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A weekly echoing the mood of the people, comes to you on every Monday

Surge in COVID-19 cases prompt Centre, state governments to postpone events, opt virtual mode

PTI, NEW DELHI: Amid a sharp spike in COVID-19 cases fuelled by Omicron variant, several government programmes have either been postponed or moved to virtual mode.

The Union Ministry for Youth Affairs and Sports has decided to organise the 25th National Youth Festival on the virtual platform from January 12-13 in view of the spike in Covid cases.

The mega event was earlier scheduled to be held in Puducherry from January 12

to January 16.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate the festival and address the participants on January 12.

Ahead of the event, Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Anurag Thakur on Sunday called upon the country's youth to share ideas for the prime minister's speech.

"My young friends, do you have a great idea that you'd like PM @narendramodi ji to speak about? Share your ideas for PM Modi's speech at 25th

contd. page-5



MP demands to take up the project of constructing a Bridge-cum-Dam between Minnie Bay & Mithakhadi areas, on top priority and complete this project from Ut. Fund

Port Blair, Jan 09:

The Member of Parliament of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Mr. Kuldeep Rai Sharman has requested the Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to take up the project of constructing a Bridge-cum-

Dam between Minnie Bay and Mithakhadi areas on top priority and complete this project from UT Fund so that this project can be completed as soon as possible for the best interest of people of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

During a recent

meeting with Hon'ble Lt. Governor, the Member of Parliament congratulate him and the entire Andaman and Nicobar Administration for completing the much-awaited Rutland Water project, which will definitely solve the

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Director General Virender Singh Pathania, PTM, TM, Indian Coast Guard called on Admiral D K Joshi, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, NM, VSM (Retd.), Hon'ble Lt. Governor, A&N Islands and Vice-Chairman, Islands Development Agency today at Raj Niwas. Discussed issues related to ICG and A&N Coast Guard Region including force accretion, infra perspective plans, Coastal Security etc.

COVID-19 status in A&N Islands

Port Blair, Jan. 9

During the RT-PCR test conducted on 435 passengers who arrived here yesterday, 129

positive cases have been detected. Today, 14 flights with 1623 passengers arrived, out

contd. page-4

COVID- precaution dose for HCWs, FLWs & people above 60 with co-morbidities to be administered from today

Port Blair, Jan. 9

Administration of COVID precautionary vaccine dose for Healthcare and Frontline Workers and those over 60 years of age with co-morbidities will begin from tomorrow (Jan.10). The Centre has issued guidelines stating that no new registration is required to get a COVID precautionary vaccine dose. The Centre has

already said that the precautionary vaccine dose will be the same vaccine as administered previously in the first two doses.

Accordingly, the A&N Administration is also geared up and all set to inoculate Healthcare, Frontline Workers & people above 60 with co-morbidities. Those completed 270 days after second dose are eligible to receive COVID

precautionary vaccine dose. The beneficiaries have to bring Aadhaar Card and second dose certificate copy. The eligible population who have taken two doses of Corona vaccine can directly take an appointment or walk-in to any COVID Vaccination Centre in the Islands from 9 am to 4 pm, a press release from DHS said.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban

Port Blair, Jan. 9

All stakeholders and beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY(U)) have been informed that the Port Blair Municipal Council has established a Single Window Facilitation-cum-Monitoring Unit in the

premises of PBMC Headquarter, Mohanpura. The Unit has been setup to facilitate all the beneficiaries of Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP) of PMAY(U) to cater to all required services for the beneficiaries under one roof, a press release from PBMC said.



EDITORIAL

It's testing time for the Election Commission too

The upcoming elections to five states are as much a test for political parties as they are for the Election Commission of India. While polling begins on February 10 and the outcome will be known on March 10, the popular verdict on the EC's ability to deal with multiple challenges will be known much before that. For, its standing as an independent constitutional authority was badly bruised during the last round of Assembly polls when the second Covid wave was on.

This time around, the EC has banned poll rallies and road shows till January 15, adding any relaxation will be subject to reassessment after that date. With the third wave just starting to build up, the situation can only worsen in the next couple of months before it stabilises. It's difficult to imagine how the poll body will get any wriggle room to ease the curbs, though it has issued instructions on mass rallies, including creating mask kiosks at the venue, ensuring proper distancing, capping attendance and making district magistrates accountable for lapses. Also, candidates and parties flouting the restrictions will not get permission in future. The best available options then would be door-to-door contact-when surreptitious voter bribing often happens-and holding virtual rallies.

The other important challenge is to address criminalisation of politics. Parties have been directed to write to the EC within 48 hours of selecting any candidate with a criminal record as to why and how the choice was made. It must include the person's qualitative achievements, including public service, and not just harp on winnability. Those delaying the communication will be reported to the Supreme Court to face contempt charges. But it remains to be seen if the directive will prod parties to deny tickets to goonda elements and bring sobriety to politics.

The third big problem is to enforce the period of silence before polling day on social media. Though the EC expects platforms to enforce their voluntary code of ethics on those days, how effectively it can be implemented to tackle toxicity is uncertain. Anyway, if the poll watchdog shows it is evenhanded in both its bark and bite, it can expect to regain its lost glory.



Shri Kuldeep Rai Sharma, Hon'ble MP, A&N Islands called on Admiral D K Joshi, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, NM, VSM (Retd.), Hon'ble Lt. Governor, A&N Islands and Vice-Chairman, Islands Development Agency today at Raj Niwas. Discussed current phase of COVID19 management, Local Body election and various mega infra projects steered through Islands Development Agency to boost Tourism and Hospitality sector in these Islands.

Sanyukt Samaj Morcha leader Balbir Singh Rajewal rules out alliance with AAP in Punjab

PTI, CHANDIGARH: Sanyukt Samaj Morcha leader Balbir Singh Rajewal on Sunday ruled out the alliance with the Aam Aadmi Party for next month's Punjab Assembly polls and said they will declare their candidates within a week.

Various Punjab farmer bodies who had taken part in the stir against the Centre's now withdrawn farm law had launched their political front last month and announced to contest the Assembly polls.

The Sanyukt Samaj Morcha (SSM) leaders on Sunday held talks with farmer leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni, who had launched the Sanyukt Sangharsh Party to contest the polls.

Addressing the media here, Rajewal said the Morcha will not have a tie-up with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

He termed as "baseless" the suggestions that his political front wanted 60 seats while AAP offered only 10.

Asked if they will tie-up with any other party, Rajewal said, "We will see when the time comes."

The leader said the Sanyukt Samaj Morcha has formed three committees, scrutiny committee for



shortlisting of candidates, parliamentary board and a manifesto committee.

"We will come out with our first list of candidates in two-three days and within a week, all candidates will be announced," said Rajewal.

Asked if only farmers will be the contestants, Rajewal said the candidates will be from every section of society, including the Scheduled Castes community and traders.

Chaduni, who is the chief of the Haryana BKU (Chaduni), held a meeting with the SSM leaders and said he has decided not to announce candidates of his party.

His outfit has halted the announcement of 10 candidate which it wanted to field, Chaduni told reporters here referring to his talks with

the SSM.

Asked if there were any talks with them on seat sharing, he said, "As things progress, we will let you know."

Asked if he could merge his outfit with the SSM, Chaduni said it is premature to comment on this.

Asked about the meeting with Chaduni, Rajewal said the SSM has formed a committee, which will go into what is their requirement and accordingly a decision will be taken.

"How many tickets they want, how many we can give, this will be decided by the committee," said Rajewal.

To a question on the PM's security lapse in Ferozepur, Rajewal said farmers were not involved in it and demanded that security agencies should probe in this regard.

R-Day alert sounded in Delhi, five states



NEW DELHI: Security forces have sounded alert following intelligence inputs of a possible terror attack ahead of Republic Day. Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and major cities in all five poll-bound states are put on high alert. Detailed directions have also been issued for ensuring Republic Day ceremonies in the capital and other parts of the country remain peaceful.

Intelligence inputs suggest that terrorists plan to target high-profile leaders and security forces campuses, vital government building, crowded markets and places such as railway stations, and religious places.

The Centre has directed all security and intelligence agencies to maintain total coordination with sister agencies and other stakeholders.

"All unit control rooms and centres should be manned suitably round-the-clock for quick sharing of information and effective co-ordination," stated an official communication. The Centre has also directed top security and police officers to deploy quick action teams should be deployed at suitable and strategic places such as airports.

Former RBI Governor Urjit Patel appointed as Vice President of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank



PTI, BEIJING: Former RBI Governor Urjit Patel has been appointed as a Vice President of the Beijing-based multilateral funding institution AIIB, according to sources in the bank on Sunday. India is a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with the second highest voting share after China.

It is headed by former Chinese vice minister for finance Jin Liqun. Patel (58) will be one of the five Vice Presidents of the AIIB with a three-year tenure. He is expected to take over his posting next month. He will succeed outgoing Vice President DJ Pandian, who is in charge of sovereign and non-sovereign lending of the AIIB in South Asia, the Pacific Islands and South-East Asia, AIIB sources told PTI.

Pandian, who has previously served as the chief secretary of Gujarat, is set to return to India later this month. Patel had taken over as the 24th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) succeeding Raghuram Rajan on September 5, 2016.

Patel resigned in December, 2018 "on account of personal reasons", saying "I have decided to step down from my current position effective immediately". Prior to taking over on September 6, 2016, he was a Deputy Governor overseeing the monetary policy department at the RBI under Rajan and was known as his "inflation-warrior".

Patel has previously worked with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Boston Consulting Group and Reliance Industries among other organisations. Patel's posting to AIIB is regarded as significant as India has emerged as its biggest beneficiary by obtaining USD 6.7 billion funding for 28 projects, Pandian said in his farewell luncheon interac-

tion on Saturday.

Also, the AIIB along with the Asian Development (ADB) is processing a USD two billion loan for India to purchase COVID-19 vaccines. Of the USD two billion loan, the Manila-based ADB is expected to finance USD 1.5 billion and AIIB is considering providing USD 500 million.

The AIIB had recently granted USD 356.67 million loan for the expansion of the Chennai metro rail system. It is also considering funding several other infrastructure projects for the development of

Chennai city and its suburbs. The bank has also funded the Bengaluru metro rail project. In his farewell interaction, Pandian sought to dispel the impression, especially in India, that the AIIB is a Chinese bank. He said that the bank now has emerged as a multilateral bank becoming the lead financiers of the infrastructure projects in Asia.

Except the US and Japan, most of the developed and developing countries have joined the bank, he said. A readout on AIIB official website said the bank is a "multilateral development bank whose mission is financing the Infrastructure for Tomorrow - infrastructure with sustainability at its core".

"We began operations in Beijing in January 2016 and have since grown to 105 approved members worldwide. We are capitalised at USD 100 billion and Triple-A-rated by the major international credit rating agencies," it added.

Veer Baal Diwas to honour Sikh icons

NEW DELHI: A day after the model code of conduct for polls came into force in five poll-bound states, including Punjab, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced that December 26 shall be observed as Veer Baal Diwas to mark the martyrdom of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh.

He made the announcement in a series of tweets while paying tribute to Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh guru, on his birth anniversary. Zorawar Singh (9) and Fateh Singh (7) have a hallowed place in Sikh lore as they let themselves be bricked alive by Aurangzeb's army so as to protect their faith.

Modi's gesture brought muscular nationalism to the centrestage of the Assembly polls. Not surprisingly, BJP's ally and former Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh welcomed it. "The courage portrayed by Sahibzades under enormous oppression is unparalleled and everyone

across the globe must know about their supreme sacrifice. This is a commendable step in that direction," he tweeted.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations president Vinay Sahasrabudhe, too, hailed it, saying the decision is in the spirit that history is a part of our collective identity. In his series of tweets, Modi said Veer Baal Diwas will be observed on the same day Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh attained martyrdom after being sealed alive in a wall.

"These two greats preferred death instead of deviating from the noble principles of Dharma. The bravery and ideals of Mata Gujri, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji and the four Sahibzades give strength to millions of people. They never bowed to injustice," the prime minister added.

Inclusive, harmonious

"The martyrs envisioned a world that is inclusive and harmonious. It is the need of the hour for more people to know about them," Modi said

District Administration takes various proactive steps to prevent spread of corona virus



Port Blair, Jan 08:

To tackle the recent surge in the COVID positive cases in South Andaman and to prevent the further spread of the virus, the District Administration has taken various proactive steps. In this connection, distribution of medicines and providing of oximeters to the door steps of all the ILI cases, positive cases and contacts of positive cases is being done.

The District Administration is carrying intensive field surveillance on daily basis and around 19,009 households covering a population of 65,885 have been surveyed having around 5732 co-morbid persons who are being monitored on daily basis.

447 medicine kits and 166 oximeters have been issued to eligible cases for better tracking of health parameters. The Andaman and Nicobar Admin-

istration is committed to provide better health care facilities and is working round the clock to ensure that the spread of this virus is restricted by taking appropriate and preventive measures.

Further, Shri Suneel Anchipaka, Deputy Commissioner (SA) has requested general public to make sure to vaccinate their children between age group of 15 years to 18 years and also urged them to strictly follow COVID appropriate behaviour and help the Administration in its fight

against the virus. He also urged general public to kindly come forward and report symptoms at the earliest to the nearest PHCs/CHCs or District Control Room numbers 1077/238881/240127 for better treatment. He further reiterated that the District Administration, South Andaman is focussing on test, track, surveillance, clinical management, vaccination and COVID appropriate behaviour to be meticulously implemented in the District to control the surge of cases.

PRESS RELEASE

Shri Vishal Jolly, National Executive Member, BJP & Former State President BJP-A&N Islands and Member Home Ministry Advisory Committee, Govt. of India expressed his sincere gratitude to the Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah, National President BJP Shri J.P. Nadda, National General Secretary (Org) Shri B. L. Santhosh and National Secretary & Prabhari BJP-ANI Shri Y Satyakumar for reinstatement of the abolished "Panchayat Samiti" in A & N Islands. The decision of the Union Govt. for re-establishment of abolished Panchayat Samiti of these islands shows the determination of Modi Govt. towards a participatory form of democracy.

Further he stated that the decision of the Union Government will immensely benefit villagers for developing the village infrastructure and redress their grievances and demands etc in real time. At this critical juncture when the Nation is experiencing a pandemic.

Allotment of Govt. Accommodations through computerized system

Port Blair, Jan. 8

The Housing & Estate Section, Andaman and Nicobar Administration, Secretariat has allotted around 67 Nos. Govt. Accommodations (Type-I, Type-II & Type-III) vide Order No.2860, 2861 & 2862 dated 28th December, 2021 under General Category through the Automated Allotment of Government Accommodation Application (computerized

system).

All applicants who have got quarter allotted through the above application may send their representations / grievances, if any, related to non - allotment of preferred quarter in preferred area in the e-mail ID : secretary201ani@gmail.com within three days, a press release from H & E Section, A & N Administration said.

Distribution of Vegetable Seed Minikits in Municipal Area

Port Blair, Jan 08:

The Distribution of Vegetable Seed Minikits commenced in Municipal Area on 7th January. Altogether 5600 vegetable minikits were handed over to PBMC staff for distribution in 7 wards of Port Blair municipal council. The vegetable minikits were distributed to the sanitary staff of Ward no. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 14. For providing technical support to the beneficiary the field functionaries of Agriculture Department were also accompanied during the distribution programme. Further the remaining 17 wards will be covered from 8th and 10th Jan 2022. Under this programme so far 23500 nos of vegetable seed minikits were distributed at various villages of and municipal areas of South Andaman District. Under this programme 5498 Nos of Vegetable Seed Minikits are being sent to Hut Bay for the beneficiaries of Little Andaman Island. The same will be distributed among the beneficiaries of Little Andaman through the Community Resource Persons of respective areas along

with the representatives of Agriculture Department.

The "Distribution of vegetable seed minikits" programme was launched by Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands Admiral D.K. Joshi, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, NM, VSM (Retd) in the presence of Chief Secretary Andaman & Nicobar Administration Shri. Jitendra Narain, IAS on 29th December 2021.

This Scheme would be much useful for better utilization of wet waste in production of vegetables in their own household garden. The plastic bags and container which used to be a garbage can be better utilized for growing vegetables. The beneficiaries are hereby urged to take maximum benefit of it and extend their contribution in minimizing the house hold waste going to dumping yard. For taking care and proper crop management practices technical guidance can be obtained from the staff of Agriculture Department of their respective area or by contacting through Kisan call centre over phone no. 243434.

COVID-19 status in....

of which, 1310 passengers were vaccinated with both doses while RT-PCR test was conducted on 308 passengers (includes 08 foreign travellers) and the reports are awaited. During RAT conducted on 55 passengers bound for North & Middle Andaman at Ferrargunj, all the tests were found negative. At

from page-1 Mohanpura Bus Terminus, test was conducted on 35 passengers and all were found negative. Apart from this, RTPCR test was conducted on 14 crew members of MV Rangat and reports are awaited. Today, till 3 pm, 209 eligible beneficiaries were vaccinated, a press release from Directorate of IP&T said.

District Health Society (SA) celebrating 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' -Iconic Week of Health



Port Blair, Jan, 8

The District Administration through its District Health Society (SA) is celebrating 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' - Iconic Week of Health by conducting health awareness activities from 3rd Jan. to 9th Jan. 2022 in coordination with Directorate of Health Services and NGOs in the Community Health Centre, Primary Health Centres, Anganwadi Centres and at community level uniformly. The awareness activities are held on various vertical health programmes on the theme viz. COVID Appropriate Behaviour, Reproductive Child Health, National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme, National Programme for Control of Blind-

ness, National Leprosy Eradication Programme, National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme and National Mental Health Programme.

Further, Flash Mob /Street Plays have been conducted on the theme 'Lets fight the war against Tuberculosis (TB) and COVID-19-Lets win' in coordination with Dance Nritya Academy (DNA) at Guptapara, CIARI Road, Bathubasti, Calicut and Prothrapur Junctions and Corbyn's Cove.

Shri. Suneel Anchipaka, Deputy Commissioner (SA) urged the general public of South Andaman to follow COVID Appropriate Behavior meticulously by maintaining 'Do Gaj Ki Doori

Aur Mask Hai Zaruri' and also requested that if anyone having symptoms like 'persistent cough, chest pain, fatigue, fever, blood in cough, weight loss and night sweats' they may get themselves tested at nearest health centers and also requested to contact District TB unit, GB Pant Hospital or District Health Society, DC Office (SA) for any assistance for TB screening or testing to achieve the goal of TB eradication by 2025.

DC (SA) in a press release has further reiterated that people should Avoid unnecessary travel and stay home to stay safe. "Safai, Dawaai, Kadai, Tabhi Jeetenge Corona Se Ladai"

MP demands to make the entire recruitment process of all the existing vacancies, totally offline and to fill up 100 percent vacancies with local youths

Port Blair, Jan 08:

The Member of Parliament of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Mr. Kuldeep Rai Sharma has requested the Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to make the entire recruitment process of all the existing vacancies in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, totally offline. He has also requested to take some prominent measures so that 100 percent of vacancies are filled up with local youths.

The member of Parliament today called on the Hon'ble Lt. Governor at Raj Niwas and during the meeting, he said that the recent direction of Hon'ble Lt. Governor to all the Departments to expedite recruitment of all vacant posts

in a time-bound manner, particularly Group B (NG) and Group C posts, has infused a high-level enthusiasm and unlimited joy among the unemployed youths of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The Member of Parliament added that Islanders are hopeful that this time thousands of vacant posts will surely be filled up in a time-bound manner, which will in turn transform the lives of thousands of families in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

He pointed out that presently the only cause of concern in this matter is that in the previous few recruitments drives it has been observed that large numbers

of mainland candidates are being selected in various jobs of Andaman and Nicobar Administration as they have obtained better training in competitive exam classes and they have more exposure than the local youths in many fields.

The Member of Parliament mentioned that jobs in Andaman and Nicobar Islands are limited and there are thousands of thousands of unemployed youths who are waiting to get a government job but now they are fearing that if all the vacancies, to be published in coming days, are filled-up through online mode, most of the jobs will be taken away by mainland candidates.

District Administration Keenly monitoring the COVID Situation

Port Blair, Jan 08:

The District Administration is reaching out to general public in wake of the sudden surge of COVID-19 wave in all possible ways. Control Rooms with 1077 toll free number have been strengthened by the District Administration and the COVID cases are being monitored on regular basis by the Deputy Commissioner (SA) and the team.

Screening of all incoming passengers in the Veer Savarkar International Airport is being carried out scrupulously and all passengers are immediately put on surveillance and any positive case found in the sample collected are quarantined immediately by the District team.

Four District Level Control Rooms have been established in the District Office for resolving grievances related to COVID for the public and

also to aims at redressing various other issues arising out of the present situation.

Two control rooms are functioning in the District Conference Hall in which Doctors are monitoring the health conditions of ILI/SARI/suspect cases through telephonic surveillance. Quarantine and other mechanisms are also put in place for managing Covid -19.

A dedicated Control Room at Zilla Parishad Conference Hall has been setup for monitoring the field surveillance, which is being carried out by field staff to cover entire populace of the District, which covers more than 2.5 lakhs. Around 900 staff are deputed for field surveillance activities all over the District and around 17,914 house hold have been visited by the field staff which covered around 64,092 people of the District today. This will be daily exercise till the condition becomes normal.

Another Control Room is also functioning at State Library which is monitoring the Home Quarantined persons and looks after the medicinal requirement and distribution of pulse oximeter for positive cases in Home Quarantined and primary contacts of positive cases, ILI/SARI/suspected cases all over the District.

The DC (SA) informed that COVID-19 management is the foremost focus of the Administration and the entire administrative unit have once again started working on war-footing to constrain the new wave of pandemic. The Deputy Commissioner has further appealed to the general public to cooperate and support the Administration in fighting this pandemic. He appealed to all citizens to kindly report any symptoms to the nearest PHCs/CHCs or District Control Room numbers 1077/238881/240127.

Surge in COVID-19...

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National Youth Festival on 12th January 2022," the minister tweeted.

The venue of Puducherry for organising the festival had been "handpicked" by the prime minister, a ministry official said.

Besides, the 30th edition of the New Delhi World Book Fair (NDWBF), which was scheduled to be held under the aegis of the National Book Trust at Pragati Maidan from January 8 to 16, has also been postponed in view of the latest DDMA guidelines imposed following the surge in COVID-19 cases and "request from stakeholders".

The fresh dates for NDWBF, which was held online last year due to the pandemic, will be announced separately, the National Book Trust had said in a statement on January 6.

On January 6, the Gujarat government also decided to postpone the 10th edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit which was to be inaugurated by Modi on January 10.

The three-day summit was to be held in a grand manner to attract investments and delegations from many partner countries, and CEOs of top

companies were supposed to participate in the event.

The West Bengal government had on January 5 announced postponement of the 27th Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF), which was scheduled to begin from January 7.

The announcement came days after KIFF organising committee chairman Raj Chakraborty and member Parambrata Chatterjee said that they had been infected by COVID-19.

The 27th edition of the Kolkata International Film Festival was slated from January 7 to January 14.

Announcing the schedule for the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa with a strong focus on digital and virtual modes of campaigning, the Election Commission had on Saturday banned physical rallies and roadshows till January 15 due to Covid concerns.

The Commission, however, said the ban on rallies, roadshows, nukkad sabhas, padayatras and vehicle rallies will be reviewed on January 15.

Reliance buys New York's premium luxury hotel Mandarin Oriental for USD 98.15 million

PTI, NEW DELHI: Mandarin Oriental New York, the premium luxury hotel a subsidiary of Reliance Industries is acquiring, is known for its much-in-demand ballroom, five-star spa and eating and drinking venues, including MO Lounge.

Liam Neeson and Lucy Liu are among regular guests.

Set up in 2003, 248-rooms-and-suites hotel towering over Central Park is an iconic luxury hotel located at 80 Columbus Circle, directly adjacent to the pristine Central Park and Columbus Circle.

Mandarin Oriental New York occupies floors 35-54 and is known for its much-in-demand ballroom, five-star spa and eating and drinking venues, including MO Lounge.

Liam Neeson and Lucy Liu are among regular guests.

"Reliance Industrial Investments and Holdings Limited (RIIHL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited ("RIL"), has today, entered into an agreement to acquire the entire issued share capital of Columbus Centre Corporation (Cayman), a company incorporated in the Cayman Islands and the indirect owner of a 73.37 per cent stake in Mandarin Oriental New York, one of the premium luxury hotels in New York City for an



equity consideration of approximately USD 98.15 million," the firm said in a stock exchange filing late on Saturday.

This is the second acquisition of an iconic hotel by Reliance in less than a year.

In April last year, Reliance acquired Stoke Park Ltd in the UK - an iconic locale that's been the setting for two James Bond films.

The two iconic locales add to its current stake in Oberoi hotels and hotel/managed residences in Mumbai that it's developing.

The latest marquee acquisition for the oil-to-telecom and retail conglomerate marks its pivot toward consumer offerings.

Flush with Rs 2.6 lakh crore in cash, Ambani is helming a transformation as he seeks to build the digital and retail business into equal-sized pillars for

Reliance, paring dependence on profits from its traditional oil refining business.

Over the past five years, Reliance has announced USD 5.7 billion in acquisitions with 45 per cent in TMT and 23.6 per cent in new energy.

Mandarin Oriental New York has global recognition and has won several influential awards, including AAA Five Diamond Hotel, Forbes Five Star Hotel, and Forbes Five Star Spa, among others.

It had revenues of USD 115 million in 2018, USD 113 million in 2019 and USD 15 million in 2020, according to the Reliance filing.

"This acquisition will add to the consumer and hospitality footprint of the group. The group already has investments in EIH Ltd (Oberoi Hotels),
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MP demands to take....

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problem of water scarcity in Port Blair and certain areas of South Andaman region to a certain level.

He mentioned that another ambitious and crucial project, which can further solve the water scarcity issue of the entire South Andaman region, is the project of constructing a Bridge -cum- Dam between Minnie Bay and Mithakhadi areas of South Andaman region.

The Member of Parliament added that this project of constructing a Bridge -cum- Dam between Minnie Bay and Mithakhadi area of South Andaman region once completed, the South Andaman area will get a huge catchment area of freshwater after a certain point of time.

He pointed out that once this Bridge -cum-Dam is constructed, people can reach the South Andaman region

within 5 minutes from Port Blair city, as they won't have to travel an extra 15 to 18 km through Andaman Trunk Road anymore.

Mr. Kuldeep Rai Sharma mentioned that this Bridge-cum-Dam will not only hugely benefit people of Andaman and Nicobar Islands but also will give a solid boost to the Andaman Tourism Industry by making tourism sports of South Andaman like Wright Myo and Shoal Bay, accessible via road and also by making journey of ATR shorter.

He said that the proposed Bridge-cum-Dam will also bring economic prosperity to many areas of South Andaman region and will develop South Andaman areas under Port Blair Concept.

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PBMC Control Room**

Lakshya Sen eyeing maiden title on India Open debut



PTI: World Championships bronze medallist Lakshya Sen says he will look to build on his rich vein of form and return with a maiden title when he begins the new season with a debut appearance at the India Open Super 500 here on Tuesday.

The 20-year-old from Almora had a good outing in the last season as he reached the final of the Dutch Open, made it to the semifinals at Hylo, and then entered the knockout stage of the World Tour Finals on debut.

However, the icing on the cake was his bronze at the World Championships, which helped him to emulate his mentor Prakash Padukone and compatriot B Sai Praneeth.

"This is the first time I will be playing the India Open as the last two editions were cancelled due to the pandemic. So I am looking forward to making the most of this opportunity and win the title," Sen told PTI after arriving in the national capital.

"I had a 10-day break after the world championships and started training from

January 1st. I had some niggles but now I am back to full fitness."

Walking down memory lane, Sen talking about the time when he would come as a fan to watch greats such as Lin Dan and Taufik Hidayat compete in the tournament.

"I remember coming to India Open as a 10-year-old in 2011-12. I was inspired a lot by Lin Dan and Taufik Hidayat. I have always loved Taufik's game, it influence me a lot."

Sen will open his campaign against Egypt's Adham Hatem Elgamal and a win will pit him against Sweden's Felix Burestedt in the next round.

"I have a good draw. In the first round, I am playing a player from Egypt and in next round, it will be Felix. I had trained with him in Dubai.

"I will take one match at a time and the way I am playing, I am confident of winning the tournament."

The year will be a hectic one with big-ticket events such as the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games lined up, apart from the regular BWF World Tour events.

Sen said his entire focus

will be to stay injury-free and peak at the right time.

"It is an important year as there are lots of important tournaments lined up. I have to come up with a proper training plan ahead of these important events, also pick and choose events," the world number 17 said.

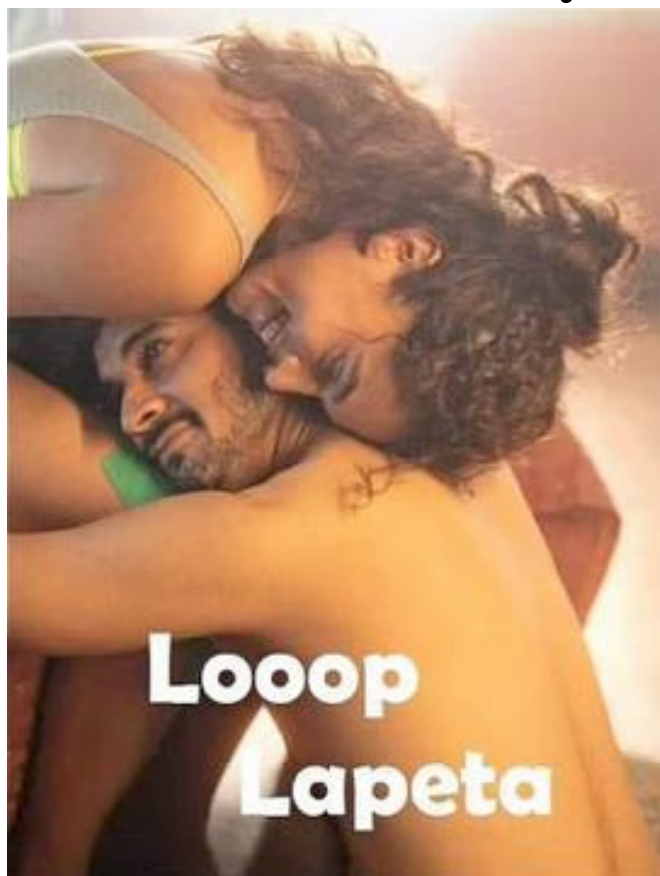
"I have to perform well so that I can qualify for important events. So the focus will be on staying injury free and peaking at the right moment."

Organised by the Badminton Association of India (BAI), the India Open is all set to kick off on Tuesday at the Indira Gandhi Stadium's KD Jadhav Indoor Hall.

Most players have started arriving in the capital for the tournament.

"All the participating players will be taking the necessary safety precautions right from their arrival in New Delhi as per protocol, and will be tested everyday at the hotel and from there they will be having shuttle buses to come to the stadium, play matches and go back to the hotel again," the BAI said in a release.

Taapsee Pannu, Tahir Raj Bhasin's 'Loop Lapeta' to debut on Netflix in February



PTI, MUMBAI: Taapsee Pannu and Tahir Raj Bhasin-starrer "Loop Lapeta" will premiere on Netflix on February 4, the streamer announced on Saturday.

Helmed by debutante director Aakash Bhatia, the upcoming comedy thriller is a Hindi-language remake of German filmmaker Tom Tykwer's 1998 cult classic movie "Run Lola Run".

The film promises to be an adventurous ride through a sticky situation where a girlfriend is on a mission to rescue her boyfriend.

As the plot unfolds, a series of events constantly prompts the lovers to make choices that define their future, the official synopsis of the film read.

In the film, Pannu plays the role of Savi, who is on a mission to rescue her boyfriend.

"This compelling story was extremely enjoyable to make along with my director, Aakash and co-star, Tahir. I cannot wait for fans and audiences to watch this edge-of-the-seat film and enjoy it as much as we loved making it," the 34-year-old actor said in a statement.

Bhasin, 34, who will

be seen as Satya, said: "Loop Lapeta" offers a new take on romance and he is thrilled to show the movie to the audiences.

"The film is a clutter-breaking take on new age romance, and a genre I am exploring for the first time.

I can't wait for the world to meet the characters Satya & Savi.

"Our director has a unique style stamp that has created a visually stunning world where thrill and comedy combine for one crazy rollercoaster of an entertainer," Bhasin said.

Bhatia said he is excited that his debut film "Loop Lapeta" will stream on Netflix.

"There's no way to downplay the exhilaration of making a first film and 'Loop Lapeta' has surpassed every bit of it. I'm extremely excited with the shape we have given it. It boldly jumps genres from comedy, thriller to romance and makes for a rollercoaster ride for audiences," Bhatia said.

'Loop Lapeta' is produced by Sony Pictures Films India, Ellipsis Entertainment along Aayush Maheshwari.

Reliance buys New York's..... from page 5

Stoke Park Limited in the UK and is developing a state-of-the-art convention centre, hotel and managed residences in BKC Mumbai," it said.

The closing of the transaction is anticipated to occur by the end of March 2022 and is subject to certain customary regulatory and other approvals and the satisfaction of certain other conditions.

"In the event that the

other owners of the hotel elect to participate in the sale transaction, RIIHL would acquire the remaining 26.63 per cent, based on the same valuation used for the acquisition of the indirect 73.37 per cent stake," it added.

RIIHL had in April last year announced the acquisition of the entire issued share capital of Stoke Park, which owns and manages a 49 luxury bedroom and suites hotel, 27-hotel

championship golf course, 13 tennis courts and 14 acres of private gardens in Buckinghamshire, for 57 million pounds.

Since James Bond played a game with Auric Goldfinger there in the 1964 blockbuster, the estate with the Georgian-era mansion set in the midst of 300 acres of parkland has been a backdrop in productions like 'Bridget Jones's Diary' and Netflix's British Royal Family drama 'The Crown'.