

**OPINION 8**  
THE CONVERSION FACTOR:  
HOW REAL IS THE THREAT?

**WORLD 11**  
N KOREA TEST-FIRES BALLISTIC  
MISSILES IN MESSAGE TO US

**SPORT 14**  
MORGAN OUT OF  
FINAL TWO ODIS

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ARJUN  
12 VIVACITY

## Alarming rise in Covid deaths

At 53,476 coronavirus cases, total soars to 5-month high



A couple pays a penalty for not wearing a face mask, as is mandatory as a precaution against the coronavirus, at a market place in New Delhi on Thursday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After breaching the 50,000-mark for the first time almost eight months ago and the last time on November 6, last year, India on Thursday yet again saw the tally of coronavirus cases climb up to 53,476 in a continuing sign of renewed concern. India's Covid-19 cases now stand at 1,17,87,534.

The rapid rise has begun to show its impact on the death numbers as well. The daily death count, which had dropped to double digits in February, has risen to more than 200 during the last two

days. On Thursday, 251 fatalities were reported.

However, compared to the sharp increase in cases, the fatalities have been quite low in the ongoing second wave in contrast to what was seen in the peak months of July, August and September last year.

It was on July 29, 2020 that India first witnessed Covid-19 cases cross the 50,000 mark. And after November 6, coronavirus cases have been registering a downward slide, only to take the upward swing since the last few days.

According to the Union Health Ministry, Maharashtra

and Punjab are turning out to be a major cause of worry. Cases have been increasing over the last two weeks. Maharashtra reported 31,855 new cases followed by Punjab with 2,613 and Kerala with 2,456 new cases.

When the first time the daily case count crossed the 50,000-figure on July 29 last year, India reported 775 deaths. That was because the daily case count at that time had already remained in the range 30,000-40,000 for two weeks before hitting the 50,000 mark. This time, the rise in cases has been much more rapid. India has

### 237 more test positive in city as active cases climb to 1,357 in UP

**Lucknow:** The active cases soared to 1,357 with 237 tested positive for coronavirus infection in the state capital on Thursday. In Lucknow, the fresh cases included 22 from Alambagh, 18 from Indiranagar, 11 each from Gominagar & Mahanagar, nine from Madaon and eight from

Hasanganj.

In the state, 836 people tested positive, including 60 from Varanasi, 39 from Ghaziabad, 33 from Kanpur, 30 from Gautam Buddha Nagar and 26 from Meerut, pushing the tally to 6,10,279. There were four Covid deaths in the state;

■ Details on Page 3

reported cases in the 40,000 range four days and 30,000s in two days, before touching the 50,000 range on Wednesday. It is possible, therefore, for the daily death count to show a sudden rise in the coming two weeks.

With the death of 251 people in the last 24 hours, the toll has reached 1,60,692 in India while the active caseload in the country has mounted to 3,95,192.

With the discharge of 26,490 patients in a day, a total of 1,12,31,650 persons have been discharged so far. A total of 10,65,021 tests were done on Wednesday. So far, 5.31 crore doses of corona vaccine have been administered in the country since the drive began on January 16 after approval for Covishield and Covaxin.

Now, those over 45 years of age will also get the Covid-19 vaccine from April 1, irrespec-

tive of the co-morbidities, the Central Government has announced.

Six States including Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh are showing a steep rise in the daily new Covid-19 cases and have accounted for 81.63 per cent of the new coronavirus cases recorded by India in the last 24 hours, informed Union Health Ministry said on Thursday. Of these, Maharashtra and Gujarat recorded the biggest single-day jump in total infections ever since the pandemic hit India.

According to the Health Ministry, 10 States --- Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh, Karnataka, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases.

Continued on Page 11

## Varanasi, Kanpur to have police commissionerate system

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government on Thursday approved the commissionerate system of policing in Kanpur Nagar and Varanasi, the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, giving more powers to the police there.

This decision was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath here.

Already Lucknow and Noida are under the police commissionerate system. Both the cities were brought under the commissionerate system of policing in January 2020.

The government spokesman said that now the holy city of Varanasi and the industrial city of Kanpur Nagar would have an ADG-level officer as police commissioner. Both police commissioners will have magisterial powers.

The police commissionerate system gives more powers, including magisterial powers, to police officers and is aimed at better and effective policing, the official said.

Under the new system, 28 police stations, including 10 of rural areas, in Varanasi will be brought under the police commissioner who will have a team of two IGs as joint commissioners, nine SP-rank officials and a lady officer of SP rank along with a lady officer of ASP rank.

**Under the new system, 28 police stations, including 10 of rural areas, in Varanasi will be brought under the police commissioner who will have a team of two IGs as joint commissioners, nine SP-rank officials and a lady officer of SP rank along with a lady officer of ASP rank.**

"The lady officers will work exclusively on cases relating to crime against women and its control," the spokesman said.

In Kanpur Nagar, 45 police stations will be brought under the police commissionerate system, to be headed by an ADG rank officer as commissioner. There will be two DIGs, five SPs, a SP-rank lady officer and an ASP rank officer.

"The government has decided to bring Kanpur Nagar and Varanasi under the commissionerate system of policing following the success of this system in Lucknow and Noida," the official said.

In other decisions, the government decided to transfer land of the Labour Department adjacent to the 42nd PAC Battalion in Naini to the PAC

free of cost.

The cabinet also approved the UP Special Protection Force Rules, 2021 for the formation of UP Special Protection Force. This rule will ensure appointment of members, recruitment, prosecution and also define their regulating powers.

The government also decided to give special facilities and concessions to projects worth over ₹ 200 crore on case to case basis.

Under the Establishment and Industrial Policy 2012, special facilities and concessions will be given to more than ₹ 200-crore projects on case to case basis under the UP Industrial Investment and Employment Promotion Policy, 2017. The concessions will also be extended to economically backward areas of the state under the Prompt Promotion Policy.

In another decision, the government decided to hand over land belonging to closed ITR, Bareilly IT and Electronics Department for setting up IT Park. The government also took a decision to give houses on affordable rent under the PM Housing Scheme.

The cabinet has also given a proposal to set up a committee under the chairmanship of the chief secretary to redefine Hi-Tech Township Policy.

The cabinet also approved prorogation of the UP Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.

## Cases to peak in mid-April, may taper off by May end

### Mass vaccination the only solution, says SBI report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India started on February 15 and could last until the end of May witnessing a peak in mid-April this year, a research report released by the State Bank of India (SBI) said on Thursday.

Cautioning that the country could see an addition of 25

lakh cases during this period, it said mass vaccination and not local lockdown, as is being imposed by some States, is the only solution to curb the surge.

The 28-page report said localised lockdowns or restrictions have been "ineffective" and that mass vaccination is the "only hope" to win the battle against the pandemic.

"Considering the number of days from the current level of daily new cases to the peak level during the first wave, India might reach the peak in the second half of April," it said.

Focusing on the econom-

ic indicators, the SBI report said the business activity index, based on high frequency indicators, has declined in the last week, adding that the impact of the lockdown or restrictions imposed by certain States might become visible next month.

Currently, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttarakhand are some of the States in the country which have imposed night curfew and shut business entities in some of their cities reporting an increase in cases.

The report also calls for an increase in the pace of vaccination across States. Increasing daily vaccination from the current 34 lakh to 40-45 lakh per day would mean that inoculation of citizens over 45 years can be completed in four months from now.

So far, nearly 5 crore people have been vaccinated. With an attempt to bring more beneficiaries under the inoculation drive launched from January 16, the Government has widened the ambit from April 1 to include those above 45 even if they have no co-morbidities.

## NCW: 80% jump in domestic violence since lockdown

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With families remaining confined to homes during the Covid-19-induced lockdown, domestic violence reared its ugly head more menacingly. There has been a major rise in the number of complaints of domestic violence from 2,960 in 2019 to 5,297 in 2020, which is a jump of nearly 80 per cent. Worryingly, the ominous trend is continuing in the ongoing year too.

The National Commission for Women (NCW) received a total of 19,730 complaints of crimes against women in 2019 as compared to 23,722 in 2020 which is a jump of little over 20 per cent year on year data.

A year after the lockdown, the NCW continues to receive over 2,000 complaints every month of crimes against women with nearly one-fourth of them related to domestic violence, according to the official data.

According to the NCW data, as many as 1,463 complaints of domestic violence against women were received from January 2021 to March 25, 2021.

The nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 25 last year to curb the spread of Covid-19, but it trapped many domestic violence victims with their abusers.

Soon after the lockdown was imposed, the NCW reported a surge of complaints related to domestic violence so much so that it started a dedicated WhatsApp number for reporting of just domestic violence complaints.

The number of complaints of domestic violence went on increasing through the months and in July, a record number of 660 such complaints were received.

Since June, the NCW has been receiving over 2,000 complaints of crimes against women every month out of which nearly a quarter are of domestic violence, the data suggests.

According to the NCW figures, 25,886 complaints of crime against women have been received from April, 2020 till now which includes 5,865 complaints of domestic violence. Also, the NCW received the highest number of

Continued on Page 11

## LoC silent in March after 5/6 years, says Naravane

### Terror launch pads in POK intact, says Army Chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With both the countries agreeing last month to observe ceasefire on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu & Kashmir, Army Chief General MM Naravane said here on Thursday the border is silent for the first time in around five to six years with not a single shot fired in March.

The Army Chief, however, said the terror infrastructure, including terrorist launch-pads, on the Pakistani side remained intact and asserted that it cannot be business as usual unless the neighbouring country stops supporting terrorism.

Speaking at a conclave, Naravane said he was optimistic that the ceasefire will hold as the Pakistan Army was on board. "I am glad to inform that in the whole month of March, we have not had a single shot fired at the Line of Control (LoC) barring an odd



incident. It is for the first time in about five or six years that the LoC has been silent. That really bodes well for the future," he said.

Last month, the Indian and Pakistani armies recommitted themselves to the 2003 ceasefire agreement on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir. The return to the ceasefire was agreed upon by the director generals of military operations (DGMO) of the two countries.

"Our core issue is that they have to stop support to terrorism. Unless they stop that it cannot be business as usual," Naravane said.

Asked what could have prompted Pakistan to suddenly agree to the ceasefire, Naravane said the duels between the two sides had not

resulted any forward movement and that Islamabad has its own internal problems.

"I feel that they have their own problems internally and from time-to-time, you have to also see whether a strategy that you are following is actually paying any dividend," he said.

"Over so many years, they would have also realised that it is time to make a change and that would have prompted them to extend this olive branch," he added.

The Army Chief said he was optimistic that the ceasefire will hold and even made an apparent reference to recent comments by Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa. On India-Pakistan ties, Bajwa recently said it is "time to bury the past".

"I would say we are very optimistic especially with the comments which have been made recently and the very important point is that the agreement is between the DGMOs of both the sides," Naravane said. "So obviously the Pakistan Army is on board and if the Pakistan Army is on board then there is every reason to be quite optimistic of the

Continued on Page 11

## Modi leaves for Bangladesh to attend 50th independence day

### It's first foreign visit by PM after 496 days

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to visit Bangladesh on Friday to mark the 50th anniversary of the neighbouring nation's freedom in 1971, it will be his first foreign visit after a full 496 days — the longest gap between two of his foreign visits.

His last foreign trip was to Brazil from November 13 to 15, 2019. Besides Bangladesh, Modi is expected to visit Brussels for the European Union-India summit (May 8),



and to Cornwall, United Kingdom, from June 11 to 13, to attend the G-7 grouping where India is a special invitee (June 11-13).

Bangladesh has invited four other heads of State from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives to join the celebrations marking 50 years of its independence, but Modi will be

the only leader to join. India and Bangladesh will sign several agreements and unveil new measures to boost people-to-people contacts.

In his departure statement, Modi said, "I am happy that my first foreign visit after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic will be to our friendly neighbouring country, with which India shares deep cultural, linguistic and people-to-people ties. I look forward to visiting Bangabandhu's Samadhi in Tungipara to pay my respects to his memory." The PM said he also looks forward to offering prayers to Goddess Kali at the ancient Jashoreshwari Kali Temple, one of the 51 Shaktipeeths in the Puranic tradition.

Continued on Page 11

## Bengal phase 1 campaign ends

### Didi, Shah take on each other's outfit

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Even as curtains came down on the high decibel campaign for the 30 Assembly seats going to polls in the first phase of Bengal elections both the BJP and Trinamool Congress on Thursday went all out against each other claiming the State would collapse if their rivals came to power.

While Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee attacked the BJP for splurging money and using muscle power to win the State polls and asked the people to remain on guard against the saffron outfits alleged nefarious designs, Home Minister led his party's campaign rolling out a long list of promises for the Jangalmahal area.

Thirty seats spread across tribal-dominated of Purulia, Bankura, Jhargram, Purba Medinipur (Part 1) and Paschim Medinipur (Part 1) districts once considered the citadel of the Left will go to polls on March 27.

"I have definite information that the BJP is spending money and pushing in criminals from other States ... so you will have to remain vigilant against their dirty designs," Banerjee told two rallies in Jangalmahal.

"Be prepared with your kitchen tools to repulse any outsider raid on your voting rights ... do check and recheck the EVMs (electronic voting machines) and do turn up early in the morning to cast your votes," the Chief Minister said alleging the BJP was "using all the dirty tricks in its kitty to throw me out of power."

She said "first I was given an

injury to stop me from campaigning ... but I am made of different metal ... I can play with one leg and kick many goals ... then they are using the central forces to dominate the voters ... they are also splurging money to purchase votes besides bringing in criminals from other States to rig elections ... be prepared with your rolling pins and other kitchen tools to repulse the outsider criminals ... We have specific information about people being brought from Odisha to loot votes."

Earlier she said that the criminals and police forces from the BJP ruled States like UP were being imported to loot votes.

Alleging that the BJP had tacit understanding with the Indian Secular Front — the newly floated party by a Muslim cleric Abbas Siddique that was jointly contesting with the Left and the Congress —

Banerjee said "the minorities will have to remain alert about a new party that has emerged in the scene with tacit backing of the BJP so that it can eat into the minority votes."

Attacking the BJP for forcing making plans to victimize the citizens of India she said "if the BJP comes they will introduce CAA and NPR but we will never allow these to happen in Bengal ... Remember if BJP comes there will be apocalypse. So stop them here and now."

Earlier from a rally at Jhargram Shah said that if BJP came to power infiltration would be stopped. "Let the BJP come to power there will be no infiltration in Bengal so that your food, your jobs and your business is eaten away by the foreigners ... let alone foreigners not a bird will be allowed to enter Bengal," he said

## I'm scapegoat, says Vaze; NIA finds 62 bullets in his house

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The special court here on Thursday extended till April 3 the NIA custody of suspended police officer Sachin Vaze in the Ambani security scare case, with the probe agency claiming that the alleged crime fell in the category of "terrorist act".

The National Investigation Agency also told the court it wanted to confront Vaze with the other accused in the Mansukh Hiran murder, a related case, and also probe 62 unaccounted for bullets found at Vaze's house. Vaze pleaded that he had been made a "scapegoat".

Maurya sanctions Rs 115 cr for 25 ongoing projects

Lucknow (PNS): To expedite the ongoing development work in the Public Works Department (PWD), the state government on Thursday further sanctioned a budget of



over Rs 115 crore for 25 ongoing projects.

According to an official communiqué released on Thursday evening, on the directions of Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, Rs 60.47 crore has been released for broadening and repair work on 14 projects of highways and other roads.

The projects are in Gorakhpur (3), Hamirpur (2) and one each in Hardoi, Shahjahanpur, Mainpuri, Jaunpur, Mau, Kheri, Firozabad, Aligarh and Barabanki.

The release further said that besides the above, Maurya released Rs 55.79 crore for 11 ongoing projects which include two projects each in Farrukhabad, Varanasi and Prayagraj, and one each in Kanpur Dehat, Jalaun, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut and Amethi.

Maurya has directed officials to ensure that all the ongoing projects are completed in time while maintaining the quality of the work.

He said that senior officers supervising these projects would be held responsible in case of any negligence resulting in poor quality of work.

Martyred SI Prashant Yadav cremated with state honour

Rs 50,000 reward announced on killer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Inspector General (Agra Range) A Satish Ganesh on Thursday announced a cash reward on the killer of Sub-Inspector Prashant Yadav and formed eight teams to arrest him at earliest.

The martyred policeman, Prashant Yadav, was cremated with full state honour in his native village in Bulandshahr. Reports said that after the post-mortem, the body was kept for senior police officers to pay homage after which it was taken to his native place for the last rites.

It may be mentioned that Sub-Inspector Prashant Yadav was killed in Agra after he went to resolve a dispute between two brothers.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had expressed grief over the death of the cop and announced a compensation of Rs 50 lakh to his family besides a job for a dependant. He had also issued a directive to name a road after the martyred sub-inspector and had

asked the senior officers to take stern action against those involved in the crime.

The incident took place when Prashant Yadav, posted at Khandauli police station in Agra, went to Nehra hamlet on Wednesday evening after learning about a dispute over the agriculture field between two brothers. As he reached the spot and enquired about the dispute from the elder brother who had called the police, the younger brother, Vishwanath, got agitated and opened fire with a country-made weapon. The firing turned fatal for Prashant as he was hit by a bullet and died on the way to hospital.

Meanwhile, three teachers have been suspended and a case against them along with one another for sexual harassment and teasing, besides culpable homicide for forcing a school teacher to commit suicide in Bahraich.

The teacher ended his life due to the insensitivity of the local cops who did not take cognisance of excesses by the accused, forcing the

victim to commit suicide.

According to reports, the Basic Shiksha Adhikari in Bahraich, Uday Raj, after learning that a case had been registered against three teachers, placed all of them under suspension on Thursday.

The accused teachers along with one other person had reportedly harassed an assistant teacher, Akansha Mishra, and threatened her husband Neeraj Chaubey (31), also a teacher in the same government school, after the latter warned of action.

ASP Kunwar Gyananjay Singh said that soon after learning that Chaubey, who consumed poison on Tuesday night, died in the SPM Hospital in Lucknow on Wednesday night, he registered a case and launched a hunt for the accused.

Sources disclosed that all the accused belong to a particular community and are absconding to evade arrest.

It may be mentioned that the sensational incident was reported from Bahraich and the victim took

the step as the accused harassed his wife and he got no relief from the local police to whom he complained several times.

Chaubey was living in a rented house in the Kaiserganj area of Bahraich. Reports said that he was upset for the last few days as half a dozen local goons, including three of his junior colleagues, started harassing his wife whenever she went out to school or for any other work.

Even during the absence of Chaubey, they camped near his house and passed lewd remarks. When several of his complaints to the police went unheard and the accused also started threatening him for going to the police, Chaubey went in depression and on Tuesday night, he wrote a suicide note mentioning all the above facts and stating that he was ending his life.

After finding him in an unconscious state, the victim was rushed to the local community health centre from where he was referred to Lucknow.

Gorakhpur- Lucknow flights from March 28

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Turning a new leaf in regional connectivity, Gorakhpur is now being connected with Lucknow as flights between two cities commence on March 28.

With this new air connectivity, the journey from Gorakhpur to Lucknow can be made in an hour.

Travelers aboard the inaugural flight coming from Gorakhpur will be given a grand welcome at the Chaudhary Charan Singh Airport in Lucknow.

Only four airports were operating in the state in the year 2017 with flights to only 25 destinations. However, eight airports have become operational in the last four years of the Yogi Adityanath rule in UP, providing air services to 61 destinations. As against 26.49 crore passengers in the year 2016-17, as many as 34.46 crore passengers used air facilities in 2018-19.

By 2017, the country's most populous state had only two international airports - in Lucknow and Varanasi - but now UP will have three more international airports -- Noida International Greenfield Airport at Jewar, in Kushinagar and at Ayodhya, making it a total of five international airports.

A total of 13 more airports and seven airstrips are in the process of being activated in the state. This effort will make Uttar Pradesh fly high in the field of civil aviation.

The airstrips at Aligarh, Azamgarh, Moradabad, Shravasti, Chitrakoot and Sonhadra have been selected for air services under Udaan, the regional air connectivity scheme of the Central government.

The airports at Aligarh, Azamgarh, Moradabad and Shravasti are under development while Chitrakoot and Sonhadra airports are nearing completion.

A budget of Rs 101 crore is proposed for Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram Airport being built in Ayodhya. Procurement of land for the airports at Saharanpur, Jhansi, Meerut and Lalitpur is also underway.

UP is the first state in the country where five international airports are being built simultaneously. Even after 70 years of independence, the most populous state had only four airports till 2017. Now, Uttar Pradesh has eight operational airports while 13 more are being built.



NOTICE

Due to mistake the name of my daughter entered in Class X marksheet as Hansika, whereas her correct name is Hansika Malhotra. Please correct accordingly. Neeraj Malhotra, 42/1 Peeli Colony, Aishbagh, Lucknow.

NOTICE

I, Brijesh Srivastava, S/o Kalpanath Srivastava, resided at Village & Post Dohari, Tehsil Ghorawal, Sonbhadra, as declared that his son name as in school is Ved Srivastava, but this is not correct name. His correct name AARUSH SRIVASTAVA for all purposes

NOTICE

The original papers of my grand father's property (H. No. 128/1116 Y-Block Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur, which I have received on the basis of the "Will" have been lost somewhere. Use of these papers will be considered illegal by anyone else. Arman Mishra, Ph. No. 9369443447.

NOTICE

I, Sushila Singh M/o Sudhir Kumar Singh Vill Trikolia PS Huzurpur Dist. Bahraich have changed my name from Meena Devi to Sushila Singh and DOB from 01.07.1962 to 01.01.1956 vide affidavit dated 22.03.2021 before notary Bahraich

NOTICE

I, Harishchandra Singh F/o Sudhir Kumar Singh Vill Trikolia PS Huzurpur Dist. Bahraich have changed my DOB from 01.07.1959 to 01.01.1956 vide affidavit dated 22.03.2021 before notary Bahraich

NOTICE

To be informed that I Surendar Prasad Pandey S/o Late Dashrath Pandey R/o 16A/65 Vrindawan Yogna-4 sect-16 Raibareilly Road Lucknow. I have lost my Allotment Letter No-263 on dated 27/02/2009. It used is illegal. mobil no-8368126044

NOTICE

To be informed that I Kunwar Akhilesh Singh S/o Kunwar Amresh Singh R/o Flat no-102, 103 Silver Line Apartment. I have lost my Allotment Letter. It used is illegal. Akash Singh S/o Ram Charan Singh 104 Shipra apartment gombi nagar vistar sec-4, Lucknow mobil no-9935505479

NOTICE

Original allotment letter dated 08.08.1980 and original Possession Certificate dated 22.11.1988 of my property no.-139/EWS, Block Phase-3, Scheme No-2, Barra-3, Kanpur have been lost somewhere. Any unauthorised use of the said documents will be illegal. Smt. Sanu Jauhari Saxena, W/o Sri Jitendra Kumar Saxena, R/O House No-104, MIG Janta Nagar, Kanpur Nagar.

AUCTION NOTICE

दिनांक 06.04.2021 अपराह्न 3:00 बजे राज्य सूचना शिक्षा संचार ब्यूरो के निष्प्रेषण आर्कटि प्रेस से सम्बन्धित मशीनों तथा अन्य सामग्रियों आदि जो विक्रित्वा से स्वस्थ सेवा महाविद्यालय, स्वास्थ भवन लखनऊ के भूतल में स्थापित है की नीलामी चारख्य भवन में होगी, सित्कोरिटी रु 10,000/- बैंकड्राफ्ट निदेशक, राज्य सूचना शिक्षा संचार ब्यूरो, उड्डो, लखनऊ के नाम संस्था के लेखा कार्यालय पंडित दीनदयाल उपाध्याय भवन, 4-यडित नगर, लखनऊ में जमा प्रातः 11 बजे-1 बजे तक, सामग्रियों निरीक्षण अपराह्न 1 बजे-3 बजे तक कराया जाएगा। आई पी. सिंह एण्ड सन्स

UPEIDA aims to construct bridge in record time

Lucknow (PNS): With more than 50 per cent of the construction of Bundelkhand Expressway project completed, the Uttar Pradesh Expressway Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) is all set to create a record by constructing a bridge over river Yamuna in a record time of 6-8 months.



Awasthi said that the total length of Bundelkhand Expressway project was 296 km. He said keeping in view the quality, the construction of ROBs and structures on the expressway was also being done at a rapid pace. In-charge of Bundelkhand Expressway and UPEIDA Chief Engineer Manoj Kumar Gupta said that out of the total length of

296 km of the expressway, UPEIDA had completed construction of 140 km length up to bituminous level.

So far, the work of clearing and grubbing in Bundelkhand Expressway has been completed by 97 per cent and soil work by more than 83 per cent.

"Out of a total of 818 structures, 527 have been completed. For construction of long bridges, out of total 1,465 piles, work of 1,285 piles has been completed and work of all 14 long bridges and four railway over bridges (ROBs) is in progress. Out of 18 flyovers under construction, 16 have been completed up to the pile level," he said.

TMC says no PAC in Bengal elections

Lucknow (PNS): The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has written a letter to the Election Commission of India raising questions over the deployment of 30 companies of Uttar Pradesh's armed police force, the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC).

In the letter to the Election Commission, the TMC says: "We do not object to the deployment of armed forces of any non-BJP state, we strongly object to the deployment

of personnel of PAC from UP since it is governed by UP CM Yogi Adityanath who is a star campaigner of BJP"

Significantly, UP CM Yogi Adityanath is in great demand in Bengal elections. The BJP has launched him as a star campaigner in the election rallies.

The Nath sect, to which Yogi Adityanath belongs, also has a significant influence in Bengal.

NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that special general body meeting was held at the registered office on 15.03.2021 at 11:00 am to transact the following business. 1. To change Registered Office from '515, 5th Floor Chokhani Square Sector-18, Noida, UP-201301 to C-40/5, 02nd Floor, Meera Bai Marg, Hazratganj, Lucknow, UP-226001. For USB Credit Cooperative Society Limited (Ranveer Singh Tomer) Date: 24.03.2021 President Place: Noida

BSP, Cong target BJP govt over harassment of nuns

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday slammed the state government over the alleged harassment of Kerala nuns during their train journey via Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh.

"In UP, heinous crimes, especially related to the safety of women, are not stopping which is a matter of grave concern. Incidents of female insecurity in Pilibhit and Gonda, police vandalism in Etah and unloading of Kerala's nuns in Jhansi from the train are shameful and condemnable. The government should pay attention," Mayawati tweeted in Hindi while targeting the Yogi Adityanath government on law and order front.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, too, condemned the incident and said that the attack on nuns was a result of the 'vicious propaganda' run by the Sangh Parivar.

In a tweet, Rahul said, "The attack in UP on nuns from Kerala is a result of the vicious propaganda run by the Sangh Parivar to pitch one community against another and trample the minorities." He added it was time for the nation to "introspect and take corrective steps to defeat such divisive forces".

In a scathing attack on the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra shared a video showing some persons allegedly belonging to the ruling party's youth wing seeking personal details of some young women commuting on a train. The one-minute and seven-second-long video shared by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra showed some alleged youth-wing members talking to young

women commuters onboard a train and seeking their personal details.

Posing a series of questions, the Congress leader asked, "Which political party do these goons belong to?"

Sharing the video on micro-blogging platform Twitter, Vadra asked, "Which political party runs the government that enables these goons to harass and demand personal details of young women commuting on a train?"

Priyanka Vadra, while seeking to know as to which party's student wing these members belonged to, blamed the BJP and its government for giving patronage to these goons.

Linking this incident with the alleged harassment of some Kerala nuns in Uttar Pradesh, she further attacked Home Minister Amit Shah over his remark to give protection to these nuns as 'poll gimmick'. However, it is still unknown when and where this video was taken. It may be recalled that Priyanka, her brother Rahul and her party Congress have been extremely critical of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre and the Yogi Adityanath regime in Uttar Pradesh.

On Wednesday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan also wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, urging him to take action against Bajrang Dal members and police officers of Jhansi who allegedly harassed four nuns while they were travelling by train from New Delhi to Rourkela in Odisha. He said that the nuns were forcefully removed from the train by the Jhansi police without the presence of women police officers and despite nuns showing their Aadhaar cards, the police did not accept those cards, stating that they were fake, and kept the nuns at the police station till late night.

DELHI JAL BOARD, GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SDW) XII STP SEC-25 ROHINI DELHI-110085 "STOP CORONA : Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene" Press NIT No.22 (2020-21) Table with columns: S. No., Name of Work, Estimated Cost, Earnest Money (EMD), Dated of release of tender in E-procurement solution, Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution

GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (NE) III G.T ROAD SHAHDARA, DELHI-110032 E-mail: eeneiii.eg@gmail.com Ph No.22596845 "Stop Corona; Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene" Press NIT No.62 (2020-21) Table with columns: S. No., Name of Work, Amount put to tender, Tender Fees (in Rs.), EMD (in Rs.), Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution, Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution

GOVT. OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SUBARNAREKHA IRRIGATION CIRCLE, LAXMIPPOST AT/PO-LAXMIPPOST, DIST.-MAURBHANJAN Government of Odisha e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE Bid Identification No:-08/2020-21of SE, STIC, Laxmipost Table with columns: Sl No, Name of Works, Value of Works (Rupees In Lakhs), Period of Completion, Date & Time of Availability of Bid Document in the Portal, Last Date of Receipt of Bid in the Portal, Name & Address of Officer Inviting Tender

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No.: 64/2021 Important Notice for the Rail Passengers It is notified for information of general public that following Puja Special trains will run on as per revised timings:- Train No 05045/05046 GORAKHPUR-OKHA-GORAKHPUR WEEKLY SPECIAL TRAIN Revised Timing & Stopages Table with columns: 05045 Gorakhpur-Okha, STATION, 05046 Okha-Gorakhpur, Arr., Dep., Arr., Dep.

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# 444 containment zones created in city

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bid to check the spread of coronavirus, 444 containment zones have been created in Lucknow, according to incharge of Integrated Control and Command Centre Prabhas Kumar. The containment zones are mostly in Alambagh, Aliganj, Indiranagar and Silver Jubilee Hospital.

"In these containment zones, people can move in and out but in a very controlled manner. We are also pasting posters outside the houses where inmates have tested Covid positive," said Kumar, who is also the chief development officer. The old protocols of forming containment zones, sanitising them, serving notices on those flouting the rules have been effected again.

"A meeting was held with all the heads of government hospitals like RMLIMS, KGMU and SGPGI because their support is required for increase in the number of beds for Covid-19 patients. We are planning to increase the Covid facilities and roping in nine more hospitals.

About the double mutant, Kumar said samples have been sent to the lab and nothing of that sort has been found so far. "We are collecting samples randomly and then sending them for strain test," he said, adding that the spurt in cases has been because of the travellers.

Earlier, Health Minister JP Singh carried out an inspection of Integrated Control and Command Centre late on Wednesday night. District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash gave details to the minister regarding treatment, follow-up, ambulance, advance life system and arrangements being made in the L1, L2 and L3 hospitals. He told the minister that they were taking care of patient management, ambulance arrangements, door-to-door surveillance and hospital management from the control room.

The minister said that apart from testing and tracking, a large-scale awareness pro-



A locality in Narhi converted into a containment zone

gramme should also be carried out to contain the spread of virus. The DM said they have also started public announcements from the ITMS and 100 crossings for public awareness regarding Covid preventive measures.

The DM said that testing of people coming from other states or districts is also being carried out at hotels on a daily basis. "Target testing is also being carried out at banks, schools, offices and shops and the number of ALS and BLS ambulances has also been increased," he said. He added that equipped with latest technology, the control room is also carrying out real-time monitoring of Covid cases and vaccinations.

Meanwhile, SGPGI on Thursday issued instructions for patients visiting the OPD. The patients can come only after taking an appointment and the OPD will remain open both for old and new patients. "The patients have to get their online registration done and produce their RT-PCR negative report as well as that of the attendant to the guard. The patients will be allowed to enter after showing the receipt of registration," the spokesperson said.

## SGPGI director, wife test Covid positive

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

SGPGI director Prof RK SDhiman and his wife tested positive even after getting two vaccine doses. The director took his first vaccine dose on January 16 and the second on February 16. His wife took the first dose on January 26 and the second on February 26.

The SGPGI director, who is currently having mild symptoms like fever and cough, said that infection can occur even after vaccination but not severe and no hospitalisation is required. "Vaccination is a very effective way of preventing hospitalisation as well as deaths. At the maximum, the virus causes mild disease," he said.

Meanwhile, a teacher tested positive at a school in Mahanagar on Thursday, after which the district administration sealed the premises and sanitisation was carried out. Sixty-seven samples tested negative in antigen tests and the

**Vaccination is a very effective way of preventing hospitalisation as well as deaths. At the maximum, the virus causes mild disease**

— SGPGI DIRECTOR PROF RK DHIMAN

same have now been sent for RT-PCR testing.

A member of the rapid response team said when they reached the school for testing, students were taking pre-board exams. Later, the school was closed and samples collected. A total of 67 samples were collected. All antigen samples tested negative and were sent for RT-PCR tests," she said. District immunisation officer Dr MK Singh said the schools will remain closed till March 31.

## Active cases climb to 1,357 with 237 more testing positive

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The active cases soared to 1,357 with 237 tested positive for coronavirus infection in the state capital on Thursday. In Lucknow, the fresh cases included 22 from Alambagh, 18 from Indiranagar, 11 each from Gontinagar & Mahanagar, nine from Madaon and eight from Hasanganj.

In the state, 836 people tested positive, including 60 from Varanasi, 39 from Ghaziabad, 33 from Kanpur, 30 from Gautam Buddha Nagar and 26 from Meerut, pushing the tally to 6,10,279. There were four Covid deaths in the state; one each from Lucknow, Kanpur, Prayagraj and Sultanpur. Besides, 165 patients recovered while there are 5,049 active cases in the state.

Thirty per cent of those testing positive in Lucknow are people coming from other states, according to Integrated Control and Command Centre incharge Prabhas Kumar.

He said many of the people who have tested positive have been a part of several Holi parties and gatherings which have now been restricted.

"There have been a lot of increase in the number of cases in banks and other training institutes. Teachers who came of the training institutes from different places have tested positive for coronavirus infection and caused the spread," he said. In banks too, a number of employees are testing positive because they are in close contact with one another, he pointed out.

The training institutes from where cases have emerged primarily include a railway institute and a call centre in Alambagh and Aliganj, respectively. Incidentally, he pointed out that not many of the traders have tested positive this time.



Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel was administered the first dose of Covid vaccine on Thursday. She urged people to get themselves vaccinated. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the whole country is fighting a decisive battle against coronavirus, today I also got the Indian vaccine against coronavirus. The vaccine is completely safe. I appeal to the people of the country and the state to get vaccinated," the governor tweeted in Hindi. Meanwhile, 9,964 people were vaccinated in Lucknow on Thursday, including 3,837 senior citizens and 1,569 those aged above 45 years with co-morbidities.

## Intensify contact tracing, expedite testing: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Alarmed over the fresh spike in coronavirus cases in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked officials concerned to intensify contact tracing and expedite testing of people coming from other states, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab and Tamil Nadu.

"Implement the Covid guidelines effectively to contain the spread of coronavirus cases across the state. Intensify testing of people coming from other states. Set up testing booths at railway stations and airports. In case of any suspicion, action should be taken as per Covid protocols by arranging for quarantine and conducting RT-PCR investiga-

tions," Yogi said during a review meeting held with senior officials here on Thursday.

"We were able to control the spread of coronavirus last year because of our contact tracing efforts. Implement that system again. Officers should follow Covid guidelines in letter and in spirit," he said.

He said that availability of one dedicated Covid hospital in each district should be ensured and necessary human resources and equipment should also be arranged. About the festive season, the chief minister said that no processions should be taken out without securing permission of the district administration. Guidelines

should be adhered to strictly and officials must make sure that Integrated Command Centres are working to full capacity, he added.

The government has already made it clear that no public function should be allowed without district administration's permission. It has ordered deployment of a nodal officer or employee at every gram panchayat level in rural areas and ward level in cities.

As Holi coincides with Shab-e-Baraat, the chief minister has directed the officials to ensure special vigilance and caution in view of the festivals and maintain communal harmony.

## Extortion racket in weekly market busted; 7 arrested

### Six cops sent to lines for laxity

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Six policemen, including incharge of a police outpost, were sent to Reserve Police Lines (RPL) for laxity in connection with a case of extortion from shop-owners and vendors in the weekly market (Mangal Bazaar) in Krishnanagar police station area. The police also arrested seven accused working as extortion agents for a person, identified as Amit.

The cops who faced the action included inspector Saurabh Tiwari, head constables Navneet Shukla, Mohammed Khalid & Jai Shanker Pandey; and constables Rinku Yadav & Uday Bhan. The accused arrested were identified as Deepu Pandey of Manak Nagar, Shiv Kashyap, Ankaj Verma, Tiliu Rajput (all of Krishnanagar), Mohammed Naeem of Para, Anuj Singh of Nigohan and Mohammed Rehan of Aminabad.

DCP (Central) Somen Barma said he got a complaint of extortion from poor vendors selling goods in the weekly market. He said the

matter was probed and it surfaced that Amit was running the extortion racket. "A team was formed and the accused were nabbed on Thursday," he said.

He said the policemen deployed at the police outpost in the weekly market were unaware of the extortion racket and action was taken against them. Even as the police claimed to have worked out the case, shopkeepers are still apprehensive. They said goons have been realising extortion for a long time. "The weekly market earlier was in Chandernagar and shifted to Barigan locality in Krishnanagar after the construction of metro station in Chandernagar. The goons would force to coughing up *hafta*. On being confronted, we would be beaten up black and blue. The cops deployed at the police outpost never entertained the complaints given by us in the past," they alleged.

They said the extortion racket had the patronage of low-rung cops and some influential persons. "If someone has to put up a shop in

the market, they have to cough up extortion," they claimed.

Meanwhile, two unidentified miscreants deprived a woman of her gold chain in Rajajipuram under Talkatora police station area on Thursday morning. As per reports, Shakuntala Nigam was returning home from a morning walk when the bike-borne miscreants snatched my gold chain," she told police.

Meanwhile, two policemen were sent to Reserve Police Line for stealing cash and belongings of a youth who was sent to jail in connection with a case. ADCP Syed Abbas said action was taken against head constable Tribhuvan Singh and constable Rakshpal for their involvement in the crime. The youth was arrested for indulging in a brawl and sent to jail a few days back. The youth came out of the jail after being granted bail and demanded his wallet and other items. The cops opted for dilly-dallying, following which he complained to senior officers.

## Former SHO accused of thrashing woman, demanding hafta

Case registered on court's order against inspector, 3 other policemen

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman accused a former Vikas Nagar SHO and three other policemen of misbehaving with her, demanding extortion and thrashing her for refusing to cough up *hafta*. The case was lodged on March 23 on the directions of a court.

In her complaint, the woman alleged that inspector Dheeraj Shukla, along with three other policemen, stormed her house in the night on July 2 last year on the pretext of conducting a raid in connection with a case against her son.

"Shukla and his colleagues slapped me and pinned down my husband, who was later taken into custody. When I sought to know the reason, he hurled expletives on me and indulged in obscene acts in the name of searching my house. The police had already sent my son to jail. Shukla threatened

to send my husband behind the bars if I failed to cough up Rs 50,000. I somehow managed to give him a sum of Rs 20,000," she alleged. However, Shukla and his colleagues kept visiting her house even after that, she added. "After he was transferred to another place, I went to the police station, but my case was not registered. Instead, the police officers mocked at me. I was left with no option but to move court. It was only after which that the Vikas Nagar police registered a case," she said.

The police said a case was registered on the instructions of the court and a transparent investigation would be done.

This is the second case in the recent past registered against police after court's intervention. "In the Pulatsya encounter case, the police did not register a case against policemen accused of conducting fake encounter to intimidate his family," sources said. They said in the Vikas Nagar case, the police were reluctant to register a case as the allegations were against an inspector and his team.

## Man held for acting fresh with minor girl

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man was arrested for allegedly acting fresh with a minor girl and threatening her in Gontinagar Vistar police station area on Thursday. The accused was identified as Malkhan Singh of Unnao. He was presently staying in Gwari locality. Police said the victim works as a domestic help at a flat in Greenwood Apartment in Gomti Nagar Extension. She had lodged a case against Malkhan, accusing him of acting fresh and threatening her. A case was registered under sections 354 (a) and 506 of IPC and the accused was also booked under POCSO Act.

In another success, a team of Gontinagar police arrested a youth who had allegedly eloped with a minor girl. The police also rescued the girl. The accused was identified as Akash (23) of Sitapur. The police said Akash eloped with the 16-year-old girl on March 7. "After a case was lodged, we started searching for the girl and recovered her. Later, the accused was also arrested," the police said.

**FORM NO. 5**  
**DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL**  
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow-226007  
(Area of Jurisdiction-Part of Uttar Pradesh)  
**SUMMONS FOR FILING REPLY & APPEARANCE BY PUBLICATION**  
Date: .....

(Summons to defendant under Section 19(3) of the Recovery of Debts due to Bank and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal Procedure Rules 1993)

**Original Application No. 987 of 2020**

**Bank of Baroda** Applicant  
**VERSUS**  
**Mr. Mohd. Abid Siddique & Another** Defendant/s

**1. Mr. Mohd. Ahmad Siddique S/o Jameel Ahmad Siddique H - 5/120 Amrapali Yojna Hardoi Rd. Lucknow - 228017**  
**2. Mrs. Tarannum Ahmad W/o Mr. Mohd. Ahmad Siddique H - 5/120 Amrapali Yojna Hardoi Rd. Lucknow - 228017**

In the above noted application, you are required to file reply in Paper Book form in 2 sets along with documents and affidavits (if any), personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/duly authorized agent after publication of summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on **06.09.2021 at 10.30 A.M.** failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence. Registrar, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Lucknow

**SAI**  
**Sports Authority of India (Personnel Division)**  
Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Complex (East Gate)  
Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003

In supersession to the notification dated 30.12.2020, Sports Authority of India (SAI), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) and a Registered Society under the Societies Registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, invites applications from eligible candidates for the appointment to the post of Executive Director (Finance) on deputation basis. The deputation will be initially for a period of 03 years extendable to a maximum of 02 years in the pay matrix 13A as per 7th CPC equivalent to PB 4 with GP Rs. 8900/- for posting at SAI Head Office, Lodhi Road, New Delhi. The applicants who have applied in response to earlier advertisement need not apply again. The details and application form is available on the website of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports www.yas.nic.in and SAI i.e. www.sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in. The application complete in all aspects should reach to "Director (Personnel), Sports Authority of India, Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, (East Gate), 2nd Floor, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003 latest by 15.04.2021."

Deputy Director (Personnel)  
Sports Authority of India  
davp 47103/11/0016/2021



Shops selling gulal and sprinklers have come up across the state capital as Holi approaches

## Model accuses man of rape

Lucknow (PNS): A man was accused of raping a model who was called for a meeting at a hotel in Vibhuti Khand police station area on Thursday.

The accused was identified as Vasu Soni of Rajajipuram. Reports said the accused lured the 23-year-old girl through Instagram by showering praises and offering her a modelling assignments in reputed companies. The accused succeeded in winning the confidence of the girl and called her for a meeting at a hotel. It was alleged that Vasu spiked the drinks of the girl and later forced himself upon her. The girl contacted police after she regained consciousness. Inspector Chandrshekhhar Singh said a case was registered. He said the police were collecting evidence against the accused. The inspector said Vasu is said to be working as liaison officer offering modeling opportunities to aspiring girls.

**ARYAVART BANK** आर्यावर्त बैंक  
(A Joint Undertaking of Govt. of India, U.P. Govt. & Bank of India) (एक संयुक्त उद्यमता का संयुक्त उद्यमता)

Regional Office: Lucknow, Aryavart Bhawan, 569/20/K/1, Sneh Nagar, V.I.P. Road, Opp. Awadh Hospital, Alambagh, Lucknow

**Notice Under Section-13(2) of The Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. (SARFAESI Act.)**

Authorized Officer, Aryavart Bank, Regional Office - Lucknow, have issued Demand Notice under Section-13(2) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 through Registered /Speed post. The contents of the same are inter alia the defaults committed by you in the payment of outstanding amount including principal interest and other charges etc. The outstanding dues are mentioned here-in-below:

Name & Address of the Borrowers/Guarantors/Branch	Description of the property	Date of Demand Notice	Amount of Notice
<b>Borrower : 1. Mrs. Huma Kausar w/o Mohd. Arif, Mirjaganj, P.O- Malihabad, Lucknow-226102</b>	Residential Plot, Part of Khasra No.-1006, situated at Malihabad, Kasba, Pargana & Tehsil- Malihabad Distt Malihabad, Owner : Mrs. Huma Kausar w/o Mohd. Arif, As Per Sale Deed Dated 06-08-2010	20.02.2021	Rs. 4,00,259.00 + Interest & Other Expenses
<b>Guarantor : 1. Mr. Abej Khan s/o Mr. Saqir Ahmad, Mirjaganj, P.O- Malihabad, Lucknow-226102</b>			
<b>2. Mr. Zahid Wali Beg s/o Mr. Ahmad Wali Beg, Mirjaganj, P.O- Malihabad, Lucknow-226102</b>			
<b>Branch : Malihabad</b>	<b>Boundaries : East : Plot Smt. Seema Hussain, West : Remaining land of seller, North : Road 19 Ft. wide, South : Bag Ravi Shankar Sharma aadi</b> <b>Area : 93.00 sq. mt</b>		

Further with reasons, we believe that you are avoiding the service of said Demand Notice issued under the Act hence, we are now constrained to make this publication of demand notice, as required u/s-13(2) of said Act. The Rule-3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. You are hereby called upon to pay Aryavart Bank, within a period of 60 days from the date of publication of this Demand Notice with the aforesaid amount alongwith further interest, cost, incidental expenses, charges etc., failing which, we Aryavart Bank will take necessary action under the provisions of Section-13(4) of sale thereof. Further, you are prohibited u/s-13(13) of the said Act from transferring either by way of sale/lease etc. and encumber in any other way, the aforesaid secured asset.

**Date : 26.03.2021** **Place : Lucknow** **Authorised Officer**

# Vision document being prepared for Ayodhya by three firms

**Ayodhya:** The Ayodhya Development Authority has hired three consultants to draft a vision document for the Uttar Pradesh city, which has grand plans for itself as a Ram temple comes up.

Sources said the Prime Minister's Office is likely to be shown the vision document, on which the three firms are working since mid-February.

Ayodhya Development Authority vice chairman Vishal Singh said the document will also take into account the inputs from about 500 people.

LEA Associates South Asia Private Ltd, L&T and Kukreja Architects were picked to finalise the vision, implementation strategy and an integrated infrastructure plan for the city, Singh told PTI.

Lea Associates was involved in drafting the Tirupati Master Plan and Kukreja Architects in planning the Malaysian transit corridor, he said.

The state government had begun the process of selecting consultants on December 26 by publishing a request for proposals. The Uttar Pradesh government had set up a bid evaluation committee under the chairmanship of Deepak Kumar, principal secretary for housing and urban planning, to pick the consultants from a short list of those which met the qualification criteria.

The selected consultancy firms will conduct a survey, identify stakeholders and hold comprehensive discussions, the vice chairman said. National and international case studies will be taken into account.

They will draw up the document on Ayodhya's development keeping the Ram Mandir

and the city's religious character in view.

The document will deal with aspects like town planning, infrastructure development, transport, traffic, finance and tourism, according to the official. It will also include development of places linked to seers in adjoining districts.

The Yogi Adityanath government has already announced several projects in Ayodhya city and the district, which will be completed as the construction of the Ram temple continues.

In its November 2019 judgment on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute, the Supreme Court cleared the way for the construction of the temple. Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the bhoomi puja ceremony marking the beginning of construction. Following the SC judgment, the administration has allotted an alternative site in the district for a mosque. The Babri mosque was demolished in December 1992 by kar sevaks, insisting that it was built at the site where a Hindu temple once stood.

# Mamata reduced WB to state of penury: Yogi

**Kolkata:** BJP leader Yogi Adityanath Thursday said that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has reduced the state to extreme penury with no intention of developing it but "promoting goons and extortionists".

Speaking at three public rallies in Sagar assembly constituency in South 24 Parganas, Chandrakona in West Midnapore and Nandigram in East Midnapore here, Adityanath said that Bengal once upon a time was the most advanced and progressive state in the country.

"Bengal was once an advanced state and progressive too. But first the Congress, then the Communists and now the Trinamool Congress have destroyed the industrial development of the state and allowed corruption to blossom unbound," he said.

He said the count down has begun and after 35 days BJP will form the government in Bengal. "The people of West Bengal are yearning for jobs and development. People will be benefited by the development which will take place then". The Uttar Pradesh chief minister said the soil of Bengal has produced great patriots like Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Referring to Syama Prasad Mukherjee, the founder of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Adityanath said he raised his voice against Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir which has

been scrapped by the BJP-led government at the Centre fulfilling his dream.

He said the saffron party leader Sudendu Adhikari, once a follower of Banerjee had shown courage to leave TMC and join BJP with the vision to create a prosperous state.

Hitting out at TMC, Adityanath said it had "successfully produced goons and extortionists who have destroyed the development of the state".

He claimed that in the last ten years under Mamata Banerjee's chief ministership, people did not get money in their hands though funds had been sent by the Centre like after Cyclone Amphan.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given Rs 1000 crore

to the state just after Amphan cyclone. That money never went to the hands of the people but was taken away by TMC leaders," he said.

Adityanath said people of UP have received benefits of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, the PM Ujjwala scheme, Ayushman Bharat and farmers under Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme. "Then why the people of West Bengal will be deprived of these benefits? This shows TMC is not bothered about the development of the state," he added. He said once the state gets the government by the party (BJP) that is in power at the Centre, then benefits will flow to the people of the state.

Commenting on Mamata Banerjee's opposition to 'Jai Sri Ram' slogan of BJP, Adityanath

said there was a government in UP which also disliked it like her. "But the people of UP overthrew the government and brought BJP into power".

Taking a dig at the TMC supreme, he said she is only keen to protect the infiltrators and has always encouraged the politics of appeasement to preserve her vote bank.

"If BJP is given a chance to come to power in West Bengal, infiltration will be stopped", he said. Adityanath said India is fighting terrorism under the leadership of Modi. "Earlier, Pakistan used to enter Indian territory and launch attacks. But, now Indian jawans are launching surgical strikes destroying terrorists camps in that country", he added.

PTI

# Change in liquor limit to increase excise revenue

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

The change in policy on liquor limit has brought cheers among the retailers and also in the Excise Department as the both expect revenue to increase in the time to come.

As per policy, one desirous of stocking liquor at home for personal use will have to apply for a personal home licence for which one will have to deposit Rs 12,000 as fee with Rs 51,000 as security deposit.

Liquor Sellers Welfare Association (LSWA) general Secretary KL Maurya said the policy on the limit of stock liquor at home will bring revenue to the Excise Department. He said the licence would be issued at district level and it would be valid in the district in which it was issued.

Maurya pointed out that top businessmen, contractors and other high profile people kept a good stock of liquor for their personal use. "These people purchase high brand liquor from a state where its cost is low to cater to their needs," he said.

Maurya said the Excise Department had done a meticulous calculation of consumption of bottled liquor in a district and sale of these brands from the liquor shops in that district.

He said there were several thousand people who loved to stock liquor of different brands in their cabinet and if all these consumers applied for a home licence for keeping liquor bottles beyond the permissible limit, the government will get revenue to the tune of crores of rupees.

Maurya added that the new policy was also a step towards responsible drinking, as was the motive of the state government behind implementation of policy on liquor limit.

Sources said the implementation of the policy would regulate/fix the loose ends in the Excise Department that usually led to smuggling or low sale of liquor from the government run shops. They pointed out that when the demand for a particular brand was very high, it was seen that the sale of that brand was low at the liquor shops.

# Man bullied by job racketeers hangs self, names 2 accused

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

A 46-year-old man, trapped in the clutches of job racketeers, ended his life allegedly due to being bullied, in Gontinagar on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Deenanath Rajbhar of Vishal Khand. A suicide note was recovered in which Deenanath alleged that two persons took money from him for facilitating him a job and then refused to give it back after failing to do the same.

A neighbour of Deenanath caller latter's cousin Vinay Kumar on Thursday morning and informed that Deenanath had locked the door and was not opening it. Vinay said he, along with a relative, reached the scene and broke open the door, only to find Deenanath hanging

from the ceiling with a scarf tied around his neck. On being informed, a team of police reached the scene and recovered a suicide note. "Deenanath mentioned the names of Ved Prakash Pandey and Pawan Rajbhar and stated that the duo took money from him for providing him a job but they failed to fulfil their promise and refused to refund it," the police said. Deenanath also accused the duo of using bullying tactics. "On the basis of the allegation, the police are collecting details of the accused and a team is searching for them," the police said.

Meanwhile, a differently-abled man was found hanging at his house in Jankipuram on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Basant Lal (55) of Saidpur Jahangeer village. He

implemented for purchase of Rabi crop.

Senior BJP leaders believe that during the panchayat elections, the farmers, especially Jats, will ultimately support them and that the success in the panchayat elections will also demoralise the farmers leading to withdrawal of the agitation to force the Central government to withdraw the new farm laws. Besides, they believe that a victory in the panchayat elections will also push out the new agriculture laws from debate much before the assembly elections and Yogi Adityanath will retain power once again.

It may be mentioned that in view of coming panchayat elections and assembly polls early next year, UP Congress in-charge Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has visited several districts over the past few months and RLD vice-president Jayant Chaudhary has also taken centre stage as he visits village after village for rallies and mahapanchayats across the state. Even Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav joined Chaudhary in a joint mahapanchayat in Mathura. However, political analysts say that efforts by the Congress will not necessarily convert into votes and that the SP and RLD may be the biggest beneficiaries of the anger towards BJP.

**MODERN COACH FACTORY, RAEBARELI**

**E-Tender Notice No. -ELECT-PS-20534 E-Tender Notice Date: 22.03.2021**  
On behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/(PS), Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli is inviting **Open e-tender**, based on single packet system from capable & experienced tenderers through Indian Railways portal [www Ireps.gov.in](http://www Ireps.gov.in) for the under mentioned work. **Details:-Name of work:** Provision of New Earthing in place of defective/damaged Earthing of Residential Quarters, Service Building, offices and Workshop area of MCF/RBL. **Place of work:** Modern Coach Factory, Lalganj, Distt. Raebareli. **Approx. cost:** ₹ 28,96,432/- (Twenty eight lakh ninety six thousand four hundred thirty two only). **Earnest money:** ₹ 57,900/- (Fifty seven thousand nine hundred only) or Bid Security Declaration. **Date & Time of closing of tender:** 20.04.2021 at 10.30 hrs. **Period of completion:** 06 (Six) Months. **Terms & Condition:** Other details, terms & condition are available in tender documents on [www Ireps.gov.in](http://www Ireps.gov.in)

**Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/(PS)**

On behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Fur. Co-ord, Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli is inviting **Open e-tender (E-Tender Notice No.-M/200/MCF/RBL/LHB/Air Brake 2021-22/F17 Date-25.03.2021)** based on single packet system online through Indian Railway portal [www Ireps.gov.in](http://www Ireps.gov.in) for following work.—**Description of work:** Works contract for complete fitting of interior & exterior Air Brake Fittings/Activities in EOG type LHB AC/Non AC coaches with FIAT bogies as per scope of work. **Approx. Value:** ₹ 1,03,04,000.00. **Quantity of work:** 1000 Coaches. **Work completion period:** 12 Months or earlier. **E-Tender submitted through online up to 15.00 hrs. on 19.04.2021.** Manual offer will not be considered. \* E-Tender shall be opened on 19.04.2021 after 15.00 through online on [http:// www Ireps.gov.in](http://www Ireps.gov.in). Detailed Tender E-Notice and Terms & conditions are available at Indian Railway IREPS website: <http://www Ireps.gov.in>

**Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Fur/Co-ord.**

S.N.	Tender No.	Short Description	Qty.	Due Date
01	03211106	AL Moulding EX EQ Angle (3.15x25.4x25.4)L=1.8M	26997 Nos	20.04.2021
02	11215006	Set of Lavatory Side Wall for LSLRD Coach.	130 Set	19.04.2021
03	11211052	Sliding Door (LH&RH) Alongwith Mounting ARRGT.	150 Nos	29.04.2021
04	11211045	Roff ARCH For AC3 Tier LHB Coaches	8100 Nos	22.04.2021
05	05215015	Harness for Under frame and roof arrangement for LSLRD Type Coaches	89 Set	22.04.2021
06	05211082	Set of Panel for LHB EOG AC3 TIER Ganib Rath Coaches	258 Set	23.04.2021

**Corrigendum**

Tender No.	11211012	Due date may be read as
01	11211012	01.04.2021 instead of 25.03.2021

**Website Address:** [www Ireps.gov.in](http://www Ireps.gov.in) & [www mcf.in.dianrailways.gov.in](http://www mcf.in.dianrailways.gov.in)  
Serving Customers With a Smile

**कानपुर विद्युत आपूर्ति कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड 14/71, सिविल लाइन्स 'केसा हाउस' कानपुर ई-निविदा सूचना**

अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता द्वारा ई-निविदा पृथक-पृथक दो भागों में निम्न सामग्रियों हेतु केस्को ई-निविदा वेबसाईट [www.kesco.co.in/](http://www.kesco.co.in/) पर आमंत्रित की जाती है। ई-निविदायें प्रप्रत्र पूर्ण कर निविदादाताओं द्वारा वेबसाईट पर खुलने की तिथि के अपराह्न 12:00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकती है। उक्त ई-निविदा उसी दिन 15:00 बजे से 17:00 बजे तक वेबसाईट पर सार्वजनिक रूप से खोली जायेगी। उक्त तिथि को अवकाश घोषित होने पर निविदायें अगले कार्यदिन में नियत समय पर खोली जायेगी। ई-निविदा घनराशि का भुगतान ऑन लाईन एन0ई0एफ0टी0 / आर0टी0जी0एफ0 (खाता सं0 628805018266 आई.एफ.एस.सी. कोड—ICIC0006288) के माध्यम से किया जायेगा। ई-निविदा प्रप्रत्र निविदा खुलने की तिथि पर दिये गये समय से दो घण्टे पूर्व तक वेबसाईट से डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है। वेबसाईट पर निविदा प्रप्रत्रों के साथ यूटी0आर0 स्कैन्ड प्रति अपलोड करना अनिवार्य है। ई-निविदा के प्रथम भाग में धरोहर घनराशि का भुगतान ऑन लाईन एन0ई0एफ0टी0 / आर0टी0जी0एफ0 (खाता सं0 628805018266 आई.एफ.एस.सी. कोड—ICIC0006288) के द्वारा स्वीकार किया जायेगा एवं निविदा प्रप्रत्र के प्रथम भाग में निर्धारित पी0 क्यू0 आर0 एवं तकनीकी अभिलेख होगा तथा निविदा के द्वितीय भाग में दरे एवंम्न व्यवसायिक शर्तें होगी, बिना धरोहर घनराशि के तथा सशर्त निविदायें खोली/स्वीकार नहीं की जायेगी। निविदा सं0 19/20-21 पात्र फर्म मूल निर्माता/अधिकृत विक्रेता/अनुमोदी ठेकेदार विवरण 33 के0बी0 बेटेरी सेंट एवं बेटेरी चार्जर की आपूर्ति हेतु धरोहर घनराशि (रु०) 7000/- निविदा घनराशि रु० में (जी0एस0टी0 के साथ) 1180/- ई-निविदा अपलोड करने एवं खोलने की तिथि 15.04.2021 निविदा सं0 20/20-21 पात्र फर्म मूल निर्माता विवरण विभिन्न प्रकार के स्टील ट्यूल्स पोल की आपूर्ति हेतु। धरोहर घनराशि (रु०) 5000000/- निविदा घनराशि रु० में (जी0एस0टी0 के साथ) 5900/- ई-निविदा अपलोड करने एवं खोलने की तिथि 15.04.2021 उपरोक्त ई-निविदा की पूर्ण प्रक्रिया केस्को की ई-टेंडरिंग वेबसाईट [www.kesco.co.in/](http://www.kesco.co.in/) पर आमंत्रित की जाती है। ई-निविदायें प्रप्रत्र पूर्ण कर निविदादाताओं द्वारा वेबसाईट पर खुलने की तिथि के अपराह्न 12:00 बजे तक दो अलग-अलग भागों में मुहरबन्ध निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदायें दिनांक 19.04.2021 अपराह्न 15:00 बजे उपरोक्त कार्य हेतु अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता अथवा नामित अधिकारी द्वारा सार्वजनिक रूप से उपस्थित निविदादाताओं प्रतिनिधियों के समक्ष मण्डल कार्यालय में खोली जायेगी। लिफाफे पर फर्म का नाम निविदा संख्या भाग प्रथम एवं द्वितीय एवं खुलने की तिथि स्पष्ट अंकित होनी चाहिये। निविदा के प्रथम भाग में निविदा शुल्क व धरोहर घनराशि केवल RTGS के माध्यम से अधिशासी अभियन्ता विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-द्वितीय, कानपुर (IFSC Code-PUNB0103500 A/C No 1035002100001555) के पक्ष में जमा रसीद हो तथा निविदा के दूसरे भाग में दरे व शर्तें होगी। निविदा शुल्क या धरोहर घनराशि के अभाव में निविदा का दूसरा भाग नहीं खोला जायेगा। अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता को सम्पूर्ण निविदा या उसके किसी अंश को बिना कारण बताये स्वीकार/अस्वीकार करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। निर्धारित तिथि में अवकाश पड़ने पर सारी प्रक्रिया अगले कार्यदिन में सम्पन्न होगी। कार्य का विवरण नोटिस बोर्ड पर देखा जा सकता है। निविदा प्रप्रत्र का मूल्य तथा जी0एस0टी0 नियमानुसार देय होगा। निविदा प्रप्रत्र निविदा खोलने के एक दिन पूर्व तक प्राप्त किये जा सकते हैं। निविदा संख्या-89 की धरोहर घनराशि रु०—5000/- निविदा मूल्य रु०—354/- (जी0एस0टी0 सहित) राशि नियमानुसार देय होगी। अधिशासी अभियन्ता (मण्डल क्रय) संख्या : STP/A-11/848/20-21 दिनांक 25.03.2021 राष्ट्रहित में बिजली बचाए

**CITYBRIEFS**

**BSA SHIFTED**

Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA) of Lucknow Dinesh Kumar was shifted for laxity on Thursday. In an adverse report sent to the state government, the district magistrate stated that because of the laxity on the part of the BSA, all the programmes of the Basic Shiksha department were being impacted and that another officer should be appointed in his place. Taking note of the adverse report, the government transferred the BSA and attached him to the head office till further orders.

**RLD FLAYS GOVT**

Rashtriya Lok Dal national secretary Anil Dubey criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party government in UP for increasing the price of DAP fertilizer by Rs 300 per bag. He demanded roll back of the fertiliser price and also the hike in power tariff and fuel price. In a statement, he said the BJP was framing anti-farmer policies and its recent decisions had broken the back of the farmers already facing hardship.

**JEE (MAINS)**

Atul Pandey, a student of City Montessori School, Gomti Nagar Campus I, scored 99.54 percentile in the second phase of JEE (Mains), results of which were declared on Wednesday. Five other students of CMS made their mark by securing above 99 percentile. The students include Harsh Joshi (99.50 percentile), Yash Pratap Singh (99.39 percentile), Pranav Mishra (99.20 percentile), Syed Mustafa (99.19 percentile) and Juhu Bajpai (99.18 percentile). These students selected for admission to top engineering colleges in the country have expressed gratitude to CMS teachers for their guidance.

**कार्यालय उपनिदेशक (वि०/या०) राज्य कृषि उत्पादन मण्डी परिषद, उ०प्र०, नवीन गल्ला मण्डी स्थल, महवा चुंगी, गोरखपुर-273016 ई-मेल :- ddemgrkhpur2016@gmail.com**

पत्रांक : वि०/या०—(निविदा)/2021—595 दिनांक 25.03.2021

**ई-निविदा सूचना (अल्पकालीन)**

निम्नलिखित कार्यों की ई-निविदायें वित्तीय रूप से सुदृढ़ एवं मण्डी परिषद में रजिस्टर्ड/अनुमोदी फर्मों से दिनांक 16.04.2021 को अपराह्न 01:30 बजे ई-टेन्डर के माध्यम से आनलाईन कार्यालय उपनिदेशक (वि०/या०) गोरखपुर में खोली जायेगी। उक्त निविदायें दिनांक 15.04.2021 को अपराह्न 5:00 बजे तक वेबसाईट [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in) पर ऑन लाईन भरकर डाउनलोड की जा सकती है। निविदादाता को दिनांक 16.04.2021 अपराह्न 1:00 बजे तक समस्त बिड डाक्यूमेंट एवं समस्त आवश्यक प्रप्रत्र सहित कार्यालय उपनिदेशक (वि०/या०) राज्य कृषि उत्पादन मण्डी परिषद, नवीन फल एवं सब्जी मण्डी स्थल महवा चुंगी गोरखपुर में जमा करना अनिवार्य होगा।

क्र० सं०	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत (रु० लाख में)	निविदा की मूल्य (रु० सहित (रु० में)	धरोहर राशि (रु० लाख में)	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि (की श्रेणी)	पंजी-कृत ठेकेदारों की श्रेणी
1	नवीन मण्डी स्थल सुल्तानपुर में पोलो की प्लिन्थ, पोलो को बदलना, क्रय केन्द्रों का जनरेटर से संयोजन, नलकूप की मरम्मत डेवलपमेंट, ग्रेवल पैकिंग स्टेन्डवाई पम्प, वाटर कूलर की शिफ्टिंग एवं निर्माणधीन पम्प हाउस में आन्तरिक विद्युतीकरण कार्य। 2021_RKUMP_576591	8.61	590.00	0.87	03 माह	ब
2	मण्डी समिति रायबरेली जनपद रायबरेली के क्षेत्रांतर्गत ग्रामीण हाट पैठ बाजार सुल्तानपुर खेड़ा बाजार में 01 नग नलकूप निर्माण एवं 01 एच0पी0 सबमर्सिबल पम्प की आपूर्ति/स्थापना 02 किलोवाट क्षमता का रूफटाप सोलर पावर प्लाण्ट एवं सोलर स्ट्रीट लाइट लगाने आदि 2021_RKUMP_576592	3.80	118.00	0.39	06 माह	स

नोट :- 1. टेन्डर डाक्यूमेंट वेबसाईट [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in) पर दिनांक 15.04.2021 अपराह्न 5:00 बजे तक उपलब्ध रहेगा। निविदा शर्तें वेबसाईट पर देखी जा सकती है।

उपनिदेशक (वि०/या०) मण्डी परिषद, गोरखपुर

# Opposition parties trying to capitalise on farmers stir

**PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW**

With the opposition parties rallying behind the agitated farmers protesting against the new farm laws for the last about four months, and if the massive crowds at the rallies of Congress and Rashtriya Lok Dal is any indicator towards their growing influence over the 'annadata', it would be a litmus test for the Bharatiya Janata Party to keep its vote intact. The outcome of the efforts made by the opposition parties to corner the BJP assume great significance in the current context as Uttar Pradesh is to hold its three-tier panchayat elections in April/May this year followed by Assembly elections in 2022.

Initially, maintaining a safe distance from the movement to avoid getting 'political sponsored protest' tag, leaders of all major opposition parties are now not shying away from consolidating votes in their favour through farmers' agitation. Barring the Bahujan Samaj Party, which has largely been missing from action, most other opposition parties have registered their presence through the mahapanchayats particularly in the Western UP. Mayawati, however, made several tweets in support of the farmers' agitation, urging the

implemented for purchase of Rabi crop.

Senior BJP leaders believe that during the panchayat elections, the farmers, especially Jats, will ultimately support them and that the success in the panchayat elections will also demoralise the farmers leading to withdrawal of the agitation to force the Central government to withdraw the new farm laws. Besides, they believe that a victory in the panchayat elections will also push out the new agriculture laws from debate much before the assembly elections and Yogi Adityanath will retain power once again.

It may be mentioned that in view of coming panchayat elections and assembly polls early next year, UP Congress in-charge Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has visited several districts over the past few months and RLD vice-president Jayant Chaudhary has also taken centre stage as he visits village after village for rallies and mahapanchayats across the state. Even Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav joined Chaudhary in a joint mahapanchayat in Mathura. However, political analysts say that efforts by the Congress will not necessarily convert into votes and that the SP and RLD may be the biggest beneficiaries of the anger towards BJP.

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# FCIN racket kingpin held by ATS

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

The sleuths of the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on Wednesday arrested the kingpin of fake Indian currency notes racket (FCIN) supplying counterfeit notes to his conduits in Uttar Pradesh.

The arrested accused, identified as Sadar Ali, is a resident of Malda Town in West Bengal and was carrying a cash reward of Rs 25,000 on his arrest. He was earlier arrested by Murshidabad police in West Bengal in 2010 and fake currency of over Rs 4 lakh was recovered from him.

According to an official communiqué of the ATS released here on Thursday evening, they arrested two persons -- Thesin Khan and Waseem Khan -- on November 11 last year from whom counterfeit notes of Rs 5.97 lakh were recovered. The ATS registered a case and during interrogation,

it was revealed that the high quality FCIN were brought by the accused from Malda Town by Sadar Ali, who was active in the trade along with his wife Mumtaz. The cops named the couple as 'wanted' and announced a cash reward of Rs 25,000 on arrest of each of the accused.

The ATS claimed that acting on a tip-off, the sleuths arrested Sadar from Noida on Wednesday night. During interrogation, he disclosed to have pumped FCIN mainly in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and in the National Capital Region. Further interrogations are on with him in this regard.

It may be mentioned that on Tuesday also, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had arrested one Babloo, a resident of Sitapur and a key member of the fake Indian currency notes racket from Lucknow. Babloo's role had surfaced in the case after the

arrest of three people by UP's Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on November 25, 2019 when they unearthed the fake Indian currency notes racket. The ATS had seized FCIN of Rs 1.79 lakh from the three accused identified as Phulchand, Aminul Islam and Nasiba Khatoun.

The NIA officials said the three were arrested near Itanuja toll plaza on Lucknow-Sitapur highway and the case was initially registered at the ATS police station in Gomti Nagar, Lucknow. Later, the NIA took over the case on January 20, 2020 and filed a charge sheet against the three accused in this case.

Reports said that since then the NIA teams were in search of Babloo as the investigation in the case revealed that he was engaged in smuggling of high quality FCIN and was in regular telephonic contact with the charge-sheeted accused Aminul Islam and Phulchand.

# Banarasis play 'Massane Ki Holi'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Amidst the singing of famous dhoon of 'Holi Dighambar khele Massane me Holi...' the unique Festival of Colours was played with ashes left after the cremation of bodies at 'Mahashamshan' Manikarnika Ghat here on Thursday, on the second day of Rangbhari Ekadashi. To see this unique and typical pre-Holi event of this city of Lord Shiva, a good number of people were present at the ghat. This religious city has several unique pre and post Holi festivals like Rangbhari Ekadashi, Massane Ki Holi, Budhwa Mangal and Gulab Badi.

According to mythology, there was an interesting story about the genesis of this 'Cheeta Bhasm Ki Holi'.

On the occasion of Ekadashi, the Banarasis played Rangbhari Holi when after his 'Gauna', Lord Vishwanath (Shiv) came to the city along with Goddess Parvati (Maa Gaura) it was attended by all the deities and others but the



People playing 'Massane Ki Holi' at Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi on Thursday

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demons, devils and visible-invisible souls could not attend the same.

To make them happy, this typical Mahashamshan Holi was

played on the second day of Rangbhari Ekadashi. Amidst the chanting of songs, the people played the Holi with ashes (Bhasm). To show their love

towards the nation, the participants also used saffron colours and offered prayer at Baba Mahashamshan Nath Mandir.

# BJP launches door-to-door campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday launched week-long Ghar-Ghar Sampark Abhiyan to apprise the people of achievements and works of Yogi government during its four year rule by visiting door to door and in this order, the president of Kashi Kshetra of party Mahesh Chandra Srivastava established contact with residents of his polling booth (No-257) in Pared Kothi, here.

Along with the state government the BJP is also celebrating the four-year rule of BJP-led Government in the state and in this order; it launched a week-long drive to apprise the people of the achievements and works of the government by visiting door to door. Srivastava visited the houses falling under his polling booth and established direct contact to residents who are also voters of the booth. He distributed papers related to achievements of the government among the residents and also knew about the opinion what they have about the government. The drive has been launched in entire state and the party will cover a total of 28,189 polling booths of Kashi Kshetra during the drive.

Earlier, to mark the four-year completion of the Yogi government, the Labour department organised programmes on Wednesday in all eight development blocks of the district under the labor welfare to apprise common people of the works related to reform,



Regional BJP chief MC Srivastava making door-to-door campaign in Subhash Nagar Colony (Parade Kothi) in Varanasi on Thursday

Pioneer

perform and transform done by state government in various sectors.

The departments such as labour department, employment exchange, skill development mission, youth welfare & sports department, social welfare department, health department, rural development department, women welfare department, khadi & village industry department, etc installed their stalls of schemes at block level which are being run by them. These departments made people aware about their schemes through pamphlets, posters and forms.

The beneficiaries of various welfare schemes were honored and also given away the certificates, kits and equipment. The labour department made registration of MNREGA labourers under Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan Pension Yojana on the basis of 100 days work done through CSC.

In the meantime, a cleanliness fair was organised at Sewapuri block on Wednesday under Niti Ayog under which the various departments exhibited the schemes being run by them and appraised the villagers about these schemes. The NGOs also exhibited the

works being done by them. The children of primary school staged street play and songs to generate consciousness among villagers about cleanliness.

The chief guest and Chief Development Officer Madhusidan Hulgi inspected all the counters and gathered information about schemes. The workers and Asha & Aaganbadi workers engaged in sanitation work were given citation. The villagers also took a pledge of maintaining cleanliness. The CDO appealed the villagers to unite and ensure the cleanliness in entire premises of Gram Panchayat.

# Teak-neem ash to make water drinkable: Research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Scientists at the Indian Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University (IIT-BHU) have succeeded in the research of extracting many toxic substances from water by using ash made from teak and neem wood. This method is not only eco-friendly but also inexpensive. In recent years, adsorption has been considered inexpensive and more effective than other chemical techniques. It costs less and is considered very effective in the prevention of water-borne diseases.

Dr Vishal Mishra, an assistant professor of Biochemical Engineering at the IIT-BHU, and his team have prepared two different types of adsorbent from the ashes of teak wood sawdust and neem stalk, thereby separating the harmful metals, ions, from the water can be made potable. Dr Mishra said 'the wood powder of teak (scientific name: Tectona grandis) is mixed with sodium thiosulfate and heated in an atmosphere of nitrogen to make activated charcoal (coal). Also, adsorbent is also made from neem (scientific name: Azadirachta Indica) stalk ash (neem twig ash). On one hand, teak can extract harmful gases, ions, sulfur, selenium in water from coal made of wood, and on the other hand the study of neem ash is intended for the treatment of polluted water containing copper, nickel and zinc.'

researchers in the world have already investigated available porous (perforated / extremely small holes) charcoal as an active agent, but their method of chemical synthesis involves several drawbacks. Porous charcoal made from sawdust wood powder is harmless and eco-friendly. Sodium thiosulfate is not a toxic reagent (a chemical substance helps in the discovery of other substances). Sodium thiosulfate has many medicinal applications. On the other hand, neem seeds, bark and leaves have been used as an adsorbent by various researchers but neem stalk ashes have not been used for purity of water.

According to him, the nickel present in water is responsible for asthma, neuro disorder, nosia, kidney and lung cancer. Zinc causes fatigue, lethargy, dizziness and excessive thirst, and the excess copper in the water is genotoxic, which can cause changes in DNA and also damage the liver and kidneys. 'The river Ganga is rich in nickel, zinc and copper. Packed Bed Column (PBC) method in Ganga is made clean with the help of ETP (Efficient Treatment Plant). In these ETPs, initiatives can be taken to clean Ganga water very cheaply using coal made from teak wood and ash made from neem stalks,' he said, claiming further 'currently RO systems are installed in almost every household. Coal made from teak wood sawdust can be used to purify water in place of the activated charcoal

in the RO system. This will also reduce the total cost of RO and the available minerals in the water will be safe.'

V-C INAUGURATES NEW BUILDING IN BHU: Vice-Chancellor Prof Rakesh Bhatnagar inaugurated the new building of School of Biotechnology in Institute of Science, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Wednesday evening. The building is equipped with state-of-the-art laboratories to facilitate research and development of technologies. Addressing the gathering after the inauguration of the building, the V-C called upon faculty members and students to develop technologies and contribute in solving problems.

He said that it should be ensured that students make best use of facilities available by using and practicing them on their own and their learning should not be confined to demonstration by teachers only. He said that students and researchers must get proper opportunity of using lab equipment and it is important that they find applications of whatever they are researching upon. Prof Anil K Tripathi, Director, Institute of Science, said that the facilities in the new building have been made possible only because of the support and aid from the university under the leadership of V-C. He said that the university has provided good research infrastructure to the faculty members and now it's upon them to contribute in terms of research and

innovation. Coordinator of the School of Biotechnology Prof Sukh Mahendra Singh said that the building has two full fledged and well-equipped MSc laboratories with a capacity of 60 students. He added that the building also houses six research laboratories with the entire required and advanced infrastructure, provided to the newly inducted faculty members (two professors and four assistant professors). Prof Singh said that the building has a rich library-cum-conference room, with thousands of books. He added that it is one of the best libraries among all the schools of biotechnology all over the country. Rector Prof VK Shukla, Dean of Faculty of Science Prof Mallikarjun Joshi and many others were also present.

53 MORE TEST POSITIVE: The COVID-19 cases continued increasing on Thursday posing a serious threat before the district administration to control it effectively as as many as 53 new positive cases were reported during last 24 hours, increasing the tally of confirmed cases to 22,338. With no COVID-19 death being reported in the last 24 hours, the death toll remains at 377. With 6 Covid patients having been cured in home isolation and none in Covid hospital, the number of Covid patients recovered in the district so far is 21,704 including 18,709 in home isolation and 2,995 in Covid hospitals. As present 257 active cases are under treatment in the district.

# House of main accused in Phulpur liquor incident demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The police, who came into action after 14 deaths due to spurious liquor in Handia, demolished the house of Shyam Babu Jaiswal, the main accused in the Phulpur liquor incident. The demolition of the house in Agarapatti village caused panic among the people, villagers and liquor smugglers.

Shyam Babu, after earning money from illicit liquor, built a luxurious two-storey house on government land, which was demolished by JCB. At present, seven accused, including Shyam Babu, his wife and brother, are behind bars.

In November last year, seven people from three villages, including Amilia of Phulpur, died after drinking

poisonous liquor. The casualties occurred after consuming spurious liquor purchasing from the country made liquor shop. After this, their condition deteriorated and seven died, while 19 people were admitted to the hospital. After the incident, the police had lodged reports against many, including Shyam Babu. Then seven people including Shyam Babu were arrested and sent to jail. A few days ago, the police filed a chargesheet against all the accused on the arrival of the viscera report and instituted a case of Goonda and Gangster Act.

But in Handia, action against smugglers was intensified when questions were raised on the working of the police and administration on deaths from poisonous liquor. On Wednesday afternoon, on

the instructions of the District Magistrate, Phulpur CO Ramsagar Tiwari, Inspector Rajkishore and other officials reached Agarapatti village. After this, Shyam Babu's house was demolished by JCB. SHO said that Shyam Babu had illegally built a house on government land through the acquired property, on which demolition action had been taken.

COUPLE FOUND DEAD: A couple was found dead in their rented room at Kuchchi Sadar in Daraganj area on Thursday morning. The police suspect that they must have invited an altercation which resulted into this incident. The wife was found lying on the ground while the husband was hanging from the fan hook with a rope. They were the residents of Jaunpur.

The land lady said that the couple had come to her house about one year ago and had been paying a rental of ₹2000 per month. Both were labourers and used to leave at six in the morning in search of work.

On Thursday when they did not open the door, people got suspicious. The police was called, and after breaking open the door bodies of the couple were found.

According to the police, it was the second marriage of the woman. Her divorce petition was still pending before the court.

The land lady said that she did not hear any sound in the night to suggest that the couple was quarrelling.

The police are investigating the case keeping in view all the angles.

# Man kills wife & then commits suicide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In a bizarre incident, a young man killed his wife and thereafter made a call to dial 112 and said that the wife has been murdered and now he is going to commit suicide himself. On this information, the police became active and tracing the location of the caller's mobile reached the spot.

Here the cops found the body of the youth hanging on the tree on the bank of the pond. The wife's body was also found lying at some distance. A panic in the village triggered when the news of the deaths spread like wild fire. However, the police in the initial investigation are considering the infighting behind the murder and suicide.

Vinay Bharatiya has a brick kiln in Balapur village in Ghoorpur area. Here, many youths of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh work as labourers and live in a hut with family at some distance. Shrawan Kumar (30), a resident of Kirada village in Basna area of Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district, along with wife Pushpa (28), came to work on a brick kiln. He has four children. His father-in-law Shiva Prasad is the first to work here.

According to the police, Vinay consumed ample alcohol. He had a dispute with his wife on this day. On Wednesday night, he called



Dial 112 and told that he had killed his wife. Now he is going to commit suicide himself. Police immediately became active on this information. The police began to trace the location of the caller.

The police were looking for the same when Vinay's body was found hanging from a tree on the bank of the pond about two hundred meters from the brick kiln located in Balapur

village. Pushpa's body was also found lying at some distance. On seeing the the body, the cops speculated that Pushpa has been strangled to death. The SHO of Ghoorpur Bhuvanesh Choubey and CO Karchana reached the spot and reviewed the situation.

Police said that during preliminary investigation, it was learnt that Vinay committed suicide by hanging himself

after strangling his wife Pushpa. The police took the body and sent it for postmortem. Police officer-in-charge Bhuvnesh Choubey said that the body has been sent for post-mortem. Necessary action will be taken after filing a report based on the PM report.

However, in the investigation so far, the matter of mutual discord is coming behind the incident, police said.

# eCourt Fees Payment inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The NSTEP (National Service and Tracking of Electronic Process) Services Web and Android App & eCourt Fees Payment was inaugurated by Justice Govind Mathur, Chief Justice, Allahabad High Court in the presence of Justice SP. Kesarwani, Chairman, Justice Yashwant Varma and other members of the computerisation committee.

The NSTEP is a centralised summons and process service tracking application designed to streamline the processes electronically in civil cases. The Bailiffs/ Process server

can capture GPS location, photo of the receiver or premises, the signature of the receiver. Such process can be sent electronically Inter-District also.

Court Fees payment through online payment mode has been enabled for District Courts of Uttar Pradesh on ePay Portal - <https://pay.ecourts.gov.in> and also through Stock Holding portal - <https://www.shclstamp.com>.

This will benefit all the Stakeholders including Lawyers, Litigants, Government authorities and general public. They can easily pay eCourt Fees through

online mode from both portal for 24x7 anytime from anywhere.

The NSTEP & eCourt Fees project has been implemented in the entire State of UP from March 24, 2021, onwards.

Justice Govind Mathur, Chief Justice, Allahabad High Court while inaugurating the project said that NSTEP application will speed up the disposal of cases and the issues involved in service of process in physical mode be streamlined. He also said that the eCourt fees shall benefit the lawyer and litigants to great extent.

In this occasion, Chairman, Computerisation

Committee said that NSTEP application will strengthen the justice delivery and will help in speedy justice. Traditional service of summons is very complex and NSTEP will help in speedy disposal of pending cases.]

The eCourt Fees administration will streamline the system and benefit all.

Justice Yashwant Varma said on the occasion that a lot of cases are pending in District Courts at the stage of service of summons. NSTEP shall improve the delivery system of summons in District Courts of UP. The eCourt Fees administration will facilitate all stakeholders.

# OTS scheme to end on March 31

ALLAHABAD (PNS): The One Time Settlement Scheme (OTS) launched by Power Corporation will end in a few days. Registration for this scheme will be done by March 31. Payment will also be done by this date. Officials and employees of the Electricity department are mounting pressure on the defaulters here, but they are not cutting their connection. The line is not being cut on the condition that they will pay the dues with registration in OTS by March 31. This will give exemption in hundred per cent surcharge to the defaulters, while the revenue of the Electricity department will also increase. Thirty per cent of the arrears have to be deposited at the time of registration. In such a situation, if the people registering in OTS do not pay on the due date, then the amount deposited at the time of their registration is forfeited. This means that the amount is deducted in the dues bill, but the defaulters do not get the

benefit of OTS. The festival of Holi is falling in the last week of the month. Payment under OTS is also to be made on the second day of Holi. In such a situation, a big problem has arisen in front of people. People say that if the payment date is extended then they will get a lot of relief and they will also be able to pay the dues in full.

Chief Engineer Vinod Gangwar said that domestic and private tubewell consumers should avail of OTS. Registration and payment will be done by March 31 only, so defaulters need to register immediately to avail 100% interest waiver.

SEMINAR: To celebrate World Theatre Day, Samanvay Rangmandal organised a seminar at Kesar Bhawan, Prayagraj on 'Lok Mein Vachik Parampara' on Thursday. Key note speaker was a folk poet Mohan Lal Yadav who explained the tradition of 'Kissagoi', traditional songs for every occasion, and folk theatre

which were popular media in the past, particularly in rural areas. Chief guest Ajit Pushkal, a well known poet and writer expressed his views on 'Batkahi' style of rural areas where persons sit in groups and listen to each other. He introduced the audience to the power of spoken words. The programme was presided over by Atul Dwivedi, former programme officer of North Central Zone Cultural Centre.

Artistes of Samanvay presented before the audience some emotional scenes of the plays staged by the group in the recent past. The artistes included Divya Shukla, Vaishali Shukla, Himanshi Chaurasia, Jagdish Gaur, Manish Tiwari, Vijay Kumar, Meena Uraon, and Sushma Sharma. At the end the secretary of Samanvay Sushma Sharma extended vote of thanks. On this very occasion of World Theatre Day Madhyam theatre group staged Rishyee in 'Dastangoi' style in the cozy auditorium of Ruchi's

Institute under the direction of Vinay Srivastava. Rishyee is a story written by Dwiwendra Nath Mishra 'Nirgun'.

VALCHEM-2021 CELEBRATED: An American Chemical Society (ACS) sponsored Chemistry Festival 'VALCHEM-2021' was celebrated in Pharmacy department of Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture Technology and Science (SHU-ATS).

Main focus of this programme was to explain the role of chemicals through simple chemical experiments to children from different schools. Convener of the event and Faculty Advisor ACS International Student Chapter Prof Amita Verma welcomed the guests and delegates. Guest of the Event Dr Chiagoziem Otuechere from Biochemistry department of Redeemer's University, Nigeria explained the importance of chemistry in studies and daily life.



CDO, Dr Mahendra Kumar raided the COVID-19 vaccination centre at Nawabganj on Thursday.

Pioneer

## Acting DM warns against laxity in vaccination drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Acting District Magistrate and Chief Development Officer Dr Mahendra Kumar carried out a surprise inspection of Nagriya Swasthya Kendra at Nawabganj on Thursday and found several irregularities in maintaining record, both off-line and on-line. He warned the officials that wherever Covid vaccination work was going on, apart from uploading the data on the official portal, the details of the vaccinated people had to be maintained in a register as well so that it could be cross-

checked.

He said the UP government was serious towards the vaccination drive and would not tolerate laxity and dereliction of duties. He directed the chief medical officer to deduct one day's salary of Ms Sushila who was found absent from duty.

He said another cause of concern was that Dr Himani Sachan was unable to give any detail for Covid vaccination data feeding. He said all answers related to queries were given by BHW Mayank Awasthi instead of Dr Himani. The acting district magis-

trate said this was gross negligence and apathy towards his assigned work and directed the CMO to transfer Mayank Awasthi in one week's time and post a new BHW in his place. He also expressed concern over the careless attitude of Dr Himani Sachan and directed the CMO to ensure that online portal feeding and details in register was maintained mandatorily.

He expressed concern over the working of computer operator Ajay and directed the CMO that if he failed to show improvement in working in one week's time then he should

be transferred to a distant district.

The acting district magistrate then visited the office and took first hand details of the working and the presence of staff in the office. He said if the staff and officials were found not to be delivering as per the state government directives then stern action would be taken against them and they would also be transferred to a distant district.

He also took feedback of the vaccines and the staff on duty and the average patients visiting the centre for vaccination.

## Two killed, 3 injured in road accident

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A retired army man and a farmer were killed while three others, including the project officer of Basic Education Department, were injured when the auto-rickshaw they were travelling in was hit by a speeding private bus on Akbarpur Mati Road in Kanpur Dehat on Thursday morning.

All the injured were admitted to the district hospital. According to reports, after collecting passengers from Mati, the auto-rickshaw was heading to Akbarpur when a private bus coming from the opposite direction collided with it near the circle officer's residence.

While retired army man Girish Kumar Dubey (52) of Jaganpur and a farmer Jitendra (27) of Khamhaila village died on the spot, Prabhu Asrey (80), father of deceased Girish Kumar Dubey, project officer at BSA office, Purnima Arya, and auto-rickshaw driver Rahul Pal of Alam Chandrapur were injured.

Police admitted all the injured to the district hospital where the condition of Purnima Arya and Prabhu Asrey was stated to be critical. After the accident the bus driver escaped after abandoning the vehicle on the spot. Police have impounded the damaged auto-rickshaw and bus.

Station House Officer of Akbarpur, Tulsiram Pandey, the bus driver would be arrested.

## Woman's body recovered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The body of an unidentified woman was recovered from Banpurva village in Barra police station area on Thursday morning.

The killer had brutally smashed her head with a brick. Some villagers passing that way saw the body and informed the police about it.

The police recovered two beer cans, slippers of the deceased, cigarette butts and a blood-stained brick from the spot.

During search, the police also recovered Rs 400 from the pocket of the jeans of the victim and a mobile phone in the nearby bushes.

The cops raided the beer and liquor shops on Banpurva road to get some clue to the identity of the victim. The police believe that the woman was brought to the spot in the night on some pretext and then killed.

Superintendent of Police (South) Deepak Bhuker said they were trying to ascertain the identity of the victim. The body was sent for autopsy.

## 17 renowned artists taking part in National Art Camp

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Many acclaimed artists of the country are taking part in the ongoing National Art Camp at Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Sanatan Dharm Vidyalaya in Nawabganj here.

Organised by the regional centre of Lalit Kala Akademi as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to commemorate the 75th anniversary of independence and Martyrs Day, the camp was inaugurated by Minister of State for Higher Education, Science and Technology, Neelima Katiyar, on March 23.

As many as 17 renowned artists from different parts of the country, including Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Delhi, Odisha and Uttarakhand, are taking part in the camp and will prepare portraits of country's great martyrs Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, depicting the incidents of their lives. These portraits will be displayed in an exhibition to be organised on March 27.

## Nigahi also achieves target

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

The Nigahi Project of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Miniratna company of the Government of India, on Tuesday achieved the fixed annual coal production target (19.52 million tonnes) for the year 2020-21, eight days ahead of schedule. The project compared to same period last year with a spectacular growth of 5.61 per cent (pc) has produced 20.04 million tonnes (MT) till Tuesday. The Jayant, Dudhichua and Kakri Projects of NCL have also met their annu-



al coal production targets on time. NCL CMD Prabhat Kumar Sinha and its Executive Board of Directors on this special achievement, congratulated the management and workers of all coal fields. In the year 2020-21, NCL in relation to its target of 113.25 MT so far compared to the same period last year with an increase of 6.34 pc has produced 111.81 MT of coal as well as despatched 106.22 MT of it. NCL with an annual growth of 16.81 pc has also removed 368.16 million cubic metres overburden which is very important in coal extraction process.

## Siwan Jn- Gkp DEMU spl from Mar 27

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration will for the convenience of run the 05153/05154 Siwan-Gorakhpur-Siwan daily unreserved DEMU express special train from Siwan from March 27 and from Gorakhpur from March 30 and the 05145/05146 Chhapra-Siwan-Chhapra daily unreserved DEMU express special from Chhapra from March 27 and from Siwan from March 31. It will also run the 05149/05150 Bhatni-Barhaj Bazar-Bhatni daily unreserved express special from Bhatni from March 27 and from Barhaj Bazar from March 27 and 05151/05152 Bhatni-Bahraj Bazar-Bhatni daily unreserved express special from Bhatni from March 27, and from Barhaj Bazar from March 27. Keeping Covid-19 in mind, these special trains will be run as unreserved express specials so that there is no extra rush in them and to ensure compliance of its safety standards. It is necessary to comply with the Covid-19 safety norms issued by the Government of India in the larger health interests of passengers travelling in these trains and their co-passengers, CPRO PK Singh said.

Dudahi at 09.48 hrs, Chaf Halt at 09.55 hrs, Kathkuiyan at 10.03 hrs, Padrauna at 10.15 hrs, Barhaganj at 10.27 hrs, Ramkola at 10.37 hrs, Lakshmiaganj at 10.44 hrs, Matia Barghat Halt at 10.51 hrs, Kaptanganj at 11.20 hrs, Bodarwar at 11.40 hrs, Mahuva Khurd Halt at 11.46 hrs, Pipraich at 12.02 hrs, Unaula at 12.30 hrs, Gorakhpur Cantt at 13.08 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 13.25 hrs.

**GKP-SIWAN JN SPL:** In return journey the 05154 Gorakhpur-Siwan Jn daily unreserved DEMU express special will from March 30 daily depart from Gorakhpur at 19.15 hrs and after stopping at Gorakhpur Cantt, Unaula, Pipraich, Mahuwa Khurd Halt, Bodarwar, Kaptanganj, Matia Barghat Halt, Lakshmiaganj, Ramkola, Baraha Ganj, Padrauna, Kathkuiyan, Chaf Halt, Dudahi, Gauri Sriram, Tamkuhi Road, Tariasujan, Tinpheria, Jalapur, Sipaya, Sasa Musa, Narkatiya Bazar Halt, Thawe, Hathua, Amlori Sarsar and Siwan Kachari will reach Siwan at 00.10 hrs on the second day. A total of eight DEMU coaches will be attached in this train.

leave Siwan daily at 05.50 hrs and after stopping at Pachrukhi, Duraundha, Chainwa, Mahendranath, Ekma, Daudpur, Kopa Samhota and Teknewas reach Chhapra at 07.40 hrs. A total of eight DEMU coaches will be attached in this special train.

**BHATNI-BHJ SPL:** The 05149 Bhatni-Barhaj Bazar (BHJ) daily unreserved express special will from March 27 leave Bhatni daily at 05.10 hrs and after stopping at Peokol, Salempur, Deoraha Baba Road, Satraon and Sisai Gulab Rai Halt and reach Barhaj Bazar at 06.15 hrs. In return journey the 05150 Barhaj Bazar-Bhatni daily unreserved express special from March 27 will leave Barhaj Bazar at 06.40 hrs and after stopping Sisai Gulab Rai Halt, Satraon, Deoraha Baba Road, Salempur and Peokol reach Bhatni at 07.50 hrs. A total of five coaches, including four of general second class and one of SLR will be attached in this train.

**BHATNI-BHJ DAILY:** The 05151 Bhatni-Barhaj Bazar daily unreserved express special will from March 27 leave Bhatni daily at 16.20 hrs and after stopping at Peokol, Salempur, Deoraha Baba Road, Satraon and Sisai Gulabrai Halt reach Barhaj Bazar at 17.25 hrs. In the return journey, the 05152 Barhaj Bazar-Bhatni daily unreserved express special will from March 27 leave Barhaj Bazar daily after stopping at Sisai Gulab Rai Halt, Satraon, Deoraha Baba Road, Salempur and Peokol reach Bhatni at 19.05 hrs. A total of five coaches, including four of general second class and one of SLR will be attached in the train.

**SIWAN-GKP DEMU:** The 05153 Siwan Jn-Gorakhpur daily unreserved DEMU express special will from March 27 daily leave Siwan Jn at 07.55 hrs, Siwan Kachari at 08.02 hrs, Amalori Sarsar at 08.11 hrs, Hathua at 08.21 hrs, Thawe at 08.35 hrs, Narkatiya Bazar Halt at 08.46 hrs, Sasa Musa at 08.53 hrs, Sipaya at 08.59 hrs, Jalapur at 09.05 hrs, Tinferia at 09.11 hrs, Taria Sujan at 09.18 hrs, Tamkuhi Road at 09.32 hrs, Gauri Sriram at 09.41 hrs,

**SIWAN JN-CHHAPRA DAILY:** In the return journey, 05146 Siwan Jn-Chhapra daily unreserved DEMU express special will from March 31

## Trains to be diverted, rescheduled

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Due to traffic-cum-power block given by the railway administration for the construction of limited height subway (LHS) between Godinganj-Chhapra Gramin on April 13, 20, 27 and May 4 and 11 the following trains will be controlled, rescheduled and diverted, CPRO PK Singh said.

**JYG-ASR HUMSAFAR SPL:** The 04651 Jaynagar (JYG)-Amritsar (ASR) Humsafar clone special train on April 13, 21 and 27 and May 4 and 11 will be run from Jaynagar by being rescheduled by 240 minutes.

**SAHARSA-NEW DELHI SPL:** The 02553 Saharsa-New Delhi special will be run on April 13, 20 and 27 and May 4 and 11 from Saharsa by being rescheduled by 60 minutes.

**HATIA-GKP SPL:** The 05027 Hatia-Gorakhpur special will be run on April 12, 19 and 26 and May 3 and 10 from Hatia by being rescheduled by 180 minutes. Meanwhile the 05028 Gorakhpur-Hatia special train will be run on April 13, 20 and 27 and May 4 and 11 from Gorakhpur by being rescheduled by 120 minutes.

**BALLIA-SEALDAH SPL:** The 03106 Ballia-Sealdah special train will be run on April 13, 20 and 27 and May 4 and 11 from Ballia by being rescheduled by 180 minutes.

**HWH-KATHGODAM SPL:** The 03019 Howrah (HWH)-Kathgodam special train to run from Howrah on April 12, 19 and 26 and May 3 and 10 will be run by being controlled between Barauni and Sonpur by 70 minutes.

**JYG-AMRITSAR CANTT SPL:** The 04649 Jaynagar-Amritsar Cantt special to run from Darbhanga on April 13, 20 and 27 and May 4 and 11 will be run by being controlled between Samastipur and Sonpur by 30 minutes.

**NEW DELHI-SAHARSA SPL:** The 02554

New Delhi-Saharsa special running from New Delhi on April 12, 19 and 26 and May 3 and 10 will be run by being controlled by 60 minutes between Gorakhpur and Chhapra Gramin stations.

**NEW DELHI-JAYNAGAR:** The 02562 New Delhi-Jaynagar special to run from New Delhi on April 12, 19 and 26 and May 3 and 10 will be controlled by 60 minutes between Varanasi and Chhapra Gramin stations.

**LJN-PATLIPUTRA SPL:** The 02530 Lucknow Jn (LJN)-Patliputra special train run from Lucknow on April 13, 20 and 27 and May 4 and 11 will be run by being controlled by 60 minutes between Gorakhpur and Chhapra stations.

**DARBHANGA-NEW DELHI SPL:** The 02569 Darbhanga-New Delhi clone special train to run from Darbhanga on April 13, 20 and 27 and May 4 and 11 will instead of its scheduled route Darbhanga-Muzaffarpur-Chhapra-Gorakhpur will be diverted via Darbhanga-Sitamari-Raxaul-Narkatiaganj-Paniahwa-Gorakhpur. Meanwhile the 02565 Darbhanga-New Delhi special train to run from Darbhanga on April 13, 20 and 27 and May 4 and 11 in place of its scheduled route i.e. Darbhanga-Samastipur-Muzaffarpur-Chhapra-Gorakhpur will be run via Muzaffarpur-Paniahwa-Gorakhpur.

**SAHARSA-NEW DELHI SPL:** The 02563 Saharsa-New Delhi clone special to run from Saharsa on April 13, 20 and 27 and May 4 and 11 instead of running on its scheduled route Muzaffarpur-Chhapra-Gorakhpur will be diverted via Muzaffarpur-Paniahwa-Gorakhpur. Meanwhile the 02564 New Delhi-Saharsa clone special to run from New Delhi on April 12, 19 and 26 and May 3 and 10 will instead of running on its scheduled route Gorakhpur-Chhapra-Muzaffarpur will be diverted via Gorakhpur-Paniahwa-Muzaffarpur.

## Over 20,000 farmers in UP benefited by KUSUM Yojana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In Uttar Pradesh, over 20,000 farmers have benefited under KUSUM Yojana. As per the directive of the government, banks give a 30 per cent amount as loan to farmers for installation of solar pumps for irrigation. Similarly, the government gives 60 per cent of the total cost of the solar pumps as a subsidy to the farmers.

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthaan Mahabhayan (PM-KUSUM) Yojana was initiated by the Government of India to increase the income of farmers and provide source for irrigation and de-dieselise the farm sector. The PM-KUSUM Yojana got administrative approval in March 2019 and its guidelines were framed in July, 2019. After the launch of this scheme, the demand for solar panels has increased rapidly in Uttar Pradesh in the last few years. This was stated District Project Officer Ashish Pathak while addressing a meeting on Thursday. He said every farmer, including small businessmen, could connect with this scheme and make good

income by generating electricity. He advised farmers interested in installing solar panels to directly contact the Renewable Energy Development Authority of the state government.

He said to promote solar energy, the UP government was constantly introducing new schemes and under the government schemes, solar panels were being provided at cheaper prices for setting up solar plants. He said that the farmer would get subsidy on new and improved solar powered pumps.

He said they could take a loan for this from the SME branch of many banks and this scheme will help farmers to generate electricity for their tube wells.

Pathak said the plan aimed to combine solar and another renewable capacity by 2022 with a total central financial support of 25,750 MW. He said solar pumps would not only help irrigate the fields but would also generate safe energy. He said farmers could also sell surplus power to power supply companies and this would help them generate additional income.

He said with the help of a power grid, one could supply one's generated electricity to the state government or could supply the electricity in one's area from house to house.

He said the bank was also giving loans at very low interest or on easy installments to install solar panels at home. He said financially weak farmers could also get a solar panel installed at their house.

**CONGRESSMEN PAY RICH TRIBUTES TO GANESH SHANKER VIDYARTHI:** Rich tributes were paid to Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi on his Balidan Diwas on Thursday.

The Congressmen assembled at Phool Bagh and paid floral tributes to the great revolutionary.

Addressing the gathering, Har Prakash Agnihotri said today the youth were forgetting the sacrifices of Vidyarthi and thus it was the duty of Congressmen to create awareness among the youth to tread the path shown by him.

He said Vidyarthi became an agent of well-known revolutionary Hindi and Urdu journals Karamyogi and Swarajya and began contributing to

them in the pen name of 'Vidyarthi' - the seeker of knowledge. Agnihotri said Vidyarthi attracted Mahabir Prasad Dwivedi, the doyen of Hindi journalism, who offered him the job of a sub-editor in his famous literary monthly 'The Saraswati'. Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi then founded Pratap, his famous revolutionary weekly, which identified itself with the cause of the oppressed wherever they might be. He first met Mahatma Gandhi in 1916 in Lucknow and threw himself wholeheartedly in the national movement. He took a leading part in the Home Rule Movement of 1917-18 and led the first strike of textile workers in Kanpur. In 1920, he launched the daily edition of Pratap and it was in this year that he was sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment for championing the cause of peasants of Rae Bareilly. In 1925, when the Congress decided to contest elections of Provincial Legislative Councils and organised the Swaraj Party, Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi won the poll on its behalf from Kanpur and served as a member of the UP Legislative Council.

## District jail inspected

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

DJ Lal Chand Gupta, DM Praveen Kumar Laxkar, SP Ajay Kumar Singh and CJM Swati jointly inspected the district jail on Wednesday. During it they inspected the barracks, kitchen, hospital, urinals and toilets etc, interacted with prisoners and became aware with arrangements. During the inspection nothing objectionable was found. The jail officials were directed to follow Covid-19 prevention norms. On the occasion jail superintendent Arun Kumar Mishra, SHO City Kotwali Ravindra Yadav and SHO Katra Kotwali Swaminath Prasad were also present.

**PROGRAMME:** In the series of programmes to highlight achievements of state government on completion of four years the Labour department organised a camp at City block headquarters on Wednesday. Majhawa MLA Shuchismita Maurya, who was chief guest, said government was committed to helping the needy. ALC RK Pathak said the department was providing several benefits to labourers and their dependents. The MLA handed over the cheque of ₹2 lakh to two widows of labourers and 30 bicycles to girl students who were daughters of labourers. BDO Shwetank Singh, staff of the block and Labour department and girl students were present.



# National Bank for Financing Infrastructure RS passes Bill to fund infrastructure projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Budget Session of Parliament concluded on Thursday with the Rajya Sabha passing the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development Bill to fund infrastructure projects. The Lok Sabha had passed it on Tuesday. The Budget Session was earlier scheduled to end on April 8. In his valedictory remarks, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said the Upper House saw a productivity rate of more than 90 percent in the Budget Session. The House also bid farewell to three retiring members from Kerala — Vyalar Ravi, K K Ragesh and Abdul Wahab. While giving a brief account of the performance of the House, Naidu said the upper house functioned for a total of 104 hours as against the total scheduled time of 116 hours. In the second part of the



Budget session, both the houses started working simultaneously with relaxed social distancing norms. In the first part of the Budget session, the Rajya Sabha met in the first half of the day while Lok Sabha functioned in the afternoon session. He also said a total of 21 hours and 26 minutes of the House was lost due to disruptions during this Session. However, the House compensated this loss and sat beyond the scheduled time for a total of 14 hours and 28 minutes to complete the legislative and other business. Naidu also note that the high productivity witnessed during the last four sessions since June 2019, that is, 249th, 250th, 251st and 252nd Sessions has continued in this Session (253rd) as well. As regards legislative output, Naidu said the Rajya Sabha passed 19 bills during the session, which includes the Appropriation Bill and Finance Bill. Around 34 hours and 4 minutes were spent on the discussion of the Government bills, which comes around 42 per cent of the total function-

ing time of this house, spent on the legislative business. He, however, expressed concern over issues such as less attendance of members and the duration of the meetings, which need further improvements. In his observations before adjourning the proceedings of the Lok Sabha sine die, Bhartruhari Mehtab, who was in the chair, wished Speaker Om Birla a speedy recovery and informed members that the Speaker was stable. He had tested corona positive. "Several important bills were passed during the Session. I could not be present in the House during the last days of Session due to health reasons. Panel of Chairpersons conducted proceedings smoothly & Hon'ble Members also cooperated meaningfully. I express my gratitude to all," Birla tweeted. In Birla's absence, a panel of chairpersons, including Mehtab, Rajendra Agrawal, Rama Devi, Meenakashi Lekhi and Midun Reddy, chaired the proceedings. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several cabinet ministers and Congress leader Rahul

## The House also gave its nod to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021

Gandhi were present in the House. The first part of the Budget Session started on January 29 with the President's address to joint sitting of both houses of Parliament. The address was boycotted by over 20 Opposition parties, including the Congress, in support of the demand of the protesting farmers for the repeal of the three farm laws. The Union Budget was tabled on February 1. Thereafter, House proceedings were washed out for four consecutive days over the opposition's demand for separate discussion on farm issues. To compensate the session's lost time, the House sat till midnight for several days.

The House also gave its nod to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021. The Insurance (Amendment) Bill which increases foreign direct investment (FDI) limit in the insurance sector from 49 per cent to 74 per cent was passed in the House. In his remarks before adjourning the house, Mahtab said despite disruptions, the Lok Sabha's productivity during the Budget session stood at 114 per cent and the members also dealt with important issues by sitting till midnight on several occasions. 146 members participated in the discussion on the Union Budget for 14 hours and 42 minutes, he said.

## Two lakh plus grievances received against 2 Ministries between 2018 and 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over two lakh grievances have been received against two Ministries between 2018 and 2020. Besides, one to two lakh grievances have been received against four ministries/departments and 50,000 to one lakh grievances received against eight Ministries during the same period. Expressing concern over the large number of grievances, a Parliamentary Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its 106th report on Demands for Grants (2021-22) of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions has asked the Centre to constitute social audit panels to identify core grievance-prone areas and streamline their systems. As regards the redressal of grievances by states/UTs, the Committee noted that the percentage of grievance disposal is not satisfactory.

In its recent report, the panel recommended to the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) to progressively bring down the maximum time limit for grievance redressal from 60 to 45 days. "The Committee recommends the Department to instruct the ministries/departments of central government to constitute social audit panels to identify core grievance prone areas and streamline their systems accordingly," the committee said. The Government of India has established the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), an online system for grievance redressal. This system facilitates citizens to lodge their grievances to ministries/ departments/ organisations/ state governments/ UTs, which scrutinise and take action for speedy and favourable redress of these grievances. A separate work flow and functionality for grievances to appeal authorities in CPGRAMS has been operationalised in CPGRAMS. The time line for resolution of an appeal by the nodal appellate authority is 30 days of receipt of the same, according to the report. The Committee appreciated the department for institutionalizing an appellate mechanism in CPGRAMS. The Committee also emphasizes that the department should publicise the portal through all possible means including the print and electronic media so that the benefits of the grievance redressal mechanism percolate down to those at the bottom of the pyramid, it said.

The Committee also recommends the department to develop an Interactive Voice Response System for registration of grievances for the benefit of people who inhabit remote areas and have no proper access to the internet, the report said. "We have allowed the appeal," the bench said while pronouncing the judgement. The top court had reserved its verdict in the matter on February 16. Mukhim's counsel had earlier argued before the apex court that there was no intention to create disharmony or conflict through the post which referred to an incident of a murderous assault on July 3, 2020. The counsel for Meghalaya government had earlier claimed in the top court that "communal colour" was given to the scuffle between minor boys and her post shows it was a communal incident between tribal and non-tribal people.

## SC quashes FIR against journalist

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Thursday quashed an FIR lodged against journalist Patricia Mukhim for allegedly creating communal disharmony through her Facebook post. A Bench headed by Justice L Nageswara Rao allowed the plea filed by Mukhim against the Meghalaya High Court order which had refused to quash the FIR against her.



"We have allowed the appeal," the bench said while pronouncing the judgement. The top court had reserved its verdict in the matter on February 16. Mukhim's counsel had earlier argued before the apex court that there was no intention to create disharmony or conflict through the post which referred to an incident of a murderous assault on July 3, 2020. The counsel for Meghalaya government had earlier claimed in the top court that "communal colour" was given to the scuffle between minor boys and her post shows it was a communal incident between tribal and non-tribal people.

## IN SHORT

### NIA RAIDS 3 LOCATIONS IN RAILWAY BLAST CASE

New Delhi: The NIA has conducted searches at three locations in West Bengal and Jharkhand in the Nimtita Railway Station Bomb Blast Case in which West Bengal Minister Jakir Hossain and 26 others were injured. On Wednesday, the NIA conducted searches at the premises of Biyon SK and Mohammedin SK alias Mohan Kasai in Murshidabad, West Bengal and at the premises of accused Shahidul Islam at Majgaon, West Singbhum, Jharkhand in connection with investigation of case.

### DOUBLE-DECKER FLYOVER TO EASE TRAFFIC JAM

New Delhi: The Centre is working on a proposal to build a double-decker flyover in steel city Jamshedpur to reduce traffic congestion in the city, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday. Replying to a query from Jamshedpur MP Bidyut Baran Mahato during the Question Hour in Lok Sabha, Gadkari also said the total toll collection on national highways is expected to reach ₹34,000 crore in the financial year ending March 31, 2021 despite farmers' protest on some highways from ₹24,000 crore in 2019-20.

### EXTENSION FOR PERSONAL DATA SAFETY BILL PENDING

New Delhi: The Joint Committee of Parliament examining the Personal Data Protection Bill was on Thursday given extension till the Monsoon Session to submit its report. The JCP, headed by the BJP's Meenakashi Lekhi, was constituted in Lok Sabha in December 2019, and was expected to submit its report in the Budget Session.

## SC to hear plea seeking permanent commission for women in Army



A Bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud said the process by which women officers were evaluated did not address the gender discrimination concern raised in the verdict delivered by the apex court last year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Thursday allowed the pleas of several women SSC officers seeking grant of permanent commission in the Army, while holding that the ACR evaluation process was flawed and discriminatory in nature.

The Bench also noted that the structure of our society is created by males for males where talk of equality is a farce and since Independence, efforts have been made to bridge the gap and grant equal opportunity to men and women.

Delivering its verdict on a batch of pleas filed by several women officers who had sought compliance of its February last year directions to the Centre for grant of permanent commission, promotions and consequential benefits, the court said the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) evaluation criteria for grant of permanent commission to women officers ignored achievements and laurels brought by them to the Indian Army.

A Bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud said the process by which women officers were evaluated did not address the gender discrimination concern raised in the verdict delivered by the apex court last year.

In its landmark judgement delivered on February 17 last year, the top court had directed that women officers in the Army be granted permanent commission, rejecting the Centre's stand of their physiological limitations as being based on "sex stereotypes" and "gender discrimination against women".

It had directed that within three months, all serving short service commission (SSC) women officers have to be considered for permanent commission irrespective of them having crossed 14 years or, as the case may be, 20 years of service.

In its judgement passed on Thursday, the apex court said that ACR evaluation criteria for SSC women officers in Army created systematic discrimination.

## CAG orders enquiry into renovation of India House in London

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has recommended an inquiry in the renovation of the India House in London as the works award was given without approval of the Ministry of External Affairs.

According to a CAG report tabled in the Parliament, the High Commission of India, London undertook work relating to renovation of the basement at the India House, at a cost of GBP 744,971 (approx. ₹ 6.63 crore), without prior approval from the Ministry of External Affairs and resorted to irregular splitting of works to evade approvals from higher authority and open bidding. "It adopted a grossly manipulated process for award of works to the same person, and made post facto additions and alterations in the scope of work which led to undue benefits being extended to Contractors. Such blatant subversion of rules and processes indicates supervisory failure and possible collusion between Mission officials and the agencies".

The renovation work of the basement area was taken up at a bid cost of GBP 129,800 (₹ 1.07 crore). After five months in January 2018, the Mission issued another NIT for "Design and furnishing of the consular service area", which was again a part of the original project scope, and awarded this work at a cost GBP 345,480,23 (₹ 3.14 crore). Subsequently, (August/September 2018) the Mission took up "additional works25" not originally within the scope of the renovation project valuing GBP 107,694 (₹ 99.06 lakh), by splitting the total work into 19 piecemeal orders. The CAG said that the Mission resorted to indiscriminate sub division of work with the intention of evading seeking approval of higher authorities/Ministry and avoiding open bidding.



"Further, additional work was awarded based on fraudulent quotations, to an associated ineligible company, incorporated immediately prior to the award of work and dissolved after receipt of payments," the CAG said. The report further states as per the contract, the work was to be executed within 8-10 weeks from September 1, 2017 i.e., by November 15, 2017. "However, the work was completed on 31 January 2018. Despite a delay of 10 weeks (minimum) in completion of the work33, the Mission did not recover liquidated damages amounting to GBP 7,78834 (₹ 6.85 lakh) from the company," it said.

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## Not proper to call RSS, affiliates 'Sangh Parivar': Rahul



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said it is not right to call the RSS and its associated groups 'Sangh Parivar' as a family has women, respect for elders, compassion and affection, and the organisation has none of these. Gandhi's remarks come a day after he said the harassment and de-boarding of nuns from a train in Uttar Pradesh was a result of the Sangh Parivar's "vicious propaganda" to pitch one community against another and trample on minorities.

In a tweet in Hindi on Thursday, he said he will no longer refer to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh as 'Sangh Parivar', united family. "I believe it is not right to call the RSS and associated organisations Sangh Parivar — there are women in the family, there is respect for the elderly, a sense of compassion and affection - which is not there in the RSS".

## BJP leader Mukul Roy to get Z category security during Bengal polls



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has upgraded the VIP security cover of BJP leader Mukul Roy to 'z' category during the polls process in West Bengal. The Union Home Ministry has asked the VIP security unit of the CRPF to undertake the upgrade. Earlier, Roy was enjoying 'y' category cover. Roy, 66, was under the 'y+' category cover of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). Roy is the national vice president of BJP and a party candidate from the Krishnanagar Assembly seat in Nadia district of West Bengal. During the polls, he will now enjoy a 'z' category cover during his movement in the state. Roy will now have a contingent of 24-30 armed personnel who will work in shifts and accompany the politician during the poll campaign and also provide security at his residence. He had joined the BJP in November, 2017 from the Trinamool Congress (TMC) party and has also served as the Railways minister in the past.

## Climate change may hurt Indian manufacturing due to heat stress on workers: Chicago study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

One-degree Celsius rise in annual temperatures may lead to two per cent drop in productivity levels of industrial units and climate change may hurt the Indian manufacturing sector owing to heat stress on workers, a new study has said. The study by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago used several high-frequency micro-data sets of worker output and a nationally representative dataset of more than 58,000 factories across India. The researchers found that there is around two per cent drop of productivity for every one-degree rise in annual temperature.

## SC orders status quo on supply of Yamuna water to Delhi till today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Thursday directed Governments of Punjab, Haryana and others to maintain status quo on supply of Yamuna water to Delhi till Friday. The apex court was hearing an application filed by Delhi Jal Board (DJB) which has sought directions to the Haryana Government to cease the discharge of untreated pollutants into the Yamuna and release sufficient water to the national capital. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde issued notices to Haryana, Punjab and Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) and asked them to file their responses on the application by Friday. Senior advocate A M Singhvi, appearing for DJB, said that water level has fallen in the national capital. Senior lawyer Shyam Divan, appearing for Haryana, said that full level of water supply has been made. Senior advocate Vikas Singh, who also appeared in the

matter, said that a court commissioner should be appointed to verify the water level. Divan said no application has been filed for the appointment of court commissioner in the matter. "This is about the fundamental right to water. We will not go into technical issue whether court commissioner can be appointed only after the application. If the need arises, we can appoint it," said the bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian.

## ₹3,700-crore bank fraud case: CBI raids over 100 spots in 11 States/UTs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday conducted searches at over 100 locations in 11 States/Union Territories in a countrywide special drive and registered over 30 cases related to bank fraud of over ₹3,700 crore. These searches are part of Special Drive to book the fraudsters on the complaints received from different Nationalised Banks in the country. The complainant banks include Indian Overseas Bank, Union Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India, IDBI, Canara Bank, Indian Bank and Central Bank of India. The various cities/towns where the searches were conducted include Kanpur, Delhi, Ghaziabad, Mathura, Noida, Gurugram, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Tiruppur, Bangalore, Gantur, Hyderabad, Bellary, Vadodara, Kolkata, West Godavari, Surat, Mumbai, Bhopal, Nimadi, Tirupati Visakhapatnam, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Karnal, Jaipur and Sri Ganganagar.

"During searches, various incriminating documents and other material/digital evidences have been recovered," the CBI said in a statement. The CBI has been receiving a number of complaints from various banks alleging cheating, diversion of funds, submission of fake/forged documents by different defaulting firms while obtaining loans/credit facilities and the like. There have been allegations that such firms have been turning defaulters resulting into the loans becoming Non Performing Assets (NPAs), thus causing heavy loss to the public sector banks, it said. "After scrutiny of the complaints, the cases are registered by CBI. Thorough investigation is carried out in order to book the culprits, take them to face the law and endeavour to salvage public money," it added.

## RS polls from Kerala

# CPM accuses EC of succumbing to Centre's pressure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CPI(M) leaders on Thursday accused the Election Commission of succumbing to the Central Government's pressure and changing the schedule of elections to three seats in Rajya Sabha from Kerala. Last week, the Election Commission announced the schedule and the election was supposed to be conducted on April 14. But all of a sudden the EC kept the election on abeyance citing an opinion from the Law Ministry.

"Election to Rajya Sabha from Kerala has been kept in abeyance. ECI says Law Ministry recommended so. Art. 324 vests the power to conduct the election only in the ECI. Why the political intervention? Why has ECI succumbed to it? Indian Constitution has been violated, yet again!" tweeted Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan expressing displeasure.

CPI(M) politbureau member Nilotpal Basu said that the party is shocked to see the attitude of the Election Commission. "We wanted to pointedly question the bonafides of the Government of India to directly intervene in the process of elections where as no political party or individuals had expressed any disagreement with the authority of the ECI, much less the details of the notification for elections. "We are afraid that this appears to be completely in contravention of the immense powers of the Election Commission under Article 324 and actually amounts to the relinquishing of its independence. It is clear that the ECI is acting at the behest of the overnment", said he.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Stop playacting

### Uddhav shouldn't allow the Maharashtra Home Minister to sell a dummy to the people

Politicians nowadays seem to have scant regard for probity, accountability and integrity in public life; what matters to them is power and position. The recent turn of events in Mumbai reflects that those wielding power think that they can get away with anything. NCP chief Sharad Pawar's blue-eyed boy and Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, against whom serious charges of corruption have been levelled by Mumbai Police's former Commissioner Param Bir Singh, said he would welcome a probe against himself if Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray orders any. The CM has so far not acted against his tainted Cabinet colleague while Pawar has predictably defended his pick. The Home Minister's statement came a day after the Supreme Court (SC) termed the matter "quite serious" and asked Singh to approach the Bombay High Court (HC) with his plea seeking a CBI probe against Deshmukh. Deshmukh seems to be aware that in case Uddhav orders a probe against him, the HC will take note of this fact before deciding on Singh's plea. It may or may not have a bearing on the High Court's decision but Deshmukh is apparently trying to ensure that the case is not handed over to a central agency. A CBI inquiry means trouble not only for the Home Minister but for the entire Government.



On the other hand, even if Uddhav orders a probe, any inquiry against Deshmukh by the State agency, while he continues to occupy his office, hardly makes any sense. It would be merely an eyewash as the subordinate officials will leave no stone unturned to ensure that their boss comes clean of all charges. Ideally, any officer or Minister who faces an inquiry is suspended or asked to proceed on leave until the probe concludes. It is done to ensure that the probe remains unbiased and the suspect in question does not influence the investigation in any manner. Had he been serious about the corruption charges against him, Deshmukh should have tendered his resignation on moral grounds before asking the Chief Minister to launch a probe. Now, it is up to Uddhav to take a call on the prickly issue. However, he is expected to ask Deshmukh to tender his resignation before ordering any probe against the Home Minister. However, in case he decides to go soft on Pawar's favourite man, Uddhav can reshuffle his portfolio or make him a Minister without charge. But seeing the state of affairs in Maharashtra, where Pawar is calling the shots while the Chief Minister sits with his hands tied behind his back, it is most likely that Deshmukh will continue as the Home Minister irrespective of whether a probe is initiated against him. On the other hand, Deputy CM Ajit Pawar has claimed that the Opposition wanted the Maha Vikas Aghadi Government to fall from day one but the Government enjoys full majority. While the spate of allegations and counter-allegations between the Government and the Opposition flies thick and fast, it would be interesting to see what happens next in Maharashtra.

## PICTALK



People celebrate Lathmar Holi at Sri Krishna Janmasthan temple in Mathura

# The conversion factor: How real is the threat?



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

## The mistreatment of nuns on a train in Jhansi for alleged attempts at conversion is proof of the high-handedness of the Right-wingers

The heckling of two nuns in Jhansi is making news and brings to the fore the conversion debate at a time when five Assembly elections are round the corner. In the incident, two nuns travelling on a train were mobbed allegedly by a group of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad activists. They felt that the nuns were in some way involved in conversions, though there was nothing at the spot to suggest this. Still, their journey came to an abrupt end. Mercifully, they were not hacked which was not a distant possibility.

It happened in Uttar Pradesh (UP), which has been at the forefront of 'love jihad' and other minority-related issues. To date, there is no law in UP against conversion though a controversial Bill is on the anvil. The Act will debar religious conversions by inducement, though conversion by free will would be allowed. That is when it comes into effect. Eight States have already passed a similar Act.

Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees the freedom to profess, practice and propagate religion to all citizens. For argument's sake even if the law was enforced and the nuns were involved in conversion, it does not become the Right-wingers' prerogative to enforce it. The self-assigned custodians of Hinduism who try to enforce the law are by its very definition outlaws. It is the job of the police, not citizens, to bring the culprits to book.

Conversion is an old debate and Christian missionaries have been under the scanner for it. Muslims, for that matter, are spared from this debate (love jihad is a different issue). Other mass conversions that take place are from Hindus to the Buddhist fold. Since Babasaheb Ambedkar converted to Buddhism along with several of his Dalit followers, the trend has continued. Most conversions that take place from the majority community to minority are frowned upon while the ones from minority to majority are welcomed as homecoming. Double standards there! Right now, over 1,000 appli-



cations are pending in Gujarat for conversions. Most of them are from Hindus who would like to embrace Buddhism. The Right wing should view such conversions as a reason to introspect rather than blaming the other religionists for wooing their flock. Almost all Hindus who have applied for conversion to Buddhism are Dalits.

These champions of Hinduism must raise their voice when atrocities are committed on Dalits. From the suicide of Rohit Vemula to the flogging of Dalit workers, hardly ever has a Hindu outfit stepped forth to protest such incidents. If you don't treat your co-religionists well, such applications are bound to increase.

As far as Christian missionaries are concerned, there is no denying that they are entrusted with the task of converting people and that is how Christianity spread across the globe. For that matter, that is how Buddhism spread when Emperor Ashoka sent his emissaries to spread the teachings of Buddha to various places. No harm in that.

The charge often levelled against Christian missionaries is that they do so by bribing and inducement. Allegedly, huge sums of money are spent

by Christian organisations for converting the tribal and Scheduled Caste Hindus. That Odisha is the State where such practice takes place is a myth that needs to be busted.

Since Independence, the Christian populations in the country has declined in absolute as well as relative terms. The census data shows that it declined to 2.30 per cent in 2011 from 2.33 per cent in 2001. The Christian population growth is lower than the Hindu growth rate. So either the money the Christian missionaries are getting is going down the drain or the missionaries are not able to deliver. Christian organisations must ponder over the return on investments as the Christian population in the tribal region of Odisha has remained static.

This writer had filmed a documentary in Manoharpur in Odisha where missionary Graham Staines was burnt alive with his two sons, Philip (10) and Timothy (7), on the night of January 22, 1999, for allegedly converting tribal Hindus. The spur to do the documentary was a small story in a newspaper. Gladys Staines, the widow of Graham, had said that she had forgiven Dara Singh, the murderer of her sons

and husband. It takes real conviction and guts to even pretend, let alone forgive by heart. The lady surely deserved to be portrayed in the right manner but she chose otherwise.

The place was so backward that it had no electricity, market or a pucca house. Primary health services, banks, police stations were a far cry. She still worked there and ran a hospital and provided many basic necessities to the people.

You don't need a million dollars to convert people there; just a loaf of bread and a dressing on a wound would do. Can the Right-wing groups please do something about their plight so that no one would ever think of converting? Service to mankind is a basic Christian tenet.

In any case, the Christianisation of India is a lost cause. It could not happen during the British rule, so now the chances are even less. There are practical reasons: By converting, the SCs lose the tag and thereby many Government benefits. Also, they cannot move up the social ladder in the religious hierarchy. Raising the bogey against conversions is easy but far removed from reality.

(The writer is a columnist and documentary film-maker. The views expressed are personal.)



THESE CHAMPIONS OF HINDUISM MUST RAISE THEIR VOICE WHEN ATROCITIES ARE COMMITTED ON DALITS. FROM THE SUICIDE OF ROHIT VEMULA TO THE FLOGGING OF DALIT WORKERS, HARDLY EVER HAS A HINDU ORGANISATION STEPPED FORTH TO PROTEST SUCH INCIDENTS

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### VACCINATION IS NO PANACEA

Sir —The detection of a new 'double mutant variant' — a combination of two variants E484Q and L452R — and several other variants in India is a serious problem to grapple with. Genome sequencing of samples by Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG) set up by the Health Ministry has made the detection possible. The COVID-19 situation is exacerbated by the presence of the UK, Brazilian and South African strains classified as "variants of concern" along with the newly-detected 'double mutant variant' in India.

The scientists are investigating if there is a correlation between the new variants and the current surge in infection cases. The exact nature of the variants is still to be understood. Data on them, whenever available, will be analysed in terms of their clinical consequences such as transmissibility, severity and responsiveness to vaccines and treatment. The 'double mutant variant' — two mutations in a single virus — is being studied to find out if it causes "immune escape" or, in other words, allows the virus to slip past the body's immune defences, and increases infectivity. Studies will show if it is a "variant of concern" or a "variant of interest".

The uncertainties and imponderables surrounding the Novel Coronavirus undergoing mutations, coupled with the people hesitancy in getting inoculated, indicates that the end to the pandemic is nowhere in sight. It is difficult to forecast how long the pandemic will linger on. It is necessary that we all wear masks, sanitise our hands and maintain physical distancing. In the time of this pandemic, we must all submit to science and abide by what it requires us to do.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

### CENTRE, DELHI GOVT SETTING WRONG EXAMPLE

Sir —The conflict between the Centre and Delhi Government is setting a bad precedent for democracy. Recently, the Central Government has introduced the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill that seeks to

## Lower the loudspeaker volume



This refers to the editorial 'Deafening' (March 25). The Right to Freedom of Religion is guaranteed to all Indians by the Constitution under Articles 25 to 28. This right is not only for individuals but also for religious groups in India. But we have no right to trouble others. Azaan is for Muslims but it also falls on non-Muslim ears. Further, a random peek in any mosque during the prayer times would show that not many Muslims

respond to the call. The footfall in mosques is negligible except for the midday Friday prayer and those who regularly go there five times a day do not actually depend on the azaan to be reminded of the prayer time. The high-decibel noise emanating from the loudspeakers must be regulated as it only not only adversely affects human health but also troubles animals and birds.

People are at high risk of losing their hearing permanently due to noise pollution in India. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), noise exposure below 70 decibel does not pose any health risks to human beings or wildlife. However, if someone is exposed to noise levels of 85 decibel or more for more than eight hours on a regular basis, it can be considered hazardous.

Not only loudspeakers but road traffic, aeroplanes or jets and trains produce a large amount of noise. Exposure to such noises on a regular basis for long periods of time have proved detrimental to human health. It is advisable that Muslim clerics should tune the loudspeakers installed on mosques to lower volumes.

Nischai Vats | Sultanpur

## Indians first

### The heckling of two nuns on false accusations doesn't behave us as a peace-loving, tolerant nation

India is a country with major aspirations. It wants to be a regional superpower so that it can keep an increasingly belligerent and expansionist China in check for amity in its immediate neighbourhood. The country, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, dreams of becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2025. How is it then that a nation that positions itself as a "vishwa guru" and believes in the concept of "Vasudhaiva kutumbakam" (the world is one family)" and ahimsa, is increasingly becoming intolerant in its own backyard?



Whether it be cow vigilantes beating a young man to pulp with a hammer even as the police stand by mutely in Gurugram or the lynching of dairy farmer Pehlu Khan in Alwar, or the recent harassment of two nuns and their trainees travelling on a train from Delhi to Rourkela in Odisha. The four women were forced to disembark in Uttar Pradesh's Jhansi after an Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad worker accused them of forced conversions. The women were bullied, abused and harassed by a crowd before being taken away by the railway police. However, the police found the conversion claim wrong as the two postulates were carrying their baptism cards issued in 2003.

With elections in Kerala round the corner, the issue has led to a political slugfest in the State and the BJP, which has been trying to woo the Christians there, suddenly found itself on the back foot. Campaigning in Kerala, Home Minister Amit Shah was at pains to assure the people of action. But what if it had not been the election season? Would our *netas* have jumped to the defence of the minority community then? The Constitution allows everyone in the country to believe or not to believe in any religion and the Jhansi incident is an encroachment on the freedom and fundamental rights of these citizens. It is a sad reflection on our country that more and more States are coming out with repressive laws that target the freedom of preaching and practising select religions. Should we as a country not be more focused on bringing about an end to hunger, poverty, casteism and discrimination than fighting each other over something as personal as religion? We would be better *desh bhakts* if we focused on peace, equality, prosperity and brotherhood among all Indians. We must remember that we are all Indians first.

## SOUNDBITE

In a family there are women, there is respect for elders, there is love and affection which is not there in the RSS. So now I will not call the RSS as Parivar (family).

Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi

The fluctuations in the markets over the past few days do not reflect the fundamentals, dynamics, potential or the future of economy.

Turkish President — Recep Tayyip Erdogan

When you do big films, while you are bound to get more eyeballs, along with it comes a lot of scrutiny.

Actor — Vaani Kapoor

Cricket between Pakistan and India is very important. Sports should be kept away from politics. Relations between the two countries can improve because of cricket.

Former Pakistan captain — Shahid Afridi

The Government is studying the possibility of outsourcing the modern abattoir of Goa Meat Complex to private companies for the period of 10 years.

Goa CM — Pramod Sawant

### GOVT MUST LISTEN TO THE FARMERS

Sir — As the farmers' protest on Delhi borders continues, farmer unions have called for a Bharat Bandh on March 26 demanding a complete rollback of the farm laws. The Sanyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a union of farmers protesting against the new agriculture laws, has appealed to the citizens of the country to make the Bharat Bandh on March 26 successful.

Several rounds of talks have been held with the Government, but no agreement has been reached yet. Farmers are camping at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders of Delhi. They are adamant on repealing the laws altogether, while the Government is ready for amendments after discussing the loopholes in the laws. The Centre must listen to the farmers before it's too late.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

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





## FIRST COLUMN

## HARASSMENT OF NUNS MUST STOP

The nuns sacrifice their whole lives in the service of society and want nothing in return



MARKANDEY KATJU

The recent incident of harassment of nuns from Kerala in Jhansi by the Right-wing goons needs to be unequivocally condemned as it brings disgrace to our country. Nuns are no ordinary women and they render great service to society, particularly in the fields of education and healthcare. Some of the best convent schools in India are run and managed by these sisters and almost everyone wants his or her daughter or other female relative to get admission in these missionary schools. Further, the hospitals they run are also par excellence.

The nuns sacrifice their whole lives in the service of society and want nothing in return for their selfless devotion. They live a disciplined life and serve people without any discrimination. They are deprived of the pleasures and happiness which most women have — a family, a husband and children. And yet many people levy all kinds of false and baseless allegations on these nuns, some of which are better left unsaid. One of the allegations that they do forcible conversions is palpably false.



When I was a lawyer, and later a judge at the Allahabad High Court, the nuns of St Mary's Convent who run the best girls school in the town, would often come to me for help. I have always helped them *pro bono*. Their biggest harassment would begin a month or two before school admissions kick-starts in March as the school session started in April. Often they were harassed by the authorities and officials, who wanted to secure a seat for their daughters or other female relatives in the school.

The harassment was a way to create pressure as the seats in the prestigious school were limited and for every seat there would be at least 10 or 20 aspirants. In such a situation, a competitive test was imperative and was organised to select the candidates. However, in case any official's daughter failed to get through the entrance test, s/he would harass the nuns and create pressure. I remember how the municipal authorities once sent a notice to the Principal, Sister Evelyn, alleging that the land on which the school stood had been illegally occupied, which of course was totally false. On another occasion, an Income Tax notice was sent by an Income Tax official whose daughter had not been able to beat the competition. Also, police officials would often harass them and since the nuns were defenceless, they had often to succumb to such pressures.

Apart from the harassment by the authorities and officials, the nuns were also faced with the goonda-type student leaders of the Allahabad University, who pressure them for giving admission to their candidates. After I became a judge of the Allahabad High Court in 1991 whenever the nuns had a problem they came to me for help and I would call the District Magistrate or other authority and tell him that the harassment must stop. The result was that the nuns started regarding me as their elder brother, and they would sometimes invite me over for tea. I still remember the excellent cakes they would themselves prepare for me.

In my opinion, the nuns are our role models and if our nation has to progress, our people must develop the spirit of service and sacrifice which the nuns have. Far from harassing them, we must give them the highest respect and learn from them.

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India. The views expressed are personal.)

## A sprinkling of stardust on my shoulders

Tasked with covering a film awards function for DD, I was clear that I didn't want to tread the beaten path of filing a TV report nor take the services of a scribe for interviewing stars



SUDHIR TANDON

One Friday evening in March 1973, I was summoned by an Assistant Station Director of Delhi's Doordarshan (DD) and introduced to a charming man. "Yunus Dehlvi runs the influential magazines *Shama* and *Sushma* and is organising a film awards function. This is Sudhir Tandon and he will cover your event." My boss sensed my surprise (for cameramen were not asked to take on the role of a producer-director, unless they themselves came up with a proposal) "As you are to become a producer soon, the Director Television Centre has given this order. Discuss the details of the event with Dehlvi sahib."

We met the following day at the Convention Hall of New Delhi's iconic Ashoka Hotel for a recce of the venue and familiarisation with the drill where Yunus' younger brother Idrees became my point man. I was clear that I didn't want to tread the beaten path of filing a TV report (summary of the stage show) nor take the customary services of a journalist for interviewing celebrities. Instead, there had to be verve and a certain irreverence in the programme. I inquired of Idrees the names of starlet attendees. We narrowed down on Reena Roy who had been selected for the award of the Best Rising Star. The toil to contact her began as soon as she had checked in at the Ashoka. Even though Idrees had briefed Reena, but every time I called up her room, a lady would tell me to ring up later as she was either taking a nap or was out or was busy. Finally, on Sunday evening the lady told me that: "Baby has gone to the hairdresser. She'll contact you on her return" — a refrain that I'd heard earlier. Exasperated, I lost my cool and told her "Ammaji, tell your baby not to bother. She is out of my programme and I'll find someone better."

Would my boast work? Harried, I went to Idrees and, on the way, I saw Nargis in her room. "If nothing works out, I'll approach Nargis (with whom I'd some acquaintance) and request her to salvage the situation," I thought and asked Idrees, "which other starlets are on your list?" He mentioned Dimple Kapadia. The name sounded faintly familiar. "She's the 16-year-old heroine of Raj Kapoor's under-production film," he explained. Immediately, we rushed to her hotel room.

The wait between the knock on the door and its opening was inexorable. The door opened and a concussion of comeliness hit me. But...she appeared older than 16 years! What transpired between her and Idrees, I couldn't fathom in those catatonic moments. We were led to a sofa and she disappeared. A man dressed in a black suit appeared and was introduced to me as Chunnibhai — Dimple's father. My escort briefed him about the purpose of our visit and the father consented. A few minutes later, a girl in white appeared and, immediately she owned the room. Dimple's presence demanded unwavering attention of those present there. She was sprightly, her big brown eyes hinted at impish intelligence and her face had intimations of self-assurance, playfulness and joy.

Upon hearing my proposal, she giggled, "I have no such experience." Rolling her eyes, she quipped with disarming candour about how she had fluffed in a school show and even in the Board exams. My heart curled while her hands sculptured the silence with a disciplined eloquence. Soon she intoned, "But why not? I can try." There was a glint in her eyes and she spoke with a certain *elan*.



A MAN DRESSED IN A BLACK SUIT APPEARED AND WAS INTRODUCED TO ME AS CHUNNIBHAI — DIMPLE'S FATHER. MY ESCORT BRIEFED HIM ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF OUR VISIT AND THE FATHER CONSENTED. A FEW MINUTES LATER, A GIRL IN WHITE APPEARED AND, IMMEDIATELY, SHE OWNED THE ROOM. DIMPLE'S PRESENCE DEMANDED UNWAVERING ATTENTION OF THOSE PRESENT THERE

The writer is former president, Osian's Connoisseurs of Art, Founding Executive Director, LS TV and Additional Director General, Doordarshan. The views expressed are personal.



My next worry was to look for the sound recordist who had not turned up even though little time was left for the show to start. Those were the times when film cameras were used for filming outside the TV studios. A sound recordist used a tape recorder to capture sounds. And soon enough, the stars and celebrities began to arrive. That was one occasion in which I'd planned for Dimple to chat with them. But the plan had to be aborted. Nonetheless, I took silent shots not only of the arrivals of the stars but subsequently of the stage show as well. Over 45 minutes into the event the sound recordist turned up, from which point onwards our film had picture and sound in synchronisation.

With the show ending and the opportunity to chat with the stars lost, it was decided that we would go to the Oberoi Hotel where the post-event dinner was to be held. Dimple agreed to the plan. At an appropriate moment in the edited film we see a man and a woman with their backs to the camera. She hides the man, "Hari bhai, aapko sharam nahi aati ki ek ladki thand me thithoor rahi hai aur aap beparwah hain?" (Isn't it shameful that a woman is shivering in this cold and you have no concern?) Taken aback, Sanjeev Kumar sheepishly muttered something to Dimple and the banter went on. In her chats later with a couple of stars who could be commandeered, she bounced spontaneously from gossip, to the personal, to jocular. She was no slouch either when it came to conversing with the fresh crop from my alma mater, FTII — Shabana Azmi,

Kanwaljeet and so on. By the time we packed up, it was nearly 1 am.

The next morning's newspapers had a big surprise in store not only for me but for all film fans. A box item on the front page exclaimed that superstar Rajesh Khanna had proposed to Dimple the previous night. Since I had missed out on taking close shots of Dimple, I called her up the next day. She readily agreed to come to the DD studio and bring some clothes for the shots. A sari, however, was a big "no" as she had been forbidden to wear it by Raj Kapoor prior to the release of 'Bobby'. When I enquired about her engagement, she disclosed that she had met Rajesh Khanna soon after our shooting got over and that the turn of events culminated in a commitment.

Editing the stage show was a big problem due to the non-availability of the sync sound. As *All India Radio* also had recorded the event for its report, I borrowed their tape from my friend and legendary drama producer Dinanath. Because the film camera and the sound recorder run at different speeds, there is always a mismatch between the action, especially the lip movement, and the sound. This mismatch becomes stark in close-ups. Therefore, where it was just impossible to achieve synchronisation, I took recourse to using music, songs and words as a counterpoint to the visuals. This resulted in an added nuance in the programme.

Finding a suitable title for the programme was another headache. The title had to reflect the brand of the magazines and the spirit of the event but I didn't want it to be vapid

or trite, for instance *Shama-Sushma* Film Awards. I reached out to our senior scenic designer and an Urdu poetry buff in DD. Johri came up with a design in which the melting candles revealed the title *Shama-dar-shama*. This title also resonated with the lyrics and the ambience of the film *Pakeezah* which was a rage then and a few dances from which were performed at the function.

Even though I did not accept the position of a producer later, I was still assigned to make a programme on the second edition of the *Shama-Sushma* Film Awards the following year. This was on the request of the Dehvis as my programme had received appreciation. While filming, I spotted Dimple Khanna seated in the front row of the Ashoka Convention Hall. We exchanged greetings and in jest, I asked her if she would again want to host my show. She flashed a smile and shook her head. "Sorry. Can't."

Moments like modulations come in human relationships. One begins to recall the cadences of the past. Now, a total recall gluts the mind's screen. But why after nearly five decades? I could not find any record of the debut of the *Shama-Sushma* Film Awards nor of the date on which Rajesh Khanna proposed to Dimple anywhere on the web. The Dehlvis and their magazines are all gone. My programmes are lost. Maybe, my memory of the event and perhaps Dimple's first screen appearance for public might reclaim some lost territory. Or, is it the arrogance of a grotesque leap of a private fantasy for public attention? Who knows!

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

IF MAMATA HAS TO KEEP HER LEG OUT, THEN WHY WEAR A SARI? SHE COULD WEAR A PAIR OF BERMUDAS INSTEAD. —BENGAL BJP PRESIDENT DILIP GHOSH



GHOSH SAYS MAMATA SHOULD BE WEARING SHORTS TO DISPLAY HER LEGS. THESE PERVERTED, DEPRAVED MONKEYS THINK THEY ARE GOING TO WIN. —TMC MP MAHUA MOITRA

## The power of the 'janata curfew' decoded

Since such people play a pivotal role in administration, the credibility of 'janata curfew' will be tested on the anvil of public interest time and again

With the fresh and rapid spike of COVID-19 cases in India, the fear of a second wave of the pandemic is looming large in various States. A couple of days ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Chief Ministers of all States to chalk out an amicable mechanism, including the management of micro-containment zones and strict enforcement of restrictions to control the "emerging second peak" of the contagion.

Last year, too, the Prime Minister called for social distancing and a "janata curfew" — a curfew of the people, by the people and for the people — was imposed on March 22 to contain the pandemic. The speech was inclusive and persuasive and the "janata curfew" proved beneficial to prepare the country mentally



SANTOSH BISWAL | UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

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for the hard lockdown that was to come soon after, to contain the spread of the Coronavirus.

Currently, with a view to checking the infection, the vaccination drive is in full swing across the nation. In the Vidarbha regions of Maharashtra, various district administrations have decided to implement "janata curfew" from time to time, instead of complete lockdowns. Though it is true that a complete lockdown cannot be replaced by a "janata curfew" if the infection is to be effectively contained, the intention of the administration is not to paralyse socio-economic activities completely but to continue them in a restricted manner. In this context, such a curfew has an edge over a complete shutdown.

The record of "janata curfew" deserves unraveling and

accounting for. The central idea behind such an effort rests on the people's participation from the beginning to the end.

Last year, while advocating social distancing to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the Prime Minister's clarion call for a "janata curfew" received immense support. There was clapping, ringing of bells, beating of drums and utensils in gratitude to the Corona heroes nationwide. Endorsements from celebrities also poured in.

In her balcony in Mumbai, Sunita Bhuyan played the tune of a song by the iconic Bhupen Hazarika on her violin. There was solidarity expressed at the historic Jama Masjid of Old Delhi, too. The overall support was colossal.

A couple of days before the "janata curfew", Modi



addressed the nation on the pandemic. While hailing the doctors, nurses, housekeeping staff, police and media persons for the commendable job they were doing in a time of crisis, he counselled people not to go for panic buying. The "janata curfew" worked as a good means of communication and Modi took the narrative of social distancing to the next level. The tone of the address was apolitical and he laid stress on the power of

the people, as a weapon to keep the crisis at bay.

People's participation has effectively met the necessary requirements in various fields including public health. The idea of 'Pani Panchayats' driven by the people is intended to manage groundwater across the country. Community kitchens, meant for achieving food security for people on the margins, are not mere populism. Khabar Lahariya, a community media driven by rural women journalists, belongs to Dalits, tribals and other minority classes. Community radio stations like *Vidyavani* run by the Savitribai Phule Pune University and *Radio Udaan* for the visually impaired, have been instrumental in giving a voice to the voiceless. These instances encapsulate the power of the community in nation-building. Sadly, some

of the ambitious programmes and action plans are marred by irregularities.

However, there are other sides to the "janata curfew", too. The Mahagujarat movement, known as the Mahagujarat Andolan in the year 1956, is a case in point. A "janata curfew" was called to protest the film *Padmavat*, too. Earlier in 2013, to get a separate Gorkhaland, Gorkha Janmukti Morcha chief Bimal Gurung had resorted to a "janata curfew" to take on Mamata Banerjee's 72-hour ultimatum to lift the strike in the Darjeeling Hills.

Tellingly, since India is a place of the people and their decision plays a pivotal role in every aspect of the administration, the importance and credibility of "janata curfew" will be tested on the anvil of public interest from time to time.



COOPERATION, NOT CONFRONTATION!

Vaccinating the world is the only way out of the COVID-19 pandemic, but a mixture of nationalism and protectionism is blocking the exit. The US, UK and EU have for months blocked a proposal at the World Trade Organisation, put forward by India and South Africa, to waive intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines. It is galling for poor countries to hear Boris Johnson preach the virtues of a liberal trading regime for the UK when he imposes a protectionist one on them. (The Guardian editorial)

Govt plans single window nod for investors by Apr 15

PTI ■ NEW DELHI A part of furthering the ease of doing business in the country, the Government is set to introduce a single-window clearance mechanism for investors by mid-April in order to attract greater foreign investment, a senior official said on Thursday.

The single-window portal will integrate the existing clearance systems of various central and state departments. "A lot of hand-holding, a lot of investor support (is being provided) and we are also going to launch a national single window for the investors. We are targeting April 15 for that launch," Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Secretary

Investor wealth erodes by over ₹ 7L cr in 2 days

New Delhi: Investor wealth has eroded by over Rs 7 lakh crore in two days of market crash as sentiment remained muted amid rising COVID-19 cases in the country.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 740.19 points or 1.51 per cent to close at 48,440.12 on Thursday. In two days, the

Guruprasad Mohapatra said at the Times Network India Economic Conclave. All central government departments and 14 state governments, to begin with, will be part of the system, he said. "So they will be all part of that national single window, so the investor is on the one side, all the clearances, approval from central governments and state government on the other, and you can track your investment proposal where it is stuck and take action by the concerned department or state," he said.

He also emphasised the need for states to reduce the compliance burden and make it more attractive for foreign investors.

Investment climate going well in India; private sector: CEA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The investment climate is going well in India and the private sector should skill their workforce in the interest of its business, Chief Economic Advisor K V Subramanian said on Thursday asserting that he does not foresee any difficulty in demand and supply of the workforce.

Addressing 'Times Network India Economic Conclave', Subramanian further said job creation is part of the virtuous cycle that starts with private investments flowing into the country resulting in production, growth, job creation and increase in aggregate demand which in turn leads to more investments in the economy. "The investment climate is going well in India. Other things will follow, though with a lag...It is for the private sector to start recognising that it is in their own business interest that

they should skill their workforce. This, in turn, will raise the average level of skills in India," he said.

As far as skilling is concerned, Subramanian said he does not foresee any difficulty in demand and supply of the workforce. The economic reforms have been done keeping in mind the problem of dwarf firms in India, the CEA said adding these are the firms which grow in size and age but do not create jobs.

Subramanian also noted that there is no short-term silver bullet to growth and job creation.

Noting that the emphasis has been enabling primary and secondary sectors of the economy, he said the secondary sector is extremely critical for job creation.

"What India needs today is significant number of jobs created in manufacturing sector," he opined.

Also participating at the event, Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said that India wants employment creation and wants to drive its demographic dividend, it has to grow at high rates consecutively year after year.

While the government has undertaken vast structural reforms in the post-COVID-19 era, there is a need to focus on sunrise sectors to give quantum jump in economic growth. "Structural reforms across many sectors including coal and mining will accelerate the pace of growth for the next decade," he said.

"However, we must look at sunrise sectors like 5G technology, hydrogen and battery manufacturing instead of sunset sectors as this will lead to a quantum jump in economic growth and thus create more employment," Kant added.

Stressing on the need for the private sector to invest and grow bigger in size and create

more jobs, the Niti Aayog CEO said the government is trying to create size and scale in manufacturing while eyeing monetisation of assets to create a virtual cycle of growth.

"The idea of asset monetisation is to allow the private sector to bring in equity and raise more debt. This will be used by the government to create more assets, thus starting a virtual cycle of growth which will drive job creation in the country," Kant said.

On the role of the New Education Policy, he said it is the biggest driver of change and will bring about a paradigm shift in providing a skilled workforce.

"While India should focus on skilling across new areas of growth as we move from a mere data rich to data intelligent country, the private sector should be ready to pay more for the skilled workforce," he said.

Sebi makes dividend distribution policy compulsory for top 1,000 listed cos

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To strengthen corporate governance practices and disclosure requirements, Sebi on Thursday decided that top 1,000 listed firms should formulate a dividend distribution policy.

"Requirement for formulation of dividend distribution policy by the existing top 500 listed entities has been extended to the top 1,000 listed entities on the basis of market capitalisation," Sebi said in a statement after conclusion of its board

meeting. In case of board meetings held for more than one day, Sebi said the financial results should be disclosed by listed entities within 30 minutes of end of the board meeting for the day on which such results are considered.

IN BRIEF

CASTING OF 2ND CONCOURSE SLAB COMPLETED The construction work of Noapara-Barasat via Bimanbandar Metro project has been going on in full swing. In recent times, a significant progress of this project has been achieved. Casting work of the 2nd concourse slab of Bimanbandar station was completed on Thursday.

SRM HOSTS DEFENCE SERVICE HACKATHON FOR STUDENTS SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur hosted a Defence Services Hackathon, the first-of-its-kind in the country. It was hosted by SRM Innovation and Incubation Center, SRMIST. The aim of this hackathon was to involve students and researchers in developing solutions for real time problems faced by our armed forces.

ONCE-A-DAY HAND SANITIZER LAUNCHED Adding an altogether new dimension in the hand sanitizer industry, Swanrose India, a wholly owned subsidiary of US-based Swanrose Inc., announced the launch of 'once-a-day' hand sanitizer - 'Just Human'.

JAMMU TOURISM HEAD MEETS TOUR OPERATORS The Director tourism Jammu, Dr Naseem Javid Chowdhary held an interactive meeting with travel and tour operators of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Delhi on the sidelines of SATTE at Noida. SATTE is one of the prominent travel exhibitions of South Asia in which J&K participates every year.

COOPERATIVES YET TO LURE YOUTH: MINISTER Minister of State for Agriculture Parsothman Rupala has said that Cooperatives which can be the instrument of rural development particularly agriculture are yet to catch the fancy of the youth and the Government must take efforts to attract them into this model. The government is eyeing towards cooperatives to help it achieve its goal of becoming a US\$ 5 trillion economy by 2024-25 as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Numerous economic opportunities are available for the youth in the cooperative sector. But not many are coming forward. They think that cooperatives are some old-fashioned concept run by elderly people. It is our responsibility to introspect how to make them part of the cooperatives which holds huge potential to push the country's economic growth."

RBI HAS MAJOR CONCERNS ON CRYPTOCURRENCIES: DAS The Reserve Bank has "major concerns" on the cryptocurrencies traded in the market and has conveyed the same to the government, its governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said. Underlining that both the government and the RBI are "committed to financial stability", Das said there are no differences between the central bank and the Finance Ministry on the matter, and "we should now await the final decision on the matter" from the Centre.

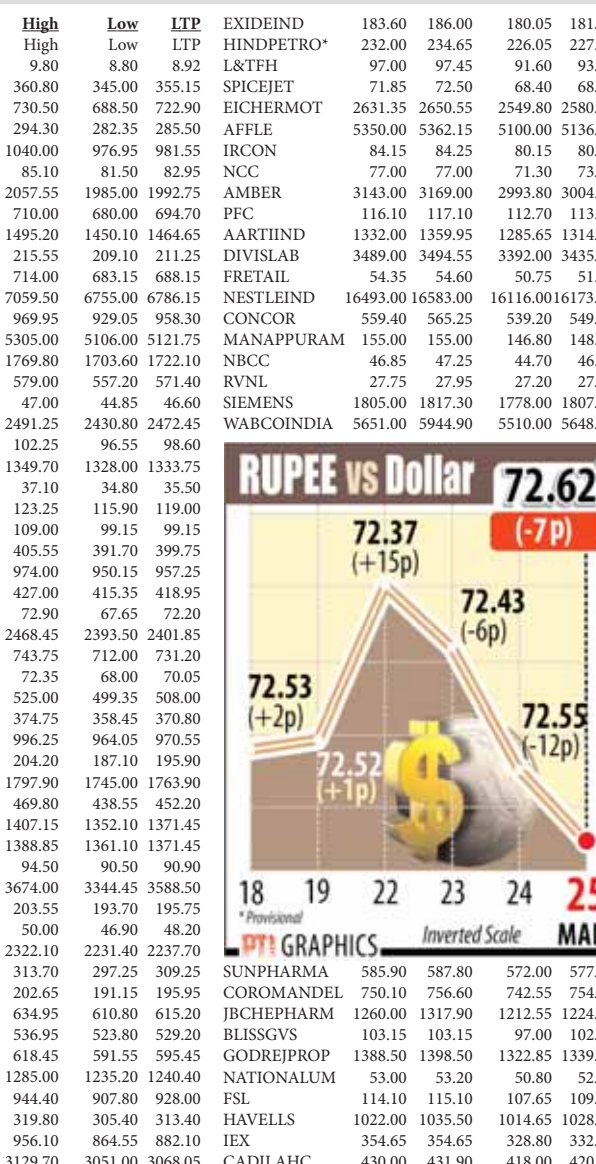
NIFTY 50

Table with columns: SCRP, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Lists various stock symbols and their current market values.

BSE 500

Table with columns: Script, Open, High, Low, LTP. Lists various stock symbols and their current market values.

RUPEE vs Dollar



NIFTY NEXT 50

Table with columns: SCRP, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Lists various stock symbols and their current market values.

BSE 500

Table with columns: Script, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Lists various stock symbols and their current market values.

TOP GAINERS

Table listing top performing stocks with columns: Symbol, Gain %.

TOP LOSERS

Table listing underperforming stocks with columns: Symbol, Loss %.

BSE Sensex

Table showing BSE Sensex performance metrics and a line chart of the index over time.

AFTER 'SILENCE STRIKE' Myanmar protests again met with force

AP ■ YANGON

Protesters against last month's military takeover in Myanmar returned to the streets in large numbers on Thursday...



A protester flashes the three-finger sign of defiance as he walks past burning tires in Yangon, Myanmar on Thursday AP

Security forces sought to break up some of the protests by force. Social media accounts and local news outlets reported violent attacks on demonstrators in Hpa-an...

DVB also reported that another young man was killed and at least four other people wounded Wednesday night in what it described as a crackdown by the army in Kyaukpadaung...

Association for Political Prisoners says at least 286 people have been killed in connection with the crackdown. It says 2,906 people have been arrested, charged or sentenced at one point in connection with resisting the coup...

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North Korea test-fires ballistic missiles in message to US

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea test-fired its first ballistic missiles since President Joe Biden took office on Thursday, as it expands its military capabilities and increases pressure on Washington...



TV screens show a news programme reporting about North Korea's missiles with file footage at an electronic shop in Seoul, South Korea on Thursday AP

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said the launches threaten "peace and safety in Japan and the region," and that Tokyo will closely coordinate with Washington and Seoul on the North's testing activities...

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missiles were fired at around 7:06 a.m. and 7:25 a.m. From an area on the North's eastern coast and flew 450 kilometers (279 miles) on an apogee of 60 kilometers (37 miles) before landing in the sea...

Another senior US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military observations, matched the information from South Korea's military, saying that initial assessments suggest the North fired two short-range ballistic missiles...

analysts say that the North would gradually dial up its weapons displays to increase its bargaining power as it angles to get back into stalled talks aimed at leveraging nuclear weapons for badly needed economic benefits.

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Stuck ship in Egypt's Suez Canal imperils shipping worldwide

AP ■ ISMAILIA (EGYPT)

Skyscraper-sized cargo ship wedged across Egypt's Suez Canal further imperiled global shipping Thursday as at least 150 other vessels needing to pass through the crucial waterway idled waiting for the obstruction to clear...

Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement, the company that manages the Ever



This photo released by the Suez Canal Authority on Thursday, shows Lt. Gen. Ossama Rabeei, head of the Suez Canal Authority, investigating the situation with the Ever Given, a Panama-flagged cargo ship AP

already stuck in the canal system on Egypt's Great Bitter Lake.

Cargo ships already behind the Ever Given in canal will be reversed south back to Port Suez to free the channel, Leth Agencies said. Authorities hope to do the same to the Ever Given when they can free it.

Evergreen Marine Corp., a major Taiwan-based shipping company that operates the ship, said in a statement that the Ever Given had been overcome by strong winds as it entered the canal from the Red Sea but none of its containers had sunk.

An Egyptian official, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to brief journalists, similarly blamed a strong wind. Egyptian forecasters said high winds and a sandstorm plagued the area Tuesday, with winds gusting as much as 50 kilometers (30 miles) per hour.

An initial report suggested the ship suffered a power blackout before the incident, something Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement denied Thursday. AP

Uyghurs in Turkey protest Chinese Foreign Min's visit

Istanbul: Hundreds of Uyghurs staged protests in Ankara and Istanbul on Thursday, denouncing Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Turkey and demanding that the Turkish government take a stronger stance against human rights abuses in China's far-western Xinjiang region.

The crowd gathered at Istanbul's Beyazit Square, holding posters of missing relatives they believe are being kept in detention camps in China and chanting slogans against Beijing. Dozens of Uyghurs, Turkish opposition lawmakers and academics also assembled near the Chinese Embassy in Ankara, as Wang met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Cavusoglu and later with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"We call on Turkey to not turn its back on our Uyghur people because of some economic benefit," he was using the Uyghurs' term of reference to their homeland in Xinjiang.

Biden taps Vice-President Harris to lead response to border challenges

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden has put Vice-President Kamala Harris in charge of leading the diplomatic effort to address the root causes of migration from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras and to stem the recent surge of immigrants to America's southern border.



American and first Asian American vice president.

It is the first major foreign policy issue to be assigned to Harris, and it comes as the White House grapples with a growing number of migrants from the Central American countries at the southern border, including thousands of minors arriving without adult family members.

Announcing his decision on Wednesday, Biden said nobody is better qualified than Harris, who ran the second-largest attorney general's office in America, to deal with the migration issue.

In 2010, Harris was elected California's Attorney General and oversaw the largest state justice department in the United States. Harris, 56, is the first female US vice president as well as the first African

and enhance migration enforcement at their borders and we are already talking with Mexico about that," he said. When he took office two months ago, Biden, a Democrat, stopped further construction of the border wall championed by his Republican predecessor Donald Trump and embraced what he said would be a more humane treatment of migrants. Many migrants have viewed Biden's policy shift as an invitation to make the journey on the assumption that if they make it past the US-Mexico border, they will be allowed to stay in America.

In an interaction with reporters before his meeting with Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on the migrants issue, Biden said his administration is going to be dealing with a full team. "I (can) think of nobody who is better qualified to do this than... This is a woman who ran the second-largest attorney general's office in America after the United States attorney general in the State of California," he said about Harris. AP

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GLOBE TROTTER

MOROCCO: FOUR HELD FOR LINKS TO ISIS ATTACK PLOT Rabat: Special agents in eastern Morocco on Thursday arrested four suspected Islamic State-linked extremists who were allegedly assigned to attack a military base and other sensitive targets, the official Moroccan news agency MAP reported.

PAK: 7 KILLED IN ROAD MISHAP IN BALUCHISTAN Quetta: Seven people, including six of a family, were killed when a speeding bus crashed into a car in Pakistan's Balochistan province, officials said on Thursday.

DUTCH COALITION TALKS HALTED AFTER COVID CASE The Hague: Preliminary discussions to map out the contours of the next Dutch governing coalition were left in limbo Thursday by a positive Covid-19 test and an inadvertent display of preparatory notes by one of the officials leading the talks.

DEAF AND MUTE GIRL GANG-RAPED IN PAK Islamabad: A 16-year-old deaf and mute girl was allegedly gang-raped by five persons who also filmed a video to extort money from her father in Pakistan's Punjab province.

FROM PAGE 1

ALARMING RISE IN COVID DEATHS

India's total active caseload stands at 3.95 lakh (3,95,192) today, comprising 3.35 per cent of the total positive cases. A net decline of 26,735 cases is recorded from the total active caseload in the last 24 hours," it said. The Ministry further said that the three States, Maharashtra, Kerala and Punjab, account for 74.32 per cent of total active cases in the country. Maharashtra alone accounts for 62.91 per cent of the total active cases in the country.

The total number of recoveries in the country has surged to 1,12,31,650 with 26,490 people recovered from the disease in the last 24 hours. The Ministry said that the national recovery rate is 95.28 per cent.

Meanwhile, the gap between total recovered cases and the active cases stands at 10,836,458 today.

Jammu & Kashmir (UT), Goa, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Ladakh (UT), Sikkim, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland have not reported any Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours.

NCW: 80% JUMP IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SINCE LOCKDOWN

complaints against women in six years in 2020 at 23,722 of which about 25 per cent of them were of domestic violence.

NCW chairperson Rekha Sharma had said economic insecurity, increased stress levels, anxiety, financial worry, and lack of other such emotional support of parents/family's side may have resulted in domestic violence in many instances in the year 2020.

"More so, home has become the workplace of both the spouses and as well as schools and colleges for their children. In such situations, women are multitasking being professional at the same time supporting their families from the same space. But the biggest challenge for women this year is not only to adapt but to thrive in this unprecedented situation," she had

told a news agency.

LOC SILENT IN MARCH AFTER 5/6 YEARS, SAYS NARAVANE

outcome," he said.

Naravane also talked about terror infrastructure on the Pakistani side, saying India has intelligence inputs about them. "The terror infrastructure and launch pads remain in place. We have detailed intelligence of each of those camps, locations and likely strength of terrorists awaiting and who have undergone training and are present there, perhaps waiting for an opportunity to cross over," he said. Asked whether Pakistan agreed to the ceasefire under compulsion, the Army Chief said, "Yes, that's quite possible." He said "We will have to wait and see. Once the snow melts and passes open, if the situation still remains normal then there is a good prognosis for the future, we have to wait and see."

Elaborating upon Pakistan opting for ceasefire, Naravane mentioned the situation in Pakistan's border with Afghanistan as well as pressure on that country to comply with recommendations of the anti-terror watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF). "One is of course the situation on their western border with Afghanistan. Things are not very rosy there as far as they are concerned," he said.

"The second is the threat of the FATF which hangs over their head. They are still in the grey list. Probably they would like to show that they are making some efforts to not support terrorism and third of course is their domestic compulsions," he said.

MODI LEAVES FOR BANGLADESH TO ATTEND 50TH INDEPENDENCE DAY

"I will be having substantive discussions with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, following our very productive virtual meeting in December last year. I also look forward to my meeting with President Abdul Hamid, and to interactions with

other Bangladeshi dignitaries," Modi said. As per the details of the PM's foreign and domestic visits on pmindia.gov.in, the largest gap so far between his two foreign trips was 158 days when he visited Sri Lanka in May 2017 after he went to Japan in November 2016.

Before this, the longest gap was of 102 days between Modi's visit to Nepal to attend the SAARC summit between November 25-27 in 2014 and then to Seychelles on March 10, 2015. And, prior to that, there was a gap of 94 days after his unscheduled visit to Pakistan on December 25 last year and then his travel to Saudi Arabia after three months on March 29 in 2017. As per data since May 26, 2014, Modi has made 59 foreign trips, visiting 60 countries including the visits to USA to attend the UN General Assembly, to Asian countries, following his Neighbourhood First and Act East policies. Modi has visited USA six times and five times to China, France and Russia. He went to Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates thrice and to Germany, Japan, Nepal and Singapore four times. Modi has visited only once Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Fiji, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Laos, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Netherlands, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda and Vietnam during his tenure. He made foreign visits twice to Afghanistan, Bhutan, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. According to the Ministry of External Affairs data, an expenditure of Rs 446.52 crore has been incurred on the foreign visits of PM Modi in the last five year. As per details, a cost of Rs 121.85 crore was incurred in 2015-16 while an expenditure of Rs 78.52 crore was incurred in 2016-17. In 2017-18, a cost of Rs 99.90 crore was incurred while in 2018-19, an expenditure of Rs 100.02 crore was incurred. In 2019-20, a cost of Rs 46.23 crore has been incurred on the Prime Minister's foreign visits, it said.

'Shattered hopes and sham revolution' in Nandigram

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ NANDIGRAM

My family was in the forefront of (the land) movement. We lost one of our members in the (police) firing. But what did we get in return? Only false promises... Not even a school teacher's job. I took the TET (Teachers' Eligibility Test) but failed to land a job because some other people purchased these jobs for Rs 5 lakh a piece.

That is how Prason Maity (name changed) pours his anger out not only on Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee but also her principal opponent Suwendu Adhikari who is contesting on a BJP ticket. Prason is a member of a "highly respected Sahid" (those who died during the land movement that triggered Nandigram police firing in March 2007) family.

"If you condemn Mamata Banerjee can you spare Suwendu Babu for that... he was an MP and later a powerful minister chairman of Haldia Development Board and cooperative bank and god knows how many things

... we know how many of their men got jobs some for cash others for service but what happened to the kind of those... on whose corpse they rode to power. Nothing," says Dipak Sihi (name changed) a local from Garchakraberia who too lost a relative in the movement.

"We know there will once again be a gagging lull after the elections. All these hullabaloo will be gone... and after May 2 those who are coming with folded hands will look at us with contempt and scorching eyes... we will continue to lead a speechless life for another five years... at times we feel why we walked into the trap of TMC and Maoists... Why did we not allow a chemical hub to take place in Nandigram so that thousands of locals would not have to go out for jobs," says Feroz from Rowapara adding however "we the Muslims are in a catch 22 situation... we know that Mamata Banerjee has cheated us but still we have to vote for us... this is a battle of identity."

ED grills Mehbooba in money laundering case

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chief Mehbooba Mufti was grilled by the officials of the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a case of money laundering in the Srinagar based zonal office for over five long hours on Thursday.

Initially, Mehbooba had refused to appear in person before the ED officials in New Delhi on March 22 but after the Delhi High Court refused to grant stay on ED summons, she was left with no

option but to present herself before the investigating officers of the Enforcement Directorate.

Mehbooba arrived in the ED zonal office around 11.00 a.m and remained clogged for over five hours. Interacting with the media persons after her questioning Mehbooba Mufti tried to put up a brave front claiming, "my hands are clean, I have nothing to hide".

Without naming anyone in particular Mehbooba in a veiled reference to the central government said they have been searching for two long years and now they have started questioning about my

Cong-led UDF fighting back to retain power

KOCHI: Despite the opinion polls and surveys conducted by the media in the State portraying the Congress trailing behind the CPI(M) in the run up to the April 6 Assembly election, the Grand Old Party is slowly and steadily fighting back and catching up in the race.

The Congress-led UDF, though handicapped by the prolonged discussions to settle the conflicts between the constituent parties in the Front as well as between various groups in the lead party, have put the differences behind them and launched the full-fledged campaign by early this week. The road show by former party chief Rahul Gandhi in the districts of Ernakulam, Kottayam has given a new life to the Congress workers and the party has come back to its fighting mood. Former Chief Minister Oommen Chandi, Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala, KPCC Chief Mullappalli Ramachandran and working president K Sudhakaran MP are the frontline warriors of the party travelling across the length and breadth of the State to campaign for not only the Congress but for the candidates fielded by the constituent parties of the UDF.

The Congress was in for a shock when former minister P C Chacko, a loyalist of Sharad Pawar who did not follow his mentor when the latter walked out to float the NCP in 1998, quit the party early this month because he was denied a seat in the April 6 election. PMS

ing the restoration of Article 370. "One who speaks against you (Government of India) is being either booked under sedition charges or being summoned by the investigative agencies. "I was questioned about my father's property in Bijbehara, which we have sold out and was asked how you sold it and other related things. Secondly, they questioned me how secret funds were utilised during my tenure in office. They asked me who prepared the list of widows to whom funds were granted, how money was utilised for youth engagement programs," the PDP chief said.



**Bollywood**  
 'There is something about Jackie (Shroff) sir and his energy. As soon as he arrives, everyone is very comfortable.'  
 —Vijay Varma

# A PERFECT CANVAS

Fashion designers creatively use white as a canvas to give your Holi celebration a colourful expression. Here are some outfit ideas to freshen up your look. By TEAM VIVA

The colour white as a canvas gives room to an array of creative and colourful ideas. While Holi is a festival of colours and traditionally, you would see people wearing white to celebrate the occasion. As a symbol of peace, white embraces each colour. Thus, giving the festival a perfect canvas to celebrate creativity at its best.

And with the festival of colours right around the corner, we have a set of designer labels including Ridhi Mehra, Vedika M, Kunal Anil Tanna, Sukriti & Aakriti, BARI India and Gulabo Jaipur, who have creatively used white as a canvas to give your Holi celebration a colourful expression. So, here's a little something white for a day filled with bright and beautiful colours!

## BARI INDIA

Make a statement by pairing BARI India's swatch and splash hand-block printed kurta with a pair of white palazzo pants. "The kurta will not only give an ethnic touch to the whole look but will also allow women the freedom to flaunt their stylish persona with confidence," says Nitisha Jain, founder of the brand.



## GULABO JAIPUR

Comfort plays a crucial part when you decide what you are going to wear for Holi. And Gulabo Jaipur has just the perfect look to celebrate the festival of colours. This glorious white *kalidar* is not just simple and comfortable but it's also soft on the skin. And with great white outfits, comes great responsibilities. "With this garment, I would advise women to keep it simple and minimal. Oil your hair, tie it in a bun or a loose pony. You could opt to wear tiny earrings, so you don't lose them while playing Holi," suggests designer Saloni Panwar of the brand.

## KUNAL ANIL TANNA

So, why should girls have all the fun, right? This minimalist white pintuck kurta with a hint of bling by Kunal Anil

Tanna will add festive cheer and a dash of colour to your intimate Holi celebrations. "It's important to preferably have a fabric that dries off easily. Keeping it simple is crucial as you don't want to keep adjusting instead of enjoying the festivities," shares designer Kunal Tanna of label Kunal Anil Tanna.

## RIDHI MEHRA

If you are invited for a Holi party where you would play with flowers instead of colours, then this elegant Anarkali in sublime ivory should be your OOTD. "Aliza, a bejewelled silhouette paired with a net *dupatta* makes for a perfect festive outfit," shares designer Ridhi Mehra.

## VEDIKA M

It's all about experimenting with your look this Holi and label Vedika M has just the outfit for you. To add a dash of vibrancy to your festivities, you can style plain white long sleeves elas-

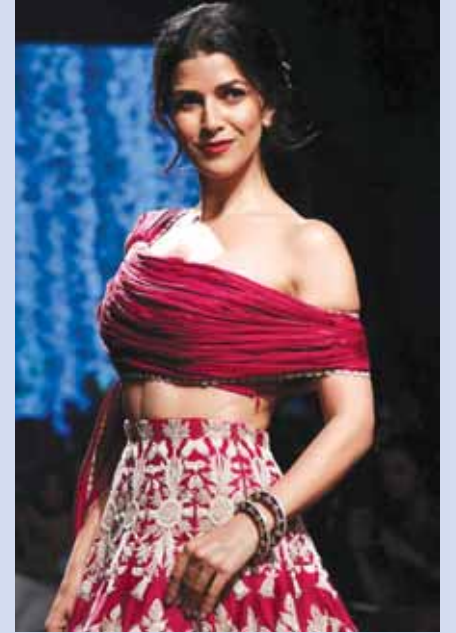


ticated top with a pair of hand brush painted jogger pants in shades of sea green and pink. "You can accessorise the white outfit with chunky earrings, colourful bangles and complete the look with a pair of sunglasses to have a trendy indo-western outfit," Vedika says.

## SUKRITI AND AAKRITI

Holi parties are known for their music and if you love to dance then fashion designer duo Sukriti & Aakriti have just the perfect look for you. In menswear, this embroidered *bandi* paired with a kurta set is chic and comfortable, whereas women can opt for this white organic sharara set with multi-coloured *gota* work and tassels. "You can style the sharara with a pair of *chand bali* earrings and a sleek pulled back hair style. As for the guys, a pair of retro sunglasses will add pizzazz to that *desi* look," duo Sukriti & Aakriti share.

'Having a career abroad comes with a price'



Actor Nimrat Kaur, who has been part of international projects such as *Homeland* and *Wayward Pines*, says that due to her involvement outside Bollywood, she doesn't get a lot of films to choose from in India.

However, the actor adds that she has never had to remind anyone of who she is. "I am not in circulation as I might have liked to be regularly. I may not get to choose from a big spectrum of parts which otherwise I would have got. But it has never come to a point where I have to remind people about who I am," Nimrat says.

She adds that she might not be offered the kind of roles that she wants, but that's the "price" she has to pay for a career abroad.

"They might not offer me exactly what I am looking for, but that's part and parcel of life. I have a career abroad and here. That comes with a price," she says.

Talking about the kind of work she wants to take up, Nimrat says, "I cannot think of a genre I will not attempt, even if I fail at it. I am looking for all kinds of work. The more you do, the more you want to. It's a bottomless pit where you can keep playing different people."

Nimrat will be seen in the film *Dasvi*, which also features Yami Gautam and Abhishek Bachchan.

# 'There were no distractions'

Singer-songwriter ARJUN KANUNGO wrote more music during the pandemic than he ever did in his life

Singer-songwriter Arjun Kanungo had no option but to create music all through last year, due to lockdown induced by the pandemic. In hindsight, the 30-year-old feels it was the "best thing" that happened to him.

"(The pandemic) weirdly enough made me more focussed. I wrote more music in the pandemic than I have ever written in my life," he said.

"There were no distractions, no live shows, no travel and basically there was no socialising, except of course the social media lives. I could only make music. That really connected me to the roots of why I started playing music in the first place, and how I started playing music at home. We came back to that part of our journey and that kind of grounded everyone," added Kanungo.

Another thing the pandemic did was that it "accelerated" the growth of non-film music, he notes. While he agrees that indie and non-film music are as big as film music now, he is "still confused" about non-film music becoming the "primary source of listening to music" for the Indian audience.

"I am not sure about the two categories (film and non-film music) competing against each other. I feel it will take a



few years before non-film music starts generating the same kind of numbers as film music does. (That's why I think) they will co-exist. India is such a big market and there are so many people. It can definitely have two categories co-existing," Kanungo said.

"Right now, (it's) a bit confusing for me, in the sense that where does non-film music go from here. At this stage it depends on the audience. Will today's youth pivot towards non-film music? I don't know yet. It's more like-

ly that people might consume both," he added.

Having said that, Kanungo points out that musicians no longer need the film industry to sustain themselves.

"Not just musicians who do non-film music primarily, but also guys who are into indie music — many of them have become stars now. COVID has helped musicians to move towards non-film music and in general the music scene has changed so much. You can (now) sustain yourself as a musician," he said.

This past week, on a school WhatsApp group, I got a reminder that it is a decade since I lost two batch-mates in the space of a month to car accidents. Their names were Aseem Chaturvedi and Vikram Rusell, and while they were both taken far too soon, I hope that time has allowed their families and their friends the opportunity to grieve. This reminded me about why we should take road safety seriously. Forget everything else, forget the loss of bright and talented individuals or the economic impact of losing 1,50,000 people annually in road accidents, this reminded me about the millions of family members and friends impacted by road fatalities every year.

The events of the past 12 months will ensure that road fatalities would have declined very sharply, yet as things have opened up, road fatalities have gone back to their pre-pandemic levels. In the past 12 months, India has officially lost 1,60,000 people, thanks to the Coronavirus, but that is not very far off from the number of people who died on Indian roads in 2019, at least officially. We shut down our economy, cost millions their jobs and, according to a recent report, pushed 75 million people back into poverty because of the potential damage a pandemic would have had on the Indian populace. Yet, while there has been a quantum leap in camera-based traffic enforcement in India over the past few years, no matter where you drive in India, it is almost comical at how entitled and selfish the average Indian driver is. Across the board, from a cycle-rickshaw carrying iron-rebar rods to e-rickshaws not using their headlights, motorcyclists treating pavements as a carriageway and car drivers blithely ignoring speed limits or driving on the wrong side to save some time.

I will not be holier than thou and claim that I am a perfect driver. I most certainly am not. I have had accidents, thanks to my own carelessness. Although I would like to believe that I am a far better driver today than I was 10 years ago because I know that

# A reminder to be safe

The government's mandate to carmakers that requires compulsory airbags, for driver and front passenger, is a good move but road safety needs much more work



KUSHAN MITRA



instead of Aseem or Vikram it could have well been me inside a car. I do not want to be morbid here, but every single one of us has been impacted by someone we know dying or being badly injured in an accident yet we have not changed our behaviour on the roads.

Recently, the Ministry of Road Transportation and Highways mandated that carmakers fit a front passenger airbag compulsorily in all vehicles from the middle of the year. That will make a slight difference. Carmakers are increasingly fitting six or even seven airbags in their vehicles, some across their variant range including

base models. Automatic transmission vehicles are getting traction control and stability systems. But a vast majority of road fatalities happen to motorcycle riders and passengers and truth be told, other than in a few cities helmet usage or even stopping triple ridership has not been enforced. Heck, motorcycle companies actively advertise their products with stunts and a disclaimer in point size zero. When the government tried to mandate longer insurance terms for two-wheelers, the industry protested in unison. Across the board, accident and road insurance for vehicles are abysmal and it is believed that less than a quarter of motorcycles more than five years old have any sort of insurance. Yes, insurance adds to costs, but

a decent insurance package can ensure that those who get hurt the hardest by an accident, not the victims but their families, are at least taken care of to a certain degree.

Here is the thing, we cannot reduce road fatalities to zero. Even bringing down road fatalities to below 1,00,000 (2020 notwithstanding) will take a concerted effort by the centre, states and traffic police forces across the country. This is a manageable target, we owe it to the families to do this. And we cannot and must not ask the authorities to do it all. We have to change ourselves. We have to ensure that we are better drivers and riders because if we don't change ourselves, nothing, not higher fines or the fear of death will make us change.

## TRENDBLAZER

### VARUN SHARES MEMORIES FROM ARUNACHAL

Actor VARUN DHAWAN has shared a slice of the memories he has brought back from the recent location shoot of the supernatural film *Bhediya* in Arunachal Pradesh.

Varun posted a picture on Instagram, where he was seen posing with Abhishek Banerjee near a lake.

"Memories made forever. #teambhediya," Varun wrote as the caption.

Abhishek commented, referring to the clean air of the place: "Best oxygen *waali* memories."

### fairtalk

AKSHITA MUDGAL



'I feel lockdown was a period where there was no entertainment on television. This is why people moved to OTT platforms to watch shows. OTT platforms were there earlier too, but people started switching because they were getting entertainment there. This is why viewership has increased and people give preference to OTT over TV.'

### dailytalk

VAANI KAPOOR



'When you do big films, while you are bound to get more eyeballs along with it comes a lot of scrutiny. I have always been clear in my head that I want to be part of films that allow me to showcase my skills as an actor. My next films *Bell Bottom*, *Shamsher*, and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* will hopefully entertain all of India.'

### OLIVIA CAN'T RECALL HER OSCAR-WINNING SPEECH

Actor OLIVIA COLMAN, who won the Oscar as Best Actress for her role in *The Favourite* in 2019, has revealed that she has no recollection of what happened after the ceremony or even her winning speech, during which she thanked her co-stars, crew, and kids.

"My husband said it was the best night of his life. I can't remember what I said. I only know because I've seen it played back now. I still can't quite believe it happened," she said.



Walking into a magnificent structure with floor-to-ceiling glass windows and doors, which overlooks a serene garden, could instantly transport you to a state of zen. The Glass House at Hilton Garden Inn, Gurugram, is sophisticated, classy and peaceful to say the least. Though its permanent menu takes you around the world, the curated one '21 dishes of 2021' promises to embrace the best of the myriad of cuisines — both local and international — to enhance your dining experience.

Seated on a table for two, right next to the glass windows while enjoying 80s pop music, I was welcomed with a Dark chocolate dome. Plated with granola soil and a white chocolate cigar which bridged across the plate, connecting the granola soil with the chocolate dome. It read, 'Welcome to HG1, Shambhavi' in white chocolate, adding a warm, personal touch to the dessert. Once the chef poured the melted chocolate over the dome, it melted revealing the filling inside. I began cutting into the dome only to be surprised by the layers upon layers within it. At the very bottom of the dome was a dark chocolate brownie which was dense yet fluffy. Above the brownie was the light and airy whipped cream which was topped with some diced fresh strawberry and almond shavings. As I took my first bite, I began to think, 'this might be too chocolate-y', but I was wrong. The freshness and citrus from the strawberries with the airy whipped cream, brownie and some nuts and dome bits for crunch, made a deadly combination. The dark chocolate dome bits added some bitterness which helped the dish to not enter the 'overly sweet' zone. This dessert answers the question, 'how much chocolate is too much chocolate?' by proving that no amount of chocolate is too much if it is perfectly balanced.

Now, it was time for something to wipe the chocolate flavour from the palette. An amuse-bouche was served (typically bite-sized dish, served to refresh the palate between courses). This was the Compressed watermelon with mint and cucumber broth, and Cream



## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

At Glass House, you can travel the world through multiple plates, says SHAMBHAVI SURI

cheese quenelle. Served in a white bowl, the compressed watermelon looked like a beautiful piece of salmon at first. However, to my surprise, I had cut into the crisp piece of watermelon. The melon was submerged in the mint and cucumber broth, only revealing a bit of the piece over which the cream cheese sat. The beauty of the dish was that the flavours do not linger on the palette and was truly refreshing.

Next up was the Malaysian laksa. Served in a hollowed-out coconut, the dish was presented in a very creative way. Serving the laksa in the tender coconut was not merely for presentation. The chef explained that once the piping-hot broth is poured into the coconut, the pulp of the tender coconut melts, giving an enhanced flavour. The broth was thin in terms of its texture, making it light and delicious. The noodles were also topped with peanuts, carrots, broccoli and fried onions that added a crunch and some more layers to the dish. This bowl of laksa was comfort food redefined! The lightness of the broth had me going in for more.

While I was still enjoying the laksa, the Blue cheese *malai*



*tikka* with *ananas* chutney made its way to my table. The *tikka* came in a cylindrical-shaped, brass serving piece with the skewers inside. The serving piece was smoked with coal and made the entire place smell like Old Delhi at night, when all the *tandoors* come out into the narrow gali (ally). The *tikka* was soft and succulent, and came apart as soon as I put my fork on it. The pungent flavour from the blue-cheese was a lip-smacking variation to the traditional *malai tikka*. The blue cheese also added another layer of creaminess along with the *malai*. The flavours in the mouth that lingered after the bite were just the smokiness of the *tandoor* and the sweetness from the *malai*. In my next bite, I paired the *tikka* with the *ananas* chutney. It was

just tantalising! It was tangy, refreshing and the flavour of the pineapple was not curbed by the flavour of the red chillies or ginger in it. The pairing of the chutney and the blue cheese *malai tikka* was a match made in heaven. The acidity from the *ananas* chutney balances the heavy creaminess of the *tikka*, making the entire experience delightful.

The next appetizer served was a different take on the traditional *dahi kebab*. Known as yogurt polpettes, it was served with a Raw papaya relish. The polpettes were rolled out and shaped like a cigar, covered under a blanket of noodles and deep fried. The stroke of the fluorescent green raw papaya relish on the black plate was like a brush stroke in a painting.

Cutting into the polpettes, there was the hung-curd mixed with coriander, cashews and finely chopped green chillies. I put some relish on top and took my first bite. Just like the *malai tikka* and the chutney, this dish was also balanced perfectly with an almost citric and acidic condiment, paired with a heavy and creamy element. The fried noodles gave it an extra crunch which is missing in the traditional *dahi kebab*.

For the main course, I was served *Chaudhary saab ki biryani* alongside *Burari raita* and *salan*. The non-vegetarian variant of the *Chaudhary saab ki biryani* was with pieces of chicken, cloves, cardamom, mint leaves along with chicken *keema* and topped with fried onions. The *biryani* was served in a traditional earthen pot known as *matka*. The smell of the *desi-ghee* took over all my senses as soon as I took off the lid of the *matka*. With all my senses engaged, I took a bite and it transcended all my expectations. It was one of the best *biryani*'s I had in a very long time. The different flavours of the chicken pieces and the *keema* added layer upon layer to it accompanied by the spices. All this was brought together with the taste of *desi-ghee* which transported me to the roots of India.

After all this, the beautiful afternoon came to an end with a dessert. The Indian Dessert Board plated four different kinds of *barfi*. The first from the left was a round-shaped *pista barfi*, topped with almond shavings. Second was the rectangular *betroot barfi*. Next was the *strawberry-khoya barfi* shaped in the form of a heart and the last one was the *coconut barfi*. This dessert board truly represented the great Indian desserts, celebrating the diversity of flavours and ingredients present in India.

With the sun rays getting fainter as the evening skies came about, it was time to end the journey that I took through the food served. The kind and friendly hospitality of the chef and the waiters at the restaurant made my afternoon even more memorable. For someone who is looking to take a trip around the world to experience different cuisines and flavours, you can do it right here.

## Enter the world of single malts

ANGAD SINGH GANDHI shares a few trends that are going to dominate the industry and some interesting food pairings to try out with your whisky

Whisky has been an innate part of our lives for decades. While last year saw a dramatic shift in the spirits world with more home consumption and lesser venturing out, there are a few trends that have emerged and will amplify this year. So here is what we predict the whisky world will swirl and sip in 2021:



**☐ Sustainable innovations will be on the radar:** The current pandemic and growing concern for the environment has given rise to a more conscious consumer and producer base. From eco-friendly packaging to sustainable hospitality and bar culture, 2021 will be about rethinking convention and moving towards a more inventive and responsible whisky industry. Bars will focus on reducing waste in drinks, eschewing disposables and sourcing ingredients that are locally grown and produced, sometimes even within the bar itself.

**☐ Continual rise of new craft producers:** The whisky world will witness a boom in the number of craft producers, micro distilleries and increased approachability when it comes to newer entrants. With rise in homegrown brands and rapid modern whisky movement, we can expect a big wave in number of craft producers with a nuanced and refined whisky collection.

**☐ The next big whisky market:** Lesser-known whisky regions will gain prominence. Changing lifestyles, higher incomes, increasing demand for premium spirits, change in demographics of the whisky drinkers, etc, will significantly contribute in bringing several countries on the whisky map of the world. Especially for a country like India where whisky culture has evolved by leaps and bounds from both producers and consumers end. The century old

whisky market has been gaining its momentum quiet steadily and will continue to be a preferred spirit this year as well.

While single malt as a category will remain a preferred choice among the mature consumers, it will continue to attract the young drinkers in times to come. In addition to these trends, food pairings will continue to be a great way to cherish your single malt. While most people are curious to try food pairings, they are not sure how to.

Consuming your single malt with food opens a world of aroma and flavour opportunities. The goal is not just to find things that go well together, but to create a match where the food brings out something new in the whisky or the whisky brings out something new in the food. In other words, the idea is to create gastronomic synergy to appreciate and savour the drink. Don't be intimidated with the enormous length and breadth of food options to try out with your single malt just trust your taste buds. You can enjoy a dram with any food you like. Experiment a little and find out what works for you.

So here are a few food pairings that go extremely well with water of life aka whisky:

**☐ Diverse culinary culture of**

**the South:** Unexpectedly, have you ever cherished your single malt with fiery flavours of Andhra cuisine? If not, you're missing out. Gongura leaves and red chillies peculiar to both Andhra and Telangana delicacies work well with the fruity notes of your whisky. Choose from a wide variety of mouth-watering vegetarian and non-vegetarian delicacies.

**☐ Exotic flavours of Kashmir:** The extraordinary gastronomic journey of the Kashmiri cuisine is worth the mention. The traditional Kashmiri *wazwan* which comprises of slow cooked meat dishes is yet another wonderful pairing and enhances the spicy notes of the whisky. The spices and the condiments just accentuate your drinking experience.

**☐ The South-East Asian bandwagon:** When it comes to the global fare, the tangy flavours of South-East Asian cuisine are a perfect accompaniment with the malty notes a single malt offers. The aromatic component of the South-East Asian food adds a lot of flavour to your whisky.

**☐ The secret ingredient:** Elixirs created with fine ingredients is yet another way to experiment with flavours and tasting notes of single malts. For instance, each whisky variant pairs well with different ingredients that enhance the aroma and finish of the single malt serve, so there's a whole world of flavours to play with.

The rules are simple — choose a subtle dram to compliment lighter flavours or a spicier whisky to complement fuller-flavoured dishes. So, grab your glass of whisky and pair it with the food of your choice to relish every sip of it with added flavours. Slainte!

(The writer is the Brand Ambassador of Glenfiddich India.)

## R E C I P E S



### ALMOND & SESAME PINNI

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Wheat flour: 2 cup
- Semolina: 2½ tbsp
- Roasted almond slivers: ¼ cup
- Roasted white sesame powder: ¼ cup
- Pure *ghee*: ¾ cup
- Gram flour (*besan*): 1½ tbsp
- Sugar: 1 cup

- Water: ½ cup
- Green cardamom powder: ½ tsp
- Roasted white sesame: 1 tbsp
- Roasted whole almonds: 3 tbsp

#### METHOD

- Heat *ghee* in a pan, add semolina and wheat flour to it.



Roast the mixture till a golden colour is achieved.

- Mix the sugar and water in a pan, and put it over low heat. Cook till single string sugar syrup is formed.

- Mix the sugar syrup with the wheat flour mixture. Add the green cardamom powder.
- Cook the mixture till it becomes a little dry. Add the

roasted almond flakes and ground white sesames to the mixture and mix well.

- Allow the mixture to cool. Divide the mixture into equal parts and shape it into rounds.
- Cut the roasted almond into halves and place it over the pinni and roll the pinni gently in roasted white sesame.

Courtesy: Chef Manish Mehrotra.



### LAUKI AND KELE KI MALAIDAR KHEER

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Full fat milk: 800 gm
- Bottle gourd (grated): 400 gm
- Banana (grated): 2
- *Khoya*: 30 gm
- Almonds (sliced): 20 gm
- *Chironji*: 10 gm
- Cashew (crushed): 10 gm
- Brown sugar: 90 gm
- Cardamom powder: 1 tsp
- *Ghee*: 25 gm
- Saffron: 8/10 strands

#### METHOD

- Heat *ghee* in a pan. Fry cashews and almonds. Also, keep some aside for garnishing.
- When they turn slightly brown, add grated *lauki* and cook it for eight to 10 minutes on slow flame.
- Add milk when it starts boiling. Simmer the heat and let it cook on slow heat for 25 minutes more.
- Keep stirring in between.
- Now add sugar, *khoya* and cook it for another two to three minutes.
- Put cardamom powder and saffron for enhancing the taste.
- Let the *kheer* cool at at room temperature. Then add grated bananas and mix really well.
- Garnish with leftover almonds and cashews. Serve cold.

Courtesy: Michelin Plate Winner, chef Dayashankar Sharma.

### VEG BIRYANI

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Basmati rice: 3 cups
- Whole green cardamom (divided): 18
- Cloves (divided): 12
- Salt: 3 tsp
- *Ghee*: 4.5 tbsp + 1 tsp
- Red onion (thinly sliced): 6
- Broken cashews: 6 tbsp
- Potato (cubed): 3
- Cauliflower florets: 150 gm
- Carrot (diagonally cut): 3
- Green beans (diagonally cut): 20
- Mil: 30 ml
- Saffron strands
- Ginger and garlic paste: 2 tbsp
- Green chillies: 6
- Oil: 30 ml
- Cumin seeds: 2 tsp
- Cinnamon stick
- Bay leaf: 3
- Whole black peppercorns: 13
- Curd: 1 cup
- *Biryani masala*: 4.5 tsp
- Red chilli powder: 1.5 tsp
- Water: 1 cup
- Cilantro (chopped): 8 tsp
- Mint (chopped): 7 tsp
- Rose water or *kewra* water: 3 tsp
- *Garam masala*: 1 tsp

#### METHOD

- Soak the rice in three cups of water for 35 to 40 minutes. Drain the water later.
- Heat a pot full of water. Add one black cardamom, three green cardamom, four cloves and 3/4



teaspoon salt to it. Let it come to a boil.

- Put rice and stir with a spoon.
- Let it cook uncovered (don't lower the heat) until it's almost cooked. This takes around six to seven minutes.
- Remove the pan from heat and drain the rice in a colander. Add a teaspoon of *ghee* to the rice. Set aside.
- Heat 1.5 tablespoon of *ghee* in a pan on medium heat. Once hot, add one sliced onion and cook until they turn golden brown and caramelize. Remove on a plate.
- To the same pan, now add cashews and cook until golden brown. Remove and set aside.
- To the same pan, add potato and cook for two minutes until light brown. Remove on a plate.
- To the same pan, now add cauliflower, beans and carrots. Sauté for two to three minutes

until veggies appear light brown. Remove them on a plate.

- Heat two tablespoons of milk in a pan. Once warm, add saffron strands (crush it before adding). Set it aside.
- Crush ginger, garlic and chilli using a mortar and pestle. Set aside.
- Heat 1.5 tablespoons of oil in a pan on medium heat. Add cumin seeds, cinnamon stick, bay leaf, peppercorns, remaining three cardamom and remaining two cloves.
- Stir and let the spices sizzle for a few seconds. Add the sliced onions and also add 1/4 teaspoon of salt.
- Cook for three to four minutes until onions turn light brown. Then add the crushed ginger, garlic and green chillies paste. Cook for two minutes until the raw smell goes away.
- Remove the pan from heat and

whisk in the yogurt, whisking continuously until it's all absorbed.

- Put the pan back on heat. Add all the veggies and toss to combine.
- Add the *biryani masala* and red chilli powder.
- Add 1/4 cup of water. Let it cook for around six to seven minutes until veggies are almost cooked but not overcooked. They should be firm to bite. Remove from heat.
- Now take a heavy bottom pan. First grease it with *ghee*.
- Then add a layer of rice (half of the rice). Top with half of fried onion, half of fried cashews and half of cilantro and mint. Add 1/2 teaspoon of rose water. Now place the veggies on top (all of it).
- Then add another layer of rice on top of the veggies. Then top it with remaining with fried onion, cashews, cilantro and mint.
- Add the prepared saffron milk and the remaining one teaspoon of rose water on top.
- Finally drizzle one teaspoon *ghee* on top. Sprinkle some *biryani masala*.
- Cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil. Then cover with a fitted lid.
- Heat a flat pan on medium heat. Once hot, reduce the flame to lowest. Place your *biryani* pot on top of the pan and let it cook for 25 to 30 minutes on lowest heat.
- Scoop out the biryani from the bottom of the pan so that each serving has both the veggies and the rice.
- Serve hot vegetable biryani with *raita*.

Courtesy: The Biryani House.



### DAAB CHINGRI

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Prawns: 750 gm
- Onion
- *Panch phoron*: 1 tsp
- Green chillies: 4
- Turmeric
- Wheat dough: 20 gm
- Large tender coconut: 1
- Mustard paste: 3 tbsp
- Garlic cloves: 3
- Mustard oil: 2 tbsp
- Salt as required

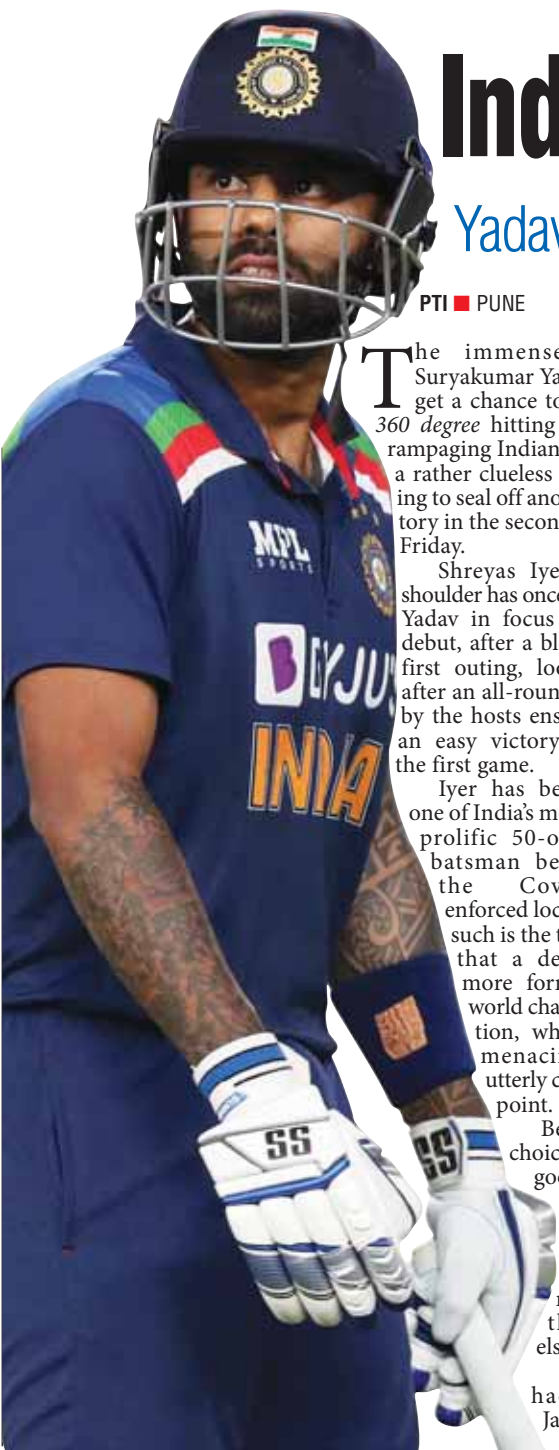
#### METHOD

- Chop garlic, green chillies and onion. Scrape out the coconut flesh and put it in a grinder. Grind well to get a coconut flesh paste.
- Heat oil in a pan over medium flame and add *panch phoron* in it.
- Add the chopped green chillies, onions and garlic cloves.
- Now, take it out in a large bowl and add mustard paste,

turmeric, salt and coconut flesh paste.

- In the mixture, add the raw prawns and mix everything well.
- Cut the bottom of the coconut shell evenly to make it stand properly inside the pressure cooker.
- Put the prawn mixture in the shell and cover the top with wheat dough.
- Add some water in the pressure cooker and place the coconut shell inside it. (Note: The level of water should be about half the height of the coconut shell.)
- Put the cooker lid on and let it cook over medium flame until you hear three whistles.
- After removing it from the flame, let the dish be inside the cooker for 10 minutes more.
- Take it out and remove the wheat dough seal. Serve hot with steamed rice.

Courtesy: Swissotel Kolkata.



# India gear up for Surya Namaskar

Yadav to make ODI debut as Men in Blue target hat-trick of series win

PTI ■ PUNE

The immensely talented Suryakumar Yadav is likely to get a chance to showcase his 360 degree hitting skills when a rampaging Indian team takes on a rather clueless England, aiming to seal off another series victory in the second ODI here on Friday.

Shreyas Iyer's dislocated shoulder has once again brought Yadav in focus and his ODI debut, after a blockbuster T20 first outing, looks imminent after an all-round show by the hosts ensured an easy victory in the first game.

Iyer has been one of India's most prolific 50-over batsman before the Covid-19 enforced lockdown but such is the team's strength that a debutant looks more formidable for a world champion opposition, who are no less menacing but seem utterly confused at this point.

Being spoilt for choices is always a good headache to have for the think-tank and skipper Virat Kohli will be more pleased than anyone else.

Kohli has not had Ravindra Jadeja's services

for close to three months but neither Axar Patel in Tests, and now Krunal Pandya in the ODIs, have let the team miss their maverick from Rajkot.

Prasidh Krishna, already a household name due to IPL, looked completely at home on his ODI debut, hurrying batsmen for pace in the absence of Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami.

And come to think of it, once Jadeja and Bumrah are back, a Krunal or Krishna will either cool their heels in the dug-out or even worse, not find a place in the squad, which is a testimony to India's unimaginable depth of talent pool.

The biggest positive during the opening game was Shikhar Dhawan's return to form with a match-winning 98. He was under pressure after being benched for a large part of the T20 series.

Rohit Sharma had sustained a blow to his elbow during the first match but is expected to be fit in time for the second game.

The pace trio of experienced Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Prasidh Krishna and the ever-improving Shardul Thakur took nine of the 10 wickets and would be keen to rock the England batting line-up again.

The best part was how they came back after first 15 overs of mayhem by Jason Roy and Jonny Bairstow.

Meanwhile, England will look to level the series and stay alive in the contest.

England have a lot to ponder on and injuries to skipper Eoin Morgan and batsman Sam Billings, while fielding, in the lung-opener have only added to their woes.

All-rounder Ben Stokes was firm in his belief that England do not have

## Morgan out of final two ODIs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

England skipper Eoin Morgan will miss the final two ODIs of the three-match series against India in Pune after sustaining finger injury in the first game.

Vice-captain Jos Buttler will lead the side in absence of 2019 World Cup winning captain as Liam Livingstone is likely to make his ODI debut.

Also Sam Billings will be unavailable for Friday's match, with a decision on his availability for Sunday's final match to be taken in due course.

Morgan sustained a split webbing between his thumb and index finger in Tuesday's series opener, an injury that required four stitches. The captain went through a fielding drill during training at the MCA Stadium on Thursday and afterwards declared himself unfit.

too many reasons to worry despite the continuing disappointments.

"We've been formidable in the white ball format for over a number of years. Just because we lost the T20 series doesn't mean we need to start changing things around," he said on match eve.

Bairstow was among the runs as he blazed to 94 off 64 balls as was his partner Roy (46).

The two would be looking to put up another fine show and carry forward the aggressive brand of cricket, which was the cornerstone of the 2019 World Cup triumph.

However, their middle order hasn't performed up to its potential and the likes of all-rounder Ben Stokes, Jos

Morgan said: "I had the hand re-dressed before the start of training today but it quickly became apparent that I found myself protecting the injury and getting into the wrong positions to catch the ball.

"There's nowhere to hide on the field in International cricket these days, especially in limited-over formats so it didn't require any great thought to make myself unavailable.

"It was a freak injury and it's extremely frustrating but there's nothing I can do about it. It's now just a case of letting the cut heal. I have every confidence in Jos and the rest of the squad coping without me."

Billings did not train on Thursday after he suffered a bruised left collar bone while fielding in Tuesday's opening match. David Malan, with the tour party as cover, has been drafted into the squad and is available for selection.

Buttler and Moeen Ali faltered with the bat.

If England have to put a big total or chase a score, the trio needs to fire in unison.

Their key spinners Adil Rashid and Moeen Ali haven't been able to trouble the Indian batters and both went wicket-less in the opening game.

They will have to step up and deliver and along with Tom Curran, who will need to compliment his brother Sam and pace spearhead Mark Wood, who troubled the batters with his speed.

Come Friday, it remains to be seen whether India are able to add "another sweetest victory" or if the visitors spoil their party.

## KL isn't surprised by Krishna's sensational debut

PTI ■ PUNE

KL Rahul isn't surprised by India's newest pace sensation Prasidh Krishna's smash-hit International debut as he always felt that it was about time that he would join the ranks of big names from Karnataka, who have already donned national colours.

Prasidh, who had made a name for himself with his performances in the Indian Premier League for Kolkata Knight Riders, took four wickets on his ODI debut against England.

"Look, quite honestly, I am not surprised with what he (Prasidh) did yesterday (Tuesday). I was always very confident that the next player that is going to come out of Karnataka, is going to be Prasidh," said the pacer's state teammate.

"We weren't of the same batch, but I have watched him play a lot of junior cricket and in the nets, he is somebody, who will catch your eye," Rahul said at the virtual press conference.

The best part according to Rahul is Prasidh's ability to bowl quick.

"(He is a) tall guy (who) bowls quick, gets a lot of bounce from the wicket, and someone having played with him in the last couple of seasons for Mushtaq Ali and Vijay Hazare, I realised

that he is a brave boy." Rahul is also impressed by his game sense.

"He has a great sense of the game, it's not just his skill but how he understands and reads the game. He is a very keen learner and he is, like I said, very brave and comes in with a lot of aggression," Rahul said.

Rahul is confident that Prasidh will be a great asset for Indian cricket if he keeps on working hard.

"We saw in the last game, he was trying to have a word or two with the batsmen and he enjoys being in a contest and that's something I love, about him," Rahul said.

"...And I am so happy to see that he is carrying on the same thing and he wasn't overwhelmed by the place he is in, playing his first game for the country, I am sure there will be lot of nerves but the way he came back after the first three overs, got those crucial wickets, so these are the qualities that a player and as a team, a lot of us are impressed with, what he has done."

For Rahul, the manner in which each newcomer has performed in this series can be attributed to consistent show in the domestic cricket for years.

"I think a huge part is the IPL and the confidence that these boys come in with. And whoever has coming into the team, is not because they have performed in one season of the IPL or one season of first-class cricket but it has been 2-3 years of consistent performances and at whatever level they play, or wherever they play," said Rahul, who captains the Punjab Kings, in the T20 league.

But obviously having played all the top English players in IPL did help their performance, Rahul admitted.

"Obviously, you would have heard Surya (Suryakumar Yadav), Ishan (Kishan) and Krunal (Pandya), in their interviews saying that they have played against most of these guys in the IPL at some point and they know how they go about their games and IPL performances have obviously given them a lot of confidence and they have carried that confidence into playing for their country," he noted.

## Animated outbursts isn't our way of operating: Stokes



PTI ■ PUNE

Animated and aggressive body language might work well for Virat Kohli and his Indian team but that doesn't have a bearing on England's modus operandi, said their premier all-rounder Ben Stokes.

The question was in reference to India captain Kohli's aggressive in your face demeanour while fielding or celebrating a fall of wicket.

"Every team and every player has a certain way of operating in the field, which makes them successful. As a team over the last four-five years, that's not the way that works for us," Stokes said on the eve of their must-win second ODI.

"We stick to what we do best and what we make is to build a better side. Each team is entitled to their own way of operations. India have their and we have ours," he dashing all-rounder said.

Asked whether he preferred a "nice or spiky" Virat, Stokes gave a smart reply:

"Personally, I prefer Virat doesn't get runs, because that's not good for us."

After their 66-run loss in the first ODI, England risk of being usurped for their No 1 ranking but Stokes said it's not their driving force.

"We deserve to be No 1 because of our results and how we played our cricket and we won't go away from that. Being No 1 is obviously a fantastic thing to have next to your name as a team, but it's not our driving force."

"Our driving force is the way that we go about it and our attitude towards playing the game. And that's what's made us successful, and the more successful we are obviously the more chance and the more opportunity we've got to be at No 1."

With twin injury blows to Eoin Morgan and Sam Billings, England may hand a debut to Liam Livingstone and Stokes is confident that a "fearless" Livingstone would embrace the opportunity if picked for the second ODI.

## Playing more games keeps me in good touch: Rahul

PTI ■ PUNE

Three months without a competitive game left KL Rahul a trifle rusty but the stylish right-hander had complete faith in his preparedness, something which helped him bounce back to form in the first ODI against England.

After an indifferent T20 series against the same team, Rahul had a good first ODI scoring a half century as well as a number of catches behind the stumps.

"As a batsman I feel being in the middle and playing games is what keeps me in good touch," Rahul said on the eve of the second ODI.

"Having not got as much game time as I would have liked, I mean I won't say it did not play



on my mind, but somehow or the other you have to find a way to be best prepared, be it at training or open net sessions," he explained.

"In terms of that, I tried to prepare in the best way possible but having said that, nothing beats game time," he added.

With Rishabh Pant back in the white ball mix and Ishan Kishan also grabbing his chance with both hands, Rahul knows that he cannot take his place for granted despite being one of the most prolific performers in the shorter formats.

"Look when you are a part of this Indian team you know that competition is going to be really, really high and you can never sit back and feel comfortable like you own a position. You will always be challenged

and that's how it is.

"Our country has got a lot of talent, you will always try to push yourself and keep training harder and working on your game. And when opportunity comes, try to grab it with both hands," he said.

The lean patch that he encountered is part of a journey for an international cricketer, something that didn't stress him much.

"This is part of the journey and everybody goes through this. I didn't do anything different or I wasn't too stressed."

## Blue Tigers hold Oman for 1-1 draw

the match that he would give chances to maximum number of players for them to gain the experience of playing in big matches.

The first half was all about Oman attacking in waves with India not getting a single shot on target.

Oman, who have won both the two-legged matches of the 2022 World Cup qualifying against India, played a high defensive line with more men on attack. India were content defending their citadel with more players in their own half and just one man upfront most of the time.

The Indians lost possession too easily on most occasions as



**IGOR STIMAC GAVE DEBUTS TO AS MANY 10 PLAYERS TO GAIN THE EXPERIENCE OF PLAYING IN BIG MATCHES**

Oman did not let them hold on to the ball for long.

Oman squandered a penalty in the 27th minute after Rowlin Borges committed a foul on Abdul Aziz Al Gheiani inside the box. Aziz himself took the spot kick but shot

straight to Amarinder Singh.

But Oman were not to be denied a goal in the first half. Al Aghbari got the ball on the left wing and sent a low cross on the face of the goal. Amrinder could not collect the ball cleanly and it hit Chinglensana Singh and went past the goal line.

Stimac made two changes at the start of second session with Lalengmawia and Raynier Fernandes replacing Jaekson Singh and Rowlin Borges.

The Indians dished out a much improved show in the second half, holding the ball a lot more than the first 45 minutes and playing a more attacking game.

India equalised five minutes

before the hour mark. Bipin Singh sent in a delicious cross from the right flank which was headed home by Manvir.

Oman, ranked 81st as compared to India's 104th in the FIFA charts, then pressed hard for the winning goal but Amrinder was impressive behind the bar as he made two fine saves in the 63rd and 65th minutes.

India play their second International friendly against the UAE here on Monday.

The friendlies are a part of preparations for the joint qualifying round matches of the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup to be played in June.

## India women's win 25m team pistol Gold

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian juggernaut remained unstoppable at the ISSF shooting World Cup with the country's women shooters grabbing the spotlight by clinching the 25m pistol team Gold medal following a Silver in the 50m rifle 3 positions team event here on Thursday.

The seventh competition day was also marred by the Hungarian team's pullout from the men's rifle 3 position final — against India — after a dispute with its seasoned shooter Peter Sidi over a bipod that was attached to his rifle, leading to a postponement of the event to Friday.

The host nation's team will take on third-placed USA in the final.

There was positive news for India after that unprecedented act, as the triumvirate



Chinki Yadav, left, Manu Bhaker, center and Rahi Sarnobat pose for photo with Indian flag after the trio struck Gold in the women's 25m pistol Team event

of Chinky Yadav, Manu Bhaker and Rahi Sarnobat shot a total of 17 to beat Poland's Joanna Iwona Wawrzonowska, Julita Borek and Agnieszka Kojewo, who managed to score 7.

"In individual competitions if we make mistakes, we

main match. It's not like a test event or anything, it's just that we have to perform so we have to be at our best. I consider it the same thing, just the name has been changed."

The team Gold came only a day after Yadav, Bhaker and Sarnobat swept the individual final by winning all the medals on offer on Wednesday.

The victory in this event consolidated India's position at the top of the pecking order with 21 medals, including 10 Gold, six Silver and five Bronze.

Earlier in the day, India's Anjum Moudgil, Shreya Saksena and Gaayathri Nithyanadam claimed the Silver medal in the 50m rifle 3 positions team event.

The Indian rifle team shot 43 in the Gold medal showdown to finish behind the Polish team, which scored 47 to grab the top prize.

## Saina enters Orleans quarters

PTI ■ PARIS

London Olympics Bronze Lmedallist Saina Nehwal advanced to the quarterfinals of the Orleans Masters after prevailing over France's Marie Batomene in the women's singles second round on Thursday.

Running against time to make it to her fourth Olympics, Saina recovered from the opening game reversal to see off world No 65 Marie 18-21, 21-15, 21-10 in a 51-minute clash in the Super 100 event, which is part of BWF's revised Olympic qualification period.

The fourth seeded Indian, will face either France's Yaelle Hoyaux or Malaysia's Iris Wang next.

Ira Sharma, ranked 162, also made it to the quarterfinals after beating Bulgaria's world No 71 Mariya Mitsova 21-18, 21-13 in 32 minutes.

## Oranje stunned in Turkey

AFP ■ ISTANBUL

The Netherlands slumped to a dramatic 4-2 defeat by Turkey in their opening 2022 World Cup qualifier on Wednesday, while reigning champions France were held by Ukraine despite a brilliant Antoine Griezmann goal and Belgium came from behind to beat Wales.

European champions Portugal battered to a 1-0 victory over Azerbaijan, but 2018 World Cup runners-up Croatia lost 1-0 in Slovenia as they started their bid to reach the finals in Qatar.

In Istanbul, Turkey led 3-0 shortly after half-time through two Burak Yilmaz goals and a Hakan Calhanoglu strike, but substitutes Davy Klaassen and Luuk de Jong gave Frank de Boer's Dutchmen hope.

Yilmaz's wonderful free-kick sealed him a hat-trick and



Turkey's Burak Yilmaz celebrates after he completes his hat-trick

Turkey a crucial win. The defeat was a dreadful start to the campaign for the Netherlands, who failed to qualify for either Euro 2016 or the 2018 World Cup.

France kicked off their title defence with a 1-1 draw against Ukraine at the Stade de France. Griezmann curled a fine

finish from outside the box into the top corner in the 19th minute to draw level with David Trezeguet in fourth place on France's all-time goalscoring list, with 34.

But Presnel Kimpembe put through his own net before the hour mark to draw Ukraine level.