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I MISS MY
FATHER:
RANBIR
10 VIVACITY

'Omicron multiplies in lungs 70 times faster than Delta'

Together with its ability to escape vax immunity, variant's threat high: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the first findings on how the hypermutated Omicron variant infects the respiratory tract, researchers from Hong Kong University (HKU) on Thursday reported that the virus multiplies 70 times faster in the bronchi than Delta and the original SARS-CoV-2 virus, which, they said, might explain why Omicron transmits faster. The researchers said Omicron infection may be less severe, depending on the body's immune response. The variant reaches higher levels in the tissue, compared to Delta, 48 hours after infection, said the study.

The preliminary data, published online on Wednesday, gives for the first time a look at how Omicron may behave inside the respiratory tract — and the data offers a tantalising clue as to why this heavily mutated variant is spreading so fast and even outcompeting Delta.

Michael Chan Chi-wai, who led the work, said the result needed to be interpreted with caution because the severe disease is determined not only



A health worker collects swab sample of an outstation passenger for Covid-19 test at Bandra Terminus railway station in Mumbai on Thursday

by how quickly the virus replicates but also by a person's immune response and, in particular, whether the immune system goes into overdrive, causing a so-called cytokine storm.

"It is also noted that by infecting many more people, a very infectious virus may cause more severe disease and death even though the virus itself may be less pathogenic," he

said. "Therefore, taken together with our recent studies showing that the Omicron variant can partially escape immunity from vaccines and past infection, the overall threat from the Omicron variant is likely to be very significant."

Jeremy Kamil, an Associate Professor of microbiology and immunology at Louisiana State University Health Shreveport,

pointed out that Delta, which turned out to be more pathogenic, showed a similar pattern of replicating more slowly in the lungs.

"These authors found Omicron replicates fantastically well — even far better than either Delta or the original virus — in bronchial tissue," Kamil said. "This could in some ways contribute to an advantage in spread/transmission between people."

"Of course, a huge component of Omicron's transmissibility in real life is going to be its potential to escape neutralising antibodies that protect against infection in the first place. It's very likely spreading well even between vaccinated people, especially those who haven't recently gotten a booster shot."

DELHI ADDS 85 COVID CASES

New Delhi: Delhi on Thursday recorded 85 fresh Covid-19 cases with a positivity rate of 0.15 per cent, according to data shared by the health department here.

With this, the city's Covid-19 caseload climbed to 14,41,935. Of this, over 14.16 lakh patients have recovered from the disease, the health department bulletin stated.

The death toll remained unchanged at 25,100, it said.

India celebrates 50th anniversary of liberation of Bangladesh

Prez Kovind addresses Victory Day in Dhaka; Rahul, Priyanka slam Govt for no mention of Indira in PM's tribute

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/DEHRADUN

India on Thursday celebrated Vijay Diwas to mark the 50th anniversary of 1971 war and liberation of Bangladesh. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi recalled the valour and sacrifice by the Indian Armed forces, President Ram Nath Kovind addressed the Victory Day in Dhaka and said the 1971 Liberation War has a special place in the hearts of every Indian.

Modi led the nation on Thursday in paying tributes to the Armed forces by laying a wreath at the National War Memorial.

"On the 50th Vijay Diwas, I recall the great valour and sacrifice by the Muktiyoddhas, Biranganas and bravehearts of the Indian Armed forces. Together, we fought and defeated oppressive forces. Rashtrapati's presence in Dhaka is of special significance to every Indian," PM Modi wrote on Twitter.

However the occasion was marred by a controversy with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi criticising the Government for ignor-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the homage and reception ceremony of Swarnim Vijay Mashaals on the occasion of 'Vijay Diwas' at National War Memorial in New Delhi on Thursday

ing former PM Indira Gandhi, who played a pivotal role in the 1971 war.

Four victory torches (Vijay Mashaals), which were taken across the country during the last one year, were merged into the memorial's eternal flame by the PM.

These victory torches, which were lighted by the PM exactly a year ago, were carried to various parts of India, including to villages of the awardees of Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra of the 1971 war, as a part of Golden Jubilee year celebrations

(Swarnim Vijay Varsh).

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and chiefs of the three Armed forces were present at the National War Memorial during the event. Modi said on Twitter, "On this special day of Vijay Diwas, I had the honour of paying my respects at the National War Memorial and merging into the Eternal Flame, the four Vijay Mashaals which traversed across the length and breadth on Dhaka."

President Kovind on Thursday said India has always attached the highest priority to its friendship with Bangladesh

and that New Delhi remains committed to doing all it can to help realise the full potential of its friendship with Dhaka.

Addressing the Victory Day celebrations here, President Kovind said the 1971 Liberation War, struggle for freedom has a special place in the hearts of every Indian.

"India has always attached highest priority to its friendship with Bangladesh. We remain committed to doing all we can to help realise the full potential of our friendship with Bangladesh," he said.

Delhi to deregister 10 yrs old diesel vehicles; to give NOC for use elsewhere

Process from Jan 1
STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will deregister all diesel vehicles which will complete 10 years on January 1, 2022, and issue no objection certificate (NOC) so that they can be re-registered in other places in compliance with the National Green Tribunal's directions.

However, no NOC will be issued for diesel vehicles, which have completed 15 years or more on the date of applying for it, according to an order issued earlier this week by the Delhi Transport Department.

The NGT has issued directions relating to restrictions on registration and plying of diesel vehicles more than 10 years old and petrol vehicles more than 15 years old in Delhi-NCR.

In an order in July 2016, the tribunal said its direction for deregistration of diesel vehicles, which are more than 10 years old, will be complied with effectively and without



default.

The deregistration of diesel vehicles, which are 15 years old, was to be taken up in the first instance. The transport department order said that "accordingly, the department will deregister all such diesel vehicles in Delhi on January 1, 2022, which have completed or would be completing 10 years on that date."

The department has been deregistering vehicles that have completed their lifespan. NOC for diesel vehicles, which are 10 years old, and petrol vehicles, which are 15 years old, can be issued for any place in the country, it said. This will be, however, subject to condition that NOC will not be issued for the places which are identified by states as restricted area for re-registration, the order said.

Young national level shooter found hanging

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/HOWRAH

Young national-level shooter Konic Layak was found hanging at her hostel in Bally in Howrah district, police said. According to Howrah Police sources, a suicide note was found with her where she blamed "depression" as the reason for taking the extreme step. The incident happened on Wednesday.

"She was depressed for not getting chances, she wrote in the note," said a police official, adding that the 26-year-old girl was due to get married in February. This is the fourth such case in recent times in the shooting fraternity.

The shooter, who had won a few medals at the state level, was training along with Olympian and Arjuna Awardee Joydeep Karmakar in Kolkata. Police have started investigations into the death of the shooter who was from Dhanbad in Jharkhand.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) is aware of the shocking incident.

Naravane appointed chairman of chiefs of staff committee

Army chief to serve as head till a new CDS is appointed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Army chief General MM Naravane has been appointed Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee. He is the senior-most among the three Services Chiefs and will serve as the Chairman till a new Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) is announced.

The institution of Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee, was functional till two years ago to ensure cohesion and synergy between the three Services. However, the role was taken over by General Rawat when he was made the first CDS of the country in January last year and the Committee was made redundant.

Naravane's appointment as the head of the Committee is a



stop-gap arrangement till the political leadership appoints the new CDS, sources said here on Thursday. General Rawat, his wife, and 12 others were killed in a helicopter crash on December 8.

The Government went by the principle of selecting the senior most amongst the three Chiefs for the newly created CDS post and appointed General Rawat as he was the senior-most then.

Amarinder in Delhi to finalise ties with BJP

New Delhi: Former Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh has reached Delhi to finalise the alliance between the BJP and his newly formed Punjab Lok Congress Party.

He will remain in Delhi for the next three days and will meet senior BJP leaders.

On Friday evening, Amarinder will meet BJP national president JP Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

However, it is not yet clear whether the picture will be clear about the seats during this visit of the Captain to Delhi.

With the formation of the Punjab Lok Congress Party, he has announced to enter the election fray along with BJP and other Taksali parties. Recently, he met BJP's Punjab election in-charge Union Minister Gajendra Shekhawat at his Siswan farm house.

The Captain had apprised the BJP of his seat-sharing formula in this important meeting and the same was liked by the BJP's central leadership, according to sources.

Akhilesh buries 5-yr-old feud with uncle, forges alliance for UP polls

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and his estranged uncle and Pragatishheel Samajwadi Party Lohia (PSPL) chief Shivpal Yadav buried their five-year long family feud on Thursday and forged an alliance for the forthcoming Assembly polls.

The SP chief reached Shivpal's residence in the evening and held a closed-door meeting, which lasted for about 40 minutes. Sources said apart from Shivpal and Akhilesh, the former's son, Aditya Yadav, was also present at the crucial meeting.

Following the meeting, Akhilesh tweeted and confirmed the alliance between the SP and the PSPL. "Met the PSPL chief and confirmed our alliance. The strategy of alliance with smaller parties is strengthening the SP and is taking the SP along with alliance parties towards a historic win," said



Akhilesh Yadav meets Shivpal Singh Yadav at his residence in Lucknow on Thursday

Akhilesh. The decision of seat-sharing, however, has not yet been announced by either of the leaders. During the meeting, hundreds of supporters of both parties gathered outside Shivpal's residence and raised the slogan "Chacha -Bhatija zindabad".

CAPSULE

2 LET MILITANTS KILLED IN ENCOUNTER IN J&K
Srinagar: Two LeT militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Kulgam district of Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday, police said.

MAX TEMP TO DROP ON CHRISTMAS: IMD
New Delhi: Due to a 'Western Disturbance', the maximum temperature this Christmas will be colder with light to moderate rain or snowfall over the western Himalayan region, northwest India, and adjoining areas of central India, the IMD said.



Armed forces personnel pay tribute to the mortal remains of late Group Captain Varun Singh in Bengaluru on Thursday

Sheena Bora alive, claims Indrani

Her letter to CBI gives a sensational twist to murder trial

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After having been behind bars for more than six years on charges of murdering her daughter Sheena Bora, Indrani Mukherjea has now — in a bizarre claim made in a letter to the CBI — said that her daughter "is still alive" and "is currently in Kashmir" and asked the CBI to track her down.

In what is being seen as a tactic to further delay or derail the already much-delayed trail in the sensational case, Indrani claimed in her letter to the CBI that her fellow inmate at the Byculla Women's Jail had told her that the latter had met Sheena in Kashmir and want-



ed the Central investigating to trace her daughter.

Talking to the media persons here, Indrani's lawyer Sana Raees declined to divulge the details of the letter but said that she on behalf of her client would file an application in the Bombay High Court on December 28, after which she would share the letter her client had written to the CBI with the



media.

However, there was no reaction yet from the CBI till the evening on the claim made by Indrani, who has been lodged in Byculla Women's Jail in south Mumbai ever since she was arrested on August 25, 2015 for the alleged murder of Sheena.

However, Peter Mukherjea — who separated from Indrani

by way of divorce through mutual consent in October 2019 while both were behind bars — has been out on bail for the last 10 months. The Bombay High Court had on February 6, 2020 granted bail to Peter on the ground that prima facie there was no evidence to prove his direct involvement in the murder.

Bill soon to raise legal marriage age of women from 18 to 21 years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has decided to raise the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years, bringing it at par with that of men. Experts, however, have raised concern over the decision, saying the move is akin to treating symptoms instead of the underlying causes.

The Union Cabinet had on Wednesday cleared a proposal to bring in uniformity in the marriageable age of men and women, sources said on Thursday.

The Government is likely to bring a bill in the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament to amend the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, they said. The proposed Bill may also seek to make consequential



changes to various personal laws relating to marriage of different communities to ensure a uniform marriage age, the sources said.

As of now, the legal age of women to get married is 18 while that for men is 21 years.

The decision came a year after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the Government was deliberating on what should be the minimum age for marriage of women.

Setback for BJP as Metro man to stay away from active politics

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The BJP in Kerala suffered a major setback on Thursday after E Sreedharan, former chairman of Delhi Metro Rail, announced he would stay away from active politics in future.

"I joined the BJP and contested the Assembly election with the sole aim of serving the people as their servant. But the BJP failed to win even a single seat. Moreover, at my age I am not able to go out and work to strengthen the party. I am staying away from active role, I'll be always available to the general public for any help and guidance," he told reporters.

But sources close to him said it was the indifferent attitude of the BJP State leadership that led to his decision.

Governor gives tips to trainee DSPs during interaction



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Governor, lieutenant general (ret'd) Gurmit Singh interacted with 18 trainee deputy superintendents of police of Uttarakhand in a programme organised at Raj Bhawan. He asked them about the challenges before the police in the coming five years, the three big heroes of Uttarakhand Police over a period of 21 years who should be considered as role models for new police officers, the kind of transformation policing needs in the coming times, the three tasks that should absolutely not be done by police officers and jawans, the challenges faced by women police officers and other questions. These trainee officers, after completing their training from Narendranagar Police Training College had come to the Raj Bhawan to pay a courtesy call to the governor. In

response to a question by the governor regarding infrastructure improvement in Police Training College, Narendranagar, a lady DSP suggested that synthetic track, swimming pool etc. should be arranged in Police Training College. Regarding the challenges before the police in the coming times, the trainee officers said that cyber crime and limited work force in the police is a big challenge. Regarding the change in policing, the trainee officers said that there has not been much change in the police laws, but the working style of the police is changing especially in the context of Uttarakhand Police. Due to social media, every activity of the police is being monitored. There is a complaint cell for everything. The police have to understand

the sentiments of the people and become a people friendly police. The governor told the newly appointed police officers that the fear of police uniform should be instilled among the criminals only while a sense of security should be created among the common people by seeing the police. "The police service you joined is challenging. You have to help the poor instead of the influential. Stick to your professionalism. Young police officers like you are the strength of the nation. Today there is a need for proactive and intellectual policing. To prevent crime from happening, it is necessary to educate and make people aware. Police officers should challenge themselves and try to do excellent work," he said.

RaGa's visit clears Congress lacks vision for U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The chief ministerial candidate of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Ajay Kothiyal said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's visit has made it clear that his party truly has no vision for Uttarakhand. He said that Gandhi did not make even a single announcement for people or for ex-servicemen in his speech. He said that Congress has been a dead opposition for about five years as it failed to raise any significant issues of the public. He added, "December 16 is considered a golden day for the Indian army. It would have been great if Congress could have honoured the soldiers of the Battle of Hilli who showed their valour in the battle fought in Bangladesh in 1971 but they failed in this too."

IMS marks silver jubilee with various events

PNS ■ ROORKEE

The Institute of Management Studies (IMS), Roorkee held various events to mark its silver jubilee. Presiding over the programme, the institute director D Baby Moses said that this institute is the first in Uttarakhand which was recognised by AICTE. Those who studied from the institution are working in important positions not only in the state but also in the country and abroad while many former students are contributing in the economic progress of the country by doing their own business. During the programme, the topper students of the institute were honoured with prizes and certificates. An alumni meet was also organised during which the alumni shared their experiences and guided the students. The students also presented a variety of cultural performances during the silver jubilee celebrations.

Bageshwar to introduce motorcycle taxis

PNS ■ BAGESHWAR

The Bageshwar district magistrate Vineet Kumar is planning to introduce motorcycle taxis in the district headquarters. Initially two motorcycle taxis are slated to be introduced after which more will be put into service depending on the demand. This new facility

will be useful especially for those wanting to travel to various government offices including the court, Vikas Bhawan, ARTO and degree college. "The district offices are at a considerable distance from the city. People have to wait for long to get taxis to reach these offices. This is an innovative experiment and the ARTO has been instructed to take action on it. Transport will be accessible and unemployed youth will also get employment." The motorcycle taxi fare has not been finalised yet. Assistant regional transport officer Nikhil Sharma said that motorcycle taxis can also be called to the door of the passenger. This scheme will prove to be a milestone in improving public transport and create new dimensions of employment at the local level. After getting success in the district headquarters, this system will be implemented in the Tehsils also. The application process for this has been completed.

Citizens suffer repercussions of political rallies

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With the Assembly elections not far, political rallies addressed by national level leaders and events held by state units of various parties are expected to increase in frequency. The rally addressed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday traffic on various routes being diverted and zero zone being declared on various roads around the event venue- Parade Ground. With traffic diverted from main roads, the traffic jam on internal routes face was exacerbated. Traffic was seen crawling on Mohini Road, Karnpur and even Sahastadhara Road where traffic jams usually do not occur. The impact of the rally on Thursday caused major inconvenience to the public in various areas. Sakshi Gusaian said, "These political rallies do more harm than good. Earlier this month, when PM Modi arrived, we faced a lot of problems due to the traffic jams all over the city. I had an exam that day and was late despite leaving early." She

added that the situation of Dehradun's traffic is not good and such events worsen it. Amar Das, a parent said, "We left home early to drop the kids to school and will wait till the school gets over to avoid getting stuck in the traffic." Another parent added, "We were already afraid to send our kids to school these days amid Covid and these large public gatherings are an invitation for an increase in cases in Dehradun." Senior citizen Bimla Devi said, "My daughter-in-law gave birth. We called for an ambulance to go home but it arrived after two hours due to a political rally." Businessman Abhishek Kumar questioned what happens to government directions for Covid appropriate behaviour during the political rallies. He said, "All the traffic is halted when a VIP is passing by. The authorities don't seem to consider our work important or that we also have to reach on time."

Bank employees begin strike, warn of indefinite protest against govt



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Over 10,000 bank employees commenced a two-day strike on Thursday in Uttarakhand against the proposed privatisation of public sector banks by the central government. The strike reportedly affected the transaction of about Rs 300 crore across the state. Various services like cheque transactions, deposits and cash withdrawals were also hindered on the first day of the protest. The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella body of nine bank unions of employees and officers including the All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC), All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA) and National Organisation of Bank Workers (NOBW), has called this strike from Thursday against the central government's move to privatise public sector banks. The state secretary of AIBOC Pramod Ranjan Kukreti said that over 10,000 employees participated on the first day of the strike across the state and protested against the government that affected the transaction of over Rs 300 crores. He said that 90 per cent of public sector banks (PSBs) including Union Bank, Central Bank of India, Nainital Bank and Punjab National Bank (PNB) protested against the proposed privatisation of banks to convey their disagreement to the government. He said that the unions have expressed their disagreement to the government several times since it mentioned its intent to privatise banks but the ministers did not back out. "We displayed our protest by staging peaceful strike and it will continue to be same on Friday too. We will wait for the government to positively respond to our protest to its decision but if it fails, we will be bound to commence an indefinite strike," stated Kukreti.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Ghaneshwari Devi Spouse of No. 4083707M Rank L/Hav Devendra Singh Negi 8th Garhwal Rif R/o Village Tali Baghi, Post Bhagiriathipuram Patti Sarjula, District Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand have change my name from DHANESHWARI DEVI to GHANESHWARI DEVI. Affidavit dated 14/12/2021 Before SDM Court Tehri Garhwal (UK)

In the dependent card of oathe's father Late Jawahar Singh my name has been wrongly mentioned as Sumeet whereas my correct name is Sumit Kumar and it should be updated in the dependent card. Sumit Kumar S/o Late Jawahar Singh R/o Ambadi, Vikas Nagar, Dehradun



Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami pays tributes to martyred soldiers at the martyrs memorial in Gandhi Park on the occasion of Vijay Diwas in Dehradun on Thursday

Pioneer photo

DGP suspends ASI for non-compliance with protocols

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Director General of Police (DGP) Ashok Kumar has suspended an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) from Haridwar for non-compliance with protocols. The police informed that last year, Kumar reviewed a complaint of a Bahadradad resident named Vivek Kumar of Haridwar district who had

accused an investigating officer of pressuring him to compromise with the plaintiff regarding a fraud case. After investigating the matter, the DGP found the officer guilty and directed the Senior Superintendent of Police, Haridwar to suspend him. He also ordered him to determine why the clerk concerned failed

to send the investigation report to the ASI Alok Kumar, as per the police. On reviewing the matter again, the DGP found that ASI Alok Kumar had failed to comply with rules and did not inform the senior officials about the action taken on the case beforehand as per the protocols. He has directed SSP to suspend him immediately.

DELHI JAL BOARD DELHI SARKAR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (T)/A.C.E. (M)-4 LUCKNOW ROAD, TIMAR PUR, DELHI-110054. Short NIT. No.51 (Item no.1) (2021-22) E.E.(T)/A.C.E.(M)-4. Table with columns: S No., Name of Work, Estimated Cost (Rs.), Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution, Earnest Money, Tender Fee (Non-refundable), Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution.

NORTHERN RAILWAY (Moradabad Division) Tender Notice. Table with columns: S N, Name of work with its location, App. Cost of the work (In Rs.), Address of the office from where the tender form has been issued, Earnest Money to be deposited (In Rs.), Completion period of the work, Date & Time for submission of tender & opening of tender, Website particulars & Address of office.

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF N.C.T. OF DELHI OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (NE) III G.T ROAD SHAHDARA, DELHI-110032. Press N.I.T. No.54 (2021-22). Table with columns: S. No., Name of work, Amount put to tender Rs., 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.

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उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लि 0 (उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम) कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत जानामद खण्ड 33/11 कोठी/0 उपस्थान, श्रीनगर (गो) निविदा सूचना

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PRESS NOTICE SJVN Ltd. invites online proposals (e-tenders) on Domestic Competitive Bidding for "Selection of Buyers for 5 No. Assets (Land/Buiding) located at Parwanoo/Dehradun" as below. Table with columns: Sr. e-Tender No., Address / Asset Particulars, Date of RFP, Last Date for submission of Proposals.

अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा निम्नलिखित जानामदीय कार्यों हेतु केन्द्र/राज्य सरकार/निगमों के अनुमोदित, आयकर, जी.एस.टी. एवं ई.पी.एफ. आदि में पंजीकृत तथा जी.एस.टी., ई.पी.एफ. जमा करने के नवीनतम चालान की प्रतियाँरी देकेदारों से हस्ताक्षरयुक्त मुहरबन्द निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं जो दिनांक 01.01.2022 के पूर्वान्द 11.00 बजे तक वेबो जायगी तथा निविदाएं उसी दिन अपराह्न 03.00 बजे तक जमा की जायगी जोकि उसी दिन अपराह्न 03.30 बजे अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा उपस्थित निविदादाताओं/अधिकृत प्रतिनिधियों के सम्म सार्वजनिक रूप से खोली जायगी। उक्त तिथि में अकाश क्षेत्र पर निविदाएं अमले कार्य दिवस में प्रया की व खोली जायगी। निविदा की वेधता सुखने की तिथि से 03 माह होगी। निविदाएं किसी भी कार्य दिवस में अधोहस्ताक्षरकारों के कार्यालय में देखे जा निविदा धनराशि बैंक ड्रॉमर/नगद जमा करने पर निविदा प्राप्त किने जा सकते हैं। किसी भी अथवा सभी निविदाओं को बिना कारण बतये अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा निरस्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। डाक से निविदा मंगवाने पर डाक व्यय रूप 100.00 अतिरिक्त देय होगा तथा डाक से हुए मिलभ पर विभाग का कोई उत्तरदायित्व नहीं होगा। निम्न निविदाकारों पर विभाग द्वारा पेशनाली लगाई गई हो अथवा लिखे द्वारा विभागीय कार्य सतोषजनक एवं पूर्ण नहीं किए गए/कार्यो जा रहे हों, उन्हें एकल अथवा संयुक्त रूप से भी निविदा नहीं वेबो जायगी। शतेयारी निविदाएं स्वीकार नहीं की जायगी। निविदाकार निविदा प्रपत्र खरीदने से पूर्व निर्माण कार्य स्थल का भलि-भौति निरीक्षण कर लेवें। पिछले 03 वित्तीय वर्ष में एक अनुबंध के अन्तर्गत अनुमानित लागत का 80% वा दो अनुबंधों के अन्तर्गत प्रत्येक में 80% वा तीन अनुबंधों के अन्तर्गत प्रत्येक में 40% तक के जानामदीय कार्य (civil works) का अधिशासी अभियन्ता (जानामद) उच्च स्तर के अधिकारी द्वारा जारी किया कार्य अनुभव प्रमाण-पत्र प्रस्तुत करना अनिवार्य है। निविदा भाग 01 में, अनुभव प्रमाण-पत्र, आयकर मुक्त, जी.एस.टी., ई.पी.एफ.0 पंजीकरण एवं चरित्र प्रमाण-पत्र, निविदा वेधता हेतु हस्ताक्षरयुक्त रूप 100.00 के स्टाम्प पेपर पर रूप 01.00 का स्वीडी टिकट लगा तथा धरोहर धनराशि, अधोहस्ताक्षरी के पक्ष में प्रतिभूत करते हुए सी.डी.आर./एफ.डी.आर./एन.एस.सी. के रूप में तथा वॉचिभ प्रमाण पत्रों तथा ई.पी.एफ. जी.एस.टी. जमा करने की नवीनतम सरवापित प्रति सहित प्रस्तुत की जायेगी। धरोहर धनराशि निविदा के निष्पन्न होने से पूर्व वापस नहीं की जायगी। निविदा भाग 02 में कार्य की दरें प्रस्तुत की जायगी। निविदा भाग 01 में वांछित धरोहर धनराशि एवं वांछित प्रपत्रों आदि के नहीं पाये जाने पर निविदा भाग 02 नहीं खोला जायेगा। क्रम संख्या- 1. 33/11 कोठी/0 उपस्थान कस्याली, जिला-पौडी (गो) स्थित निरग्रंण का. स्तर की विशेष मरम्मत एवं याई टर्निंग के कार्य। निविदा संख्या 12 / विजाखशी / 2021- 22. धरोहर धनराशि रूप 34000.00, निविदा मूल्य रूप 1180.00 (जी.एस.टी. सहित), कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि - 3 माह। 2. 33/11 कोठी/0 उपस्थान विजाबीबी जिला-पौडी (गो) स्थित निरग्रंण कक्ष एवं आवासीय भवनों की विशेष मरम्मत का कार्य। निविदा संख्या 13 / विजाखशी / 2021- 22. धरोहर धनराशि रूप 34500.00, निविदा मूल्य रूप 1180.00 (जी.एस.टी. सहित), कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि - 3 माह। 3. 33/11 कोठी/0 उपस्थान, अहलीसैण, जिला-पौडी (गो) स्थित निरग्रंण कक्ष एवं आवासीय भवनों की विशेष मरम्मत का कार्य। निविदा संख्या 14 / विजाखशी / 2021- 22. धरोहर धनराशि रूप 33000.00 निविदा मूल्य रूप 1180.00 (जी.एस.टी. सहित), कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि-03 माह। "विद्युत वितलों के 24x7 ऑनलाइन मुग्तान हेतु www.upcl.org पर जायें" पात्रांक- 325 / विजाखशी/0 / रिनांक 16 / 12 / 2021 अधिशासी अभियन्ता "राष्ट्र हित में विजली बचायें" टोल फ्री नं 1800-419-0405

पंजाब नैशनल बैंक Punjab National Bank Circle Sastra Centre, Dehradun East-1, Paltan Bazar, Clock Tower, Dehradun, Phone No. 0135-2716115. (NOTICE UNDER 13 (2) OF SARFAESI ACT 2002 READ WITH RULE 3 OF SECURITY INTEREST ENFORCEMENT RULES 2002) I being an Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor Bank have a reason to believe that all of you the under mentioned notices cannot be served ordinarily as attempted earlier except through this substituted service. As such, all of you the under mentioned notices are hereby informed and called upon through this public DEMAND NOTICE under section 13(2) of the SARFAESI Act with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule 2002 make payment of the amounts due against each of you, as mentioned below, within 60 days, the bank will proceed U/s 13 (4) of the said Act for taking possession of the secured property/ies/Assets mentioned against account and thereafter to sell the same to realize its dues with further interest till realization along with costs as contemplated under the said Act. Needless to mentioned here that this notice is addressed to you without prejudice to any other remedy available to bank for recovery of its dues, against you. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. Table with columns: S. No., Name of the Borrower/Guarantor/ Mortgagor, Details of Security/Property, Date of Demand Notice, Due Amount.

Modi govt dividing the country, destroying economy- Rahul

Accuses BJP government of ignoring Indira Gandhi in the Vijay Diwas programme

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Accusing the BJP government of deliberately ignoring former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has said that the programme organised by the Modi government in Delhi to commemorate victory of Indian forces in Bangladesh war has no mention of Indira Gandhi. Addressing a well attended Vijay Samman rally at Parade Ground here on Thursday, Gandhi accused the Narendra Modi government of dividing the country and destroying the economy. He said that India could win the Bangladesh war in only 13 days because every Indian was firmly united and because Pakistan was a divided country. Gandhi said that it is a matter of great concern that today the people are being pitted against one another and the weak are getting pulverized. All this is



weakening the country. He added that measures such as demonetisation, wrong GST and tax waiver to big industrialists

during the Covid-19 pandemic has jolted the economy. Gandhi said that only two-three big industrialists are prospering in the country at the cost of the small and medium industries. He said that the farmers of the country unitedly and firmly opposed the draconian farm laws which forced the PM to withdraw them. He said though the PM sought apology from the farmers, his government stated that no farmer died during the agitation. "I showed a list in the parliament of 400 farmers identified by the Punjab government and 70 farmers of Haryana who lost their lives but the government is not acknowledging it," he said.

Continuing his attack on the BJP government, Gandhi said that airports, ports, roads and mines are being sold only to

benefit two- three industrialists. He said that while the international prices of crude are down the petrol and diesel prices in India are increasing. He said that India imposes maximum tax on the petrol in the world and as a result of which Rs 10 lakh crore were snatched from the pocket of people of the country and this money was used to waive off the loans of the billionaire friends. He claimed that these industrialist friends are engaged in image building of PM Modi. Giving an example of this Gandhi said that recently such an environment was created that only one person has taken bath in holy Ganga and no one else. He said that no one including Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath and Defence minister Rajnath Singh was allowed to take a dip in Ganga when Modi was taking a bath.

Rahul Gandhi tries to strike emotional chord with U'khand

I have a relationship of sacrifice with people of Uttarakhand- RaGa



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Congress party and Rahul Gandhi tried to strike an emotional chord with the armed forces veterans and their families during the Vijay Samman rally in Dehradun on Thursday. The rally was held to celebrate 50 years of the victory of Indian forces in the Bangladesh war. Huge cut outs of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, General Bipin Rawat and the officers and soldiers who lost their lives in the recent helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu were erected in the ground. Many veterans of the Bangladesh war and other ex-servicemen were seated on the stage. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi met the ex-servicemen and one minute of silence was observed to pay homage to the CDS General Bipin Rawat. The organisers also showed a small documentary on the Bangladesh war which showcased the bravery of Indian armed forces and the leadership skills of Indira Gandhi.

In his address, Gandhi said that he understands the pain the families of the martyrs undergo as he had lost his father and grandmother. He said that he was in school when he was informed that his grandmother had died as 32 bullets were pumped into her. Gandhi said that those who have no experience of anyone getting martyred in their family cannot understand this pain. He said that maximum blood for India in the war theaters is given by the soldiers of Uttarakhand.

In his address former chief minister and head of campaign committee of Uttarakhand Congress Harish Rawat remembered the role played by Rahul Gandhi in the aftermath of

Kedarnath disaster. He said that when he became CM of Uttarakhand Rahul Gandhi asked him to reconstruct Kedarnath shrine which his government did. On a sarcastic note Rawat without mentioning the name of PM Narendra Modi said that the caves built by him were used by others for meditation. He said that the BJP government tried to impose Char Dham Devasthanam Management Board but the vehement opposition by the Teerth Purohiths forced the government to do a roll back on it. Promising that the Congress government in Uttarakhand would work for the betterment of farmers and provide employment to the youth, Rawat said that the uncontrolled prices have made things difficult for the general public. He also assured that the Congress government would set up a model of women empowerment in the state. The leader of opposition (LoP) Pritam Singh said that the BJP had promised to waive off the loans of the farmers but it failed to fulfill it. He said that the mining, land and liquor mafia are ruling the roost in Uttarakhand. The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Ganesh Godiyal said that the huge crowd and the enthusiasm of the party workers in the rally clearly shows that the people of the state have made up their mind to bring Congress to power. Former PCC president Kishore Upadhyaya, deputy leader of Congress Legislature Party (CLP) Karan Mahra, AICC Secretary Qazi Nizamuddin, in charge of Uttarakhand Congress Devendra Yadav, Avinash Pandey, Yashpal Arya, Rajya Sabha MP Pradeep Tamta and others also spoke on the occasion.

Huge crowd in rally brings cheer in Cong camp



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Former president of Congress party Rahul Gandhi gave the much needed momentum to the campaign of Congress party for the upcoming assembly elections in Uttarakhand. After a well attended rally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 4 the pressure was on the Congress party to bring people to the rally of Rahul Gandhi. The state leadership of the party tried hard on this front and the result was evident on parade ground on Thursday. The venue of the rally was jam-packed and the crowd spilled over to the adjoining roads. The police had a tough time managing the traffic as people going into and coming out of the rally created traffic jams in different parts of the city on

Thursday. Congress leaders Harish Rawat and Pritam Singh had claimed before the rally that more people would attend the rally of Rahul Gandhi.

When contacted after the end of the rally the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Pritam Singh told The Pioneer that more than 35,000 people had attended the rally. He said that in Congress' rally the crowd was double that of Modi's rally. Singh said that in sharp contrast to Modi's rally people in Rahul's rally stayed till the last and the enthusiasm was clearly very high. The CLP leader said that it clearly shows that people of Uttarakhand have made up their minds to change the government.

BJP challenges RaGa & Congress to answer questions related to armed forces

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

For decades during its rule, the Congress did nothing for the honour of the soldiers or to resolve their issues but indulged in the pretense of honouring soldiers in Dehradun. Stating this, the Bharatiya Janata Party state president Madan Kaushik challenged Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to first reply to BJP's questions.

Stating that Rs one lakh crore has been allocated in the past five years by the Centre for development in Uttarakhand, Kaushik asked which ambitious schemes did the Congress give Uttarakhand when it had the chance to make its own double engine government from 2004 to 2007 and from 2012 to

2014 when Congress was in power in both Uttarakhand and the centre. The Congress should also explain what it had done for the honour of soldiers in the decades when it was in power. Kaushik asked, "Did the Congress fulfill the demand for one rank, one pension since 1970? During Congress rule, the body of a soldier martyred at the border used to be handed over to his family with a black blanket, a black box and a postcard. Was this the honour for which Rahul Gandhi observed the programme in Dehradun? The party which displayed pictures of the late general Bipin Rawat to talk of honour is the same which had a leader calling general Rawat a

'sadak ka goonda'. When general Rawat's daughters were immersing his ashes in the Ganga in Haridwar, the whole of Uttarakhand and India was solemn but senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi was dancing at an event in Goa. Is this the tradition of honouring soldiers which Congress talks of? After the Balakot air strike, various Congress leaders had sought evidence of the same. Its leaders had also questioned the bravery of our soldiers after the surgical strike. Rahul Gandhi and the Congress leaders should reply to the various questions related to insulting the armed forces," said the BJP state president.

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd.
(A Govt. of India Enterprise-Mini Ratna)
CIN NO - L74899DL1999GO1101707

IRCTC invites E-Bid/E-RFP for the following:-

I) For selection of managed service partner for Integrated Railways Helping & Enquiry System-139. 1st Pre-bid Meeting (VC): 20.12.2021 at 1230 hrs, 2nd Pre-bid VC at 06.01.2022 at 1230 hrs. Last date of Submission: 24.01.2022

II) For Selection of Operator for 'Rail Neer Packaged Drinking Water Plant at Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. Pre-bid meeting: 28.12.2021 at 15:00 hrs. at IRCTC CO, New Delhi. Last date of Submission: 18.01.2022 up to 15:00 hrs

III) For Operation, maintenance and provision of catering services in/through Refreshment Rooms & Jan Aahaar under A1 & A Category Stations over Indian Railways under IRCTC/North Zone. Tender availability from: 20.12.2021. Last date of submission : 10.01.2022 up to 15:00 hrs.

IV) For Setting up, operation and management of Fast Food Units at B, C & D Category Stations over Indian Railways under IRCTC/North Zone. Tender availability from: 20.12.2021. Last date of submission: 11.01.2022 up to 15:00 hrs.

V) For the selection of Chatbot Solution Provider for IRCTC Website & Mobile App. Last date of submission of bids: 23.01.2022 up to 15:00 hrs.

For details visit irctc.com (SN I to V), www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC (SN I to V) and eprocure.gov.in/cppp (SN III & IV). Above Tender documents downloading & participation can only be done on website: www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC.

Note: Any corrigendum/addendum issued on the above advertisement, will Only be published on IRCTC's website www.irctc.com & tenderwizard.com.

Office Address:- Group General Manager (P&T), IRCTC Ltd, 11th floor, Statesman House, B-148, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi-110001, Tel.011-23311263-64

कार्यालय नगर निगम, देहरादून
का०-0135-02714074; फ़ैक्स-0135-2651080; ई-मेल-(nagamigam.ddn@gmail.com)
पत्रांक:- 737(H) दिनांक:- 16.12.2021
(ई-निविदा)

नगर निगम, देहरादून द्वारा वित्तीय वर्ष 2021-22 हेतु नगर की सफाई व्यवस्था हेतु सफाई उपकरण क्रय करने के लिए तकनीकी बिड व वित्तीय बिड के आधार पर ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। ई-निविदा वेबसाईट उत्तराखण्ड की ई-निविदा साईट www.uktenders.gov.in में दिनांक 24.12.2021 को 2.00 बजे तक जमा की जा सकती है। जो कमेटी के समक्ष दिनांक 25.12.2021 को प्रातः 11.00 बजे खोली जायेगी। नगर आयुक्त, नगर निगम, देहरादून

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, DEHRADUN
Government of India, Ministry of Finance, Deptt. of Financial Services
2nd Floor, Paras Tower, Mazra, Saharanpur Road, Dehradun, UK-248171

BEFORE THE RECOVERY OFFICER-I, DRT, DEHRADUN
NOTICE FOR SETTLING A SALE PROCLAMATION
(NOTICE FOR SETTLING A SALE PROCLAMATION UNDER RULE 53 OF IIND. SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT 1961 RKADWITH SECTION 25 TO 29 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS AND BANKRUPTCY ACT)
T.R.C. No. 556/2018 in O.A. No. 364/2013 Dy No. 225, Date: 25.11.2011
Canara Bank V/s M/s Pioneer Drugs Company Pvt. Ltd. & Ors. To.

CD.1: M/s Pioneer Drugs Company Pvt. Ltd. (Borrower) through its Managing Director Shri Kanwal Dhingra 6, Rampur Mandi Road, (Chakrata Road, Dehradun.

CD.2: Kanwal Dhingra (Guarantor), S/o Late Govind Ram, R/o 103, Chander Nagar, Dehradun.

CD.3: Amrit Lal S/o Late Govind Ram, R/o 103, Chander Nagar, Dehradun.

CD.4: Jaspal Singh (Guarantor), S/o Joginder Singh, R/o 8, Tyagi Road, Dehradun
Present Resident Address: 225 A, Model Gram Ludhiana, Punjab.

CD.5: Secretary, Massoorie & Dehradun Development Authority, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

This is to notify that amount of Rs. 43,19,079.00/- (Forty Three Lakh Nineteen Thousand and Seventy Nine Rupees Only) plus Pending lite and future interest @12% per annum from the date of filing of this original Application i.e. 14.08.2013 and cost is due against you as per Recovery Certificate dated 09.08.2016 issued by the Hon'ble Presiding Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Dehradun in O.A. No. 364/2013.

You are hereby informed that 04.01.2022 has been fixed for drawing up the proclamation of sale and settling the terms thereof. You are hereby directed to disclose the encumbrances, charges, claims or liabilities if any, on the under mentioned mortgaged property or any portion thereof so that the terms and conditions of sale can be settled.

SPECIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY
Shop No. L-18, Measuring area 17 Sq. Mtrs., situated in MDDA Complex, Clock Tower, Dehradun.
Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this 25.11.2021.
Recovery Officer -I, DRT, Dehradun

BJP, Cong responsible for poor education system in U'khand, says Sisodia

PNS ■ LALKUAN / DEHRADUN

The Delhi deputy chief minister and senior leader of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Manish Sisodia said that the successive governments of Congress and BJP have made the education system in the government schools pathetic rather than improving it in over two decades. He stated this after visiting a local government school in Lalkuan of Nainital district on the first day of his four-day tour to the Kumaon region on Thursday. He said the quality of government schools has fallen down in the past 21 years and it is depressing how students in Uttarakhand still have to study in such schools in the 21st century. "Students are forced to study in schools with tin roofs and sit on the floor for the classes.

I interacted with some women of the area who told me that sanitation facilities are also bad in the school and the mid-day

meal provided to students is also of bad quality. They said that though many children study in the school, they remain worried about the future of their children," stated Sisodia. He appealed to the public to eliminate such governments and political parties which have failed to provide basic facilities for the education and welfare of the children. Sisodia who is also the education minister of Delhi said that Delhi's government schools were also in the same condition five years ago but now they provide world-class education. He said, "Students of Delhi's government schools are clearing exams like NEET and IIT and if AAP comes to power the next year, children will also receive a world-class education in government schools here too." The AAP leader will visit Bhowali and Almora on Friday, Kapkot on Saturday and Rudrapur on Sunday as a part of his four-day visit.



Inauguration of
Tourist Guest House, Pokhara
By
SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ
Hon'ble Minister
Tourism, Public Works, Irrigation,
Endowment and Culture,
Govt of Uttarakhand,
on 17th December, 2021 at 10:50 AM.

***You all are cordially invited.**

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Work on permanent solution for Delhi-NCR pollution: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court directed the Commission for Air Quality Management on Thursday to invite suggestions of the public and experts about a permanent solution to the problem of air pollution in Delhi-NCR.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana took note of a report filed by the Commission which informed it that a decision to lift the ban on certain industries has been taken.

"The committee's report states measures that have been taken. So far as construction activities have been taken it's been stated that a decision will be taken tomorrow. We will list the matter in the first week of February. Meanwhile, we direct the commission to invite suggestions of the general public and experts about a permanent solution to the pollution," the bench also comprising Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench that

operation of industrial processes related to milk, dairy processing, manufacture of drugs, life-saving medicines and medical equipment has been permitted. He said some industries were permitted for eight hours, some industries said their nature of industries is such that eight hours is not sufficient. "We have asked them to have a continuous process but five days not seven days. And we have staggered industries so they don't function on the same days," Mehta said.

"Thermal power plants that are closed will remain shut but more will not be closed. Decision on construction activities will be taken tomorrow. Hospital constructions are permitted, while trucks, etc continue to be banned," he submitted.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the petitioners in the case, said only short term measures have been proposed and the problem of air pollution, long term permanent measures are needed.

The bench asked him to submit suggestions which



would be considered by an expert group constituted by the commission. The commission has told the top court that milk and dairy processing units, medicines, drugs and life-saving equipment industries have been allowed to resume full-time operations.

Besides these, paper and pulp processing industries have been allowed to work five times a week while paddy, rice industries and textile, garment

units have been permitted to work five days a week. The commission further told the apex court that power plants have been permitted to operate keeping in view the demand for power.

The ban on construction activities, however, will continue and schools will also continue to function through online mode for the time being which will be reviewed again on December 17.

Eye on Omicron, States told to be ready with O2, equipment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking cue from the rapid surge in new Omicron variant cases in various countries and in India where tally has touched to 73, an alarmed Center has asked the States and Union Territories to monitor their availability of oxygen supply, equipment, ventilators and concentrators among other things on a daily basis to ensure that there is absolute preparedness to tackle any rise in the number of infections.

In India, Omicron cases are gradually inching up. From 25 on December 4, the cases have risen to 73 with more States coming into its grip. In the wake of the rapid spread of the 'super-variant', Omicron, Maharashtra recorded 32 cases till Wednesday — the highest in the country — prompting the state government to extend the Covid-safety curbs in Mumbai till December 31 with new rules. Rajasthan was second on the list with 17 cases.

In a review meeting with the states and UTs on Wednesday, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan advised states to ensure the gap between equipment and systems deliv-

ered to the districts and installed at the healthcare facilities is reduced to zero. States have also been asked to conduct mock drills of all installed and commissioned PSA plants to ensure that they are fully operational so that oxygen of required quantity, pressure and purity reaches the intended patients at their bedside. These drills are to be completed by the end of December, the health ministry said.

Uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen in sufficient quantity is of critical importance to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic, the Centre said.

While equipment and systems have been sanctioned and delivered, in many states these have not been sent to district health facilities and when delivered, some have not been made functional, Bhushan said.

State nodal officers were requested to streamline coordination with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), HLL Infra Tech Services Limited (HITES) and Central Medical Services Society (CMSS) for resolution of electricity-related and site-related issues for ensuring quick operationalisation of the entire medical oxy-

gen supply infrastructure supplied to them.

So far, a total of 3,236 PSA plants have been installed in the country from various sources with a total commissioned oxygen capacity of 3,783 MT. Moreover, 1,14,000 oxygen concentrators are being provided to states under PM-CARES (1 lakh) and 14,000 from Emergency Covid Relief Package (ECRP-II), the government said.

It was also pointed out that ECRP-II funds have been sanctioned to them for installation of 958 LMO storage tanks and medical gas pipeline systems in 1,374 hospitals.

Over 375 mn people went hungry in Asia-Pacific due to Covid: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the emergence of Covid-19, an estimated 375.8 million people in the Asia and the Pacific region faced hunger in 2020, which is nearly 54 million more people than in 2019, according to a joint report just published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

According to the 2021 Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition, in this region alone, more than 1.1 billion people did not have access to adequate food in 2020 — an increase of almost 150 million people in just one year.

"This most recent report on the state of food security and nutrition in Asia and the Pacific tells a grim story. The high cost of a healthy diet and persistently high levels of poverty and income inequality continue to hold healthy

diets out of reach for 1.8 billion people in this region," wrote Jong-Jin Kim, Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Asia-Pacific at FAO, in the report.

The report stated that the region was already facing a "quite discouraging" food security and nutrition situation in 2019. Progress had stalled in reducing the number of undernourished, and the prevalence of certain nutritional indicators, such as stunting in children under five years of age, was much too high.

But Covid worsened the situation. Besides increasing infections, the containment measures led to a major contraction of economic activity around the globe. Disruption in food supply chains added to the problems.

The report also lauded the response of governments on the social protection measures they put in place during the crisis. However, they noted

that in building back better food environments, future agri-food systems will have to provide better production, better nutrition, a better environment and better lives.

"Our focus must revolve around the needs of small-scale family farmers in the region, as well as the needs of other vulnerable groups such as indigenous people, women and youth. These are the people that produce the nutritious food that everyone needs to eliminate malnutrition," wrote Marcoluigi Corsi, Regional Director of East Asia and the Pacific region, UNICEF.

While commitments have been made to ensure recovery, and there are opportunities to begin the hard work of advancing food security and nutrition through transforming agri-food systems, implementing these will be key to meet the second Sustainable Development Goal, SDG2, to eradicate food insecurity and malnutrition, the report said.

PM leads nation in paying tribute to 1971 war martyrs on Vijay Diwas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the nation on Thursday in paying tributes to the armed forces on the occasion of 50th anniversary of India defeating Pakistan in the 1971 war. It led to the creation of Bangladesh.

Modi laid a wreath and paid his respects at the National War Memorial on the occasion of Vijay Diwas, which is celebrated in commemoration of India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war.

Four victory torches (vijay mashaals), which were taken across the country during the last one year, were merged into the memorial's eternal flame by the Prime Minister.

These victory torches, which

were lighted by the Prime Minister exactly a year ago, were carried to various parts of India, including to villages of the awardees of Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra of the 1971 war, as a part of Golden Jubilee year celebrations (Swarnim Vijay Varsh).

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and chiefs of the three armed forces were present at the National War Memorial during the event. Modi said on Twitter, "On this special day of Vijay Diwas, I had the honour of paying my respects at the National War Memorial and merging into the Eternal Flame, the four Vijay Mashaals which traversed across the length and breadth of the country over the course of last one year." December 16 is celebrated as Vijay Diwas.

Indira took 32 bullets for country but ignored on 1971 war anniv: Rahul

PNS ■ DEHRADUN/NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday accused the BJP Government of ignoring the role of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the 1971 War as India celebrates the 50th anniversary of the victory, which he said was achieved as the country was united then.

Referring to his grandmother and the former PM, Rahul said she took '32 bullets for the country' but her name was not even mentioned at an event in New Delhi on the anniversary of the victory over Pakistan.

Parliament paid tributes to Bangladeshi freedom fighters and Indian armed forces on the 50th anniversary of Vijay Diwas, which celebrates India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war that led to the liberation of Bangladesh. Making a reference in the Lok Sabha, Speaker Om Birla remembered the exemplary courage displayed by freedom fighters of Bangladesh

as well as the Indian Army, the Navy and the Air Force.

With Indira not being named in either of the house of Parliament, Congress members raised slogans hailing late prime minister Indira Gandhi for leading the nation during the 1971 war. In the Rajya Sabha, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said the display of dauntless courage and gallantry by Indian armed forces in 1971 is still remembered with pride and zeal across the country, which continues to inspire the people of the nation.

Congress accused the Government of indulging in petty politics by not remembering Indira Gandhi during the Vijay Diwas celebrations. "It does not make any difference because I know what she (Indira Gandhi) did for the country by giving her blood," Rahul said launching his party's campaign for the Uttarakhand Assembly polls during a rally at Parade Ground in Dehradun.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla welcomes Vuong Dinh Hue, Chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam, and his delegation at Parliament. Vuong Dinh Hue is on a five-day visit to India

Yechury seeks removal of J&K HC Chief Justice

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Thursday urged President Ram Nath Kovind to remove Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (J&K&L) High Court's Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal for allegedly speaking 'against the Indian Constitution'. While addressing a programme organised by advocates' organisation affiliated to the RSS on December 5 at Jammu, Mithal spoke "against the Constitution of India", Yechury claimed in his letter to Kovind.

"It has been widely reported in the media that Mithal addressed a seminar organised by the Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Parishad and said the following, 'Inclusion of the terms secular and socialist in the Preamble of the Constitution had narrowed India's spiritual image'," Yechury said. "Mithal is further

reported to have said, 'Sometimes, we bring amendments due to our adamancy,' he noted.

Utterances against the country's Constitution by a High Court Chief justice, that too from a platform which preaches a particular ideology, is an unpardonable offence which is in violation of the oath taken by him to carry out his constitutional functions, the CPI(M) leader asserted. "Mithal's conduct (is) unbefitting of the constitutional office of the chief justice that he is holding (and it) warrants his immediate removal from the said office," he said.

"As the custodian of the Constitution, as the head of the State and as the appointing authority of Mithal, I request your good self to immediately set in motion the process for his removal from office to uphold the sanctity of the Constitution and independence of judiciary," Yechury said.

French Defence Min to visit India today; boosting strategic, defence ties on agenda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and France will discuss at length maritime security including the Indo-Pacific region during the talks here on Friday between visiting Defence Minister Florence Parly and her Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh.

France on Thursday said the visit of its Defence Minister to India highlights its "centrality" in the French strategy for the Indo-Pacific and called for friendly powers to unitedly defend the rule of law and reject all forms of "hegemony" in the region. The Pioneer had reported about the visit on Wednesday.

Parly will hold extensive talks with Rajnath with a focus on maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, industrial partnership and ways to deal with the threat of terrorism, the French Embassy said. It said she will call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and also meet National Security Advisor (NSA) SA Ajit Doval particularly for discussions on

regional security issues. The two had met in November during Doval's visit to Paris.

Parly visited India in September last year primarily to attend a ceremony in Ambala that was held to induct the first batch of five Rafale jets into the Indian Air Force.

The embassy said that since then, a total of 33 Rafale jets have been delivered to India "all perfectly on schedule despite the disruptions of the pandemic".

"The minister will reiterate France's commitment to strengthening India's defence industrial base and its willingness to offer the best of its technology with a high 'Make In India' component," it said.

In a statement, the embassy said she will be on an official visit to India on Friday to strengthen Indo-French strategic and defence ties.

"This visit highlights France's engagement in the Indo-Pacific and the centrality of India in the French strategy. It comes in the wake of several major bilateral air, navy,

and army exercises this year," the embassy said.

There have been growing global concerns over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific region. "In this respect, Minister Parly will detail the recently unveiled EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific that brings a multiplier effect to this comprehensive approach for the region," the embassy said.

"Upon taking the presidency of the Council of the European Union on January 1, 2022, France will make the Indo-Pacific and India a key priority," it said.

The embassy said the "in-depth talks" she will have in India will cover all aspects of the wide-ranging Indo-French defence ties. It said the areas to be covered in the talks will include operational defence cooperation, particularly maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, industrial and technological partnership in line with Make in India and counter-terrorism cooperation.

PM exhorts farmers to adapt agriculture to new requirements, challenges

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday called for the adaptation of agriculture according to new requirements, new challenges of the journey till the 100th year of independence and urged the farmers to shift their focus from 'chemistry laboratory experiments' and connect it with the 'natural farming' methods.

The Prime Minister said that those who will benefit the most from natural farming, constitute about 80 percent of the farmers of the country. "Those small farmers, who have less than 2 hectares of land. Most of these farmers

spend a lot on chemical fertilizers. If they turn to natural farming, their condition will be better," PM Modi said.

Addressing the summit on natural and zero-budget farming being held at Anand, in Gujarat through video conference, the PM Modi said, "In the past 7 years, with 'Beej se leke, bazaar tak' we have introduced several reforms to modernise the Indian Krishi sector with technology and reviving organic ways to protect mother nature."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar were present on the occasion,

"The time has come to shift our focus from 'Chemistry lab experiments' to natural farming methods in the agriculture sector to support our environment. We have to take our agriculture out of the lab of chemistry and connect it to the lab of nature. When I talk about nature's laboratory, it is completely science-based," the Prime Minister said.

PM Modi said today the more modern the world is becoming, the more it is moving towards 'back to basics'. "It means connecting with your roots. Who understands this better than all of you farmer friends? The more we water the roots, the more the plant

grows", PM Modi said. "We need not only to re-learn the ancient knowledge of agriculture but also to sharpen it for modern times. In this direction, we have to do research afresh, mould ancient knowledge into the modern scientific frame", he said.

"There is no doubt that fertilisers led to green revolution. But this is also true that we have to keep working on alternatives. The main reason for this is we have to import fertilisers for other countries, which increases the cost of farming. Hence, there is a need to be aware (about natural farming)," PM Modi said.

Citing the prevalent

notions of burning crop residue, Modi also expressed concern over the issue of stubble burning, saying the practice would actually harm the productivity of the agricultural land. He said time has now come to "correct the mistakes" that have become part of farming. He said that this happens despite experts having established that by setting fire to the field, the earth loses its fertile capacity.

"It is a fact that fertilizers have played a crucial role in the green revolution. But it is also imperative to work on their alternatives. It is the right time to take big steps before the issues related to farming become severe," the PM said.

VHP seeks ban on Tablighis, crackdown on Deoband, PFI

'Nizamuddin markaz building, its linked accounts should be sealed'

New Delhi: The Vishva Hindu Parishad on Thursday demanded a ban on the Tablighi Jamaat in India and "crackdown" on Darul Uloom Deoband and Popular Front of India as they provide 'direct or indirect nourishment' to Jamaat.

In a statement, the VHP, a saffron outfit, also demanded that the Nizamuddin Markaz building in Delhi and the bank accounts associated with it should be sealed, and its 'economic sources and resources' should be found out and plugged.

"Not only Bharat (India) but the whole world is in a serious trouble today due to the transgressions of the Tablighi Jamaat and its Nizamuddin

Markaz," it alleged.

"The VHP demands a complete ban on Tablighis, Tablighi Jamaat and Ijtima (religious congregation) in India be imposed," the VHP said, alleging that the Tablighi Jamaat is a manufacturing hub of "radical Islamic Jihadism" as well as a host and patron of global terrorism.

The VHP also demanded that authorities "crackdown on institutions and organisations like Darul Uloom Deoband and PFI (Popular Front of India) that give direct or indirect nourishment to Tablighis, Tablighi Jamaat and Ijtima".

"The building of Nizamuddin Markaz and the bank accounts associated with it should be sealed. Their economic sources and resources should be found out and plugged," the saffron outfit added.

Saudi Arabia has banned the Tablighi and Da'wah group, also known as Al Ahabab, call-

ing it "danger to society and one of the gates of terrorism".

However, it was unclear if the Saudi Arabian government's tweets earlier this month were directed at the Tablighi Jamaat group. Muslim organisations and clerics in India have reacted over reports of Saudi Arabia's reported ban on Tablighi Jamaat.

VHP working president Alok Kumar claimed that the Saudi Arabian government has imposed a ban "the Jamaat" and welcomed the move.

"This radical Islamic fundamentalist organisation is already banned in many countries of the world including Russia," he said, adding that "despite this, instead of welcoming the decision of the Saudi government, some Bharatiya (Indian) Muslim organisations, with their protests against it, have exposed themselves and made their role in terror-rearing and fostering quite clear." **PTI**

Mamata attacks BJP after UNESCO's Puja heritage tag

Says those who allege I bar Hindu fests should be ashamed

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after Durga Puja won the UNESCO world heritage tag Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday attacked the saffron leadership for criticising her all these years for allegedly not letting Hindu festivals take place in her State.

"Some people (read the BJP leadership) now have egg on their face... Some people used to spread canards against me saying 'Mamata does not allow Durga Puja and other festivals in Bengal... now that the UNESCO has put Durga Pujas on world heritage list what these people have to say... they should blacken their faces in shame,'" the Chief Minister said adding "you can abuse Mamata... but can abuse UNESCO... I have only one mantra... fight against these evil forces... I have created three generations that will continue to fight against these forces."

Addressing an election rally in support of TMC candidates in Kolkata Municipal Corporation elections Banerjee said "days are coming when these people who criticize us will be shamed by more such honours that we will win... we have already won international awards for Kanya Shree... we will soon win awards like the social schemes like Laxmir Bhandar, Duare Sarkar and other farmer and worker-friendly programmes."

Announcing a ₹24,000 crore programme for the development of Kolkata she said the whole city would be linked with a maze of flyovers adding "tomorrow Bengal will be known for its massive development... we will be number one not only in India but all over the world."

Vouching for the industrial projects in Bengal she said "we have created a Silicon Valley in Salt Lake where TCS is going to employ 50,000 peo-

ple... similarly Deucha Pachami coal project will see employment of 1 lakh youth." Saying that Bengal was the only State in India where the retired Government servants still got pension she claimed "the Centre was pressuring me to discontinue such schemes but I refused."

She also said that by 2024 all households in Kolkata would get drinking waterline and additional 200 water pumps would be installed in the city to rid water logging.

KMC elections are going to take place on December 19. Results will be declared on 21st December.

Meanwhile, the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday rejected the BJP's plea seeking central forces saying such decision was for the State Election Commission to take. The saffron outfit immediately appealed before the Division Bench and the case was to be heard on .

Kerala reports 4 Omicron cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Despite claims by the State administration that Covid-19 was well under control, Kerala is in the grip of fear as four persons have been diagnosed with Omicron till Thursday evening.

The health sector in the State has come to a standstill as the indefinite agitation by the Government Doctors demanding better service conditions entered the ninth day while house surgeons and post graduate doctors continued their strike for the third day.

A release by Veena George, the Kerala Health Minister, on Thursday said that 3,404 persons were diagnosed with Covid-19 during the last 24 hours.

The death toll till Thursday, according to the minister, was 43,946.

The Ernakulam District administration has issued a red alert following reports that

a person who reached Kochi airport from Congo on December 7 was diagnosed with omicron.

The passenger instead of undergoing self-quarantine visited many public places including malls, restaurants and cinemas, according to the route map released by the district administration on Thursday.

The tourism sector in the State suffered a serious setback as it was disclosed by office bearers of Kerala Homestay and Tourism Society saying that more than 50 per cent of bookings by travelers have been canceled fearing surge of Covid-19 and omicron cases in the State.

The months of December and January see heavy tourist inflow into the State, especially to Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts which are known for their panoramic beaches and reserve forests.

RSS chief roots for 'ghar wapsi' of Hindus

Chitrakoot: Rooting for 'ghar wapsi', RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat administered an oath to a congregation of Hindus to work for the return of those who had left the religion and exhorted those seeking power to shed arrogance.

"To get power, there is a need to work among the people, not have arrogance," Bhagwat said on Wednesday while taking part in a three-day "Hindu Ekta Mahakumbh" here.

The participants also pledged to protect the "modesty and honour of Hindu sisters" and strengthen Hindu society by rising above the divisions of caste and language.

Spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and Hindutva leader Sadhvi Rithambara were among the seers from across the country who attended the gathering.

"From the 'sankalpsthali' (place of resolution) of Lord Ram, the 'dharma yodhas' of Hindu culture take a pledge to work for the protection, promotion and security of the sacred Hindu religion, culture and society throughout life," the RSS chief said.

The gathering vowed to work for the return to the Hindu fold of those who had converted to other faiths.

It pledged "not to allow any Hindu brother to get alienated from Hindu religion and work for the ghar wapsi (return) of those who left Hindu religion and went somewhere else, and make them family members."

Bhagwat said, "While practising dharma and working selflessly without ego, one gets success even in the most difficult tasks." **PTI**

Raj Govt announces Govt jobs for 1971 war martyrs' kin

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday announced Government jobs to kin of 1971 Indo-Pak War martyrs from the state.

He made the announcement while addressing a programme on Vijay Diwas at Amar Jawan Jyoti. As per the existing rules, any one dependent of those martyred between August 15, 1947 and December 31, 1970 is given a government job.

The new rule will extend the cut off to December 31, 1971, paving the way for appointments of the dependents of soldiers martyred in

the 1971 India-Pakistan war.

Gehlot said the new rule will be extended to include the son and daughter of the martyr's daughter (Navasa-Navasi), even if adopted, as dependents. The son and daughter of the martyr's brother and sister too will be reckoned as dependents, he said.

Gehlot said he is proud of being the Chief Minister of a state where every house has the spirit of martyrdom to protect the borders of the country.

On the occasion, he met and honoured the dependents of the officers and soldiers who were martyred in the 1971 War. **PTI**



The statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at the Heritage street amid dense fog on a winter day in Amritsar on Thursday **PTI**

Donkey population decreased by 61.23%: Study

PNS ■ NEWDELHI

The Brooke India, the India chapter of the UK-based international equine charity Boorke, has got a detailed Investigative Study conducted on the Donkey Hide Trade going on illegally in India. From 2012 Livestock Census until the latest Livestock Census of 2019, the donkey population has decreased by 61.23 per cent.

The Study, titled as "The Hidden Hide" has been conducted by Sharat K Verma. The trigger for this Study was a drastic decrease in the donkey population across the country.

Maha politicians welcome SC's decision to allow resumption of bullock cart races

Jubilant cart owners burst crackers

Mumbai/Pune: Political leaders in Maharashtra cutting across the party lines on Thursday welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to allow the resumption of bullock cart races in the state, with Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar calling it a "victory of farmers" and saying that the move will benefit in protecting the livestock.

Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis also expressed happiness over the apex court's decision and claimed that he and other leaders of his party had followed up the matter with the Union government.

After the SC nod, the bullock cart owners in Pune district celebrated by bursting crackers and said that holding the races will give a boost to the rural economy.

The bullock cart races, a popular sport in rural Maharashtra which had been banned in 2014 on the ground that it caused pain and suffering to the bullocks. On Thursday, the apex court allowed the resumption of bullock cart races in the state.

Ajit Pawar said that with the lifting of the ban, bullock cart races can now again resume in

the state, but he appealed to the farmers to abide by all rules and regulations. "With this decision, the ox farmers have won a long battle," Pawar said, adding that NCP chief Sharad Pawar, other leaders and, social activists had contested the ban vigorously.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government gave strength to this court battle. This success will create new enthusiasm among the farmers in the state, he added.

While allowing the resumption of bullock cart races, the top court on Thursday observed that the validity of the amended provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and the rules framed by Maharashtra, which provided for bullock cart race in the state, would operate during the pendency of the petitions as the entire matter has been referred to a constitution bench.

On Wednesday, the Maharashtra government had told the apex court that the ban on bullock cart races in the state should be lifted as the same is going on in states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Fadnavis, who is the Leader of Opposition in the state Legislative Assembly, said, "The Supreme Court had banned the bull races in 2014. I had personally followed it up with the Union government and later BJP MLA Mahesh Landge had made a represen-

tation before the Centre over it," he said.

Prakash Javadekar, the then Union minister, had also issued a gazette notification to pave the way for resumption of races, but the SC had put a ban on that also. The Centre in 2017 introduced a new act so that such bull races can be organised, he said.

"A report titled as 'Running ability of bull' was prepared in two months. Today's SC decision was taken only after acceptance of the recommendations made in the report. I am pleased with the SC decision," the former chief minister added.

Former Shiv Sena MP from Shirur Shivajirao Adhalrao Patil said that for the last over seven years, bullock cart races were banned in the state, but the Maharashtra government, various organisations, stakeholders and he gave a prolonged fight for the cause.

"For the last several months, the bullock cart owners were getting restless because of the ban. Without worrying about the ban, they even resorted to holding races, due to which cases were registered against them," he said.

The Sena leader said the state government "woke up" after he and bullock cart owners threatened to launch an agitation.

"The state government, officials from the animal husbandry department put forth the state's side strongly in the

apex court through state counsel Mukul Rohatgi and due to this collective efforts, the court allowed the resumption of the races today," he said.

Mahesh Landage, BJP MLA from Bhosari in Pimpri Chinchwad, who had been pressing for the lifting of the ban, called it a victory of farmers and bullock cart owners.

With the apex court giving its nod, several parts of the state, especially Pune and the western Maharashtra region, where the 400-year-old tradition was prevalent, will once again experience the thrill of the sport, those associated with the races said.

After the decision, the jubilant bullock cart owners in Pune district decorated their bullocks and burst firecrackers.

Bullock cart races were the main attractions at the village fairs in parts of the state and according to the bullock cart organisations, these events were instrumental in giving a boost to the rural economy.

Ramkrishna Takalkar, a representative of Akhil Bharatiya Bailgada Sharyat Sanghatna, said that the apex court has given the nod to hold the races by adhering to the rules and regulations made by the state government in 2017.

"Since the Supreme Court has given the conditional permission, we appeal all the bullock cart owners to hold the races by adhering to the rules and regulations," he said. **PTI**

Kerala clocks 3,404 new Covid cases, 320 deaths

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Thursday reported 3,404 new infections and 320 deaths, which took the caseload to 51,95,997 and the death toll to 43,946.

Of the 320 deaths, 36 were recorded over the last few days and 284 were designated as COVID-19 deaths after receiving appeals based on the new guidelines of the Centre and the directions of the Supreme Court, a state government release said.



Thiruvananthapuram recorded the highest with 633 fresh cases, followed by Kozhikode (523) and Ernakulam (501).

Of the new cases, 27 were health workers, 8 from outside the State and 3,170 followed through contact with the source of it not being clear in 199. There are currently 1,47,204 people under surveillance in various districts, of whom 1,43,110 are in home or institutional quarantine and 4,094 in hospitals, the release said. **PTI**

2 LeT terrorists killed in Kulgam, 180 eliminated since Jan 2021

PNS ■ JAMMU

Two local terrorists belonging to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) offshoot- The Resistance Front (TRF) were eliminated by the joint team of security forces in an overnight encounter in Kulgam on Thursday. Around 180 terrorists have been eliminated by the security forces since January 2021.

Meanwhile, the Union Territory administration Thursday also replaced the district police Chief in Srinagar in a major reshuffle in the police department.

A 2012 batch IPS officer from Manipur cadre, Rakesh Balwal has been appointed as SSP Srinagar in place of Sandeep Choudhary. For last three years Balwal was serving in the National Investigation Agency in J&K and was part of the probe team which investigated Pulwama terror attack and other cases. He recently completed his stint with the NIA and was awaiting posting.

The district police chiefs of Poonch, Rajouri, Ramban, Udhampur have also been replaced by the UT administration in the much awaited reshuffle. A total number of 27 police officers were transferred by the Home department.

Meanwhile sharing details of the Kulgam encounter a spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir police said, "the operation was launched on a specific input regarding the presence of terrorists in village Redwani area of Kulgam". "During the search operation, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained, they were given repeated opportunities to surrender; however they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter".

In the ensuing encounter, 02 terrorists of proscribed terror outfit LeT (TRF) were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site of encounter. They have been identified as Amir Bashir Dar resident of Kujjar Frisal and Adil Yousuf Shan resident of Sursano Hatipora, Kulgam, the police spokesman said.

As per police records, both the killed terrorists were categorized terrorists and linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT (TRF). They were also part of groups involved in several terror crime cases including attacks on security forces and civilian atrocities.

The security forces recovered 02 Pistols, 02 magazines, 07 pistol rounds & 01 grenade from the encounter site.

Woman health worker tests +ve for Omicron in Gujarat

Mehsana: A 41-year-old woman health worker was found infected with the Omicron variant of coronavirus at a village in Vijapur tehsil of Gujarat's Mehsana district on Thursday, officials said.

This is the fifth case of Omicron infection in Gujarat so far. "The woman serves as an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA). She does not have any history of foreign travel, but she recently came in contact with her relatives who had arrived from Zimbabwe, one of the 'at risk' countries," Chief District Health Officer Dr Vishnubhai Patel said.

She is currently undergoing treatment in an isolation ward created in a government hospital at Vadnagar town of Mehsana and her condition is stable, he said.

"The woman recently lost her husband to cancer. To attend the condolence meet, her husband's elder brother and his wife came from Zimbabwe last month. Both of them tested negative for COVID-19 in all the three tests conducted on them," Patel added. But the authorities decided to carry out contact tracing as a precautionary measure and the woman was found positive for coronavirus on December 10, following which her samples were sent to the Gandhinagar-based Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRC) for genome sequencing, the official said. **PTI**

RPSC 'Rishtedaar' Public Service Commission under Cong rule: BJP

Kota: The BJP on Thursday held the Congress Government responsible for the State having the "highest" unemployment rate in the country and accused it of turning the Rajasthan Public Service Commission into 'Rishtedaar' Public Service Commission.

It also alleged that the state had registered an all-time high number of crime cases in the last one year and that the government had breached the promises of waving farmers' loan and providing public safety.

"The Congress government has been recruiting candidates for the job vacancies released during the BJP dispensation," BJP's state chief Satish Punia said, adding, "Despite this, the Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC) has become Rishtedaar (relatives) Public Service Commission with gross irregularities in recent REET and other exams."

Punia was making a veiled reference to allegations that former education minister Govind Singh Dotasra had recruited two of his relatives in the Rajasthan Administrative Services during his tenure. **PTI**

Politics of religion easy, but bad for country: Gehlot

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday said those who indulge in divisive politics should think about the future of the country.

He said Pakistan became a nation on the basis of religion but was divided into two countries.

He said Bangladesh was created in 1971 despite the fact that majority population was Muslim.

"Doing politics in the name of religion is easy, provoking people in the name of caste is easy, spreading hate is easy but difficult to take back when it is spread."

"I would like to tell those who do politics in the name of religion, please look at the future of the country... what will happen after 25 years or 50 years," he said addressing a programme at 'Amar Jawan Jyoti' after paying tributes to martyrs on Vijay Diwas.

He urged people to look into reasons and understand why India remained intact after independence and why Pakistan was divided. **PTI**

Petition filed to stop namaz at Idgah near temple in Mathura

Mathura: A petition has been filed at a local court here seeking prohibition on namaz at the Shahi Idgah, located close to the temple in Krishna Janmasthan here. In recent months, some organisations have moved the courts here seeking the 'removal of the Idgah claiming it is built in the 'actual birthplace' of Lord Krishna.

"The court has been requested to pass an injunction

order restraining the Muslim community from offering namaz in Shahi Masjid Idgah and on adjacent road," Mahendra Pratap Idgah, the petitioner said in his application.

He said Moghul emperor Aurangzeb had built the mosque by dismantling the temple in 1669 and that the walls of the Idgah still had signs of Om, Swastik and Shesh Nag.

In the petition filed at the

court of civil judge, senior division, Singh alleged that the management of the mosque was now attempting to either deface or removed them.

Earlier, the Mathura district administration had imposed prohibitory orders under CrPC section 144 following an announcement by the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha that it will install a statue of the deity at the mosque. **PTI**

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Coming of age

The Govt wants women to marry not before they turn 21 so they can take better hold of their lives

The Union Government proposes to raise the legal marriageable age of women from 18 to 21, the same as men, by amending the marriage Acts concerned. The Government will have to clarify whether the amended age will be applicable to personal laws of all religions. The proposal is based on the suggestions sent to NITI Aayog a year ago by a Central task force that examined "matters pertaining to the age of motherhood, imperatives of lowering Maternal Mortality Rate, improvement of nutritional levels and related issues". The task force, however, was quick to point out that empowerment of women was its primary consideration. The proposal ticks all the right boxes. It is one more way to assert that child marriages and marriages of minors are illegal. It should steer families towards adapting to changing times and encouraging young adults to take independent decisions instead of rushing them into marriages the moment they get their undergraduate degrees. The younger generation does not want to be thrust into marriage just as they leave their teens and the proposal backs their thought. It clears the path for women to become



economically independent and not be dependent on anyone for their livelihood. It paves the way for women to enjoy the right of choice, in terms of factors where they feel the pressure from their families the most — marriage, sex, or motherhood.

It is not that society's attitude towards women will improve once the amendments become law. It is that the country is making a conscious decision to create circumstances for women to take hold of their lives. We must remember that till 1978, women's marriageable age was only 15, which was then raised to 18. Women have moved up on

the ladder of choice and parity in the four decades since then and are consciously pursuing higher studies and professional careers like never before. If the age limit ensures women are not married off before they attain mature adulthood, it is also a caution that they are not married off the moment they attain the age of consent. The point of the exercise is to respect women's right to consent. The limit also discourages the marriage of minors, a social evil still prevalent in several parts of the country. It means women should be able to convince their families that at 21 they are mature enough to exercise their choice about all things in life, including, and especially, marriage. Empowerment is not selective. It is not conditional. An empowered woman has the right to educate herself, make adult choices vis-à-vis relationships, take up employment and choose the time to have a life partner. The right gives her the choice to not choose as well. That is the critical point that society at large needs to understand. Otherwise, empowerment has no meaning. Needless to say, the biggest responsibility of respecting everything the proposal stands for lies with the State apparatus.

PICTALK



Artistes dressed as Lord Hanuman take part in a procession to mark Hanuman Jayanti, in Bengaluru PTI

To \$ or not to \$

The Centre must not rush to ban it as cryptocurrency is the future, say experts

The winter session of Parliament is on and the Government is planning to bring a Bill on cryptocurrency. Locally, it is being dubbed a Bill to ban, or at least regulate, cryptocurrency. It had an impact on the crypto market and Bitcoin tumbled down 15 per cent before staging a recovery. For nearly 10 years now, cryptocurrency has been in news and its exponential growth has made instant billionaires, which led to a mad rush for Bitcoins. It has also opened an additional hawala route to transfer funds. Why is the Government so keen to ban it? Its alarm may have been triggered by the fact that crypto is being used for all the wrong purposes like procuring drugs and arms through the darknet, a hidden internet used by fugitives. The Enforcement Directorate has discovered that ₹4,000 crore were laundered out of India using cryptos last year. Though indeed a serious problem, crypto is not the only way to make such transactions. There are several other nefarious routes, and these continue unabated.

Cryptocurrency is not issued by any bank or Government but by anyone who wants to float his currency, just like airlines offering 'flying miles' or malls issuing their plastic money. Therefore, nobody — least of all a Government — has any control over it, which means regulating or banning it is nigh impossible, even though a number of Ministers have hinted that it may get banned. The Government can at best declare it to not be a legal tender, which isn't in most countries barring a few South American nations such as Ecuador and Chile. No doubt the concerns are many, but would it really be possible for the Government to control or, for that matter, ban it? If yes, would it be in the nation's interest? What happens to the 'Digital India' drive as experts feel that cryptocurrency is here to stay and, in future, it would be the mainstay for online transactions. The Government would do well to wait and watch rather than jumping the gun and deciding in haste. Except China, no country has so far banned cryptocurrency. In fact, many countries with weak currencies are promoting it. Even the US, the UK and France have not tried to control it. Crypto is the future and it won't be possible for any single nation to control it; it has to be done collectively. Banning it would in fact be a setback for 'Digital India'!

The land of freedom and democracy



PRAFULL GORADIA

At Biden's 'Summit for Democracy', Modi appropriately underlined the point that the democratic spirit is integral to India's civilisational ethos

It is safe to assume that US President Joe Biden had in mind only electoral democracy when he invited many a head of Government to his December 9 'Summit for Democracy'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a telling point when he said that the democratic spirit is integral to India's civilisational ethos. Centuries of colonial rule could not suppress the democratic spirit of Indians. He avoided extending the proposition to a faith in the phenomenon of karma which is nothing, if not democratic, on a metaphysical scale. All humans have a fair and equal opportunity to be automatically rewarded with or denied a *bhagya* or fate commensurate with her/his karma without a divine entity, say God, having an overriding say in the *bhagya*. The belief in the operation of karma is like the law in physics that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. This is a faith as near science as yet possible.

Another symptom of Indian democracy is its history down the ages. Anyone who arrived whether via the Hindu Kush or Arabian Sea as the early Jews or other traders, the Parsees, British and many others were welcome, or at least allowed to stay and settle on Indian soil. No one was expelled regardless of being cruel or kind.

The idea behind the open welcome to one and all was that the world was one family, *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. An advantage of this policy — call it Indic — or conduct was that the culture-cum-civilisation became resilient and, regardless of its disinclination to fight, survived against any number and kinds of invasions. Few cultures could withstand it and survive. It began with the advent of the Caliph and his successors, from Arabia, on to Egypt and the Mediterranean countries certainly up to Spain. On the eastern side were Iran, Central Asia, Afghanistan *et al* but, strictly speaking, not India. If conversions of the indigenous on any scale took place, they were well after the Islamic conquest.

After the Sepoy Mutiny was



over in 1858 AD, contact with Britain was reasonably close and frequent. As a result, Indian youth, even women, learnt the British ways of education, culture and socio-politics by the early years of the 20th century. By the time we won Independence, Indian leaders were ready to adopt electoral democracy as the means to choose Governments, at the Centre and in the provinces. We also chose a parliamentary system and not the American presidential style, although it would have been more suitable for India. Every adult was straightaway entitled to vote; those with more education, property or influence could exercise the advantage in their profession but not in an election. This insistence on equality is a hallmark of true electoral democracy. With the passage of every election, the Indian nation has learnt to participate better. There have so far been general elections at the Centre while the States have also been disciplined in holding their polls. The only significant interruption was the Emergency imposed by the Indira Gandhi regime in 1975; it lasted until early 1977. It was unpopular because it was declared only



THE INSISTENCE ON EQUALITY IS A HALLMARK OF TRUE ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY. WITH THE PASSAGE OF EVERY ELECTION, THE INDIAN NATION HAS LEARNT TO PARTICIPATE BETTER

with the intent of saving Indira's hold on power. Except for those 21 months or so, India's record of electoral democracy has been commendable.

Even when dealing with Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League during Partition, India's behaviour was, if anything, overdemocratic. In anticipation of the separation, the Qaid-e-Azam and his colleagues were insistent that all Muslims should be facilitated to migrate to the new Islamic country, their homeland. They were at times so vehement as to insist that all Muslims should migrate from India. In his rabid enthusiasm, one of the League bigwigs Sir Firoz Khan Noon thundered in February 1946 in Patna that if the Hindus in India came in the way of the transfer of Muslims to Pakistan, the League would re-enact the orgies of Chengiz Khan and Halaqu Khan.

Indian leaders remained calm and implied that Muslims were also their brothers and they should be allowed to decide for themselves. An Exchange of Population plan was proposed and supported by Jinnah whereby Muslims, preferably all of them, would migrate to Pakistan. And

reciprocally, all non-Muslims would move to India. Rajendra Prasad, who subsequently became the President of independent India, wrote a book entitled *India Divided* wherein he suggested that those Muslims who didn't emigrate could stay in India as aliens with visas issued by the Government of India. The same could be done by Pakistan to the non-Muslims who remained behind in that country.

Jinnah promptly agreed with Prasad. Yet, the other Congress leaders kept quiet. In the end, Pakistan, with the help of violence, loot and killing chased out most Hindus whereas Muslims were allowed to stay back in India if they wished. Some went away from East Punjab (India), UP and Bihar but compared to Pakistan, India did practically little. This is true to this day, 75 years later.

This was the practical essence of democracy. It is difficult to think of any other example of such devotion to freedom. India is indeed the land of freedom and, therefore, democracy.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RECOGNITION FOR FEMALE ATHLETES

Sir — Hyundai Motors has struck a big blow for gender parity by signing a MoU with four Indian women cricketers. So far, it was only men who were given almost god-like status in advertisements across all media. Even on the world stage, not many women get as much attention as their male counterparts do. In Indian cricket, male sportspersons have always been given preference by companies as the face of their brands. India has produced some of the finest athletes in various sports who should have been promoted but were not. Therefore, this becomes an important and perhaps a bold step by the company.

This move will benefit not only the four players who have been signed up but also serve as an example for other brands to follow suit. It will also give an added impetus to the many budding sportswomen who are trying to make a mark in the national and international sports arena. There are many dedicated and elite women athletes in the country who need and deserve such recognition. Other brands, too, should go ahead with women brand ambassadors and promote gender equality. With more women reaching the top in various fields, it certainly seems as if happy days are on the way to the women of the nation.

Anthony Henriques | Mumbai

THE BAND OF BROTHERS, FOR EVER

Sir — The soldiers of our country have protected their land and its people forever. Their supreme sacrifice has always been the flame of example that can never be extinguished. They have never failed in winning the hearts of the people by their duty as well as gesture. Recently, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans attended the marriage ceremony of martyred Constable Shailendra Pratap Singh's sister in Uttar Pradesh. The jawans, Constable Singh's colleagues, performed all the brotherly rituals and gestures in the wedding of his sister.

Constable Shailendra Pratap Singh was martyred in a terrorist attack in Pulwama last year. This gesture by the

Sack the untenable Minister



After the Special Investigation Team's (SIT) finding that the Lakhimpur Kheri carnage was 'pre-planned', the position of Minister of State (MoS) for Home Affairs Ajay Mishra Teni has become untenable. Propriety requires that he steps aside till a court finds his son, against whom the SIT found prima facie evidence, not guilty of running over four farmers and a journalist and killing them. Circumstantial evidence suggests that his son may have been abetted in the alleged commission of the crime by

him. The fact that the killing of farmers occurred following the MoS' threat that it would take him 'two minutes to discipline the protesting farmers' if he so wished, may not be sufficient to implicate him in the crime, still it is not without its own underlying import or significance.

One thing is clear, were the killers not drunk in power, the farmers would not have lost their lives. The inclusion of sections under the Arms Act in the charge-sheet spells trouble for Ajay Mishra since it was from his burnt vehicle that empty cartridges were recovered. By venting his anger on journalists, he can assert his VVIP status, but he cannot exonerate himself from the charges. The Supreme Court deserves credit for taking suo motu cognisance of the tragic incident and ordering a credible SIT without allowing the Modi Government or the Yogi Government to pervert the course of justice.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

jawans has caught the eyes of the country and a video of them performing marriage rituals has surfaced on social media and is winning hearts. The jawans showed what brotherhood actually looks like. They not only protect our motherland but have also set benchmarks for us that brotherhood does not end with the end of one's life. It leaves a very deep message encouraging us to remember our brother and sister even after they've left the world.

Manoj Kumar Jena | Cuttack

AN EVERGREEN MAESTRO'S CENTENARY

Sir — A documentary film, *Paravaikalam*, has been made on nadaswaram maestro Karukurichi Arunachalam, whose birth centenary is being celebrated. The documentary has been titled so because the legendary artist would play the instrument effortlessly like a bird in flight. At the height of his fame, Karukurichi Arunachalam had a huge fan following which was enhanced

by his contribution to the blockbuster Tamil film *Konjum Salangai*.

The song *Singara Velane Deva*, in which playback singer S Janaki sang in tandem with Arunachalam's nadaswaram, mirroring every phrase of the song, became a runaway hit. Though Janaki sang innumerable songs and won plenty of awards, Singara Velane Deva remains a watermark in her outstanding career. This song is an eternal favourite, tugging at the heartstrings of the young and old and transcending time and age boundaries. In an era when song-tracks are recorded separately and then synthesised, this immortal song was a pioneer for such an innovation more than five decades ago. It was veteran director MV Raman who directed this epic film in technicolour which reportedly cost around ₹40 lakh, something unheard of in those days.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

SOUNDBITE

The Government's refusal to sack Ajay Mishra Teni is the starkest indication of its moral bankruptcy.



Congress leader —Priyanka Gandhi

At the moment, I have no plans to attend the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Japanese Prime Minister —Fumio Kishida

We gained experience by doing 60-70 films but the new actors already have that kind of experience.



Actor —Akshay Kumar

There was no offence, no hesitation and not once was I told that you should not leave T20 captaincy.

India batsman —Virat Kohli

When the AAP forms Government in Punjab, the country's biggest sports university will be set up in Jalandhar.



Delhi Chief Minister —Arvind Kejriwal

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FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S CONNECT: A CENTRAL ASIA POLICY

Despite a solid economic partnership with China, central Asia is well aware of its deceitful nature



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Leaders from five central Asian countries comprising of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan could be the chief guests on the next Republic Day. This comes close on the heels of the Russian president's tour to India that re-emphasized Indo-Russian strategic friendship. All this happens in the backdrop of India finding new strategic allies such as the US, and Russia's growing intimacy with China and Pakistan. It brings the focus on the big global powers trying to recalibrate their strategic, geo-political and military alliances in a post-COVID, multipolar and a more transactional world order. India, therefore, has made the right move by focusing on a specific regional cluster of nations, i.e., Central Asia, within its larger foreign strategy. If the heads of state of the five Central Asian republics attend as chief guests on January 26, 2022, it would be the second occasion after 2018 when regionally important ASEAN leaders had been the chief guests. It would



be a good optical moment for India to showcase its increased influence over the central Asia republics, specifically to China and Pakistan. The five countries share land borders with Afghanistan and some also with China, Russia and Iran. The Afghanistan situation is increasingly threatening to spill over and start impacting the rest of the landlocked neighbors and beyond. The immediate threats are a barrage of illegal Afghan immigrants spilling into these five countries and onwards to Russia and perhaps China and Iran, too. There are additional threats of drug and human trafficking, terror activities and smuggling and the whole of Eurasia starts feeling the tremors. India has a unique position in the relationship because of its historical, cultural and infrastructural linkages with these countries in the past; even though it is now isolated due to its evolving relationship with China and Pakistan. Pakistan, and by proxy China, would not spare a chance to use the Taliban-trained militia to create problems for India. China and Pakistan have significant political, economic and strategic interests in Afghanistan that serves as a key gateway into Eurasia for them. China, dictated by its expansionist foreign policy almost teetering towards colonization, steadily strengthened its economic relations with Central Asia over the years. The annual trade between them is approximately \$100bn compared to India's less than \$2bn with the same group of countries. That leaves a yawning gap for India to fill by nurturing a strong relationship with them at the earliest.

India was one of the first countries to officially recognize these Central Asian republics in the 1990s. Prior to that, India's engagement with them was through the erstwhile Soviet Union. In the past three decades, India has hardly developed meaningful partnerships with these geo-politically important countries neighboring Afghanistan. In wake of the current Afghan crisis and a gradual recalibration of the global order, lethargy of the past has to be dropped. Central Asia despite having a robust economic partnership with China is well aware of the deceitful nature of the Dragon. They are also more influenced by Russia and Iran for their security, and strategic interests. Russia, even though it has an empathetic view of China's narrative on the evolving global order, knows that India is a tried and trusted friend in the region who can be a balancing component. Therefore, Russia would also encourage these central Asian countries to expand their security, economic partnerships with India and have complementarity of policies on regional concerns such as terrorism, drug trafficking and Afghanistan. India has done well by rekindling its Central Asia connect policy (first conceived in 2012). The roads from Tashkent to Thiruvananthapuram and Samarkand to Surat need to be built. (The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

Poor hygiene brings the economy down

The challenges in accessing adequate water supply, sanitation facilities and poor hygiene practices lead to a rise in diseases, causing increased economic burden



KRITHIKA MURALI SWATI MAHAJAN

Access to hygiene and sanitation facilities is a fundamental human right and one of the key determinants of health. According to the 2017 Household Survey for the Assessment of Toilet Coverage under Swachh Bharat Mission, 39.9 percent of India's rural population defecates in open and about 26 percent people do not use soap or detergent to wash their hands afterwards (National Sample Survey 2019). The challenges in accessing adequate water supply and sanitation facilities coupled with poor hygiene practices lead to a rise in diseases which can result in higher economic burden, exceeding investments in hygiene and sanitation systems.

The sixth Sustainable Development Goal is to 'Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all' by 2030. Since Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programs have a direct impact on health and socio-economic indicators, they have played a central role in improving India's overall health over the past decades. Hygiene, water and sanitation programs are a proven cost-effective investment for public health.

Ever since Independence, WASH Programs have been synonymous with the country's public health agenda. Too many lives have been lost to preventable diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, cholera, smallpox and other infectious diseases — all caused by poor hygiene, sanitation and inadequate water supply. As a result, the Government of India put emphasis on improving health indicators with a focused approach towards water supply and sanitation across the country.

In the 10th five-year plan adopted in 2002, the role of sanitation and hygiene were intrinsically linked to the objectives of reducing Infant Mortality Rate (IMR); Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR); ensuring completion of five years of schooling for all children by 2007 and providing potable drinking water in all villages. The Swachh Bharat Mission and the Jal Jeevan Mission are two recent government initiatives aimed at improving the supply of clean water and moving the country toward sustainable sanitation standards. While the Swachh Bharat Mission was aimed at achieving universal sanitation coverage, the Jal Jeevan Mission sought to ensure piped water supply for all households in the country; providing a significant boost to the rural water and sanitation industry. According to Lancet's 'The Global Burden of Disease' study, through these efforts India managed to add quality years of life expectancy to its people, indicating a substantial increase in the overall health of the country.

However, given the wide inequalities in the social and economic demographics of the population, India continues to experience mixed progress in terms of hygiene and sanitation-related outcomes.

The economic consequences caused by inadequate access to sanitation has reper-



TO OVERCOME THE ISSUES RELATED TO HYGIENE AND SANITATION AND PREVENT ITS NEGATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS, THE COMMUNITIES, GOVERNMENTS, PRIVATE SECTOR AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS MUST MAKE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TOWARDS INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

(Dr Swati Mahajan is chief of party, USAID-NISHTHA project and leads the comprehensive primary healthcare portfolio for Jhpiego. Krithika Murali is leading the communication, documentation and knowledge management portfolio for USAID-NISHTHA project, implemented by Jhpiego. The views expressed are personal.)



ussions at multiple levels. Along with loss of GDP, communities suffer due to decreased productivity and increased expenditure on healthcare. A World Bank study on the economic impacts of poor sanitation in India estimated that the country lost the equivalent of 6.4 percent of GDP due to inadequate sanitation. Over 70 percent of it (₹1.75 lakh crore) was accounted for by premature mortality and health-related costs.

While social impacts are difficult to quantify, some risks are often exacerbated, affecting the most vulnerable groups including women, children and people with disabilities. For example, poor pregnancy outcomes, maternal mortality, violence and psychological stress are some of the serious consequences of lack of access to clean water and sanitation among women and girls. Inadequate access to WASH can also lead to vulnerability, rape and attacks, and the fear of such assaults can prohibit women and children from using toilets and sanitary facilities outside their homes at night. Similarly, problems of dignity, safety and privacy to maintain good hygiene get compounded for disabled persons as they experience increasing feelings of disgust, fear of violence, injury and shame due to lack of proper hygiene services.

To overcome the issues related to hygiene and sanitation and prevent its negative socio-economic impacts, communities, governments, private sector and development partners must make collaborative efforts towards innovative solutions. Governments and supporting agencies need to foster innovation, especially from the commercial sector, to make hand hygiene a universal practice in all contexts. To tackle issues of shortage of water,

inaccessibility and unavailability of hand washing facilities and soaps, new solutions are urgently required. Multi-stakeholder collaborations in such situations assume an important role in providing market knowledge and recommendations on enhancing hand hygiene and strengthening WASH facilities.

A collaboration between the World Bank, UNICEF, Johns Hopkins University, USAID and Unilever to form a Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing in 2001 is a case in point. More notably, Unilever has been involved in tackling epidemics such as cholera and has been able to reach over 1.2 billion individuals with programs and awareness campaigns through their Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition partners. Through close collaborations with Government/ public enterprises, HBCC has been able to advocate for hand and surface hygiene among the vulnerable slum populations even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interventions to promote hand hygiene should also be founded on a thorough understanding of what people care about, and should incorporate appropriate social norms to help build sustainable habits. The emphasis needs to move towards a transformative approach focusing on needs of the community, going beyond the benefits of WASH in sanitation research and programming and eliminating the less safe forms of sanitation. Projects like NISHTHA, USAID's flagship health system strengthening project being implemented by Jhpiego in partnership with Unilever, support various state governments in leveraging the Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) platform under Ayushman Bharat. One of the key

aspects of this project is the health and wellness session, where local communities are educated on the importance of healthy hygiene. Considering the local context, this project leverages on existing limited resources and funds to establish handwashing corners and appropriate social norms to strengthen handwashing behaviours.

Transformative approaches to hygiene and sanitation require stronger governance, management and increased accountability. There is a need to build capacities of health workers and sanitation workers, create mass awareness among the larger public and collaborate with the private sector and other partners for investing in the area of WASH. This would not only ensure access to sanitary facilities to households but would also empower people to take sustained action at local levels.

Overall, investments in toilet usage, hygiene promotion, increased access to potable water, and effective waste management are estimated to save India \$32.6 billion (₹1.48 trillion) or \$29 (₹1321) per capita, according to a Water and Sanitation Program report. Improved sanitation yields several economic benefits, including direct benefits such as avoiding illnesses (the sum of money saved on healthcare expenses), indirect economic benefits such as fewer sick days and a longer lifespan because these benefits permit people to work more. As estimated by WHO, every dollar invested in hygiene and sanitation provides a return on investment for the society of \$5.50 due to lower health costs, increased productivity and fewer premature deaths. Therefore, it is imperative to carefully shape policies and regulations that prioritize and adequately fund hygiene and sanitation.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I WANT TO SEE THE BJP LOSE ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN THE 2024 ELECTIONS. IT WILL BE *KHELA HOBEY* AGAIN.
—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE



MAMATA BANERJEE HAD SAID SIMILAR THINGS IN 2014 AND IN 2019, AND ALL OF US HAVE SEEN THE RESULT.
—BENGAL BJP PRESIDENT
SUKANTA MAJUMDAR

Unifier's unflinching legacy: A tribute to Sardar Patel

Adhering to the ideals of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is taking initiatives to realise his goals

December 15, marks the death anniversary of the nation's great unifier, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The right tribute will be to adopt his ideas, actions and nationalistic spirit. The people of India will forever remain indebted to him for his leadership during the freedom struggle and his vision, wisdom, and statesmanship in the post-Independence era.

Starting his public life from being a municipal councillor in Ahmedabad to becoming India's Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Patel had a very granular understanding of the various stakeholders of governance, administration, their relevance, roles and responsibilities. His steadfast approach to handling the nation's complexities made



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

(The writer is Union Minister of State for Culture & Parliamentary Affairs & represents Bikaner constituency in Lok Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

him a responsible and reasoned voice of the masses.

With unflinching zeal and rare boldness, he handled the task of unification of the princely states. Patel's diplomatic maneuvers secured "accession" of these states and provided shape to the nation by bringing them in line with the constitutional framework. The unsuccessful unification of Kashmir turned out to be a grave mistake of Jawahar Lal Nehru under Shaikh Abdullah's pressure. On December 23, 1947, Nehru took J&K away from Patel's charge and placed it under Gopalaswami Ayyangar. It hurt Patel deeply and in his reply to Nehru's letter, he expressed his will to resign. All three stalwarts of the constituent assembly, Bhimrao



Ambedkar, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Sardar Patel, outrightly opposed J&K's special status from the beginning.

Intra-party power struggles and sheer hollowness of democratic values of Congress surfaced while choosing the Prime Minister of Independent India. Twelve out of 15 Congress Committees chose Sardar Patel for presidency, but still Pandit Nehru was selected. Socialistic leader Jayaprakash Narayan once remarked: "If Sardar Patel, and not Pandit

Nehru, had been the first PM of India, maybe, Partition of the country could have been averted."

Sardar Patel's famous letter of November 7, 1950, highlights his vigorous criticism of Nehru's foreign policy of in the context of mishandling of Tibet, China and Kashmir. This criticism finds consonance with Ambedkar's vision of foreign affairs. These Nehruvian interventions resulted in Sino-India and Indo-Pak wars over the course of our history. The 41-year delay in posthumously awarding Bharat Ratna to the Iron Man still highlights Congress's ill-will towards him. Sardar Patel was denied his fair share in history due to a lack of the rationality of Nehruvian and leftist historians. Thus, it is

imperative to bring a rational account of his monumental legacy to the new generations.

After his task of unifying India, the Iron Man of India was instrumental in making the Steel frame of India, i.e., creating a massive administrative grid through the All-India Services. He also decided to culturally connect the shared heritage and ethos of Indians by reconstructing the demolished Somnath temple that would depict the story of India's resurgence and victory of construction over destruction. Adhering to the ideals of Sardar Patel, the government under PM Narendra Modi is taking initiatives to realise his goals. The steel frame of India is further strengthened to prepare future-ready civil servants through Mission Karam

Yogi. This capacity-building program aims to overcome the modern challenges of a technologically connected world, facilitate ease of life to citizens, provide best governance and emerge as the world's best civil service.

The repeal of Article 370 was a well-articulated move to correct a historic blunder. The government is fulfilling the dream of Sardar Patel through the overall development of the Somnath temple complex.

On his 143rd birth anniversary, the 'Statue of Unity', the tallest statue in the world, was dedicated to the nation that radiates the wisdom of Sardar Patel and enlightens the path of the present as well as future generations. From 2014 onwards, his birth anniversary is

observed as National Unity Day. The Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat initiative further strengthens the sustained and structured cultural connection between different regions.

It is worth realising that our forefathers did everything for the ambience we have inherited. They had worked hard to institutionalise the framework that empowers individuals to attain their full potential and collectively scale new heights for the nation. As part of the ongoing 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', the death anniversary of Sardar Patel is the apt moment to recall the supreme sacrifices of countless named and unnamed individuals and pay our fitting tribute by pledging to achieving the futuristic goals for building a New India.

US faces a double coronavirus surge as omicron advances

Washington: The new omicron coronavirus mutant speeding around the world may bring another wave of chaos, threatening to further stretch hospital workers already struggling with a surge of delta cases and upend holiday plans for the second year in a row.

The White House on Wednesday insisted there is no need for a lockdown because vaccines are widely available and appear to offer protection against the worst consequences of the virus.

But even if omicron proves milder on the whole than delta, it may disarm some of the life-saving tools available and put immune-compromised and elderly people at particular risk as it begins a rapid assault on the United States.

"Our delta surge is ongoing and, in fact, accelerating. And on top of that, we're going to add an omicron surge," said Dr Jacob Lemieux, who monitors variants for a research collaboration led by Harvard Medical School.

"That's alarming, because our hospitals are already filling up. Staff are fatigued," leaving limited capacity for a potential crush of COVID-19 cases "from an omicron wave superimposed on a delta surge."

Most likely, he and other experts said at a press briefing Tuesday, an omicron surge is already under way in the United States, with the latest mutant coronavirus outpacing the nation's ability to track it.

Based on specimens collected last week, the Centres

for Disease Control and Prevention said omicron accounted for about 3% of genetically-sequenced coronaviruses nationally. Percentages vary by region, with the highest - 13% - in the New York/New Jersey area.

But Harvard experts said these are likely underestimates because omicron is moving so fast that surveillance attempts can't keep up.

Globally, more than 75 countries have reported confirmed cases of omicron. In the United States, 36 states have detected the variant.

Meanwhile, delta is surging in many places, with hot spots in New England and the upper Midwest. The five states with the highest two-week rolling average of cases per 100,000 people are New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Michigan, Minnesota and Vermont.

Universities are abruptly closing classrooms during finals week with infections multiplying at a fast rate. The NBA is postponing games and the NFL had its worst two-day outbreak since the start of the pandemic, with dozens of players infected.

Outside the US, the president of the European Union said omicron will become the dominant variant in a month and declared that "once again, this Christmas will be overshadowed by the pandemic".

Scientists around the world are racing to understand omicron, which has a large number of worrisome mutations in important regions

France to restrict travel from Britain to fight omicron

Paris: France will sharply restrict travel to and from Britain because of fast-spreading cases of the omicron coronavirus variant, putting limits on reasons for travelling and requiring 48-hour isolation upon arrival, the government said Thursday.

The move suddenly disrupted travel plans for families and others on both sides of the English Channel. Travellers questioned whether the measures were politically driven, and UK officials suggested they were pointless.

With omicron now seeded around the world, "red list" travel bans "wouldn't be effective or proportionate," said Boris Johnson's spokesman, Max Blain. He said Johnson hadn't spoken to French President Emmanuel Macron about the move, and that Britain doesn't plan to take a reciprocal measure. The new French measures will take effect first thing Saturday, just after midnight, "in the face of the extremely rapid spread of the omicron variant in the UK", French Prime Minister Jean Castex said in a statement.

The French government is holding a special virus security meeting Friday that will address growing pressure on hospitals in France from rising infections in recent weeks. Delta remains the dominant variant in France, but omicron is spreading so fast in Britain that it's raising concerns across the Channel.

French government spokesman Gabriel Attal said on BFM television that tourism and business travel to and from Britain will be strongly curtailed, and all those arriving from Britain will need to have a negative virus test less than 24 hours old, and to test again upon arrival and isolate "in a place they choose" for at least 48 hours. **AP**

Wednesday that early data suggests omicron is more transmissible than delta, with a doubling time of about two days.

In Britain, where omicron cases are doubling every two to three days, the variant is expected to soon replace delta as the dominant

EU leaders to discuss rise of infections, spread of omicron

Brussels: European Union leaders are trying Thursday to coordinate action to tackle the surge of coronavirus infections across the continent and the emergence of the new omicron variant while keeping borders open. With the festive season looming, the bloc's leaders want to avoid a confusing mixture of rules and to ensure all 27 member states are on the same page and that COVID-19 certificates continue to guarantee unrestricted travel.

But alarming rises in infections have prompted many European governments to implement public health measures and new restrictions in recent weeks. The European Council, which brings together EU leaders to set the bloc's political agenda, said before the talks in Brussels that "any restrictions should not undermine the functioning of the single market or hamper travel between EU member states and to Europe." **AP**

London: The data out of the UK are quite alarming at this point, and foreshadow what's to come in the United States, said Bronwyn MacInnis, director of pathogen genomic surveillance at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard. For example, she said, by Tuesday afternoon, omicron was already the most common variant in London.

In many ways, omicron remains a mystery. Hints are emerging from South Africa, where it was first reported, indicating it may cause less severe disease than delta but be better at evading

Notice Inviting e-Tender
No.SSA/Esstt/KGBV-Utensile/3702021/7945 Date: 15.12.2021
Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission (Samagra Shiksha), Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites tender through e-Tendering process from manufacturer of Steel Utensil/supplier of Steel Utensil for supply of Utensil.

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

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

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

Janasanyog/CF/2385/21

of its genetic structure that could affect how well it spreads from person to person. How quickly the number of cases doubles, known as "doubling time", can give a preview of what the disease burden could be in a few weeks.

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said

strain in the country.

"The data out of the UK are quite alarming at this point," and foreshadow what's to come in the United States, said Bronwyn MacInnis, director of pathogen genomic surveillance at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard. For example, she said, by Tuesday afternoon, omicron was already the most common variant in London.

In many ways, omicron remains a mystery. Hints are emerging from South Africa, where it was first reported, indicating it may cause less severe disease than delta but be better at evading

But, MacInnis warned: "There's much more that we don't know about this variant than we do, including the severity."

At the same time, Lemieux said, there seem to be fewer tools to fight it. Some monoclonal antibody treatments don't work as well against omicron in lab tests, Lemieux said. Vaccines appear to offer less protection, although CDC officials said booster shots strengthen that protection.

Dr Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said Wednesday there is no need, for now, for an omicron-specific booster shot. The two-dose mRNA vaccines, the Pfizer and Moderna shots, still appear to offer considerable protection against hospitalization from omicron, Fauci said.

"If we didn't have these tools, I would be telling you to be really, really worried," Fauci said.

Jeff Zients, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, said the US has the tools to fight the virus, including omicron, and "there is no need to lock down".

With vaccines available now for 95% of Americans, "we know how to keep our kids in schools and our businesses open. And we're not going to shut down."

Health officials called on Americans to get vaccinated, get their booster shots, wear masks indoors and get tested before travelling and before holiday gatherings. **AP**

**OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER IN CHIEF
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT,
NAVA RAIPUR, ATAL NAGAR
(CENTRAL TENDER CELL) E-Procurement Tender Notice
Main Portal: <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>
Tenders are invited for the Following works:-**

S NO	System Tender No. / Date	Name of Work	PAC Amount (Rupees in lacs)
1	87414 First Call 23.11.2021	CONSTRUCTION OF BHANPURI TO KOKDI MELA GROUND APPROACH ROAD(LENGTH 2.27 KM.) I/C. CULVERTS AT DISTT. DURG.	631.61
2	87415 First Call 23.11.2021	CONSTRUCTION OF GOVT. I.T.I. BUILDING AT BLOCK - LUNDRA DISTT. SURGUJA (C.G.) (Work code -W18112)	330.35
3	87435 First Call 23.11.2021	Construction of Govt. Girls College Building I/C. Water C Supply & Sanitary Fittings, And Electrification Work At Balod Distt.- Balod.	455.56
4	87446 First Call 24.11.2021	CONSTRUCTION OF GOVT. I.T.I. BUILDING AT KANSABEL DISTT. JASHPUR (C.G.) (Work code - W18110)	330.35
5	87436 First Call 24.11.2021	CONSTRUCTION OF GOVT. I.T.I. BUILDING AT UDAIPUR DISTT. SURGUJA (C.G.) (Work code - W18113)	330.34
6	87554 Second Call 25.11.2021	Construction of Village Kikrapal Mata Mandir C To Nayapur Road Length 2.850 Km. I/C Bridges Culverts, Distt-Sukma. CGRIDCL	290.35
7	87551 First Call 25.11.2021	Construction of Telgundra Matiya Road C Length 2.20 K.M. At Distt. Durg.	656.81
8	87578 First Call 25.11.2021	Construction of Chaturdik Roads at Patan in Patan Vidhansabha Length 6.60 K.M. AT DISTT. DURG.	1821.28
9	87549 First Call 26.11.2021	CONSTRUCTION OF GOVT. COLLEGE BUILDING I/C. WATER SUPPLY, SANITARY FITTINGS WATER HARVESTING & ELECTRIFICATION WORK AT CHIRKO, DISTT. MAHASAMUND (C.G.) (DN. MAHASAMUND)	463.43
10	87593 First Call 26.11.2021	CONSTRUCTION OF Demar Approach Road from Main Road (SH-22) Near Petrol Pump. Length 2.30 Km In Distt. - DURG (C.G.)	735.26
11	87730 First Call 27.11.2021	Construction of Punjipathara to Tamnar-Milupara Road Length 27.50 Km (C.C. Road) (Actual Length 26.00 Km). CGRIDCL	5849.77
12	87780 Second Call 27.11.2021	Construction Of High Level Bridge I/C Approaches Across Achholi Nalla In Km. 28/2 Of Molipur(Rajnandgaon)- Dongargarh Road. CGRIDCL	460.92
13	87791 Second Call 29.11.2021	CONSTRUCTION OF STRENGTHENING & RECONSTRUCTION OF CHARAIDAND-BAGICHA ROAD 10.00 Km AND CONSTRUCTION OF TAMBAKACHHAR TO JABLA BASTI 3.40 Km BLOCK- BAGICHA DISTT. JASHPUR, (C.G.) (Work code - W17543, W17613).CGRIDCL	2737.34
14	87927 Second Call 01.12.2021	CONSTRUCTION OF HIGH LEVEL BRIDGE I/C APPROACHES ACROSS MEDHAKI RIVER IN KM 1/4 ON KOYALBEDA-DUTA ROAD. CGRIDCL	1103.58
15	87928 Second Call 01.12.2021	CONSTRUCTION OF HARANGARH BAZAR TO MARKAMPARA ROAD FROM KM 1/2 TO 4/10 = 4.00 KM, INCLUDING CULVERTS DISTT. KANKER (CGRIDCL)	435.05

Last Date of Tender Downloading For Tenders Date are Scheduled as Date 24-12-2021. For more details on the tender and bidding process please visit the above mentioned portal.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer
(Central Tender Cell)
Office Of Engineer In Chief
P.W.D. Nava Raipur Atal Nagar

R.O. NO. - 65881/3
R.O. Date: 15/12/2021

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
Office of the Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti PHE,
Ground Water Division, Sgr.**

Gist of e-Tender.
NIT No. - e-PHE/GWDS/63 of 12/2021, Dated: - 15-12-2021
For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir e-tenders are invited in 02 Cover System for Construction of tube wells at below mentioned site from registered water well drillers/contractors as per the details given in tender document.

S.No 1. Name of work :- Construction of Dug Well (200 mm dia Odex Type Production Well for Irrigation Purpose) at Hyen B Kabab Marg Block Trhgam of District Kupwara.

Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 19.29 Lacs, **Cost of Tender Document :-** Rs. 1000/- **Time of completion :-** 45 Days, **Technical Sanction :-** PHE/GWD/85 of 12/2021, **Class of Contract :-** Registered for Construction of Gravel Packed Production Tube Wells, **Prog :-** PRI Grants (Capex Budget 2021-22), **AAA No:** 394 DDCK of 2021, dated: 13-12-2021

Critical Dates / Information.

- 1. Publishing Date :-** 16-12-2021 (02:00 P.M)
- 2. Period of Downloading of Bids :-** 16-12-2021 (02:00 P.M) to 24-12-2021 (02:00 P.M)
- 3. Period of Submission of bids :-** 16-12-2021 (02:00 P.M) to 24-12-2021 (02:00 P.M)
- 4. Date of opening of Tender. :-** 27-12-2021 at (02:00 P.M)
- 5. Tender Receiving Authority:** Executive Engineer, (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water Srinagar Kashmir- 190011.
- 6. Document Cost :-** Non-Refundable in the shape of Treasury Challan/receipt deposited to **Account Head 0215** in favour of Executive Engineer (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar (at Saddar Treasury Srinagar) (The firm shall specify the name of work for which apply)
- 7. Bid Validity Period: 180 Days**
- 8. The bids can be downloaded or uploaded on www.Jktenders.gov.in**
- 9. Instead of EMD the firm has to furnish "Bid Security Declaration", format of the declaration is mentioned in the Bid Document.**

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
Jal Shakti PHE Ground Water Division Sgr.

No. DIPK-15046/21
Dated: 16-12-2021

China's #MeToo victims face abuse, payback for going public

Taipei: Human resources and upper management wouldn't deal with her accusation of sexual assault, a former employee of Alibaba said. So she went into the busy cafeteria at the Chinese e-commerce giant's headquarters and screamed out her plight.

Now she's facing online harassment, accusations of lying from the wives of the two men she accused and a defamation lawsuit from a Alibaba vice president who was forced to resign. And, she revealed recently, the company fired her.

Women in China often face such troubles if they choose to speak publicly about sexual assault. In multiple high-profile cases, particularly during China's brief #MeToo movement in 2018, victims were sued by the men who allegedly harassed them. Some have been targeted with online harassment and censored from speaking about their cases.

In the most high-profile case, former Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai disappeared from public view after accusing former high-level official Zhang Gaoli of sexual assault. Her accusation was quickly scrubbed from the internet and discussion of it remains heavily censored.

In such a climate, women's rights activists fear that fewer victims will be willing to speak up. "This is helping the wrongdoer, and makes the workplace environment even worse, and it's an attack on the next woman who wants to stand out," said #MeToo activist Zhou Xiaoxuan.

The former Alibaba employee told the Dahe Daily, a provincial Chinese newspaper, that she would not encourage other women to come forward, given her own experience of being attacked online and called a liar.

But she said in written responses to questions from The Associated Press that she would continue her fight. **AP**

Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen has book deal

New York: The former Facebook manager who startled the world this fall by leaking tens of thousands of internal documents and accusing her former employer of caring more about money than about public safety has a book deal.

Little, Brown and Company announced Thursday that it had acquired a planned memoir, "offering a critical examination of Facebook," by Frances Haugen. The book does not yet have a title or release date. Financial terms were not disclosed.

"During my time at Facebook I realised a devastating truth: almost nobody outside of Facebook knows what happens inside of Facebook. They operate in the dark," Haugen said in a statement.

"They win by keeping their systems closed without oversight or transparency, by shrouding their operations in secrecy and PR spin. I came forward because I believe that every human being deserves the dignity of the truth — and the truth is that Facebook buys its astronomical profits by sacrificing our safety. But it does not have to be this way — these problems are solvable." **AP**

5 children die in bouncy castle accident in Australia Sydney: Five children died and four others were in critical condition on Thursday after falling from a bouncy castle that was lifted 10 metres (33 feet) into the air by a gust of wind at a school on Australia's island state of Tasmania.

The school was holding a celebration to mark the end of the school year.

The children who died included two boys and two girls in year 6, which would make them 10 or 11 years old, said Tasmania police Commissioner Darren Hine. Police later Thursday confirmed a fifth child died in the hospital.

Five other children were being treated, including four in critical condition. Hine said an investigation is underway.

Images published by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation showed police officers consoling each other as paramedics provided first aid to victims.

Parents arrived at the school gate to collect their children as helicopters ferried the injured to hospitals.

Tasmania state Premier Peter Gutwein called the incident "simply inconceivable... I know this is a strong and caring community that will stand together and support one another." **AP**

**NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Auction Notice No.: 13/2021-22
E-Auction Program for the Month of January-2022**

All prospective bidders are invited to participate in the on-line public auctions being conducted for sale of scrap material.

Proposed E-Auction Dates	Jurisdiction of lots	Contact No.
6, 12, 20 & 28 January 2022	Dy.CMM/GSD/Gorakhpur	0551-2283558
5, 11, 19 & 25 January 2022	Dy.CMM/GSD/Izzatnagar	0581-2518138
7, 13, 21 & 27 January 2022	Sr. DMM/Lucknow	0522-2233113
4, 11, 18 & 25 January 2022	Sr. DMM/Varanasi	0542-2224819
6, 12, 20 & 28 January 2022	Sr. DMM/Izzatnagar	0581-2518104

Type of Material: Scrap Rail, Cast Iron, Melting, MS, condemned Rolling Stock (Coaches, Wagons and Locomotives), Turning & Boring, Non-Ferrous such as copper, Aluminium, Batteries etc.

• In the event of Auction not being completed on the same day, Auction will be continued on the subsequent days also. • Details of Auction catalogue, Procedure and Conditions of Sale are available at www.ireps.gov.in • This auction programme is also available on N.E. Railway website www.ner.indianrailways.gov.in CPRO/S-86
Principal Chief Material Manager, Gorakhpur

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955
Never travel on roof and foot boards.

TECHNOFAB ENGINEERING

Regd. Office: 913, Hemkunt Chambers, 89 Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110 019, CIN: L74210DL1971PLCO0512
Tel: +91-11-2641-1931 / 2641-5961
Email: cs@technofabengineering.com
Website: www.technofabengineering.com

NOTICE

This is to inform that a Board meeting is scheduled to be held on **22 December 2021** at the corporate office of the Company to consider and approve the financial results for the quarter and six month ended 30 September 2021. Please take note that the trading window will remain closed for the concerned persons upto 24 December 2021.

For Technofab Engineering Limited
Date: 16/12/2021
Place: New Delhi
Arun Singh
Company Secretary

Israel to donate 1 million Covid vaccines to African countries

Jerusalem: The Israeli government on Wednesday said it was donating 1 million coronavirus vaccines to the UN-backed COVAX programme.

The Foreign Ministry said the AstraZeneca vaccines would be transferred in the coming weeks, a decision that was part of Israel's strengthening ties with the African countries.

"I am delighted that Israel can contribute and be a partner in eradicating the pandemic around the world," said Foreign Minister Yair Lapid.

The announcement said the vaccines would reach close to a quarter of African countries, though it did not provide a list. Israel has close ties with a number of African nations, including Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda.

Israel also established relations with Sudan last year as part of a series of US-brokered accords. COVAX is a global initiative that aims to provide coronavirus vaccines to poorer nations. Wealthier countries have acquired the most of the world's vaccine supplies, causing vast inequality in access to jabs. Israel was one of the first countries to vaccinate its population.

Early this year, it came under criticism for not sharing enough of its supplies with the Palestinians. Since then, Israel has vaccinated tens of thousands of Palestinians who work in Israel and its settlements, and the Palestinians have procured vaccines from COVAX and other sources. **AP**

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	M/s Onyx Industries/ Yatin Magu/ Anu Magu/ Ashok Magu/ A/C No. 629351001201	1. Plot No- 3A GF, Block- J/10, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi 110027/ 2. 56/1, Block A, Rewari Line, Industrial Area, Phase II, Opposite- SBI Branch, Mayapuri, New Delhi- 110064/ December 13, 2021	July 31, 2021 Rs. 4,11,22,469/-	Mayapuri

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

Date: December 17, 2021
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited
Place: Delhi/ NCR

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. :- NR/FUELLCELL/DEMUP/1/2021 Dt 15.12.2021

Open Tender is invited for "Hydrogen Fuel cell based DPRS with regenerative braking system 1200 KW DEMU"

Approximate Value : Rs. 84.20 Crore (Eighty Four Crore Twenty Lacs only)
Earnest Money deposit : Rs. 43,60,000/- (Forty Three lac Sixty Thousand only)
Option A (valid up to 31.12.2021) or Option B as per Clause No. 3.0 of Special Tender Conditions and Instructions to Tenderer (s)

Submission of Tender : 17.01.2022 to 31.01.2022
Date & Time of Closing : 31.01.2022 at 15:00 Hrs
Date & Time of Opening : 31.01.2022 at 15:30 Hrs
Completion Period : 30 Months

Please visit website <https://www.ireps.gov.in/> Tender Notice (NR/FUELLCELL/DEMUP/1/2021 Dt 15.12.2021) for Tender Document and other details along with necessary corrigendum/amendments, if any which shall be available on IREPS website.

Contact Person :-
Chief Mechanical Engineer/IT
Mechanical Branch, Northern Railway Head Quarter,
1st Floor, Annex-1, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001
Contact no : 9717639460/9717637480
Email: cmeltmrty@gmail.com
No. NR/FuelCell/DEMUP/1/2021 Dated 15.12.2021

2947/2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Banking services hit as employees go on strike

New Delhi: Banking operations were impacted across the country on Thursday as lakhs of public sector bank (PSB) employees began their two-day strike to protest against bank privatisation.



Employees of various public sector banks shout slogans against the move to privatise their banks during a protest near parliament in New Delhi on Thursday

Shutters of many branches of PSBs like State Bank of India (SBI), Punjab National Bank and Bank of India were down on Thursday with a message informing customers about the strike.

According to AIBEA General Secretary C H Venkatchalam, about 20.4 lakh cheques worth ₹18,600 crore could not be transacted on Thursday. Public sector lenders, including SBI, had earlier informed customers that services in their branches might be affected due to the strike.

Sensex snaps 4-session slide amid firm global cues; IT stocks shine

Mumbai: Equity indices eked out modest gains on Thursday after a four-session losing streak, in tandem with an upmove in global markets despite a hawkish tilt by the US Federal Reserve.

feel the performance of the global markets would be critical in days to come. At the same time, we expect the buzz to continue in the primary market. Among the sectors, only the IT pack looks decisive to us while others are witnessing mixed trends," he said.

Bajaj Finance led the Sensex gainers' chart with a jump of 2.61 per cent, followed by Infosys, Titan, Reliance Industries, HCL Tech, M&M and Nestle India.

Rupee posts first rise in 7 days, ends 23 paise higher at 76.09 a dollar

In contrast, Maruti, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Auto, Sun Pharma, IndusInd Bank and SBI were among the laggards, slipping up to 1.51 per cent. "Domestic bourses closed flat with a mild positive bias despite an upbeat economic outlook by the US Fed. Domestic weakness was due to FII selling and moderation in retail activity," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Mumbai: The rupee on Thursday clocked its first gain in seven sessions, rebounding 23 paise to close at 76.09 against the US dollar as participants took note of weakening of the greenback after US Fed turned hawkish.

"The Fed chair announced their decision to double the pace of asset tapering by early 2022 rather than a mid-2022 paving way for three interest rate hikes, backed by a rapidly strengthening economy and employment gains amid inflation concerns," he added. Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking, said markets managed to end marginally higher amid volatility, taking a breather after the recent fall.

According to the IMF chief economist, no individual country could solve this (cryptocurrencies) problem on its own given the complex cross-border transactions.

COMMODITY TRADING

Sebi comes out with cut-off time framework for risk parameter file generation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Thursday came out with a framework pertaining to cut-off time for generation of last risk parameter file used for collecting margins from commodities traders.

Electric vehicle mkt to see investment of ₹94,000 cr in next 5 years: Report

New Delhi: Electric vehicle market is likely to attract investments of ₹94,000 crore over the next five years and is expected to generate business opportunities in the real estate sector, according to a joint report by Colliers India and Indospace.

Cryptocurrencies a challenge for emerging markets, regulation needed: IMF chief economist

New Delhi: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Chief Economist Gita Gopinath has made a strong case for regulating cryptocurrencies, saying it will always be a challenge to ban them as they operate from offshore exchanges.

trying different things, there is obviously challenges to banning (cryptocurrencies and assets)," Gopinath, who is slated to be the first deputy managing director of the IMF early next year, said.

The new framework will be effective from January 15, 2022, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular. The regulator, in November 2019, had mandated that the cut-off time for the purpose of determining minimum threshold of margins to be collected by members from their clients will be 5 pm for commodity derivative contracts that are traded beyond banking hours.

"There is ample opportunity for landlords across the spectrum from manufacturing to charging infrastructure," it said. Significant land around 1300 acres will be required pan-India to set up 110 GWh battery manufacturing capacity by 2030. The consultant estimated that India will need about 26,800 public charging spots by 2025, requiring space of about 13.5 million square feet.

Gopinath also suggested a global policy and co-ordinated action for regulating cryptocurrencies. "I think cryptocurrencies are a particular challenge for emerging markets. It seems to be more attractive to adopt cryptocurrencies and assets in

Countries around the world are

As both banking facilities -- RTGS and NEFT -- are functional round-the-clock on all days now, Sebi said its circular issued in November 2019 "stands withdrawn".

Currently, 15 Indian states have either approved or notified EV policies, with six more states in the draft stage. States like Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Meghalaya are focusing on demand incentives, whereas southern states and Uttar Pradesh are focusing on manufacturer-based incentives.

C.G. Police Housing Corporation, Raipur. H.Q. - Old PHQ, Civil Line, Raipur (CG). Phone No. 0771-4020028. Tender No. 3074/CGPHC/Bldg/2021. Dated 15/12/2021. MANUAL SHORT TENDER NOTICE (1st Call)

UJVN LIMITED (An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprise). H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006. Phone: 0135-2763508, 2763808. Fax: 0135-2763507. Website: www.ujvn.com. No. 991. Date: 16.12.2021. Date Extension Notice-1

Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Limited (GMVN). (A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking) 741, Rajpur Road, Dehradun - 248001 (Uttarakhand). CIN U31910UR1978GCO04299. Phone: 0135-2768817, 2749398. E-Mail: mis.gmvn@gmail.com. No 2890. E-TENDER NOTICE. Date: 16.12.2021. GMVN invites Tenders from Nationalized Banks / M.N.C./ Government / Semi Government / N.G.O. / Other reputed organisations/ Private Person for providing office building of GMVN on Lease/ Rent situated at C-50, Sector-62, Noida performing permissible institutional activities for the period of five years.

C.G. Police Housing Corporation, Raipur. H.Q. - Old PHQ, Civil Line, Raipur (CG). Phone No. 0771-4020028. Tender No. 3073.3075/CGPHC/Bldg/2021. Dated 15/12/2021. TENDER NOTICE (1st Call)

UJVN LIMITED (An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprise). H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006. Telephone: 0135-2763508, 2763808. Fax: 0135-2763507. CIN No. U40101UR2001SG0025866. Website: www.uttarakhandjaidvidyut.com. प्र सं. 984. NOTICE INVITING TENDER दिनांक: 15.12.2021. For and on behalf of UJVN Ltd., Executive Engineer (Civil), Pashulok Barrage Rishikesh, invites sealed & separate tenders from interested contractors for following works:-

PUBLIC NOTICE. Mrs Jyoti Basanti Minj intend to purchase Flat No. 803 Block G4 DDA LIG flat Rohini Sector-28, New Delhi from Mr Raja Jephther Beck. I wish to create mortgage on the said property for a loan from SBI, RACB/Robini Pearl Best Height, I NSP Pitampura Delhi 34 (B code 15653). Original possession letter dt 26/7/12, Original possession slip, Original NOC for water and electricity issued from DDA relating to the property have been lost. FIR has been lodged with police vide LR no 1061553/2021 dt 16/12/21. In case any party has any claim towards the said property the same should be lodged with the intending party and also with the above stated branch of SBI within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

IMPORTANT NOTICE. This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to revise timings of Train No. 12618 H.Nizamuddin-Ernakulam Mangla Lakshadweep Express (Daily) at the following stations as per details given below:- Revised Timings of 12618 H.Nizamuddin-Ernakulam Mangla Lakshadweep Express (Daily) w.e.f. 20.12.2021

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER P.H.E.D CIRCLE TONK No.4750-4757 Date:10/12/2021. NOTICE INVITING TENDERS THROUGH e-procurement system NIT No. 26/2021-22. Online tenders through e-procurement system are hereby invited, on behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan from enlisted contractors with the department in appropriate class under the Government of Rajasthan and enlisted contractors with CPWD/Postal, Telecom, Railways, MES, other state Govt./ Central Govt, undertaking / organization equivalent to "AA" Class of Rajasthan provided they meet out prescribed eligibility criteria for the following works. The details may be seen on the DIPR web site and tenders can be downloaded from website http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in.

PUBLIC NOTICE. NOTICE is hereby given that Gurkesh Singh Batra is the owner of Property bearing MCD No. 1511, Plot no. 54.55 and 56 measuring 296 sq.yds situated at Kotla Mutarakpur known as Chuk Chambelee-wala Wazir Nagar New Delhi vide 2 Rellinquishment Deeds dated 8/3/21 and 8/3/21 (Doc No. 1195 & 1196) executed by Harpal Singh Batra through Ajay Kumar Malik, Rami Malik, Rakhi Luthra (legal heirs of Late Ram Singh) All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise whatsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned. Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate) Shop No. 5 & 6, Pkt-E, CSC, Mayur Vihar-II, Delhi-110, Mob. 9810063351

For any kind of information such as detailed Time -Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTES App. All kinds of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 may please be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

DATA PROTECTION BILL Panel suggests greater accountability for social media, inclusion of personal and non-personal data

Panel suggests greater accountability for social media, inclusion of personal and non-personal data. A Joint Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, headed by BJP MP PP Chaudhary, tabled its report in both the Houses on Thursday recommending among others that all social media platforms which do not act as intermediaries be treated as publishers and held accountable for the content they host.

The panel finalized its report in 78 sittings encompassing 184 hours and 20 minutes after being granted six extensions to submit its report. The committee received 234 memorandums and each was analyzed and incorporated after getting the response of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) on each suggestion.

Thereafter, the Committee heard the views and suggestions of 31 experts, representatives of statutory, regulatory, government bodies, data experts, cyber security experts as well as organizations representing industry and professional bodies. The committee has also taken view points from Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), National Investigation Agency (NIA), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The committee members also went to study tours to Mumbai, and Bengaluru between October 26 and 29 this year where they visited the data centres of SBI and UIDAI; Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) and Central Processing Centre of Income Tax Department. The committee also received dissent notes from Manish Tewari, Ms. Mahua Moitra, Gaurav Gogoi, Ritesh Pandey, Vivek K. Tankha, Jairam Ramesh, Derek O'Brien and Dr. Amar Patnaik on the bill. In a dissent note, Vivek K Tankha said blanket protection to the government agency is neither constitutional nor in the interest of people's democracy. India already has many data assets of national importance including Aadhar, Passport Seva, Open Data Stack (data.gov.in), MCA21, GSTN, Unified Payment Interface (UPI), WRIS (Jalshakti), DISHA (rural development) and Bhuvan (ISRO). With the world's second largest population, the fifth largest economy with GDP of \$3.0 trillion, over 700 million internet users and over 400 million smart phone users, India is generating mammoth amounts of data on a daily basis. India generates about 150 exabytes of data annually and is amongst the fastest growing data generating nations in the world. The Bill, seeking to provide for the protection of personal data of individuals and establish a Data Protection Authority for the same, was brought in Parliament in 2019 and was referred to the Joint Committee for further scrutiny on the demand of opposition members.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE. ICICI Bank. Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005. Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) R/W Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, (on underlying pool assigned to ICICI Bank by Dewan Housing Finance Ltd.) in relation to the enforcement of security in respect of a housing loan facility granted pursuant to a loan agreement entered into between DHFL and the borrower, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER. No. RMSA/CW/RIDF-XXVI/1475/2021/22. Date : 15.12.2021. The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam invites bids for the following building works from registered Class-I contractor under PWD (Building), Assam having experience of similar nature of work in Assam. Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 20-12-2021 (0900 hours) to 10-01-2022 (1400 hours). The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in



Bollywood
 'Oh My Ghost is scary in some parts and funny in others. I think that's a clever combination.'
 —Sunny Leone

PARADIGM SHIFT

Quack Quack shares a yearly round-up report of everything in online dating in 2021.

By RAVI MITTAL

If the year 2020 seemed grim for this planet, 2021 took it upon itself to be the chilling reminder that it wasn't so much about the year but the general times we have come to live in. Every domain and every sector has gone through seismic changes, both for the better and the worse. However, very few realms have observed an entire paradigm shift across 2021 as significantly as that of online dating.

Chronicling and charting out the key observations in the year 2021's dating trends becomes of paramount importance to assess where online dating stood and where it is headed. This is where a survey conducted by an Indian dating app, QuackQuack, assumes importance.

The pandemic has indeed thrown a few curveballs towards individuals wanting to date. Males and females alike are rapidly coming to terms with a new universe of online dating every single day and embracing more self-paced and healthier ways of dating, an evolving process that shall be the norm soon.

The key takeaways from the survey can be best summarised as below:



VACCINATION IS A MUST

With the world changing ever so slightly every millisecond, we are coming to terms with the notion that a new normal is not just beckoning but is very much here. The survey corroborates this very trend whereby a distinct eight out of every 10 people, who were part of the sample size of the survey, voiced their opinion in favour of compulsory vaccination as a precursor to a date.

A fairly significant 65 per cent and 75 per cent of people belonging to the age groups of 18-20 and 21-30 respectively agreed upon the same. The importance of a double jab was uniformly highlighted across both the top cities as well as the tier two cities of the country as 75 per cent and 70 per cent of the sample size belonging to each felt that the first step towards a safe date would have to be complete vaccination of the other. It was also observed that 80 per cent of the women and 70 per cent of the men who were part of the survey sample felt the necessity of inoculation prior to dates.

DATING WITH A PURPOSE

The survey outlined the notion that, owing to the protocols surrounding Covid in place, people have had very little reason to venture outdoors, thereby leading them to reflect on the nature of the dates they have found on the dating app as against plunging for matches with a sense of desperation. 47 per cent of the

women and 35 per cent of the men, who were part of the survey, vouched for this behavioural change and also commented that the process of reflection and introspection led them towards healthier relationships than before. The difference in the trend of intentional dating between individuals residing in urban areas and those belonging to rural or semi-urban areas was comparatively

similar. While nearly 37 per cent of urban teenagers found that their dating process had taken a purposeful turn, 39 per cent of those from rural or semi-urban areas felt likewise.

HAILING FROM THE SAME LOCATION IS PIVOTAL

The survey found that a staggering 58 per cent and 56 per cent of individuals ranging between the age groups of 18 to 20 and 21 and 30 respectively preferred pairing up with those belonging to a different location as it would help expand their radius of search for a prospective partner. This trend seemed to be more prominent within women as 58 per cent of them were comfortable dating partners from other locations as against a relatively lower 50 per cent among men. Further investigation into a demographic analysis of the sampled data revealed that 46 per cent of those residing in major metro cities preferred dating beyond the confines of their home location whereas a comparatively higher 57 per cent chose the same in the case of smaller cities as well as towns. The numbers indicate that a significant number of individuals do

not find location to be a major barrier when it comes to dating and are flexible with having partners from a place other than their own.

VIDEO CALLING VERSUS MEETING IN PERSON

The survey revealed that a major percentage of 56 per cent in the age group of 18 to 20 preferred having their first date on a virtual medium and were risk-averse owing to the ongoing Covid situation across the country. However, in contrast, 43 per cent people in the age bracket of 30 and above, belonging to a more old school approach, chose to meet in person whilst following all the necessary safety precautions.

In conclusion, this survey should be seen, more than anything, as a stepping stone towards more such insightful study aiming to explore the contemporary trends in the dating arena along with the ebb and flow of user habits and behaviors that is bound to accompany the vast expanse i.e. online dating.

(The author is the founder and CEO of QuackQuack.)



NEW PARTY ANTHEM

The video of A R RAHMAN and DALER MEHNDI's song, *Saala Garda Uda Diya*, from *Atrangi Re*, goes viral. By TEAM VIVA

Saala Garda Uda Diya is the new slang that is trending. The internet went gaga over the music video which crossed two million views in the first few hours of its video release. The love for Daler Mehndi's voice with AR Rahman's music and Irshad Kamil's lyrics can be seen in the comment section of the song on YouTube. One person commented, "A R Rahman plus Daler Mehndi gave us *Rang de Basanti* way back in 2006 and the same magic is seen in 2021".

Mehndi shares his experience of working with Rahman and for the first time with Kamil. He expressed, "I remember getting a call from Rahman *saab* and I was extremely happy to be his only choice for this song. My excitement doubled when I heard that Kamil is the lyricist".

He added, "Whenever Rahman *saab* and I come together, there's some magic. Receiving such a warm response from the audience in the first few hours proves that our magic works".

Even after 25 years in the music industry, Mehndi never disappoints his audience. There is something new and exclusive in every song and every work he does. He is the powerhouse of the Bollywood music industry and his songs are a full power-pack deal. There is no doubt that *Garda* is the new party anthem of the year.

Zindagi ropes in Fawad Khan and Sanam Saeed for their forthcoming original which will stream on ZEE5. The yet-to-be-titled series is helmed by critically acclaimed director Asim Abbasi who also directed Zindagi's first original *Churails*.

The show blends together magical realism and supernatural fantasy within a family reunion setting, and deals with themes of love, loss and reconciliation. In this series, Khan plays a single parent — charming but ridden with guilt for what he has lost. With his son, he tries to be every bit the father his own father was and wasn't. Saeed plays the central female character in the series. Harboursing otherworldly secrets, she takes it upon herself to heal, and make whole, everyone who surrounds her.

The series has gone on floors and a large part of it has been shot in the picturesque Hunza valley.

Speaking on the announcement of the new series, Shailja Kejriwal, from Zee Entertainment Enterprises said, "We've had a very rewarding association with Fawad, Sanam and Asim individually with their past projects and are thrilled to bring them together on this one. This time we've experimented with the genre as well as the storyline. While audiences have often seen shows on family dynamics this one is infused with realms of mystique

Blend of mystique and fantasy

Actors FAWAD KHAN and SANAM SAEED roped in as Zindagi's yet-to-be-titled show. By TEAM VIVA



and fantasy, making it a fascinating watch."

"I think Zindagi is taking bold and brave decisions when it comes to storytelling. It's nat-

urally evolving into a platform that encourages diversity of opinion and inclusiveness for all filmmakers and material ranging from everyday mainstream

to avant-garde and noir. I feel there's a place for everyone in this artistic landscape," shared Khan.

Saeed expressed, "I'm

thrilled to be collaborating with one of my favourite directors Asim Abbasi again, this time for Zindagi. This new project embarks on a fantastical journey with some stunning performances by a very meticulously picked cast. I can't wait for everyone to see the magic that's been created in this beautiful limbo land."

"Zindagi has become a pioneer, not only for India-Pakistan OTT collaborations, but also for encouraging artists to push boundaries of narrative storytelling. I experienced that with *Churails*, and I am experiencing that again with this project. Under Shailja's support and guidance, Zindagi has truly become a home for many filmmakers like me, where we can see our craziest, wildest ideas come to fruition. I am feeling blessed, and very hopeful that this new project will have a very strong emotional resonance not only with the South Asian viewers, but a global audience," said Abbasi.

One of the greatest and most loved contemporary actors, Khan and Saeed have been known for their superlative work in the popular television series *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*.



Bollywood actors Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt and director Ayan Mukherji during their forthcoming film *Brahmastra's* promotion at Thyagraj Stadium in New Delhi



—Photos by Pankaj Kumar

TRENDBLAZER

RANBIR KAPOOR MISSES HIS FATHER

Actor **RANBIR KAPOOR** is all set to return to the big screen with his superhero saga *Brahmastra*, helmed by Ayan Mukherji. He revealed that Rishi Kapoor used to bombard him with a lot of questions about the film.

"I miss my father terribly today. I remember during the making of this film, during these last how many ever years, he kept fighting with Ayan and me and kept questioning us, 'What are you doing?' 'Who takes so long to make a film?' 'Who spends so much money? Ranbir, you're not making one penny on this film. India mein koi VFX film nahi dekhta.'" the *Barfi* star confessed.

fairtalk

PANKAJ TRIPATHI



"Being a village boy, I never thought of becoming an actor when I was young, so meeting my favourite cricketer was out of question. Now, when 83's offer came to me and as part of the workshop I met Sunil sir and Kapil sir, it was emotional. It was a pinch-me moment for me. The young boy from the village has come this far — I am emotional about it."

dailytalk

DHANUSH



"Somehow, Anand L Rai found me. He saw one song of mine from a film called *Aadukalam*. He wanted somebody like that to play Kundan (the character in *Raanjhanaa*). And then he was crazy enough to fly to Kolkata the same day he spoke to me, because I was there performing for an event. Then he spoke to me for ten minutes about impossible achievements. I was amazed by the conviction he had."

BEN AFFLECK ON HIS PAST

Hollywood star **BEN AFFLECK** says that if he and his former wife Jennifer Garner had not divorced in 2018, he would feel trapped.

Affleck shared, "We probably would've ended up at each other's throats. I'd probably still be drinking. It's part of why I started... because I was trapped. I was like 'I can't leave 'cause of my kids, but I'm not happy, what do I do?' I would drink a bottle of scotch and fall asleep on the couch, which turned out not to be the solution."



38 YEARS OF ORIENT EXPRESS

SAMEER BAWA experiences an indulgent evening with fine wines and gourmet food accentuated by excellent service at Taj Palace

It's a bus, no it's a train, oh, it's the Orient Express! The train that defined luxury and comfort, before air travel came into vogue (1919 - 1977), has a namesake at the Taj Palace Hotel in New Delhi. The fine dining European restaurant which is celebrating its 38th anniversary offers luxury, comfort and great food on the lines of what the passengers experienced on the transcontinental journey from Paris to Constantinople (Istanbul) back in the day. The interiors of the restaurant are replete with deep armchairs, intricate panelling, oriental rugs and fine cutlery which mirrors the dining car of the original Orient Express.

I went in for an elaborate five course dinner last evening and thoroughly enjoyed the overall experience. "It's a rediscovery of Europe's culinary joys," says Ananya Mukherjee (Director PR & Marketing). The novel menu blends new and innovative preparations with the classics and, in a very special way, recreates the route of the journey.

We started with a selection of breads with *Chicken liver pâté* and butter on the side. Perfect accompaniment to my chilled tulip of sparkling wine. Starting off, I had the *Camembert cheese soufflé* with paprika sauce. The French classic preparation has been mastered by the Chef and was light, fluffy and perfectly balanced. Just a sprinkle of freshly crushed black pepper and every bite was divine. For the soup, I requested for the *Essence of roast fennel and celery root*, broiled pepitas seeds. Light and fragrant, the soup was exactly what I needed to rev up my appetite and perfect soul food for the nippy December evening. You could get a hint of aromas of the fennel when the broth was poured over pepitas seeds. Definitely, one for people who are counting the calories.

For the mains, I requested for the *New Zealand lamb chops* encrusted with herbs, almonds and drizzled with rosemary jus. And that, ladies and gentleman, was the show-stopper! Between medium and well done, the juicy lamb was an explosion of flavours in every bite. Perfumed with rosemary jus and garnished with almond crumble, the texture and taste were on point. One preparation that touches all your senses. You get the umami from the meat, the hint of salt and sweetness from the jus and the very slight bitterness from the almonds which made it a really well rounded dish. Absolutely loved it.

Culminated my meal with a *Baileys crème brûlée* which was nice but I thought the caramelised sugar on top could have had a bit more crunch and maybe burnt for a bit longer. They also had the very popular *Warm chocolate pudding with liquid chocolate centre* on the menu, which, off late, has been a regular feature on almost every restaurant menu. I have tried it before and its brilliant. I possibly would also stick my neck out and say that the Chefs at Taj have mastered it to the T.

All in all it was a lovely indulgent evening around fine wines and gourmet food accentuated by excellent service. The



staff at the Orient Express is very well trained and have a keen eye for detail. They are happy to help you with selection of wines and at the same time equally at ease to recommend dishes from the menu that match your palate. I strongly suggest that you make a plan to experience the Orient Express if you have not tried it as yet. In my humble opinion, they have a knack of transforming a regular meal into an occasion.

(The author is a food critic and food connoisseur.)

EDIBLE INGREDIENTS FOR A HEALTHY SKIN

RUCHIKA M SODHI shares easy home-made solutions to fight harsh winters and pollution



Winter months in and around the NCR are harsh on the skin, especially on account of the pollution. It is imperative that we take good care of our skin, especially our face as pigmentation, dark circles, crow's feet and black heads can become aggravated. But if you believe that you need to splurge on salon visits or on expensive creams and moisturisers, junk the thought. You can take care of your skin without the use of chemicals that will bring out the natural glow and radiance.

The very first step, if you are a smoker, is stop smoking. Though we always attribute smoking to lungs and heart diseases, it also hastens ageing of skin and creates pigmentation. Follow this up with staying hydrated and ensuring a good night's sleep. During the winter months, we tend to drink less water but it is very essential to remain hydrated. Water is a key constituent of healthy skin. The combination of a good night's sleep and hydration help to rejuvenate the skin.

To stay warm and comfortable, we tend to layer ourselves. While layers keep us nice and warm, these impede the breathing of our skin, resulting in dryness and itchiness. Simple home-made moisturisers can do wonders for our skin. A couple of simple and easy to make moisturisers are –

Mix aloe vera gel, rose water and a pinch or two of turmeric. Make a batch and store it in a cool place. Use it every day to nourish your skin

In aloe vera gel add a pinch of turmeric, a little almond oil, a dash of rose water and the contents of six Vitamin E capsules. Give the mixture a good shake and your nutrient-laden moisturiser.

While the body remains covered, it is the face that is exposed. We go to great lengths to add shimmer to our face and end up using a variety of creams, serums and lotions to bring out the radiance. But do you know that you can make your own effective home-made remedies to have a glowing face? I have for long propagated that you should use those ingredients on your skin that you can eat. You do not have to be a spendthrift to have a glowing skin or face. All you need is resilience and time. For starters, make a face pack using ground flax seeds, rose water and aloe vera gel. Apply this pack at least twice a week for 15 minutes at night and

scrub off with cold water. This pack will exfoliate dead skin and pollutants.

Pigmentation results in changing of your skin colour. Pollution and exposure to strong sun is one of the reasons of hyperpigmentation that make the skin darken. The solution to remove pigmentation and marks on the face is rather simple. Boil six cloves in less than half cup of water and reduce it to one-fifth. Sieve the water and add aloe vera gel and a little rose water. Mix well and apply on your face before going to bed. You will see a distinct difference on your facial skin the following morning. If you have crow's feet and dark circles, gently massage coconut oil on the affected areas after the clove water treatment.

Skin impurities sometimes become difficult to tackle. Not only pollution and the winters but also our dietary habits have residual impact on skin impurities. Thankfully, there is a do-it-yourself remedy to weed out skin impurities. Coarsely grind oats and mix with green tea leaves. Keep in jar. Before making a pack, add milk and rose water and apply the pack on your face and neck. This should be done once a week.

Fruits and vegetable have a defining role to play to keep skin healthy. Whenever you have the opportunity, rub papaya on your skin. This will give the skin a lovely glow. Instead of a branded face scrub, you can make a scrub using couple of bananas and adding a tea spoon of coffee. Use it on your face to remove dirt particles. You can also rub a slice of beetroot on your face to even out the skin. And finally, you have to keep your face hydrated. For this a good toner is the order of the day. Make a juice of cucumber and mint leaves. Keep it in a spray bottle and spray the mixture on your face once in a while. This will keep the skin hydrated and is an excellent toner.

Nature has provided us with effective solutions to take care of our health and nutrition. It has solutions for our skincare, too. Have a healthy diet, hydrate and sleep well. These are the first three necessities of a supple skin. And to take care and maintain the supple skin during the winter months and pollution, these solutions will come handy.

(The author is a nutritionist.)

R E C I P E S



GINGERBREAD MEN BISCUITS

Recipe for 500 biscuits

WHAT YOU NEED

- Flour: 2,100 gm
- Baking powder: 60 gm
- Brown sugar: 1,020 gm
- Garam masala: 9 gm
- Ginger powder: 5 gm
- Egg: 300 gm
- Honey: 600 gm
- Butter: 600 gm

METHOD

- Take a bowl and mix well butter and brown sugar.
- Add eggs and honey little by little.
- Add flour, baking powder, garam masala and ginger powder and mix all the ingredients for one minute.
- Put it for rest at a temperature of 4° for 10 hours.
- Pre heat the oven at a temperature of 160°.
- Cut the biscuits into a shape.
- Bake the biscuits for 15 minutes.
- Leave the biscuits to cool down for 30 minutes.
- Finish by decorating with royal icing.

Courtesy: By L'Opéra culinary head, Amit Kumar



CHRISTMAS FRUIT CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Light brown sugar: 200 gm
- Water: 240 ml/gm
- Butter (diced): 55 gm
- Ground cinnamon: 1 tsp
- Ground cloves: ¼ - ½ tsp
- Ground ginger: 1 tsp
- Fine salt: ½ tsp (2 gm)
- Dark or golden seedless raisins, currants, and/or dried cranberries: 300 gm
- Eggs (lightly beaten): 2 large (100 gm)
- All-purpose flour: 1½ cups (195 gm)
- Baking soda: 1 tsp (4 gm)
- Pure vanilla extract (optional): 1 tsp (4 gm)
- Candied orange or

Lemon peel (chopped): 1 cup (150 gm)

METHOD

- Take a large saucepan, over medium heat, bring to a boil and add sugar, water, butter, spices, and dried fruit. Boil gently for five minutes, then remove from heat, and let it cool until it is lukewarm (This will take about 45 to 60 minutes).
- Meanwhile, preheat your oven to 180° C. Butter, or spray an 8½ x 4½ x 3 inch (21.5 x 11.5 x 10 cm) loaf pan with a nonstick vegetable spray. Line the bottom of the pan with parchment paper and lightly butter the paper (Note: if using a dark colored pan, reduce the oven temperature to 60° C).
- Once the mixture has cooled, stir in the lightly

beaten eggs, flour, baking soda, vanilla extract (if using), and candied peel. Pour into your prepared pan, smoothing the top with the back of a spoon or offset spatula.

Bake for about 55 - 65 minutes or until a wooden toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool on a wire rack for about 15 minutes before removing from pan. If possible, cover and store for a few days before serving. This fruit cake can be frozen.

The above cake is then covered with Marzipan and decorated for Christmas.

Courtesy: Mahesh Kini, executive chef of JW Marriott, Bengaluru

RICE ABOVE THE REST AT CAFÉ DELHI HEIGHTS

Café Delhi Heights is known for their innovative food festivals time to time, but this time they have designed the best in the form of Rice above the Rest. In India, rice is not only the staple on the plate but also a cultural mainstay.

In Indian culture, rice holds great spiritual and ritual significance. It is a symbol of wealth and prosperity. The annual calendar of festivals has many celebrations based on the harvest cycle of rice.

The versatility of rice makes it the most loved grain all over the world. Right from the khichdi, to simple pulao to fragrant pots of



rice and spice meats called biryani, rice is a feast beyond compare. Hence, Café Delhi

Heights thought of curating a special menu to celebrate this very super food. They have added dishes from different states in the menu. From the belt of Andhra / Karnataka, one can enjoy varieties like Curd Rice, Hyderabadi Biryani, Bisi Bele Bath, and so on. One also gets to enjoy the specials from Maharashtra like Masale Bhaat, Payesh from Assam, Gian Pilaf from Goa, Tehri from Lucknow, Yakhini Pulao from Kashmir, Jadoh from Meghalaya are added in this special menu, too. Not only the specials from India, but favourites from International cuisines like Risotto,

Paella, Jasmine rice with stir-fry greens, Chipotle burritos bowl are added as well. Different varieties of rice like Sela basmati, Bangaru Theegalu, Rajbhog Arua rice, Dehradoni Basmati, Illupai Poo Samba, Musk budji, Goan short grain red rice, Ambe Mohar, Joha, et al, have been procured to make sure that each dish is prepared at its utmost accuracy with the perfect amalgamation of right flavours, spices and Chef's magic.

When: Till December 20
Where: All Café Delhi Heights
 Contact number for reservations: 9911154033, 8800691812

CAFE MONIQUE PAVING THE WAY FOR A SWEET

Dangling fairy lights, Fir and Pine trees standing tall, angel-hangings streaming down the branches and white bright lights shining upon the dawn with carols playing in the back — Christmas is here and we know just how to make it merrier for you! Cafe Monique is all geared up to offer a Christmas Brunch topped with a diverse palette of flavours. With world renowned French chef, Maxime, exhibiting his expertise in delicacies, desserts and baked bites, the patisserie aims to please its patrons and match up to their expectations with

the sides of warmth and joy. From Croissants, Focaccia Panini to Le Fondant au Chocolat, Le Saint Honoré and other delicacies, Monique has been building its rapport with patrons as a go-to patisserie for all their food cravings.

On the special celebration of Christmas Day, the brand shall introduce 'Make A Wish' for children. The kids can write and hang their preferred choice of dessert at the Christmas tree and Monique will pick two lucky winners who will get a

special treat.

Make your way to the bespoke French patisserie & cafe and enjoy the celebratory vibe with delicious munchies and desserts in town. Enjoy Monique's special orange and dark chocolate Christmas cookies, their Sablés de Noël, Madeleines de Noël, Les bûches de Noël or Yule log and so on.

When: Till December, 12 pm - 12 am
Where: Cafe Delhi Heights, Delhi-NCR

EMBRACE THE WARMTH OF CHRISTMAS AT THE IMPERIAI

Add sparkle to your Christmas festivities and gear up to be mesmerised at The Imperial this year.

Christmas Eve — A lavish meal features Roast turkey, Brussel sprouts, Pork belly in a bread stuffing, giblett gravy, cranberry sauce on the Western grill station and a selection of international dishes like Shepherd's pie, Cajun chicken, celeriac, Tandoori favorites along with Italian specials, salads and cold cuts.

The extensive spread of classic global favourites also include Ginger crème brulee, Bannoffie pie, Amaretto cheese cake and more.



When: December 24, 7pm-11pm
Where: 1911 Restaurant
Cost: Christmas Eve Buffet at ₹4,000+ taxes per person without alcohol and ₹2,000+ taxes per

child
 Call at 011-41116451/52 for reservations
Christmas Day — Nothing spells cheer like a hearty

Christmas Brunch. Drench yourself in the melody of Christmas carols and gorge on the classic feast including Roasted lamb, Traditional roasted turkey along with other global favourites like Beer chicken, Lemon couscous, Grilled artichokes, Array of Smoked fish, cold sea food bar, antipasti, mezze and carving stations and more. Desserts like Traditional plum cake, Yule log, Mandarin Panacotta, Chocolate Cream de pot, Plum pudding with brandy sauce make sure you enjoy to the fullest.

When: December 25
Where: 1911 Lawns
Cost: Christmas Brunch at ₹4,500+ taxes per person without alcohol and ₹2,300+ taxes per child
 Call at 011-41116451/52 for

No statements or presser, will deal with it: Ganguly

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Day after India Test captain Virat Kohli triggered a storm by publicly contradicting him, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly refused to comment on the matter, saying the Board will deal with it.

Kohli, during his pre-departure press conference ahead of the tour of South Africa, said that he was never asked to stay on as T20 skipper when he made his intent clear on relinquishing the post.

This was in complete contrast to Ganguly's assertion a few days back that Kohli had been requested to not quit the position.

"No statements, no press conference. We will deal with it, leave it to (the) BCCI," Ganguly told local mediapersons on Thursday.

There was talk of BCCI

asking chairman of selectors Chetan Sharma to address the media after Kohli's explosive press conference but the Board eventually refrained from making any counter statements.

Kohli's comments on Wednesday brought to fore the underlying tension in his equation with the administrators.

"Whatever was said about the communication that happened about the decision that was made was inaccurate," Kohli had said with obvious reference to Ganguly's statement.

"When I left the T20 captaincy, I had first approached BCCI and intimated them of my decision and laid down my point of view in front of them (office bearers).

"I gave the reasons why I wanted to quit T20 captaincy and my view point was received very nicely. There was no

DECLINES COMMENT ON KOHLI'S BOMBSHELL PC



offence, no hesitation and not for once was I told that 'you should not leave T20 captaincy,' he had asserted.

Earlier, Ganguly, in an interview to PTI, said that he had spoken to Kohli and told him that two captains in the white ball format was not something that the selectors wanted as there would be "too much of leadership."

Rohit Sharma is now the sole white-ball captain and has also been made Kohli's deputy in the Test format.

KOHLI'S TIMING NOT RIGHT: KAPIL

World Cup-winning former India skipper Kapil Dev feels Virat Kohli's statements that exposed his differences with the BCCI on the issue of captaincy were ill-timed as they created an unsavoury controversy just ahead of a crucial tour to South Africa.

In the pre-departure press-conference in Mumbai on Wednesday, Kohli dismissed as "inaccurate" BCCI President Sourav Ganguly's statement that the Board had requested him not to step down as T20I captain.

The comment exposed the underlying tension between Kohli and the administrators after he was removed as ODI skipper as well earlier this month.

"It is not good to point fingers on anybody at this point in time.

The South Africa tour is coming and please pay attention to the tour," Kapil told 'ABP News' when asked about Kohli's remarks.

"I would say Board president is Board president but yes the Indian cricket team captain is also a big thing. But talking badly about each other in public, I don't think it is a good

thing, whether it is Sourav or Kohli."

The 62-year-old, who led India to the 1983 World Cup title, urged Kohli to take control of the situation and think about the country.

"Aap situation ko control kijiye, behtar ye hai ki aap desh ke baare mein sochiye (Please control the situation and it's better to think about the country now)," said the former skipper who played 134 Tests between 1978 and 1994 and took 434 wickets along with making 5248 runs.

"Jo galat hai woh kal pata chal hi jayega but I don't think it is right to stoke a controversy before a tour," he opined.

The Indian Test team, led by Kohli, departed for South Africa on Thursday for a three-match series beginning at Centurion on December 26. India will also play three ODIs after the Test series.



Team India lands in South Africa for Test series

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

The Indian cricket team, led by skipper Virat Kohli, landed here on Thursday for the three-match Test series against South Africa, beginning December 26 at Centurion. "Touchdown South Africa," the BCCI posted on its official Twitter handle along with pictures of team members, including Test specialist Cheteshwar Pujara, Shardul Thakur and Shreyas Iyer among others.

The Kohli-led Test side had departed from Mumbai for the tour that also includes three ODIs in January.

Given the threat posed by the new COVID-19 variant Omicron, the tour's T20 matches have been postponed for now and the two teams will stay in a bio-bubble for the duration of the series.

Star opener and newly-appointed white ball captain Rohit Sharma has been ruled out after sustaining a left ham-

string injury during a training session in Mumbai.

He was replaced by talented Gujarat opener Priyank Panchal.

The side's build-up to the series has been marred by controversies surrounding captaincy and the issue snowballed into a major controversy on Wednesday when Kohli said that the Board's assertion of trying to stop him from giving up T20 captaincy was "inaccurate."

He stepped down as T20 captain after the disastrous World Cup campaign in the UAE and was subsequently removed as ODI captain earlier this month.

While the series-opener will be hosted by Centurion, the other two Tests will be played at Johannesburg and Cape Town respectively.

The Test team's vice captain is yet to be announced after Rohit's injury. He had replaced a woefully out of form Ajinkya Rahane.

Dominant Australia reaches 221-2 on Day 1 of 2nd Ashes test

AP ■ ADELAIDE

Australia shrugged off the late withdrawal of new skipper Pat Cummins because of coronavirus concerns to dominate England on the opening day of the second Ashes test and reach 221-2 at stumps.

Marnus Labuschagne was dropped twice but remained unbeaten on 95 at stumps Thursday after sharing partnerships of 172 with David Warner (95) and 45 with Steve Smith.

Smith returned to the Australian captaincy for the first time since the 2018 sandpaper scandal after Cummins was ruled out. He was deemed to be a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case when he dined at a restaurant on the eve of the match.

Smith won the toss and just about everything else went Australia's way to start the day-night test.

He was unbeaten on 18 after waiting most of the day to bat, with Australia losing just two wickets despite an England attack bolstered by the return of Jimmy Anderson and

Stuart Broad.

Wicketkeeper Jos Buttler took a brilliant catch in the first hour to dismiss opener Marcus Harris (3) but then dropped Labuschagne twice — once down legside when he was on 21 and the other when he fumbled a regulation chance off Anderson's bowling with the second new ball when the Australian No. 3 was on 95.

"That was massive for the team there. Just getting through that period, me and Steve there. Just sets us up for tomorrow," said Labuschagne, who batted for almost six hours and faced 275 deliveries.

"My job is to make sure I capitalize on that."

Veteran pacemen Anderson and Broad were recalled after missing the series opener and had the batters in trouble early, Australia surviving three reviews in the first hour and Warner taking 20 deliveries to get off the mark. The Australians grafted through 25 overs in the first session

to be 54-1 and added 84 runs in 28 overs in the middle session to reach the second interval at 129-1.

Warner and Labuschagne continued into the night session and posted their sixth

century partnership, and their second in as many tests after their 156 at the Gabba last week.

But after doing all the hard work early, Warner hit a short, wide ball from Ben Stokes

directly to Broad in the covers and his 167-ball innings ended on 95 — one better than his innings in Australia's nine-wicket win in the first test last week.

It was a reward for Stokes, who should have had a wicket in the 35th over when Labuschagne gloved a chance down the leg side but Buttler couldn't complete the catch.

Most of the drama Thursday happened pre-match.

Cricket Australia revealed only three hours before the coin toss that Cummins was ruled out because he was exposed to a person with COVID-19 in an Adelaide restaurant on Wednesday night.

He was deemed a close contact by the state's health authorities and ordered to isolate for seven days. Cummins has already returned a negative test for COVID-19.

"Gutted to miss this test but really excited to see Naser finally get his chance in the baggy green," Cummins said in a Twitter post.

"He has done the hard yards and is a seriously skillful player."

Smith became the third Australia captain in three tests. Tim Paine, who replaced Smith as test captain after the sandpaper scandal in South Africa, quit last month after reports emerged he'd been investigated four years ago for sending an inappropriate text to a work colleague.

He was replaced by Cummins, with Smith as vice-captain for the series-opening win in Brisbane.

Karolina Pliskova out of Australian Open with hand injury

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Karolina Pliskova has withdrawn from next month's Australian Open and two warm-up tournaments because of a right hand injury sustained in training.

Australian Open officials on Thursday confirmed the world fourth-ranked player's withdrawal, and said in a tweet: "wishing you a speedy recovery."

Pliskova had earlier said on social media "unfortunately I hurt my right hand in practice yesterday and I won't be able to play in Adelaide,



Sydney and Australian Open this year."

The 29-year-old Czech Republic player is a two-time Grand Slam finalist. She lost to No. 1-ranked Ash Barty in this year's Wimbledon title match and in the 2016 U.S. Open final to Angelique Kerber after Pliskova beat Serena Williams in the semifinals.

Pliskova's best finish at Melbourne Park was the semifinals in 2019, where she lost to eventual champion Naomi Osaka after beating Williams in the quarterfinals.

The Australian Open begins Jan. 17.

Real Madrid hit by virus outbreak before hosting Cádiz

AP ■ BARCELONA

Real Madrid may have run Rinto its toughest opponent of the season: COVID-19.

An outbreak of the virus has infected six Madrid players. The club said Thursday that Gareth Bale, Marco Asensio, Rodrygo, and backup goalkeeper Andriy Lunin were infected, a day after both midfielder Luka Modric and Marcelo tested positive. Assistant coach Davide Ancelotti, son of Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, was also hit by the virus.

The club did not mention the health status of any of those infected.

While Madrid made the outbreak public, the Spanish soccer federation said Thursday it was putting back into place a ban on shaking hands and other greetings as well as any tributes held before kickoff "as additional preventative measures given the rise in cases."

The league reminded clubs and players that they need to take precautions and undergo tests for the coronavirus every 15 days.

Sachin among top 3 sportspersons alongside Messi and Ronaldo

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Legendary Sachin Tendulkar has been adjudged as the world's 12th 'Most Admired Man,' as per a survey conducted by YouGov, an internet-based market research and data analytics firm.

This year's study surveyed more than 42,000 people in 38 countries and territories to compile the list.

Among sporting heroes, Tendulkar is third in the list behind Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

In the list, the iconic batter is ahead of former US president Donald Trump,



Bollywood superstars Shah Rukh Khan, Amitabh Bachchan and also present India captain Virat Kohli.

Tendulkar has been associated with UNICEF for more than a decade and was appointed the South

Asian ambassador in 2013.

Over the years, Tendulkar has supported several initiatives in health, education, and the sports sector in rural and urban areas across various states in India.

PTI ■ HUELVA (SPAIN)

Defending champion PV Sindhu stormed into the women's singles quarterfinals of the BWF World Championships with a straight-game win over Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand here on Thursday.

The world number 7 Indian defeated her Thai opponent, ranked three places below her, 21-14 21-18 in the pre-quarterfinal match that lasted 48 minutes.

With the win, Sindhu, seeded sixth in the showpiece tournament, extended her head-to-head record against Chochuwong to 5-3.

Sindhu also avenged her twin loss to Chochuwong this season - group match of BWF World Tour Finals earlier this month and All England Championships in March.

The double Olympic medal-



PV Sindhu beats Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand to enter quarters

list Sindhu faces top seed and world number one Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei, who beat Kirsty Gilmour of Scotland 21-10 19-21 21-11, in the quarterfinals.

Sindhu took an early 5-1 lead but Chochuwong rallied to narrow the gap to 5-4 and then to 10-9. The Indian zoomed ahead from there on as she made it 15-10 and then 19-11 to pocket the first game. The second game was a tighter affair though Sindhu began on the front foot with a 3-0 lead. Sindhu led 11-6 at the change of ends and the second half saw some long rallies with the Thai player winning a few of them.

Sindhu was leading 16-10 but Chochuwong made a comeback of sorts as she reduced the gap to 18-15 and then to 19-18.

Sindhu won a crucial point after a long rally to make it 20-18 before winning the second game and the match.

Confident India look to continue experimentation against arch-rivals Pakistan

PTI ■ DHAKA

Back to their best after a slow start, defending champions India would look to continue their cautious experiments when they take on arch-rivals Pakistan in their third round-robin match of the Asian Champions Trophy men's hockey tournament here on Friday.

Olympic bronze-medallists India did not have the best of starts to the tournament, their first after the historic Tokyo campaign, as Korea came from two goals down to hold the Manpreet Singh-led side 2-2 in their tournament opener.

Stunned by Korea, the Indians came out a completely different side against Bangladesh on Wednesday, thrashing the hosts 9-0 in a lop-sided



affair. Striker Dilpreet Singh slammed a hat-trick of field goals, while Jarmanpreet Singh found the net

twice from set pieces as the Graham Reid-coached side experimented with their penalty corners, trying out vari-

ations instead of direct flicks from vice-captain Harmanpreet Singh and Varun Kumar. It was a completely dominant display from the Indians in all aspects of the game against Bangladesh and the holders would look to continue in the same vein against Pakistan on Friday.

The Indian defence has been led well by Harmanpreet, while skipper holds the key in the mid-field.

The forward-line has shone bright in the tournament so far with Lalit Upadhyay scoring three goals from two games while comeback-man Akashdeep Singh, who missed out on a berth in the Tokyo Olympics squad, too registered his name on the score-sheet on Wednesday.

Having said that, the Indians can't afford to relax on Friday, especially against Pakistan, who too boast of a

rich hockey history although of late the game is on decline in that nation.

Pakistan have won three gold, three silver and two bronze medals in the Olympics and the country would be eager to get their footing in world hockey, especially after failing to qualify for the Tokyo Games.

India and Pakistan were declared joint winners in the last edition of the ACT in 2018 in Muscat after the final was washed out.

Going by past record, Pakistan definitely hold an edge but on form, India will definitely start as favourites on Friday.

India and Pakistan have faced each other in a record first seven Asian Games hockey finals. They have played a total of nine finals against each other in which Pakistan has won seven and India has won two gold.

Mercedes withdraws appeal of Formula 1 season finale

AP ■ ABU DHABI

Mercedes withdrew its appeal Thursday of the Formula One series finale in which Lewis Hamilton lost the championship to Max Verstappen.

Mercedes had filed two protests following Sunday's race, but both were dismissed. Mercedes then asked for reconsideration at the International Court of Appeal.

Mercedes was protesting over the use of the safety car following a crash with five laps remaining in the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Hamilton had a

nearly 12-second lead with Verstappen in second when the crash brought out the yellow flag.

Verstappen pitted for fresh tires while Hamilton stayed on track.

The race resumed with one lap remaining.

Verstappen then passed Hamilton to win his first world championship, denying Hamilton a record eighth title.

Mercedes said Thursday, ahead of the season-ending gala in Paris later in the evening, that it decided with Hamilton not to move forward with the appeal.