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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. PTI

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

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. PTI

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 cel-

ebrations (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 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

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 (PSP) 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 PSP. “Met the PSP 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. PTI

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. PTI

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 Mukherjee 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 trial 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 wanted 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 Mukherjee — 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.

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.

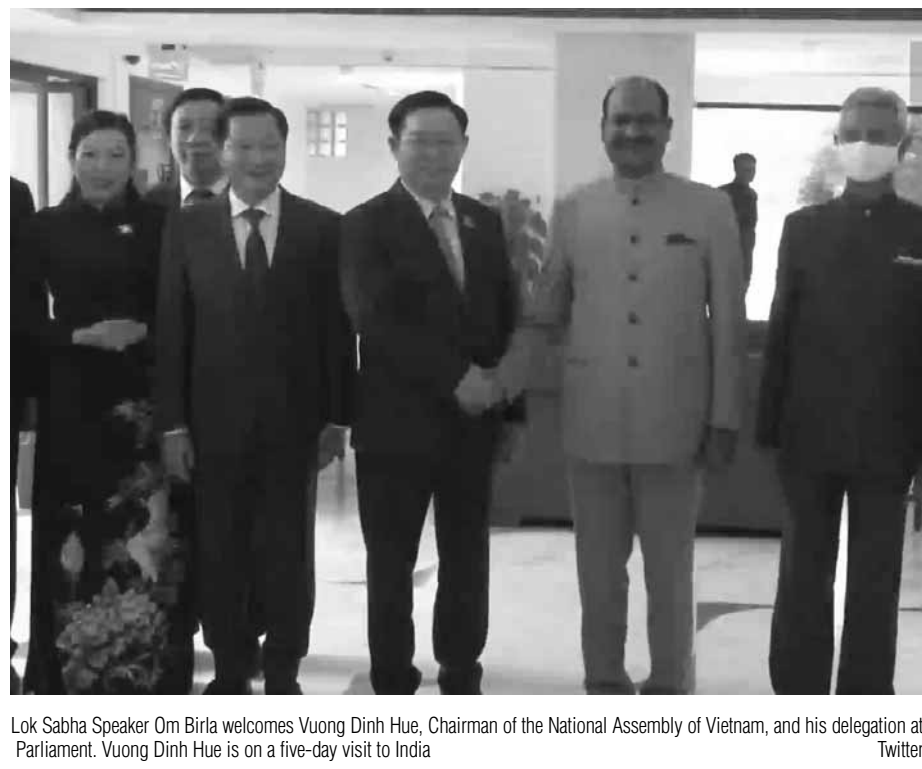
Referring to his grandmother and the former PM, Rahul said she took '32 bullets for the country' but her name was not even mentioned at an event in New Delhi on the anniversary of the victory over Pakistan.

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

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.

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.

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.

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 Asian 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.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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.



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

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

(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 Gopaldaswami 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.

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

Services are likely to be hit on Friday as well. The strike call has been given by United Forum of Bank Union (UFBU), an umbrella body of nine bank unions including All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC), All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA) and National Organisation of Bank Workers (NOBW).

According to AIBEA General Secretary C H Venkatachalam, 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.

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

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.

DATA PROTECTION BILL 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 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.

COMMODITY TRADING

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

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.

The consultant estimated that India will need about 26,800 public charging spots by 2025, requiring space of about 13.5 million square feet. "Landlords can outsource dedicated charging stations to charging service providers at busy locations. They can also enter into a revenue share model with charging service providers.

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.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Bank Symbolic Possession Notice. Includes borrower details, description of property, and dates of possession. Authorized Officer: ICICI Bank Limited.

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".

BSES wins prestigious Greentech Awards

New Delhi: There is a lot of outstanding work taking place at BSES. This is being increasingly recognized and appreciated by the industry, stakeholders and the peers.

Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Limited (GMVN) E-TENDER NOTICE. Details regarding construction and erection of prefabricated barracks.

C.G. Police Housing Corporation, Raipur. MANUAL SHORT TENDER NOTICE (1st Call). Details regarding tender for providing and fixing of fencing.

UJVN LIMITED. Date Extension Notice-1. Details regarding last date of submission of bids.

C.G. Police Housing Corporation, Raipur. TENDER NOTICE (1st Call). Details regarding construction and erection of prefabricated barracks.

UJVN LIMITED. NOTICE INVITING TENDER. Details regarding tender for construction and erection of prefabricated barracks.

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER. No. RMSA/CW/RIDF-XXVI/1475/2021/22. Details regarding tender for building works.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mrs Jyoti Basanti Minj intend to purchase Flat No. 803 Block G4 DDA LG flat Rohini Sector-28, New Delhi from Mr Raja Jeeher Becki...

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:-

Table with 5 columns: STATION, Existing Timing (ARR, DEP), Revised Timing (ARR, DEP). Rows for Kalyan Jn., Panvel.

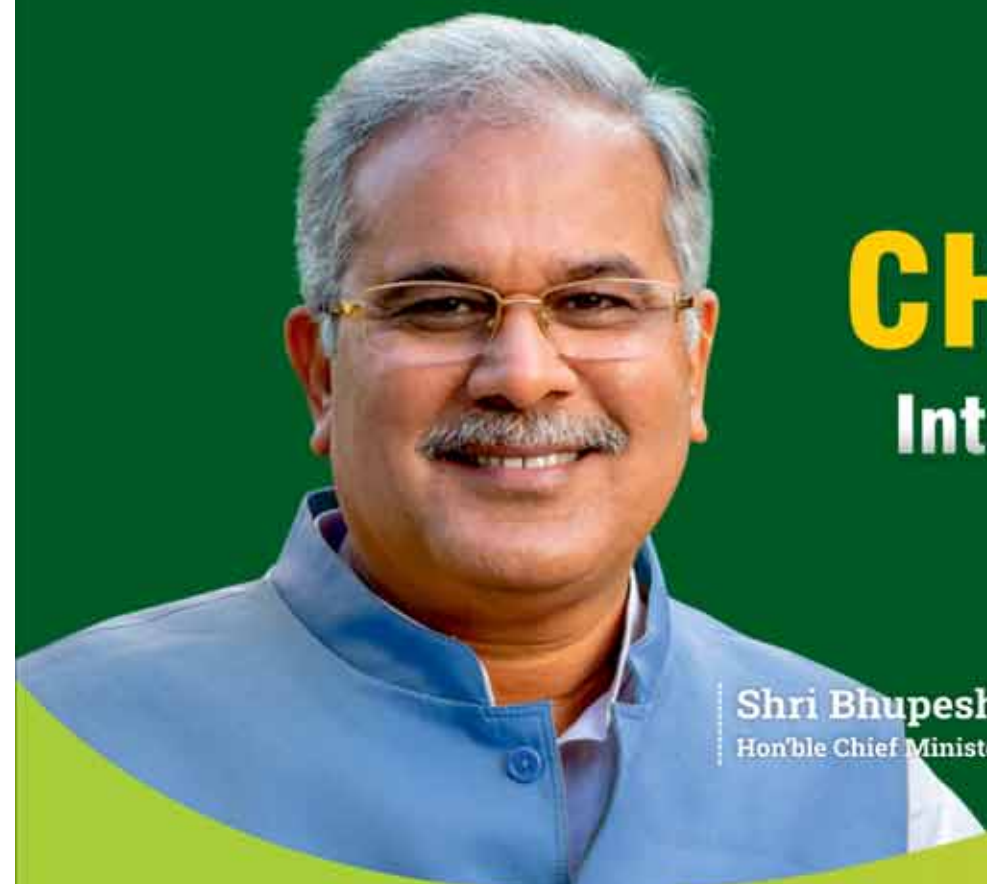
PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that Gurakshish Singh Batra is the owner of Property bearing MCD No. 1511, Plot no. 54.55 and 56 measuring 296 sq.yds situated at Kotla Mutarakur...

RAILMADAD HELPLINE NO. 139. 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...

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER P.H.E.D CIRCLE TONK. NOTICE INVITING TENDERS THROUGH e-procurement system. Includes details of work, dates, and contact information.

Table with 6 columns: SI, Package no., Name of work, Approximate value of work (Rs. in lakh), Time of completion (in month), Earnest Money Deposit (General, Reserved category), Tender cost. Rows for various infrastructure projects.



Shri Bhupesh Baghel
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh

CHHATTISGARH MODEL

Integrating Nyay, Service & Empowerment

> Farmers

- ❑ Debt free farmers, input subsidies improving productivity and farm income, strengthening overall economy
- ❑ Financial assistance to rural landless laborers

> Cattle Farmers

- ❑ Institutional purchase of cowdung adding a whole new avenues of income
- ❑ Uplifting rural economy by enabling value addition to cowdung

> Women

- ❑ Prioritizing women nutrition and health
- ❑ Empowering women, providing them equal opportunities

> Tribals

- ❑ Landmark decisions of returning occupied land
- ❑ Decision to review pending litigations against tribals in the quest for delivering justice

> Forest Dwellers

- ❑ Expediting Forest Rights Titles delivery
- ❑ Declaring MSP for Minor Forest Produce, first in the country
- ❑ Procurement of 52 types of MFPs from 7 being earlier

> Youth

- ❑ Better employment avenues for youth
- ❑ Inclusion of a new category in Public Works Contractors, enabling and inspiring youth towards entrepreneurship

> Health Care

- ❑ Delivering quality health services to citizens' doorsteps in urban & rural areas
- ❑ Making quality generic medicines available at heavily discounted prices

> Education

- ❑ Providing level playing field in education through world class educational infrastructure
- ❑ State of the Art Government English Medium Schools
- ❑ New Centres of Excellence for higher education

> Industries

- ❑ New industrial policy for limitless & inclusive investment possibilities
- ❑ Paradigm shift for incentivising industrial growth in tribal areas

> Environment

- ❑ Chhattisgarh declared the cleanest state, three times in a row
- ❑ Scientific disposal of 1600 tonnes of municipal solid waste every day
- ❑ Promoting plantation & increasing forest coverage areas

> Sports

- ❑ Nurturing prodigies in sports
- ❑ Access to sports infrastructure & provision of high end training capabilities

> Electricity

- ❑ Electricity bill reduced by half for millions of consumers
- ❑ Electric power transforming agriculture, industries & life in remote forests

> Urban Development

- ❑ Projects to provide assured tap water supply to each house hold
- ❑ Doorsteps delivery of all citizen services through Mukhyamantri Mitan Yojana
- ❑ Providing land ownership rights to slum dwellers





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

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/vivacity/>

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. Harboured 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."





सत्यमेव जयते
Government of Rajasthan



Ashok Gehlot
Chief Minister, Rajasthan

“Extending heartiest greetings on the completion of three years of the state’s sensitive, transparent and accountable government. I wish for the happiness, prosperity, healthy life and all round development for the people of the state. Come, let us together take steps for the all-round development of Rajasthan with full devotion and commitment, and play our role with mind, promise and duty by being a partner.”

Ashok Gehlot, Chief Minister, Rajasthan

Happy people, prosperous Rajasthan - These 3 years brought smile on every face

Achievement of Three Years Good Governance, Development and Prosperity

● Excellent Corona Management

Rajasthan Model State. Praised All Over the World.
Free treatment provided to the people of nearby states also

● Resolution of ‘No One Should Sleep Hungry’ during Corona

Financial assistance of Rs 5,500 each family given to 32 lakh destitute families

● Mukhyamantri Chiranjeevi Swasthya Bima Yojana

Each family is getting free treatment of Rs 5 lakh

- Election Manifesto announced as a policy document
70% promises fulfilled

- Loan of approx Rs 15,000 Crore of 21 lakh farmers waived off till now

- No increase in electricity rates for farmers for 5 years

● Mukhyamantri Kisan Mitra Urja Yojana

Grant of Rs 1000 per month on electricity bills
Electricity bills of small farmers are almost zero
Grant of Rs 18,000 crore released so far

- 1 lakh unemployed got Government Jobs

One Lakh recruitments under process, appointment to be made soon

- Medical Colleges opening in 30 out of 33 districts in the State

● Indira Mahila Shakti Yojana

Fund of Rs 1000 crore for women empowerment

Udaan Yojana

- Distribution of free sanitary napkins to all adolescent girls and women

● Mahatma Gandhi English Medium Schools

87,293 students enrolled so far
1200 schools are being opened in every village and town with a population of more than 5000

**Launch • Foundation • Inauguration
of
various works and schemes
on the occasion of completion of
three years of the State Government**

Saturday 18 December, 2021

Energy, Water Resources, PWD, Public Health
Engineering Department, Urban Development,
Local Self-Government, Forest, Dairy, Agriculture
and Cooperative Department

Total Works - 2512 Total Amount - 13186 Crore

Sunday 19 December, 2021

Launch

Udaan

Scheme of free distribution of sanitary napkins to all
adolescent girls and women and inauguration and laying
of foundation stones of various works

and

schemes of Home, Women and Child Development,
Medical and Health, Social Justice and Empowerment,
Minority, TAD, School/Higher/Technical Education, Skill
and Employment, Disaster Management, Information
and Technology and Planning Department

Total Works - 1207 Total Amount - 1306 Crore

For more information, please visit Jankalyan Portal www.jankalyan.rajasthan.gov.in
See this programme live on <https://youtube.com/user/GehlotAshok> and <https://www.facebook.com/AshokGehlot.Rajasthan>

You are cordially invited

Department of Information & Public Relations, Rajasthan