	210.9	211.65	-5.4	
HDFC	2,571.65	2,601.80	2,510.35	2,528.00	-64.95	
SHREECEM	25,182.60	25,289.95	24,072.60	24,359.55	-677.65	
INVS	1,765.00	1,768.65	1,728.00	1,734.00	-51.7	
DIVISLAB	4,189.00	4,190.00	3,788.95	4,056.00	-123.4	
BIT	1,955.00	1,959.00	1,881.55	1,897.00	-59.05	
BRITANNIA	3,610.00	3,626.55	3,505.00	3,505.00	-113.3	
ULTRACEMCO	7,360.00	7,365.00	7,088.65	7,125.00	-232.65	
ADANIPORTS	723.9	725.25	689	700.9	-23	
DREDDY	4,486.10	4,489.80	4,311.00	4,350.20	-145.95	
UPL	776.7	786	755.5	759	-27.9	
KOTAKBANK	1,884.10	1,887.90	1,810.00	1,824.50	-69.25	
ASIANPAINT	3,260.00	3,270.00	3,135.00	3,148.70	-126.15	
HCTECH	1,162.50	1,164.50	1,111.00	1,122.80	-45.15	
RELIANCE	2,475.00	2,504.75	2,355.10	2,379.90	-97.95	
BAJAJFINSV	16,388.50	16,433.95	15,444.00	15,660.00	-675.2	
TATAMOTORS	499.7	504.3	473.35	477.65	-24.2	
TATACONSUM	725	725	688.5	691.55	-35	
TITAN	2,520.00	2,522.55	2,376.00	2,403.00	-125.15	
WIPRO	605.5	605.5	568.45	572	-33.05	
TECHM	1,588.00	1,588.00	1,501.95	1,505.30	-88.25	
HINDALCO	498.95	500.5	475.5	477.5	-29.2	
GRASIM	1,791.80	1,791.80	1,684.00	1,688.00	-104.1	
TATASTEEL	1,160.00	1,163.65	1,090.00	1,100.50	-69.2	
BAJFINANCE	7,350.00	7,350.00	6,817.70	6,904.75	-469	
JSWSTEEL	656.5	657	618	620.15	-46.1	

BSE 500						
Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	Change	
TATAPOWER	242.1	243.85	226.7	229.55	-5.8	
RELIANCE	2478.1	2504.1	2352.7	2377.55	-46.08	
TCS	3841	3850.15	3741	3771.5	-54.15	
ICICIBANK	818.8	818.8	782.7	798.12	-19.54	
TATAMOTORS	500.5	504.25	473.45	478.55	-12.24	
WIPRO	605.2	605.2	568.75	572.85	-26.58	
MPSL	933.1	933.15	891.75	909.45	-21.4	
INFY	1770	1770	1728.45	1736.9	-18.7	
STLTECH	209.3	212.8	199	200.65	-13.05	
IDEA	11.4	11.4	10.75	10.95	-0.6	
SBIN	502.1	506.65	488.05	494.1	-6.6	
BAJFINANCE	7368	7368	6821.05	6932.75	-45.25	
DMART	4300	4316	3975.25	4036.4	-26.6	
SAIL	101.8	102.25	96.35	97.4	-4.45	
TATAELXSI	7251	7525.6	6834.05	7047.9	-216.55	
TATASTEEL	1164.4	1164.4	1090.1	1099.15	-64.25	
ZEEL	289.4	290.8	262.6	268.05	-20.75	
IRCTC	859	859.3	805.2	810.2	-49.1	
KPITTECH	673	699	610.1	630.85	-42.55	
NAUKRI	4750	4764.9	4409.55	4502.95	-246.95	
ITC	217.05	217.8	210.85	211.75	-5.8	
DIXON	4975	4983.6	4588.25	4624.05	-155.35	
BALDHANBNK	302.9	310.85	296	307.4	-6.45	
BSOFT	480	481.9	442	450.6	-29.3	
HCLTECH	1166	1166	1111	1123.05	-43	
TECHM	1588	1588	1502	1512.15	-76	
DEEPAKNI	2518.45	2518.45	2340	2364.1	-154.35	
SONACOMS	696.05	702.95	607.75	650.4	-45.2	
JSWSTEEL	659.8	659.8	618.6	621.9	-37.9	
HFCL	84.3	84.85	77.5	78.95	-6.4	
SUZLON	11.68	12.1	11.08	11.08	-0.6	
YESBANK	14.2	14.24	13.4	13.47	-0.77	
ASIANPAINT	3284.9	3284.9	3136	3158.5	-126.4	
HINDUNILVR	2332	2344.55	2267.15	2286.1	-58.45	
ANGLO	1515	1515	1248.75	1340.2	-174.75	
BAJAJFINSV	16,506.75	16,506.75	15,439.15	15,707.95	-798.8	
ADANIENIT	1812	1827	1697.85	1715.9	-106.95	
ONGC	166.7	168.25	163.75	165.5	-3.25	
MINDTREE	4110	4110	3841	3889.7	-220.3	
AXISBANK	715	715.8	688.3	704.35	-11.65	
LTI	6396.1	6438.35	5830.1	5970.2	-468.15	
IEX	251.6	252.3	236.25	240.25	-11.35	
IBULHSGFIN	220.15	221.2	206.4	209.35	-11.85	
RBLBANK	146.5	147.8	135.5	137.55	-9.95	
BANKBARODA	9.26	9.36	90.7	92.6	-1.9	
BHEL	60	60.1	56.4	57.3	-2.7	
LTTS	4810.4	4815.5	4480	4558.15	-252.25	
TATACONSUM	722.35	725.5	688.25	692.15	-30.2	
ADANIPOWER	109.7	110	102.05	102.85	-6.9	
ALOKTEXT	31.5	32.1	28.25	28.85	-2.65	
VEDL	322.75	325.75	310.15	312.1	-10.65	
SBICARD	853.65	853.65	800.05	814.1	-39.55	
PIRAJIND	418	426	383.35	395.35	-22.65	
MARUTI	8199	8333.05	7954.4	8047.3	-158.65	
M&M	874.45	878.05	848.45	854.1	-20.35	
GODREBANK	1518.95	1520.15	1467.95	1487.45	-31.5	
HDFCPRIPROP	1798.85	1801.15	1627.75	1654.75	-134.1	
JINDALSTEEL	401.2	402.95	371	376.9	-24.35	
BPCL	381.7	388.65	370.1	373	-18.65	
TITAN	2518	2520	2376.1	2402.95	-115.05	
IBREALEST	159	160.5	143.9	146.35	-1.15	
HINDALCO	500.9	500.9	475.65	478.6	-22.25	
SUNPHARMA	805	824.85	791.65	799.9	-24.95	
PERERSISTENT	4305	4305	4041.05	4065.8	-239.15	
DIVISLAB	4180	4191.95	3790	4043.8	-147.15	
TATACHEM	961	961.6	903.35	912.05	-49.3	
LAURUSLABS	481	481	460.55	469.05	-11.95	
NATIONALUM	108	108	100.45	101.15	-0.7	
CIPLA	868.55	895	867.45	891.7	23.15	
HDFC	2552	2602.3	2511	2538.95	86.65	
PNB	39	39.05	37.3	38	-1.05	
BIOCON	378.4	379.5	367.65	372.55	-6.95	
ASHOKLEY	137.05	138.75	130.6	132.8	-4.25	
BHARTIARTL	694	707.15	677.5	689.6	12.15	
INDUSINDBK	875	875	831.8	849.85	18.05	
GAIL	140.6	143.65	138.65	140.9	-2.75	
JUBLFOOD	3680	3695.35	3475	3501.4	-173.95	
INDIAMART	6118	6172.3	5720	5842.6	-269.7	
SRTTRANSFIN	1198	1200.45	1140.25	1154.6	-45.85	
LUPIN	902.05	933	898.45	921.65	23.15	
DELTACORP	285.4	289	264.85	267.15	-18.25	
PVR	1535.9	1557	1478.2	1517.05	-18.85	
DABUR	552	554.2	541	546.5	-7.7	
BEL	205.4	208.6	195.15	197.1	-8.45	
CANBK	217.1	217.1	204.75	208.75	-8.35	
DLF	396	396	365.7	371.95	-24.05	
ASTRAL	2378.05	2378.1	2151	2171.95	-206.1	
ZENSARTECH	442	444.15	409.05	416.3	-27.85	
SERF	2463.55	2485.4	2350.2	2369.3	-124.25	
ADANIPORTS	728	728	689.15	703.2	-38.85	
HDFCAMC	2387.95	2387.95	2235.8	2260.45	-127.5	
IDFCFIRSTB	46.75	47	44.1	44.65	-2.1	
ADANIGREEN	1937.2	1945.95	1838.55	1838.55	-5.4	
RAMCOCEM	939.55	939.55	887.7	896.9	-42.65	
FEDERALBNK	93.9	94.75	90.25	91.85	-2.1	
GREAVESCOT	234.15	239.4	210.5	210.5	-28.95	
HINDCOPPER	130.5	130.7	118.3	120.75	-10.75	
LALPATHLAB	2967.1	3000	2822.9	2869.1	-37.9	
L&TTH	75.4	76	72.15	73.3	-2.15	</



# WHO chief warns against talk of ‘endgame’ in pandemic

AP ■ GENEVA

The head of the World Health Organisation is warning that conditions remain ideal for more coronavirus variants to emerge and says it's dangerous to assume omicron is the last one or that "we are in the endgame", while saying the acute phase of the pandemic could still end this year - if some key targets are met.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO's director-general, laid out Monday an array of achievements and concerns in global health over issues like reducing tobacco use, fighting resistance to antimicrobial treatments, and risks of climate change on human health.

But he said "ending the acute phase of the pandemic must remain our collective priority". "There are different

scenarios for how the pandemic could play out and how the acute phase could end. But it's dangerous to assume that omicron will be the last variant or that we are in the endgame," Tedros told the start of a WHO executive board meeting this week.

"On the contrary, globally, the conditions are ideal for more variants to emerge." But he insisted that "we can end COVID-19 as a global health emergency, and we can do it this year", by reaching goals like WHO's target to vaccinate 70 per cent of the population of each country by the middle of this year, with a focus on people who are at the highest risk of COVID-19, and improving testing and sequencing rates to track the virus and its emerging variants more closely.

"It's true that we will be living with COVID for the fore-

seeable future and that we will need to learn to manage it through a sustained and integrated system for acute respiratory diseases" to help prepare for future pandemics, he said.

"But learning to live with COVID cannot mean that we give this virus a free ride. It cannot mean that we accept almost 50,000 deaths a week from a preventable and treatable disease."

In stark terms, Tedros also appealed for strengthening WHO and increasing funding for it to help stave off health crises. "Let me put it plainly: If the current funding model continues, WHO is being set up to fail.

The paradigm shift in world health that is needed now must be matched by a paradigm shift in funding the world's health organisation," he said.

## Omicron may not evade all monoclonal antibodies, lab study suggests

**Washington:**The Omicron variant of coronavirus may evade several, but not all, monoclonal antibodies used clinically to prevent patients from developing severe COVID-19, according to a laboratory study. Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-made proteins that mimic immune system's ability to fight off harmful pathogens such as viruses. Several past studies have shown that such antibodies are unsuccessful in neutralising Omicron. The team led by researchers at Washington University, US, tested five antibody combinations, including those discovered at Vanderbilt University Medical Centre (VUMC) in the US. *PTI*

## Pakistani Hindu lawmaker says he will visit India with pilgrims

**Islamabad:** A Hindu lawmaker from ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf party said on Monday that he will travel to India later this week with a delegation of pilgrims. In a statement issued here, Patron-in-chief of Pakistan Hindu Council and Member of National Assembly Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani said that delegation would go to India on January 29 on a special chartered flight of Pakistan Airlines International (PIA) and would stay there for three days. During their stay, the delegation will visit Dargah Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi, Dargah Khawaja Gharib Nawaz in Ajmer and Taj Mahal in Agra.

## Taliban begin talks in Norway as hunger stalks Afghanistan

**Oslo:** A Taliban delegation led by acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi on Sunday started three days of talks in Oslo with Western officials and Afghan civil society representatives amid a deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

The closed-door meetings are taking place at a hotel in the snow-capped mountains above the Norwegian capital. On Sunday, Taliban representatives were meeting with women's rights activists and human rights defenders from Afghanistan and from the Afghan diaspora. Before the talks, the Taliban's deputy minister of culture and information tweeted a voice message from Muttaqi, expressing hope for "a good trip full of achievements"

and thanking Norway, a country he hoped will become "a gateway for a positive relationship with Europe." The trip is the first time since the Taliban took over in August that their representatives have held official meetings in Europe. Earlier, they have traveled to Russia, Iran, Qatar, Pakistan, China and Turkmenistan.

During the talks, Muttaqi is certain to press the Taliban's demand that nearly \$10 billion frozen by the United States and other Western countries be released as Afghanistan faces a precarious humanitarian situation. The United Nations has managed to provide some liquidity and allowed the new administration to pay for imports, including electricity.

But the U.N. Has warned that as many as 1 million Afghan children are in danger of starving and most of the country's 38 million people are living below the poverty line.

The Norwegian Foreign Ministry said the Taliban delegation would also meet with Afghans in Norway, including "women leaders, journalists and people who work with, among other things, human rights and humanitarian, economic, social and political issues."

"Norway continues to engage in dialogue with Taliban to promote human rights, women's participation in society, and to strengthen humanitarian and economic efforts in Afghanistan," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

## NATO outlines ‘deterrence’ plan as tensions with Russia soar

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Tensions soared Monday between Russia and West, with NATO outlining a series of potential troop and ship deployments and Ireland warning that upcoming Russian war games off its coast would not be welcome while concerns abound that Moscow is planning to invade Ukraine.

The Western alliance's statement summed up moves already announced by individual member countries - but restating them under the NATO banner appeared aimed at showing alliance's resolve.

It was just one of a series of announcements that signalled West is ramping up its rhetoric in information war that has accompanied Ukraine standoff.

Russia has massed an estimated 100,000 troops near Ukraine's border and is demanding that NATO promise it will never allow Ukraine to join and that other actions, such as stationing alliance troops in former Soviet bloc countries, be curtailed.

Some of these, like any pledge to permanently bar Ukraine, are non-starters for NATO - creating a seemingly intractable standoff that many fear can only end in war.

Russia denies it is planning an invasion, and has said Western accusations are merely a cover for NATO's own planned provocations. Recent days have seen high-stakes diplomacy that failed to reach any breakthrough and maneuvering on both sides.

On Monday, NATO said that it is beefing up its "deterrence" in Baltic Sea area. Denmark is sending a frigate and deploying F-16 war planes to Lithuania; Spain is sending three ships to join NATO naval forces and four fighter jets to Bulgaria; and France stands ready to send troops to Romania. The Netherlands also plans to send two F-35 fighter aircraft to Bulgaria from April. Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said alliance will "take all necessary measures to protect and defend

all allies." He said: "We will always respond to any deterioration of our security environment, including through strengthening our collective defence." Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov charged that it was NATO and US who were behind "tensions escalating" in Europe, not Russia.

"All this is happening not because of what we, Russia, are doing. This is happening because of what NATO, the US are doing," Peskov said during a conference call with reporters. He also cited US media reports suggesting that Russia is evacuating its diplomats from Ukraine, something officials in Moscow denied. The NATO announcement came as European Union foreign ministers sought to put on a fresh display of unity in support of Ukraine, and paper over concerns about divisions on best way to confront any Russian aggression.

In a statement, the ministers said EU has stepped up sanction preparations and they warned that "any further military aggression by Russia against Ukraine will have massive consequences and severe costs". Separately, the EU also committed to increase financial support for embattled Ukraine, vowing to push through a special package of 1.2 billion euros (\$1.4 billion) in loans and grants as soon as possible.

The West is nervously watching Russian troop movements and war games in Belarus for any signs that a new invasion of Ukraine is imminent. Russia has already invaded Ukraine once, annexing Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

Moscow has also supported pro-Russian Ukrainian separatists fighting Kyiv government in Donbass region. Fighting in eastern Ukraine has killed around 14,000 people and still simmers. Asked whether EU would follow a US move and order the families of European embassy personnel in Ukraine to leave, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said: "We are not going to do same thing."

## China sends 39 warplanes toward Taiwan, largest in new year

AP ■ TAIPEI

China flew 39 warplanes toward Taiwan in its largest such sortie of the new year, continuing a pattern that the island has answered by scrambling its own jets in response.

The formation Sunday night included 24 J-16 fighter jets and 10 J-10 jets, among other support aircraft and electronic warfare aircraft, according to Taiwan's defense ministry.

Taiwan's air force scrambled its own jets and tracked the People's Liberation Army planes on its air defense radar systems, the defense ministry said. Chinese pilots have been flying towards Taiwan on a near-daily basis in the past year and a half, since Taiwan's government started publishing the data regularly.

The largest sortie was 56 warplanes on a single day last October. The activity has gen-

erally been in the air space southwest of Taiwan and falls into what Taiwan's military calls the air defense identification zone, or air space it monitors out of national security considerations.

Taiwan and China split during a civil war in 1949, but China claims the island as its own territory. As a result, Beijing opposes any

action that would identify Taiwan as a sovereign state and has used diplomatic and military means to isolate and intimidate Taiwan.

Tensions have been high since Taiwanese citizens elected Tsai Ing-wen as president in 2016, to which Beijing responded by cutting off previously established communications with the island's government. Tsai's predecessor was friendly to China and had endorsed Beijing's claim that the two are part of a single Chinese nation.

## Pakistan inducts China-made multi-role frigate in its navy

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Monday inducted a China-made multi-role frigate and 10 helicopters provided by Qatar in its navy as part of efforts to strengthen its sea frontiers.

The induction ceremony of PNS Tughril, the first of four Type 054-A/P frigates, made by China and 10 Sea King helicopters was held at PN Dockyard, Karachi, according to a statement by Pakistan Navy (PN).

The contract for four multi-role frigates for Pakistan Navy was signed between Pakistan and China in June 2018 and the PNS Tughril is the lead ship of Type 054-A/P, while the Sea King helicopters were gifted by Qatar.

PNS Tughril is the first ship of its kind that was built at a shipyard in Shanghai. It is a multi-mission capable ship, fitted with weapons such as Surface-to-Air (SAM) and Supersonic Surface-to-Surface Missiles (SSM).

"The state-of-the-art ship can carry out numerous maritime operations due to installation of weapons and sensors," according to the PN statement.

President Dr Arif Alvi, who was the guest of honour at the event, expressed satisfaction and confidence that a highly capable Pakistan Navy Fleet and its air arm will continue promoting peace and stability while "guarding our maritime frontiers".

Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi, underlined that the new inductions would further augment PN combat capabilities.

## UAE shoots down 2 ballistic missiles fired by Houthis over Abu Dhabi

PTI ■ DUBAI

The UAE defence forces on Monday intercepted and destroyed two ballistic missiles that Houthi terror group fired towards its capital Abu Dhabi, days after two Indians and a Pakistani were killed in a rare drone and missile attack claimed by Yemeni rebels.

The attack did not result in any human losses, the Ministry of Defence said, adding that the remnants of intercepted and destroyed ballistic missiles fell in separate areas around Abu Dhabi. "The air defences had intercepted and destroyed two ballistic missiles fired by terrorist Houthi group towards country on Monday," the ministry announced on Twitter. In response to attack, the Joint Operations Command of the UAE's Ministry of Defence (MOD) "immediately" destroyed a ballistic missile launcher in Yemen's Al Jawf province after it fired two missiles at Abu Dhabi.

The ministry also shared a video on Twitter showing an F-16 fighter jet destroying ballistic missile launcher in Yemen. "MOD Joint Operations Command announces that at 04:10 hrs Yemen time an F-16 destroyed a ballistic missile launcher in Al Jawf, immediately after it launched two ballistic missiles at Abu Dhabi. They were successfully intercepted by our air defence systems," ministry said in a tweet. In a statement, the ministry affirmed its "full readiness to deal with any threats," adding that it will "take all necessary measures to protect UAE from any attacks," according to official WAM news agency.

## More anti-coup protests as turmoil in Sudan continues

AP ■ CAIRO

Thousands of Sudanese took to streets in capital of Khartoum and other cities Monday, activists said, continuing relentless anti-coup protests that have rocked country since a military coup three months ago. Security forces fired tear gas to disperse protesters in several locations in capital, including area around fortified presidential palace, which has seen clashes in previous rounds of protests since Oct 25 coup, according to activists.

The military takeover has upended Sudan's transition to democratic rule after three decades of repression and international isolation under

autocratic President Omar al-Bashir. The African nation has been on a fragile path to democracy since a popular uprising forced the military to remove al-Bashir and his Islamist government in April 2019. Protesters, mostly young people, marched Monday in streets of Khartoum and its sister city of Omdurman, according to pro-democracy movement. There were also protests elsewhere in country, including provinces of Kassala, Red Sea, Jazira and already restive Darfur region movement said.

Footage circulated online showed security forces attempting to disperse protests with tear gas. Protesters were seen taking cover and hurling stones at the troops.

## Pak journalist shot dead outside Lahore press club

PTI ■ LAHORE

A senior Pakistani journalist was shot dead by unidentified men outside Lahore Press Club (LPC) here on Monday, police said. "Hasnain Shah, who was in his 40s, was parking his car outside press club when two motorcyclists opened indiscriminate fire, killing him on spot," an official of Inspector General Police (IGP) Punjab official told PTI.

Both armed men managed to flee congested area, he said. Shah, a resident of Lahore, was working as Crime Reporter for Capital TV.

He is survived by his wife and two children. "We

are investigating reports that he had enmity with some people," official said. Meanwhile, IGP Rao Sardar Ali Khan has directed Lahore police chief to ensure arrest of culprits airtight.

The journalists' associations in Pakistan have condemned Shah's killing and demanded Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government to arrest his killers.

"A journalist's murder in front of Lahore Press Club in a broad daylight is a moment of reflection for government," Lahore Press Club President Azam Chaudhry said. According to UN data, 85 journalists have been killed in Pakistan since 1993, including four in 2021.

## Burkina Faso's President Kabore is held by mutinous soldiers

AP ■ (BURKINA FASO)

Burkina Faso's President Roch Marc Christian Kabore is being held by mutinous soldiers, two of the soldiers told The Associated Press by phone early Monday. They did not say where Kabore is being held, but said he is in a safe place.

Gunshots were heard late Sunday night near the president's residence and in the early hours of Monday a battle took place at the presidential palace while a helicopter flew overhead. The roads of the capital were empty Sunday night except for checkpoints heavily guarded by mutinous soldiers. State news station RTB was heavily guarded on Monday morning. *PTI*

## Julian Assange wins right to appeal extradition in UK Supreme Court

**London:** Wikileaks founder Julian Assange on Monday won the latest round in his legal battle against being extradited to the US, as High Court judges in London granted the Australian national permission to take his extradition appeal to the UK's Supreme Court. The 50-year-old is wanted in America over the leak of thousands of classified documents related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. His lawyers argued that he should not be taken to the US because of a real and "oppressive" risk of suicide. Last month, the US authorities won an appeal against a previous court ruling that he could not be extradited due to concerns over his mental health. *PTI*

## FROM PAGE 1

## MODI INTERACTS WITH PM BAL AWARDEES

Talking to Kumari Remona Evette Pereira from Karnataka, the Prime Minister discussed her passion for Indian Dance. He inquired about the difficulties she faced in pursuing her passion. The Prime Minister complimented her mother for ignoring her own adversities to realise her daughter's dreams.

Interacting with Kumari Puhabi Chakraborti of Tripura, the Prime Minister enquired about her Covid related innovation. She also informed the Prime Minister about her fitness app for sportspersons.

Talking with Master Dhiraj Kumar from West Champaran, Bihar, the Prime Minister asked about the incident where he saved his younger brother from a crocodile attack. Prime Minister asked about his state of mind while saving his younger brother and how he feels after the fame he got now.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister noted that these awards become all the more significant in the light of the fact that they have been conferred during the important period when the country is celebrating 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

He said this is the time to draw energy from the past and dedicate oneself to achieving great results in the coming 25 years of the Amrit kaal.

Modi also greeted the daughters of the country on National Girl Child Day. The Prime Minister remembered the glorious history of the Freedom Struggle and the contribution of Birlaba Kanaklata Barua, Khudiram Bose and Rani Gaidinliu.

"These fighters had made the country's freedom the mission of their lives at a very young age and had dedicated themselves for it," the Prime Minister noted.

The Prime Minister remarked that a digital statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose has also been installed near India Gate in Delhi. "We get the biggest inspiration from Netaji - duty of the nation first. Taking inspiration from Netaji, you have to proceed on the path of duty for the country", Modi added.

He referred to increasing role of women in the national development. The Prime Minister said in areas where daughters were not even allowed earlier, daughters are doing wonders in them today.

"This is the new India, which does not hold back from innovating, courage and determination are the hallmarks of India today", he said.

## CAPT GETS 37 SEATS, BJP 65 IN PUNJAB POLL DEAL

Taking on his bete-noire and Congress' Punjab unit chief Navjot Sidhu, Singh said, "Our bravehearts are fighting Pakistan at the borders.

Yet, Sidhu wants to hug it out with the enemy." Singh was referring to Sidhu hugging Pakistan Army Chief General Bajwa during the oath taking ceremony of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan.

After resigning from Punjab chief ministership, Singh quit the Congress and floated his own party Punjab Lok Congress and forged alliance with the BJP and SAD (Sanyukti). The BJP's is paying the role of senior partner in the alliance in Punjab, where it had always played second fiddle in its more than two-decade long alliance with the Shiromani Akali Dal.

Elections for 117 seats in Punjab will be held in single phase on February 20. Punjab is likely to see a five-cornered contest this election between the farmers' political outfit, the BJP and its allies, Congress, AAP and SAD.

## COVID SPIKE IN SE ASIA DRIVEN BY INDIA: WHO

nevertheless have resulted in significant increases in hospitalisation, continue to pose overwhelming demands on health care systems in most countries, and may lead to significant morbidity, particularly in vulnerable populations," the WHO said.

In India, with the addition of 3,06 lakh cases reported on Monday, the Covid tally in India -- the second worst-hit country after the US -- now stands at 3.95 crore.

The active cases now comprise 5.69 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has decreased to 93.07 per cent.

As many as 439 people have died of Covid during the past 24-hour period, according to the Health Ministry. At least 60 per cent of the patients who died during the current wave of Covid pandemic were either partially or fully unvaccinated, said the government in a statement.

Maharashtra added 40,805 COVID-19 cases, taking its tally to 75,07,225, while 44 fatalities put the total number of deaths at 1,42,115. Delhi added 9,197 new cases, which is 19 per cent lower than yesterday's number (11,486). At 13.3 per cent, the pos-

itivity rate (the number of cases detected per 100 tests) saw a dip from 16.3 per cent a day before. The national capital also reported 35 Covid deaths in the last 24 hours. The number of daily cases in Delhi has been declining after touching the record high of 28,867 on January 13.

In the south, Karnataka reported 50,210 Covid cases in the last 24 hours, two days after the State lifted the weekend curfew. Presently, there are as many over 3.57 lakh active cases in the state. On the other hand, the daily Covid curve in Tamil Nadu saw a marginal improvement with the state registering 30,580 new infections.

## INVESTORS LOSE ₹9L CR AS MARKETS PLUMMET

It has been a quite broad-based correction across sectors and marketcaps, although the more expensively valued names and the recent IPO new age companies have seen a sharper cut," Milind Muchhala, Executive Director, Julius Baer, told news agency PTI. The weakness largely mimics the rot in the global markets over the past couple of weeks, especially in the US markets, on continuing concerns of sticky inflation and Fed's action/rhetoric, he added.

PTI quoted Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, saying, "Sell-off in global markets, weak Q3 results, and pre-budget nervousness triggered heavy sell-off in the domestic bourses as risk sentiment took a blow ahead of the FOMC meeting starting tomorrow." Investors are keenly awaiting the result of the two-day Fed meeting where the US Central Bank is expected to provide more guidance on its rate hike plans, he added. While all sectors hit rough weather, stocks of the new-age tech companies were the most affected due to a drop in growth of profitability amid expensive valuations, Nair said. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong and Seoul ended with losses, while Tokyo and Shanghai were positive. Equities in Europe were witnessing intense selling pressure in mid-session deals. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.32 percent to USD 88.17 per barrel.

On the forex market front, the rupee weakened by 17 paise to end at 74.60 against the US dollar on Monday. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net sellers in the capital market, as they sold shares worth ₹3,148.58 crore on Friday, according to stock exchange data.

## AI'S HANDOVER TO TATAS EXPECTED ON JAN 27

In his email, Hejmadi appreciated the employees for their works and sought support from them.

"We have done an excellent job till now in providing all support for the disinvestment exercise. The next three days will be hectic for our department and I request all of you to give your best in these last three four days before we get divested," he added.

"If there is no disagreement on the balance sheet, it would be handed over any day after Republic Day", said sources in the Ministry. The Government has decided to complete the process on January 27 and will decide whether the company will take over the airline now or not. The handover was to be done in December but got delayed due to the various pending approvals. Following delays in finalising the balance sheet of the airline and procuring the necessary approvals from global regulators, the targeted timeline for the closure of the agreement was extended till January end.

The transfer of Air India to Tata Group was earlier supposed to be concluded on 23 January. However, this has since then been pushed by a few days and will be concluded by end of the month," sources added.

As per the RTI reply by the ministry of civil aviation, the various Government departments and ministries had pending payments amounting to Rs 278.49 crore to Air India till October last year.

The Government on October 11, 2021, issued a Letter of Intent (LoI) to the Tata group confirming the Government's willingness to sell its 100 per cent stake in the airline. On October 25, the Centre signed the share purchase agreement (SPA) for this deal. As a part of the deal, the Tata group will also be handed over Air India Express and a 50 percent stake in ground handling arm Air India SATS.

Tatas had on October 8 beat the Rs 15,100-crore offer by a consortium led by SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh and the reserve price of Rs 12,906 crore set by the government for the sale of its 100 percent stake in the loss-making carrier.

While this will be the first privatisation since 2003-04, Air India will be the third airline brand in the Tatas' stable - it holds a majority interest in AirAsia India and Vistara, a joint venture with Singapore Airlines Ltd.




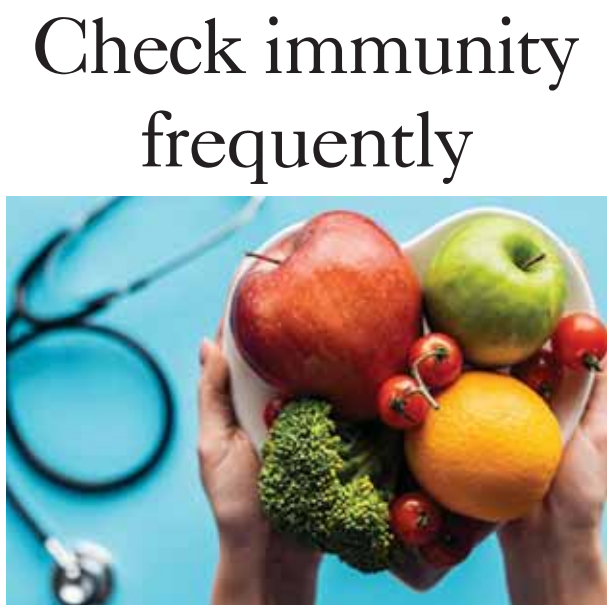
**DOCYARD**

DR PANKAJ AGGARWAL

M D (Hom),  
PhD Senior Homeopath

AGRAWAL HOMOEOPATHIC CLINIC





Every new year we make a number of resolutions and promise ourselves to achieve some specific goals. Some of us promise ourselves to avoid drinking and smoking. Some want to achieve study goals while others say they want to hit the gym from January 1 itself. There is thus no dearth of promises and resolutions. But there is one most important resolution which is a foundational one and a key to success in all areas of your life. Isn't that your health? We all must take a pledge and resolve to stay healthy. It is a supreme goal that we can gift ourselves so that we can stay healthy and disease free this new year and build upon it.

There are many medical systems. Each perhaps has its own place in the overall architecture of the health environment. Homeopathy is one of the best systems that can be adopted to maintain a disease free and healthy lifestyle.

There are a number of homeopathic remedies which can be adopted in our day to day life to improve the quality of our health. They are not highly invasive therapies but smooth and impactful. **The most effective and widely accepted methods are:-**

**Check your immunity**  
Immunity is defined as the capability of an individual's body to fight against any infectious disease or illness. Nowadays we often hear that people with low immunity are vulnerable and have a higher chance of getting infected by COVID. But there is no need for any fancy medication to improve immunity. There are a number of remedies that can be suggested to have a strong immunity. Gelsemium, Arsenicum album, Oscillococcinum, Allium Cepa and Lycopodium 30 are few remedies suggested under homeopathy to increase immunity. But to have learnt their names does not mean that you can buy it and take it. Please consult a professional homeopath. In our system generally one size does not fit all.

**Look after your mental health**  
Living in this world of stress, anxiety, depression and god knows what other mental sins one is used to which remain elusive and we often get confined with these that can create future problems. All these mind games have a very bad effect on our health which can be seen in the longer run. The uniqueness of Homeopathy is that it deals with all the habits and early signs that forewarns any major health issues. If not cured at the early stage Stress, anxiety, depression may lead to serious possible conditions like heart attack, kidney failure, liver failure and even brain hemorrhage. If you are suffering from any of the aforementioned problems, immediately consult your homeopathic doctor. Homeopathic medicines like Aconite, Argentum nitricum, Arsenicum album, Gelsemium and Ignatia can be used under such circumstances. But as it is always necessary to emphasize self medication is not advised and can be dangerous.

**Regular check-ups**  
Homeopathy follows the mantra of curing the disease before it occurs. It simply means to eradicate the early symptoms of any disease before it hits you hard. This can be done by regular check-ups with your homeopathic professional. Update your calendar for a monthly routine check-up with your homeopathic doctor to have a regular track of your blood sugar levels, cholesterol level, blood pressure and other vitals.


**Take care of heart**  
Heart plays the most crucial role in our body but is very sensitive at the same time. It is very important to look after our cardiac health and be aware of any early symptoms if seen. Cardiac arrest is the most common cause of death that kills millions of people every year but it can be prevented using homeopathic treatment. Homeopathy suggests use of naturally synthesized medications that do not have any adverse effect on our heart. Aconitum Napellus, Arnica Montana, Cactus Grandiflorus and Digitalis Purpurea can be used in times of heart related issues. Again it is important to note all these medicines can be prescribed under the care of a homeopathic doctor.

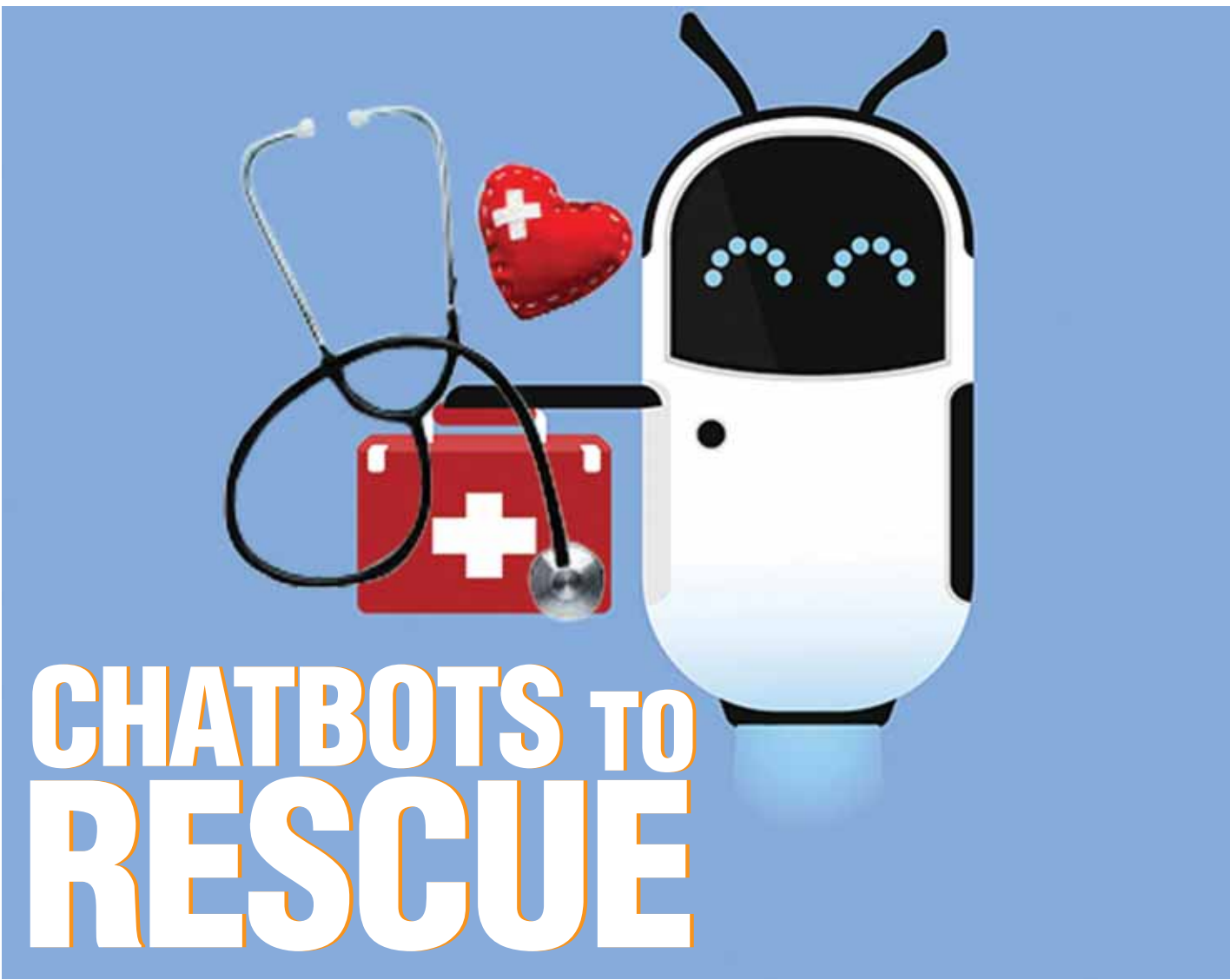
**No to bad habits**  
Most of us have become slaves of our habits. Some adopt good habits while the majority are prone to destructive habits for getting fleeting pleasures and excitement. Peer pressure is another important factor. Smoking, drinking, junk eating, all these habits are going to be a burden for the future. Homeopathy has a cure for addiction like alcoholism and smoking. Homeopathic treatment is seen as effective towards alcoholism and smoking and provides faster results as well. Natrium Mur, Avena Sativa, Nux Vomica, Kalium Bich, Silicea, Sterculia and Strychninum Nit are some of the common remedies that can be used to cure addictions.

**WARMFOOD**

**GREEN BEANS:** Green beans are low in calories, but they are high in nutrients that have a variety of health advantages. Vitamin C, flavonols, quercetin, and kaempferol are all antioxidants found in green legumes. These antioxidants battle free radicals in the body, reducing cell damage and maybe lowering the risk of certain diseases. Soluble fibre in it has

been shown to promote heart health by reducing LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol). A single cup of green beans contains around one-third of your daily required folate intake, a B complex essential for unborn babies' growth and development. Green beans are high in fibre, which keeps your digestive tract healthy and working smoothly.





Chatbots can offer support, companionship and therapy which can lessen the load on therapists and is a viable option for people who face challenges in terms of affordability and accessibility, says DR PRAKRITI PODDAR

Delivering proper care to those with mental health issues has always been a big challenge. India is on the verge of a mental health epidemic, yet it's hard to find a public discourse on ways to prevent mental health disorders or treat them.

According to a report by the World Health Organisation in 2019, over 264 million people are affected by depression and almost 800,000 people die by suicide each year. The situation has been further worsened by the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The isolation because of lockdown, uncertainty and fear due to job cuts and general discomfort due to the inability to control different aspects of life has triggered severe mental trauma in people across India. The issue has been made even more complicated by the fact that no one has any idea when things will ever return to normal.

To tackle the issue of rising mental health issues among people, technology companies are leveraging Artificial intelligence-based solutions to develop chatbots tuned to help patients with mental health concerns. These conversational agents support patients with mental health issues while offering a high level of privacy and anonymity.

Chatbots can be effective but are they really the answer?

A chatbot is able to simulate a conversation on different platforms using audio or text and sometimes video too. While some chatbots are fully automated, some utilise human interfaces. The AI frameworks

required to be trained with vast amounts of data to make these chatbots compatible with the complexity of human communication have the ability to understand cultural nuances.

There are chatbots designed to detect subtle changes in facial expressions, length of pauses or rates of speech and build a diagnosis accordingly. In case the chatbot detects a deep-seated problem in the patient, an option to meet an actual therapist is offered to them, and relevant helpline numbers are shared.

A part of the population especially, the millennials and Gen Z, believe that chatbots are a great way to address the issue of the mental health crisis in India. The young crowd is tech-savvy and more comfortable in sharing responses with a chatbot rather than a real person. This makes sense when we think about how workplaces are becoming more remote, and increasing internet conversations are making human interaction more limited.

However, not all are convinced and it can be debated whether one ought to be. Issues related to mental health are complex and articulating how one feels can be quite difficult even in front of a trained professional who can see the facial expressions, nuanced inflections in body language and even tone. Compared to that, using a chatbot may seem superficial.

Apart from that, there are other issues as well. A chatbot is trained with underlying neural nets and



**Dr Prakriti Poddar**  
Mental Health Expert  
Director Poddar Wellness

**A part of the population especially, the millennials and Gen Z, believe that chatbots are a great way to address the issue of the mental health crisis in India**

learning algorithms and can inherit the prejudice of its makers. The algorithms behind a chatbot have to be designed in a way that makes sure it behaves in a specific manner, which is helpful for the person talking to it on the other side. The people developing the chatbot need to be well aware of the nuances of mental health.

**Bridging the Gap**  
Human beings are complex creatures, even those who are not struggling with mental health issues. Those suffering from anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, and suicidal thoughts have several layers of thinking and multiple faces that they put on for their interactions. A chatbot, in this scenario, often helps to bring down the 'wall' since its biggest weakness is its greatest strength too. A chatbot is never judgemental, it will never show empathy too. Most questions used by chatbots are fed in an algorithm based on the CBT technique. The lack of emotional bonding is often what a person suffering from mental health is often looking for. However, it is important to remember that chatbots can be effective in early interventions and a primary diagnosis of mental health disorders but it is best not to let chatbots engage in full-blown mental health therapy without any human supervision.

In conclusion, chatbots can offer support, companionship and therapy which can lessen the load on therapists drastically. It is indeed a viable option for people who face challenges in terms of affordability and accessibility. In the years to come, technology companies need to develop chatbots that can strike the right balance of being empathetic without being judgemental. Those using them must be made aware of the limitations of the chatbot and the areas in which it can help — a transparent system is what is required.

## Keep infections at bay



**DR PRIYA BHARTI**  
tells us how we can stay safe among other things

Cervix is the narrow passage which forms the lower end of the uterus. Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in Indian women, after breast cancer. It usually happens in the age group of 40-50 years and unfortunately, most of the patients end up presenting in advanced stages. The bright side however is that this disease usually provides a long window for its detection in early stages. It is one of the few cancers that is largely preventable.

The warning symptoms are usually an excessive or smelly vaginal discharge, or unusual bleeding from the vagina. This bleeding can happen in between periods, or as heavy bleeding during periods. Bleeding after intercourse is an important warning sign as well. Rarely, pain in the lower abdomen, blood stained urine might also occur. Any of these symptoms should prompt a gynecological check up without delay. In its early stages, it is treated by surgery, and more advanced stages are generally treated with radiation and chemotherapy, or a combination of these.

Cervical cancer is caused by a virus called the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). This particular virus infects almost everyone after they become sexually active, but 90 per cent of people will clear the virus within one to two years of getting infected. Hence, just having the virus does not mean one is going to get cancer.

There are robust screening tests available for picking up the early disease. Two such tests are the pap smear and HPV test. Both these tests are easily and widely available, affordable and done on an outpatient basis, without much discomfort. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that all women above the age of 30 should get screened, and get routine screening every few years to enable doctors to pick up this deadly disease in its nascent stages.

Another very important aspect to consider and understand is the need for HPV vaccination. Talking about the sexual health of our children is still a taboo in our country, which we need to break. Making them aware of safe sexual practices is an important discussion that the children need to be involved in.

Vaccinating the children against a sexually acquired virus can be a difficult conversation in a lot of families, but it is the need of the hour. HPV vaccine is recommended for all young adolescent girls aged 9-14 years of age by the WHO. The vaccine can also be given to boys aged 11-12 years. The vaccine is most effective when given before the onset of sexual activity. Young immune systems are more responsive to vaccines, thereby providing better protection.

The writer is Gynae oncology surgeon, Department of Gynaecologic Oncology, Amrita Hospital, Kochi

## INBRIEF

### College graduates launch helpline support for mental well-being

While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has not only struck the masses in terms of the physical consequences but has also taken a toll on everyone's mental well-being. In order to support such people undergoing emotional trauma, a 22-year-old graduate started a support COVID mental health helpline for the vulnerable last year and has answered more than 20,000 calls.

Nikita Gupta was recently awarded with Young Women Leader in India Award. "The helpline started operations in March 2020 and has continued so far. Our approach has been in twofold, one, focussed on scaling operations so more people can get access to mental health support in more languages and two, to create awareness about mental health through social media.

Our aim is to create more accessible mental healthcare solutions and build a robust solution seeking platform as mental health problems are extremely common," said Nikita Gupta. Mental health is an extremely overlooked issue in India, that has considerably worsened over this period of pandemic. Already being a major contributor to the burden of illness in India, suicide deaths due to mental health issues attribute to at least one-third among females and one-fourth of all males. Most of this illness and death goes unnoticed.

## Better healthcare infrastructure is the key

### The medical tourism sector is booming globally and India is ranked 10th among 46 countries in the Medical Tourism Index 2021

With escalating medical expenses, people are scrambling to book doctor's appointments far away from their homes. A large number of patients travel from nations lacking healthcare infrastructure or less advanced in medical facilities to countries providing highly-specialised healthcare facilities.

The medical tourism sector is booming globally and India is ranked 10th among 46 countries in the Medical Tourism Index 2021. As per Tourism Ministry statistics, India received just over 1.82 lakh medical tourists in 2020, which contributed 6.7 per cent to the overall tourism inflow into the country.

India so far has attracted medical tourists from smaller nations lacking proper healthcare facilities back home, like Maldives, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kenya, Oman, or NRIs from developed countries who come

for affordable medical treatment, only to go back when they get well.

India offers a variety of healthcare services including Medical Treatment & Surgeries to cure chronic ailments, physical appearance enhancements like cosmetic surgery, Fitness & Rejuvenation for mental & physical relaxation or mindfulness, and Alternative Medicine Treatment to seek AYUSH.

India has immense potential to offer healthcare as per international standards, and at a fraction of the cost. Some of the key medical advantages that India brings is the skilled and qualified healthcare manpower, state-of-the-art Tier 1 hospitals equipped with the latest technologies, quality nursing care & post-operative facilities, high-end diagnostic services and top-quality yet affordable medicines (compared to developed nations). There is,

therefore, no doubt that the medical tourism market in India is estimated to grow to USD 13.42 billion by 2026.

However, to achieve this milestone, it is important to remove the disparity in urban and rural healthcare infrastructure. All the facilities mentioned above are available in Tier 1 cities only while the rural folks grapple with the most basic requirement of access to a good, qualified doctor. This restricts the options available to tourists seeking quality medical treatment in India and are made to choose cities like Mumbai & Delhi having a higher cost of living.

Further, it also discourages regular tourists from visiting Tier 2 or below cities in India, if they don't have good healthcare facilities close by, especially in case of senior citizens & family travel.

The Government recognizes this struggle and is

working to give wings to its National Digital Healthcare Mission (NDHM) to provide the much needed technology push to public healthcare by digitising health records for easy access by end users.

I also suggest this data being made available for restricted use for R&D and clinical research purposes only, to devise more accurate treatments for common & serious ailments, thus giving India the edge in diagnostic sciences.

Further, the Government is looking to increase JCI (Junior Chamber International) accredited hospitals in various cities from the current 38 hospitals. A coalition of over 100 private healthcare specialists have formed a first-of-its-kind, made in India telemedicine application called Swasth that aims to deliver equitable and affordable healthcare to all Indians. Further, the

Ministry of Ayush and Council of Scientific & Industrial Research completed a multi-center clinical trial of a medicine, AYUSH 64, for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 infections and not to mention Covaxin, our very own indigenously developed COVID Vaccine through PPP, by Bharat Biotech.

All these factors are positive developments towards making healthcare infrastructure a driving factor for tourism in India. In fact, we must learn from our friendly neighbour, the UAE, which is fast becoming a tourism hub for international patients seeking customised and affordable treatment.

I feel India is already grabbing attention from global tourists looking for quality, affordable & holistic healthcare by correcting the regional disparity in healthcare infrastructure.



REPUBLIC DAY SPECIAL

# RUSTIC RHYTHMS

RABINDRANATH TAGORE felt that painting was closer to nature, as compared to any other art form, and could be universally understood, says UMA NAIR



artists at the time. In the present works, the woodcut *Namaz* and the *Untitled*, Tagore suppressed physical detail, creating basic curvilinear forms. The body is represented as a solid field of colour with strokes. Scholars say he had a natural inclination toward the tenets of what we now understand as primitivism in modern art; the search for symbols and meaning in visual forms borrowed from non-Western, pre-historic and rural traditions and people. So, we glimpse rural regeneration in the rustic rhythms.

Painting allowed Tagore to break away from the limitations of language. He felt that painting, unlike any other art form, was closer to nature and could be universally understood and shared.

Rabindranath Tagore, was not just the Nobel laureate poet, author, thinker, composer, but he was also a self-taught artist. This Republic Day it is good to ponder on his brilliance as an aesthete of Indian heritage and experience. According to Christie's, New York, his volume of poems, *Gitanjali*, established his international reputation when it was published in London in 1912 in his own English translation, and the following year Tagore became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

As a result, he became a literary celebrity and frequently toured Europe and America. His flowing robes and long white hair and beard conformed to the common western conception of an Indian sage and his lectures attracted huge audiences. Jacob Epstein, who sculpted a striking bust of him in 1926, reported that, 'he carried no money and was conducted about like a holy man'.

Tagore turned to painting later in his life. By the time his first exhibition of paintings and drawings at the Galerie Pigalle, Paris in 1930, Tagore, at the age of 69, had been recognised as one of the greatest writers who had ever lived. He had an early inclination toward representational art but had given up hope of being a professional painter around 1900. Over the years, Tagore maintained private journals where he continued to doodle and sketch. Then almost suddenly, in 1924, while in Argentina as Victoria Ocampo's guest, his doodles assumed more elaborate and expressive intent.

Ocampo recognised Tagore's talent and found spiritualism in his images of prehistoric monsters, birds and faces as they were much more than naturalistic interpretations. Compared to his early doodles, these were not entirely spontaneous but inspired by his interest in anthropology and the examples

of both primitive and modern art he had seen.

The world Tagore revealed in his best works was one of self-reflexive evolution, where the images themselves were in the process of taking shape, as was his art. His early paintings were rendered mainly in monochrome, followed by two-toned and three-toned drawings. The pen-point brush was often used laterally, fingers and bits of rag spread the inks and the brush was the last to be adopted.

It is heads and figures executed by Tagore in a variety of styles, that have elicited the most interest. Restrained yet restless, suggestive, bizarre and haunting, these portraits are considered to be among his most memorable works. 'The pensive ovoid face of a woman with large unwavering, soulful eyes was perhaps his most obsessive theme. Exhibited first in 1930, endless variations of the same mood-image continued to emerge throughout. The earlier ones were delicately

modelled and opalescent, while the latter examples were excessively dramatic with intensely lit forehead, exaggerated nose-ridge, painted in strong colours, bodied forth from a primal gloom' (Robinson, *The Art of Rabindranath Tagore*, Calcutta, 1989, p. 56.)

These influences on Tagore evolved over his lifetime and emerged as expressions of innovation and modernity through his paintings which were unlike anything being produced by Indian

# Building blocks

Four architects define how architecture has transformed over the years in our country. By TEAM VIVA

Architects have been working tirelessly to help fit extremely utilitarian buildings while expressing the need to have carbon-neutral structures. We, as architects, are constantly looking to upgrade systems and functions, so it is fulfilling for us to deliver highly concise designs.

**Sumit Dhawan:** The founder and principal architect at Cityspace '82 Architects is



of the view that architecture is synonymous with endurance and longevity. He explains that buildings and structures made by man must be long-lasting while being able to withstand the rapidly changing human times. A building needs to be both functional and have perfectly-balanced aesthetics. It also needs to be expectant of the human changes that will inevitably come as time passes. Architecture is also becoming more community-based. So, long gone are the days wherein architects would create lofty structures that would inevitably intimidate folks. Simple and highly utilitarian buildings are the new vogue. We cater to a myriad of com-

munity-based activities that serve to increase its value.

**Anil Badan:** The founder & architect at Studio B Architects, states that architecture is all about being accessible. From simple structural incorporations like ramps and banisters that would help the elderly or the disabled to buildings designed with the help of logic and common sense, we firmly believe in having architecture made for the public and its people. So, in a way, architecture is all about improving the lives of people. Architecture also deals with the simplest forms of human equations, wherein it has the capacity to change lives, enrich human experiences and create a context for human existence to move forward. With the advent of new materials or finding new methods of using old, reliable materials, the art of architecture has changed by leaps and bounds.



**Anurag Pashine:** The principal architect from Salankar Pashine & Associates, recommends that design has the potential to change the way we work. Explaining his view with an example — an office with a scorching and sweltering area with poor ventilation and lack of windows will impact the productivity of employees as they will not be able to focus on their work. With the help of new technology and new materials being discovered every day, this office conundrum can easily be solved with proper glass facades that allow ventilation and an HVAC system that will eventually help air circulation. Taking one element out of the equation and working on it so that it is better can lead to changing human lives for the better. While architects aim to create user-friendly buildings, aesthetics also play an essential role in attracting people to the facets, so



it is more like a delicate game of Jenga that needs to balance various elements.

At the same time, it is also essential to recognise the fact that architecture and human lives are constantly in touch with each other. While recognising that architecture is used to shape and help propel human lives, human interactions also aid in shaping architecture. Reflecting the changing needs and wants of the communities, architecture ultimately helps in the proliferation of urbanisation of various rural areas as well.

# A half-full glass

While the demand for cultural and inventive content has escalated throughout the lockdown period, economic indicators assume that the cultural sector will be one of the most affected and also the slowest to recover, say JUNED and SUFIYAN KHATRI



The COVID-19 pandemic has placed the cultural and innovative industries at the heart of the inventive economy at crossroads. The ruin, widespread closures of borders, venues and physical distancing measures are impacting whole segments of the innovative economy. Many people working in the art industry have lost their jobs. Live performance and venue-based industries have been impacted majorly, impacting livelihoods, artist potency, market access and artistic freedom, together with broader effects for the value chain of suppliers and service providers. The crafts sector is a major employment provider for many countries that have experienced a massive downfall. The crisis has expedited pre-existing trends, in particular digitalisation, and it has exposed the pre-existing inequalities and precarities of the innovative economy in most of the countries around the world, also in the countries where public support schemes for the creative sector are in place.

Since the start of the pandemic, the arts and culture sector has been witnessing a paradoxical situation. While the demand for cultural and inventive content has escalated throughout the lockdown period — and digital access has now become more critical than ever before — economic indicators assume that the cultural sector will be one of the most affected and also the slowest to recover. Beyond short-term initiatives such as surveys or data collection aiming to provide artists and intermediaries with financial and logistical support, both academics and practitioners must engage in thinking about the future of art expenditure, especially from a consumer's point of view.

Many players in the local art industry have shifted to contactless and digital ordering. Other adaptive strategies have included frequent COVID-19 testing of artists and staff and regular consultation of medical experts to inform any reopening plans. Since many non-profit arts organisations are losing revenue because of restrictions and also because more people are staying at home, these additional costs pose further strain. The increased desire to supplement or replace in-person services with virtual arts experiences also adds to expenditures for arts organisations. In some situations, online platforms have allowed artists and arts groups to reach a larger audience during the epidemic than would have been possible otherwise.

While virtual platforms have become one of the most popular adaptations for arts organisations and artists, they are not without their drawbacks. Many artists and arts groups were forced to invest in new equipment and systems, develop new skills, and figure out how to sell their work in a virtual world. At the same time, viewers' ability to fully adapt to a virtual culture is not assured.

The pandemic has brought some improvements — collaboration to create new works, higher online visibility, and the ability to reach audiences and consumers differently — to the disorganised local art industry and its artistic community. But



whether the community stands for sustained advocacy with the government and private sector for recognition and support remains to be seen.

Governments are becoming increasingly interested in controlling internet creative expression. However, they must concentrate on narrowing the existing wide gap between the rich and the impoverished in the art world. While certain art forms will transition to the digital sphere, it is impossible to present street/festival performances online. To guarantee that subsidies and other programmes reach the intended recipients, governments should maintain a public registry of artists. It's vital to recognise gig workers in this industry, as well as enhance legislation that protects cultural assets.

Not all forms of art are financially self-sustaining. The loss of employment and earnings in the creative industry will have a severe impact on innovation, citizen well-being, and community vibrancy and diversity. The respect and value for an artist's work must be built from an appreciation for art's significance in presenting society with a sense of normalcy during these lonely times. Otherwise, we shall be collectively accountable for the extinction of our cultural heritage.

Local artisans, organisations and institutions around the world have met the challenges posed by the pandemic with agility. For many, the pandemic accelerated the transition to the digital medium; the act of self-preservation often led to innovation. The Internet provided unprecedented chances for artists and institutions to communicate with one another in a variety of ways, resulting in new partnerships and channels for the arts. We've merely scratched the surface of what a digital platform can provide in terms of entertainment, education, and participation. Geographical boundaries may have vanished thanks to digital media, but it is not without its drawbacks: global rivalry, shorter attention spans, and digital weariness.

The pandemic has not only strengthened ties inside the art field, but has also improved worldwide coordination. Virtual collaboration and support of one another, not only domestically but worldwide, is the way to go to maintain and grow stronger roots. Virtual cooperation will go a long way toward helping individuals stay connected in a world when physical travel is limited.

(The authors are co-founders of Kutchi Bazaar, an e-commerce platform for craft products made by the local artisans of Kutch.)

## THE MYSTICAL KRISHNA: DIVINITY THROUGH DIVERSE ART FORMS

An exhibition of art & sculptures dedicated to Lord Krishna has among other things vibrant paintings including a vintage one of the God lifting Govardhan Parvat on his finger to protect the villagers from heavy rains and thunderstorms is shown beautifully using lovely vibrant colours. The exhibition also has Pichhwai art which is a traditional Indian art having its origins in Rajasthan. Pichwai art features intricate paintings portraying Lord Krishna (Shrinathji) on cotton fabric using natural colours. There is a massive vintage Pichwai painting illustrating the Nathdwara Lord Krishna along with Gopis, Yamunaji, Gosaiji and the Devis.

A collection of Tanjore paintings has also been added to the

exhibition. From a spectacular gold finish handmade Tanjore painting of young Lord Krishna in the act of eating butter to a one of Lord Krishna along with Rukmani and Bama there are spectacular works. The exhibition also has some beautiful, handmade copper & brass sculptures dedicated to the mystical god. Krishnangarh paintings that are a fusion of Mughal and regional style paintings have also been added. There are a few depicting the unconditional love of Radha and Krishna. There is also a handmade painting where Jamunaji is seen welcoming Lord Krishna.

**Where:** <https://www.indianshelf.in/exhibition/>  
**When:** Till February 5



## DIALOGUES ON CHILD LABOUR

A webcast on the role of the private sector and the media in eradicating child labour will have panellists Tanja Brok, communications coordinator, Work: No Child's Business, the Hague, The Netherlands; Dr Shankar Borua, creative entrepreneur and communications professional and Smita Agarwal, head, education programme at Tata Steel's Corporate Social Responsibility who has worked in the field of education for over two decades. The introductions will be done by Aditi Datta, senior manager, Research and Communications, ICCSPL and the session moderated by Rakhi Sehgal, labour researcher and trade union activist who is currently coordinating an ILO project on industrial relations in the Indian garment industry. It is the third and final discussion in a series of three dialogues addressing the root causes of child labour organised in collaboration with Work: No Child's Business (WNCB) to mark the International Year for Elimination of Child Labour (IYEL - 2021).

**Where:** [https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_ZXDTG9OkR7ujbiDyvn8GA](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZXDTG9OkR7ujbiDyvn8GA)  
**When:** January 25 at 4.00 pm



## THE GREAT PERTINENCE OF GANDHI TO INDIA IN THE 75TH YEAR OF ITS INDEPENDENCE

The discussion will see the inaugural address delivered by Justice M N Venkatachaliah, chairman, Sarvodaya International Trust and the valedictory address by N N Vohra, President, IIC. The speakers include M Hamid Ansari, former Vice President of India; professor Rajmohan Gandhi, research professor, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; and Dr Gita Dharampal, professor emeritus, Heidelberg University, Germany. The speakers at the second session include Lord Bhikhu Parekh, chairman, Gandhi Foundation, UK; Shyam Saran, life trustee, IIC; and Amb. Alan Nazareth, author Gandhi's Outstanding Leadership and Gandhi: Soul Force Warrior. The sessions will be moderated by Arun Maira, former chairman, Boston Consulting Group.

**Where:** [https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_HRW01qwbQfiZbw-d4xmmSw](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_HRW01qwbQfiZbw-d4xmmSw)  
**When:** January 31 at 11:00 am





# Big dent to KL Rahul’s captaincy ambitions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A stand-in captain, who seemed stunningly short of ideas, few seniors at the business end of their careers and a dated approach in white-ball cricket -- India's woes during the tour of South Africa were many, turning what started memorably into an eminently forgettable outing.

The signs were ominous even before they departed with now former Test skipper Virat Kohli's much publicised acrimony with top BCCI officials.

The entire episode didn't leave the team in good stead and once there it all went haywire after the opening Test win.

Stand-in ODI captain KL Rahul was then left to do a lot with too little at his disposal against an opposition, which had gained invaluable confidence.

In the end, it turned out to be a nightmare with dark clouds hovering over the future of this Indian team and no sign of 'VIBGYOR' in the Rainbow Nation.

Kohli might not admit but the former captain is going through the toughest phase as a cricketer after having given up captaincy in two out of three formats and being sacked in another.

But Because he is Kohli and in a dif-



ferent class, he managed a fine 79 in the lost third Test, where he looked the best.

He also got two half centuries in ODIs with minimum fuss where he looked more like an accumulator rather than an enforcer that one associates with 'King Kohli'. The meltdown at Cape

Town with his misdirected anger at broadcasters for a DRS gone wrong also tarnished his reputation and letting the game drift away with mindless antics wasn't his finest hour when it came to judging his temperament.

But if one is very blunt, KL Rahul

perhaps blew his chance towards being a long-term option across formats once Kohli relinquished Test captaincy after losing the Test series.

"Did KL Rahul by any stretch look like a captain to you?" a senior BCCI official counter-questioned PTI when asked if he would be considered for the Test captaincy factoring in Rohit Sharma's track record of injuries.

It is understood that coach Rahul Dravid wants to see his namesake as a long-term option and it was evident that he didn't want to put a lot of blame on his captaincy.

"He did more than a decent job and a lot about captaincy is how your players execute the skills. We were short on the ODI side. He will grow constantly and get better as he leads more," Dravid's observation drifted towards the old adage of a captain being as good as his team.

But what would hurt Rahul more is his approach in batting which was more about self preservation. The 55 off 79 balls in the second ODI deserves more criticism for the balls wasted and strike not rotated rather than the runs accumulated by him.

It is for sure that Rahul, if he has to be in the white-ball scheme of things,

will have to bat in the middle-order and be a finisher.

His bowling changes didn't work in the middle overs and after watching Temba Bavuma make some inspired moves like starting the attack with Aiden Markram, he introduced Ravichandran Ashwin early in one game but that was more of a reactive move rather than a pro-active one.

What stuck out like a sore thumb is the fact that even the biggest of Proteas fans couldn't have imagined that a team facing huge transitional problems and a coach due to face a commission inquiring into his racial misconduct, would turn the heat on and win five out of six international matches and that too at a canter.

The South Africans played good cricket but were liberally helped by an Indian team that didn't walk the talk on its proclaimed cricketing philosophies.

There wasn't any fearlessness for better part of the tour, no innovative, out of box thinking and at times, they seemed short on execution of skills.

Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane showed some spark in the second innings of the second Test but for the better part, they were not playing their positive game.



## Balance of ODI side an issue, accepts head coach Dravid

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

India's head coach Rahul Dravid had no hesitation in admitting that the ODI squad lacked balance with the likes of Hardik Pandya and Ravindra Jadeja unavailable to execute their all-round skills at numbers six and seven respectively.

India lost the three-match ODI series 0-3 and Dravid answered a range of questions covering the poor show in middle-overs both in batting and bowling, KL Rahul's nascent captaincy career and how Venkatesh Iyer is not being thought of as a top-order batter.

"Yeah, we understand the template. Obviously, a large part of the template is also dependant on the balance of your squad," Dravid replied when asked if the Indian team needs to revisit its template in 50-over cricket.

"I think if you are a little bit honest, some of the guys who help us balance the squad out and give us those all-round options at Nos 6, 7 and 8 are probably not here, and available for selection," Dravid said, clearly talking about the absence of Pandya, who is trying to get his bowling fitness back and Jadeja, who is recuperating from a knee injury.

"Hopefully, when they (Hardik and Jadeja) come back, it will give us lot more depth, it allows us then to probably play in a slightly different style," Dravid made it clear as to what he missed in the series.

Dravid's assessment of his namesake's leadership skills was pretty lavish as he wanted people to factor in that he could only do as much with the kind of squad he had at his disposal. "I thought he did a good job. Not easy to be on wrong side of the result. He is just starting out as captain," he said.

".....And he will learn and a large part of captaincy is execution of skills by your players and quality of side you have got. We were a little bit short on the ODI side of things and I thought he did a very decent job, someone who is growing and will constantly be improving and get better as a captain."

There was no denying that India's batting lacked momentum in all three games especially between overs 20 to 40. "We certainly could do better with batting in middle overs," Dravid said.

"But having said that, even South Africa who batted first on two occasions scored 290 as well and if I think back and look at the 30th over in both those games, we should have chased them down.

"We didn't because we played some poor shots and we didn't play some smart cricket at critical situations," he said without naming anyone.

Dravid isn't someone who believes in taking names but when he spoke about demanding performances in lieu of security and extended run given to some middle-order batters, he obviously meant Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant.

## Smriti Mandhana named ICC women’s Cricketer of Year

IANIS ■ DUBAI

India opener Smriti Mandhana on Monday was named ICC women's Cricketer of the Year for 2021. After being named in the ICC's women's T20I team of the year, Smriti has now won the Rachael Heyhoe-Flint Trophy awarded to the ICC women's cricketer of the year for the second time after 2018.

The left-handed opener beat competition from Tammy Beaumont of England, Lizelle Lee of South Africa and Gabby Lewis of Ireland to clinch the honour. Smriti has also become the second women's cricketer after Australia's Ellyse Perry to win the honour more than once.

"I am truly honoured for receiving the prestigious Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for the ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year 2021. I am grateful to my teammates, my coaches, my family, friends and fans who believed in my potential and supported me in this journey," said Smriti in her acceptance of the award.

Despite India enduring a difficult 2021, Smriti stock continued to rise this year, scoring 855 runs in 22 international matches at an average of 38.86 with one century and five half-centuries.

In the limited-overs series against South Africa where India won just two of the eight matches at home, Smriti played a major role in both wins. She made 80 not out as India chased down 158 in the second ODI that helped them level the series and scored 48 not out to win the final T20I.



Smriti then played a sublime knock of 78 in the first innings of the one-off Test against England at Bristol that ended in a draw. She played an important knock of 49 in India's only win in the ODI series. Her 15-ball 29 and fifty in the T20I series went in vain though as India fell short in both the matches and lost the series 2-1.

"A recognition of such high class from the global governing body of cricket in an exceptional and difficult year will motivate me to continue to better my game and contribute to Team India's success going forward. I look forward to 2022 with a clear focus on winning the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2022 in New Zealand as we continue to prepare as a team and unit," added Smriti. Smriti was in good touch in the multi-format series against Australia, starting with the ODI series where she scored 86 in the second match. She compiled a brilliant century in the only Test (the first of her career), and was awarded the Player of the Match for the same.

## Lucknow IPL team to be called Lucknow Super Giants

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow franchise of the Indian Premier League will be called Lucknow Super Giants after its owners announced the name chosen by its fans.

The official IPL team of Lucknow, owned by RPSG Group, decided to take public opinions from its fans and the name was shared by owner Sanjiv Goenka in a video message on Monday.

"Thank you so much for your overwhelming response to the 'Naam banaao naam kamao' contest. Lakhs and lakhs of people responded, based on that we are very happy to choose the name for the Lucknow IPL team," Goenka said in his message, while revealing the team name.

"And the name that we have chosen based on your recommendations is Lucknow Super Giants. Thank you so much for your response and love and continue to give us your blessings in the future as well."

The franchise owners had launched a consumer engagement campaign on social media on January 3 to decide the name of the new IPL side.

Lucknow and Ahmedabad will be the two new teams in the IPL from this year as the lucrative T20 tournament expanded its wings to become a 10-team contest.



## India fined for slow over-rate after losing third ODI

IANIS ■ CAPE TOWN

India have been fined 40 per cent of their match fees for maintaining a slow over-rate against South Africa in the third and final ODI of the series in Cape Town on Sunday. In the match, India were bowled out for 283 in 49.2 overs while chasing 288 at the Newlands Cricket Ground, which meant South Africa won the series 3-0.

"Andy Pycroft of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees imposed the sanction after KL Rahul's side was ruled to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration," said the International Cricket Council (ICC) in a statement.

In accordance with Article 2.22 of

the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined 20 per cent of their match fee for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time.

Rahul pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing. On-field umpires Marais Erasmus and Bongani Jele, third umpire Allahudien Palekar and fourth umpire Adrien Holdstock levelled the charge. After Quinton de Kock's 124 propelled South Africa to 287 in 49.5 overs, Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli made 61 and 65 respectively while Deepak Chahar made a quick-fire 54 off just 34 balls. But the Indian trio's efforts went in vain as they fell short of getting over the line by four runs.

## WC dreams over for Indian women football players

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

For a bunch of Indian women football players hailing from humble back-grounds, life in the last one year has revolved around playing in the AFC Asian Cup and with that taking a shot at the elusive FIFA World Cup but that dream lay shattered after COVID-19 knocked them out of the tournament.

From captain Ashalata Devi to the youngest in the squad, Hemam Shilky Devi, the Asian Cup was a once in a lifetime opportunity and all of them were looking forward to qualify for the quarterfinals, which would have also taken them to the 2023 World Cup, before they were left "heartbroken". If not a World Cup berth, they would have made it to the intercontinental play-offs which would have been historic



in Indian football.

But it is now in the realm of 'ifs' and 'buts' after 12 players tested positive for the virus and the match against Chinese Taipei was called off. The Asian Football Confederation on Monday confirmed that India are deemed to have withdrawn

from the continental showpiece. "Absolutely devastated," said senior player and goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan aptly capturing the sentiment within the squad right now.

"In the last one year, our lives have revolved around the Asian Cup. Our sole aim was to

qualify for quarterfinals and take a shot at the World Cup," said another player.

"We are extremely sad and disappointed at the moment. But it is not the end of the world and the hope that we will get chances to achieve this in future if we keep on doing well is giving us solace."

Many of the players have fought tremendous odds to reach at this level.

Some took up to the sport as it was "cheaper" to pursue while others had to go against the will of their parents and community. Skipper Ashalata faced opposition from her family. Ditto was the case of Shilky, who is all of 16 and had the distinction of being the tournament's youngest player.

The journey wasn't easy for any of them and this setback is definitely going to cause turmoil in their minds.

## National Poker Series returns with its 2nd edition

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's most notable poker series - National Poker Series India is back with its 2nd edition in 2022. PokerBaazi.com, which is India's biggest poker platform, will continue as the hosting partner for the NPS. The series, scheduled to begin from March 6, has announced a prize pool of 18.5 crores for 84 tournaments across 15 days. With 252 medals on the line to be awarded to podium finishers in all 84 tournaments, and three NPS Podium medals for the three finishers with highest medal tallies, this year's National Poker Series will yet again have Golden Rush as one of its marquee events. Additionally, NPS Podium finishers will get to play the world's biggest international poker event in Las Vegas, USA. The qualifier tournaments, also known as satellite tournaments, have already commenced from January 15.

## Babar Azam, Joe Root, Shaheen Afridi bag top honours

PTI ■ DUBAI

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam was on Monday named ICC ODI Cricketer of the Year while England Test captain Joe Root took home the top honours in the red-ball category, beating competition from, among others, Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin. Babar's team-mate and left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi won the Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year. He was bestowed the honour for taking 78 wickets across formats in 36 internationals at an average of 22.20 in 2021.

The 27-year-old Babar scored 405 runs in six games at an average of 67.50 in 2021. He was the second-



highest run-scorer with 228 runs and was the Player of the Match in both of Pakistan's wins in the 2-1 series victory against South Africa.

The architect of Pakistan's chase of 274 in the first ODI, Babar made a century and laid the foundation with an 82-ball 94 in the final

ODI where the visitors posted 320 batting first.

He was the lone warrior for Pakistan when they were swept by England 3-0. He accumulated 177 runs in three games but found no support as none of the other batters managed to score more than 100 in the series.

# Alize Cornet reaches quarterfinals at her 63rd Grand Slam

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Alize Cornet dropped to her knees on the hard blue court, clasped her hands and took a few moments to let it sink in.

In her 17th trip to the Australia Open, her 63rd run at a Grand Slam, and two days after celebrating her 32nd birthday, Cornet finally qualified for the quarterfinals at one of the four major events in tennis.

Cornet recovered after a second-set meltdown in the hot Melbourne sun on Monday to advance to the last eight at the Australian Open with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 win over two-time major champion Simona Halep.

"It's never too late to try again!" Cornet said in her on-court TV interview. "To be in my first quarterfinal. It's a dream come true.

"The journey goes on. I still

can't believe it."

Cornet led by a set and 3-1 before losing five consecutive games and 16 straight points as Halep took the match to a decider.

The match was 2-2 in the third set after Cornet held a service game at love, saying "allez" after every shot she hit.

Halep got a break-point chance two games later with a forehand down the line that just caught the outside of the paint and which Cornet could barely believe. She saved it and held serve, then broke Halep's serve for a 4-3 lead that set her on course for the quarterfinals.

Cornet will next play Danielle Collins, the No. 27 seed from the United States who beat 19th-seeded Elise Mertens 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 in an almost three-hour match to open play on Rod Laver Arena. Collins was a semifinalist in Australia in 2019.



Cornet made her main draw Grand Slam singles debut as a wild-card entry at the 2005 French Open. She lost five previous fourth-round appearances but had gone close to reaching the quarterfinals before, having match points in the fourth round in Australia in 2009 before losing to eventual runner-up Dinara Safina.

With a ranking of 61 — 50 lower than her career-high No. 11 — Cornet came into the 2022 season acknowledging retirement must be close and that it was now or never for a Grand Slam breakthrough.

"I don't know if it's helping," she said. "I just told myself that if it should happen, then it will happen. Maybe leave it in the hands of fate, destiny, I don't know."

The marquee men's match was

on Margaret Court Arena, where U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev beat 70th-ranked Maxime Cressy 6-2, 7-6 (4), 6-7 (4), 7-5. The second-ranked Medvedev is trying to become the first man in the Open era to win his second major singles title in the next Grand Slam event. He's now potentially three wins from achieving that.

Medvedev was a runner-up in Australia last year but avenged that with a win over Novak Djokovic in the U.S. Open final. Djokovic isn't defending his Australian Open title after being deported on the eve of the year's first major for failing to meet the country's strict COVID-19 vaccination criteria.

Cressy's serve-and-volley style created some frustrations for Medvedev, who said late in the fourth set that this was the "most

unlucky day I've ever had in my life." His luck changed quickly. After saving eight break-point chances in the set, Cressy was broken in that game and Medvedev served out at love.

He will next play ninth-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime, who beat 2014 U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic 2-6, 7-6 (7), 6-2, 7-6 (4). Medvedev beat the Canadian in the semifinals at last year's U.S. Open.

No. 11 Jannik Sinner ended Australia's last hope in the men's draw when he beat No. 32 Alex de Minaur 7-6 (3), 6-3, 6-4. The temperature hit 34 degrees Celsius (93 degrees F) on Day 8, with extra breaks allowed for players to cope with the heat.

Cornet used bags of ice to cool down her head during changeovers, and draped cold towels over her neck.