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MPs must come together, stand behind soldiers: PM Modi

New Delhi (Gns). Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday noted that Parliament's monsoon session is being held in an extraordinary manner, with social distancing and with the two Houses conducting business in shifts, and urged MPs to send out a message that they were standing with soldiers at a time when they were bravely doing their duty in a difficult border terrain.

The PM's allusion was to the standoff at the border in eastern Ladakh, where the Indian Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) are within a few hundred metres of each other amid tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"This Parliament has a special duty; today our brave soldiers are at the borders with zeal and confidence in difficult terrain and soon it will begin to snow. They are there for the protection of the country, all MPs should together send a message to the soldiers that the whole country is with them. All MPs in one voice will say they are standing behind the brave soldiers," he said in a customary address to the media before House proceedings began.

Modi also thanked MPs for choosing the path to duty in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I congratulate them and expressed gratitude to them. This time, the Lok Sabha

and the Rajya Sabha will be held at different times in a day. It will be held on Saturday and Sunday as well. And all the MPs have accepted this," he said.

After the budget session was cut short in March owing to the pandemic, Parliament reconvened on Monday for an 18-day session. While Zero Hour has been reduced and



Question Hour dropped in view of the curtailed business hours, the PM expressed hope that Parliament will raise important issues.

"There will be discussion on various issues and we have experience that in Lok Sabha that the whole country tends to benefit from the detailed and extensive discussions that take place. We will continue that great tradition and all MPs will add value to it."

The PM also urged MPs and the media to abide by social distancing protocols. "In these circumstances, we will abide by the protocols; till

there is a vaccine we cannot let down our guard."

Later, in the Rajya Sabha, speaking after the election of Janata Dal (United) leader Harivansh as deputy speaker, the Prime Minister commented on the productivity of the House last year, and said that several bills that changed the direction of the country were passed.

"This House made a new record for being the most productive even when it was an election year. This is a great matter of pride that apart from productivity, positivity also grew in the house," he said.

Reacting to the PM's statement on soldiers, Shiv Sena's Rajya Sabha MP

Sanjay Raut, said: "The entire country has stood by the Army irrespective of whose government is at the Centre."

"On matters of National Security, Parliament as well as the Nation has always spoken in one voice. It is the PM himself who stood out by dismissing the incursion by PLA on our land in order to change the LAC unilaterally. It was PM who struck a discordant note by giving a clean chit to the Chinese. Our valiant soldiers have retaliated in full might and we are grateful for their supreme sacrifices... We must teach the aggressor a lesson..." said Congress spokesperson Pranav Jha.

IMA: CBI gets state nod to prosecute two IPS officers

Bangalore (Gns). The Karnataka government has provided permission to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to prosecute two top IPS officials in connection with the multi-crore I-Monetary Advisory (IMA) scam.

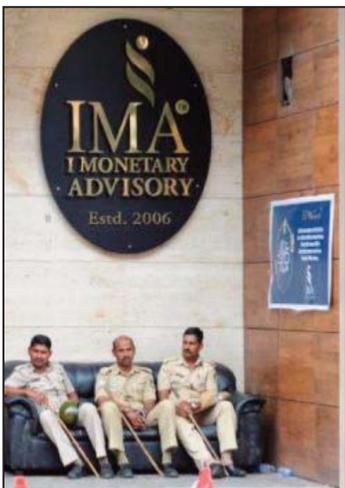
The CBI is now likely to question senior IPS officers Hemant Nimbalkar, IGP and Additional Commissioner of Police (Admin), Bengaluru and Ajay Hilori, Commandant of Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP).

The investigation into the IMA Ponzi scam — in which thousands of gullible depositors were allegedly duped of their hard-earned money — was handed over to the CBI and the central

agency had sought the state's permission to prosecute six public servants, including two IPS officers.

Following the CBI's request, the state government on September 9 accorded permission to prosecute Nimbalkar and Hilori.

The CBI had recently filed the chargesheet against LC Nagaraj, former assistant commissioner of Bengaluru Urban district, and ex-village



accountant Manjunath. When the scam happened, Nimbalkar was serving as IGP, CID, and Hilori was DCP (East). The permission has been given under section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Code as well as under section 170 of the Karnataka Police Act 1963.

The state government on September 11 permitted the CBI to prosecute EB Sridhar, the then DySP of CID, Economic Offences Division, M Ramesh, who was working as Inspector in the Commercial Street Police Station, and P Gowrishankar, the then Sub-Inspector of police at the same police station, in connection with the IMA case.

Govt's timely decisions, lockdown checked COVID deaths: Vardhan

NEW DELHI (Gns). The timely decisions taken by the government, including imposing a nationwide lockdown, helped in preventing approximately 37-38 thousand deaths due to coronavirus and 14-29 lakh people from getting infected, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Monday amid surging cases of COVID-19 in the country.

Making a statement in Lok Sabha on COVID pandemic and the steps taken by the Central government, Vardhan said in India about 92 per cent of the reported cases have mild symptoms, while oxygen

therapy was required in 5.8 percent cases and intensive care in 1.7 percent cases.

As on September 11, a total of 45,62,414 novel coronavirus cases and 76,271 deaths, with a case

fatality rate of 1.67 per cent, have been reported in India, the Health Minister added.

Asserting that the Central government undertook the COVID-19 challenge with the highest level of political commitment, he said the nationwide lockdown, a bold decision, undertaken by the government duly involving community, initiated as self-

imposed 'Janta Curfew' as per the call given by the Prime Minister is testimony to the fact that India has collectively stood up to manage COVID-19 and successfully blunted the its aggressive progression. "It has been estimated that this decision prevented approximately 14.29 lakh cases and 37.78 thousand deaths," he asserted, adding more than 35.42 lakh cases have recovered, equivalent to 77.65 per cent of the total cases.

"I wish to inform this house that the government is taking all necessary measures to prevent spread of the COVID in India," he said.

The maximum cases and deaths from the infection have been primarily reported from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, West Bengal, Telangana, Odisha, Assam, Kerala and Gujarat.

"All these states have reported more than 1 lakh cases," the minister said.

As per the World Health Organization, there are more than 2.79 crore confirmed cases of COVID-19 across the world and more than 9.05 lakh deaths, with a case fatality rate of 3.2 per cent, he said.

Many of the epidemiological parameters like mode of transmission and subclinical infection were still being researched, the health minister said.

Bengal CM Mamata announces stipend, houses for Hindu priests, academies for Dalits

Kolkata (Gns). With the West Bengal assembly polls in 2021 becoming crucial for her party, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday made a series of announcements for the state's Hindu-speaking, backward classes and tribal population as well as different religious groups. Banerjee also announced a monthly stipend of Rs 1,000 and houses for Hindu priests facing poverty.

"Many of them (priests) are very poor. They met me several times to seek help. We have given the priests a plot of land at Kolaghat for setting up a place for pilgrims. Priests who do not have houses will be given the same under the

state's rural housing scheme," Banerjee said at a press conference in the state secretariat.

"Please do not think we are doing this only for Hindu priests. We are ready to help clerics from other religions as well. The state Wakf board already gives a stipend to Imams of the mosques. We thought of doing something for the others. The state has already given a 700-acre land to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) at Nabadwip (Nadia district)," said Banerjee.

"The government will prepare a map of places of worship of all religions. The places of worship in poor state will be renovated and

preserved. Those with no definite owner or trustee fare measures for "people from all class, creed and



religions," Banerjee announced that a Hindi language academy will be set up. It will be run by

will be taken over by the government," she said.

Describing the moves as a part of the state's wel-

fare measures for "people from all class, creed and prominent members of the Hindi-speaking population. She announced a series of names as well. Former TMC Rajya Sabha member and newspaper editor Vivek Gupta will head the committee.

Making another announcement, Banerjee said, "Similar academies for tribal people and members of the Dalit communities will be set up to help them preserve and spread their culture and heritage."

Banerjee said an academy for Dalit literature will be headed by prominent writer from the community, Manoranjan Byapari, who won the Bangla Akademi award, amongst several others.

While referring to the

Dalits, the chief minister specifically mentioned the Matua community who comprise a sizeable chunk of voters as well as a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Lok Sabha member. Also, BJP won all the three seats in the state's western districts where the tribal population is significantly big.

The culturally important Baishnupur town, which incidentally is in Bankura where the BJP won the Lok Sabha seat in 2019, figures prominently in the chief minister's new plans.

"Bishnupur was a seat of learning centuries ago and the local museum has an archive of more than 3000 handwritten scrolls on various subjects including

Vaishnav literature. The state government will digitize these for preservation and research," she said.

The Bengal BJP leadership said Banerjee was making desperate attempts to please Hindi-speaking people, Dalits, tribals and Hindu priests after doing nothing for them for 10 years.

"All these years she never thought of these people. Rather she used to target those who chanted the Jai Sri Ram slogan in front of her. She gave stipend to the Imams and attended all Muslim festivals. Her regime will be over in six months. People will not be fooled by these promises," said BJP national secretary Rahul Sinha.

Lok Sabha meets with protocols in place for a change!

New Delh (Gns). : Lok Sabha on Monday met for the Monsoon session under unusual circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic with members seated in different locations, including the Rajya Sabha chamber, in view of the physical distancing norms put in place to check the spread of the virus.

Referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, he said MPs have chosen the path of their duty and added that all precautions will be taken.

Modi also enquired about the health of media personnel while noting that they will not get the opportunity to move around freely like before due to the coronavirus guidelines. As some Lok Sabha members

attended the House proceedings while seated in



the Rajya Sabha chamber, Speaker Om Birla said this is perhaps for the first time that such an arrangement had been put in place. Birla also said members do not have to stand while speaking as part of the new pro-

cedures put in place to contain the spread of COVID.

The Speaker said rules have been eased to allow Lok Sabha members to sit in Rajya Sabha and similarly Rajya Sabha members can occupy seats in the lower house to ensure distancing during the session of the upper house.

In a lighter vein, he said it is a dream of some RS members to sit in Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha secretariat said 359 members attended the proceedings of Lok Sabha on Monday. With two vacancies, the current strength to Lok Sabha is 541.

Unlike in the past, there were no opposition protests in the Well of the House, which is otherwise a usual occurrence on day

no mike facility there. The Speaker said rules have been eased to allow Lok Sabha members to sit in Rajya Sabha and similarly Rajya Sabha members can occupy seats in the lower house to ensure distancing during the session of the upper house.

Benches which usually accommodate six members had a numbered sitting plan for only three. Glass-like plastic shields of varied sizes were installed in front of benches to protect members from coronavirus. The shield also covered part of the members' sides.

In view of the coronavirus scare, only a few MPs interacted with media persons waiting at Vijay Chowk near the Parliament complex.

Chhattisgarh to set up specialised police unit to counter Maoists in Bastar

Raipur (Gns). The Chhattisgarh government has decided to set up a specialised police unit called the 'Bastar Special Force' in which only local young men of the Bastar region will be recruited to counter Maoists. The decision was taken in a review meeting chaired by chief minister Bhupesh Baghel on Monday in which senior police officials and home

minister Tamarahwaj Sahu were also present. The government has asked the police headquarters to send a proposal in this regard. "In the meeting, the chief minister said youths from remote villages of Maoist-

affected Bastar division will be recruited in this force which will also create employment opportunities



for them. Difficult geographical conditions and local dialects pose a huge challenge for police deployment in Bastar region, hence if local young men are recruited they will be of great advantage for

the police," said a senior police official. Director General of Police, Chhattisgarh, DM Awasthi told HT that the attempt is to employ the young men in the police force from Maoist affected villages of the region. "The recruitment will start in the next few months. We will send a proposal of recruiting around 1,000 personnel from all seven districts of Bastar division," said Awasthi. The DGP further said that district-wise recruitment has been planned in the force. "They will be engaged in all police activities including anti-Naxal operations.

Editorial

A battle on China's hands

After India occupied dominating features along the Line of Actual Control, China resorted to intense propaganda warfare, threatening India with war. The levels of propaganda kept rising with each passing day. The Global Times, accused India of initiating firing and said on 8 September, "the Indian army outrageously fired warning shots at Chinese border defence patrol personnel who were attempting to negotiate, which is a serious military provocation and very vile in nature." Colonel Zhang Shuili, spokesperson for the Western Theatre Command of the PLA stated, "We request the Indian side to immediately stop dangerous actions, immediately withdraw cross-line personnel, strictly restrain front-line troops, and strictly investigate and punish personnel who fired shots." This Chinese statement was released at 3 am, China time, displaying it was a desperate move and fake. The Indian army refuted Chinese claims, stating, "In the instant case, it was China's PLA troops who were attempting to close-in with one of our forward positions along the LAC and when dissuaded by own troops, PLA troops fired a few rounds in the air in an attempt to intimidate own troops." The game of claims and counter claims has just begun. Since India's offensive actions, CCP controlled Chinese media has been on an overdrive warning India of dire consequences. Most Chinese media compared the current scenario with 1962. The Global Times stated on 8 September, "China claimed victory in the 1962 war, which should be a lesson for India. Moreover, the military capability of the PLA is not what it used to be decades ago. Now, the PLA is a modern one with information capability, systematic combat capability and joint combat capability." Another article on the same day stated, "the PLA does not fire the first shot, but if the Indian army fires the first shot at the PLA, the consequence must be the annihilation of the Indian army on the spot. If Indian troops dare to escalate the conflict, more Indian troops will be wiped out." These comments appeared on social media seeking to influence the Indian public, opposition politicians and peaceniks, hoping for pressure on the government to scale back and withdraw from locations which have placed Chinese positions under threat. Currently, the only option open to China is launching assaults leading to high cost of Chinese lives. There are many aspects which Chinese media will never mention as it would prove their propaganda fake. In 1962, Indian forces, lacking ammunition, winter clothing, artillery and air support, fought in isolated posts till the last man and last round, causing such high casualties that the Chinese were shocked and in cases had no resources to push operations ahead. These shortcomings no longer exist. China will never mention the September 1967 Nathu La and Cho La clashes, where it suffered heavy casualties and was forced to withdraw in defeat. Nor will they declare their high casualties at Galwan, despite internal pressure, which would be embarrassing. Nor will China mention the valour and experience of Indian forces assaulting dizzying heights of Kargil and Siachen successfully. Another fact which the CCP-controlled Chinese media will hide is that Chinese Han soldiers are at a major disadvantage in Ladakh. Sixty per cent of the Chinese army consists of conscripts recruited for a limited tenure from rural China. They join to gain benefits in future employment, not for fighting wars. These soldiers can never survive the winters of Tibet and Ladakh. Historically, the PLA sends Chinese soldiers back to mainland China from November to April every year, leaving only locally recruited Border Defence Regiments and militia to patrol the LAC. Expecting Han Chinese soldiers to stay back and survive winters, challenging a hardened Indian army, for whom such tenures are routine is almost impossible.

What Delhi election result means for PM Modi, Kejriwal, Rahul Gandhi

The BJP made Narendra Modi its face in this election, in the absence of a strong local face who could be projected as chief minister. Modi also addressed two rallies. But this was not an election where voters had to choose or reject Modi. Delhi had made that choice last May, when the BJP bagged over 50% of the vote share. It was an element of this very base that shifted to the AAP in the assembly election, for they decided to choose Arvind Kejriwal as CM.

The fact that Kejriwal was careful not to attack the PM, and he made it not a contest between him and Modi but between him and the BJP's Delhi unit meant that Modi was not the central issue in the election.

This means that while the polls represent a setback, to read it as a rejection of Modi — or his policy approach of the last nine months — may be an error. The fact that the BJP did better than last time also shows that citizens continue to have a high degree of faith in the PM even when he is not directly in the battle. But Modi still has reason to worry.

Also Watch | Delhi gives thumbs up to Kejriwal: What it means for AAP, BJP & Congress

The worse-than-expected performance in Haryana, the loss of power in Maharashtra, the loss in Jharkhand polls, and now, the inability to challenge the AAP in Delhi, shows the BJP is losing its electoral touch at the state level.

This will have implications for governance at the national level, for state governments are crucial in implementation of key schemes. So while Modi remains India's most popular leader, his overall political challenge intensifies after Delhi.

Arvind Kejriwal Win secures regional footing, opens door to national politics

The Delhi chief minister has had a difficult five years — with a running battle with the Centre on

governance issues, the exit of key party leaders, setbacks to any national expansion plans (especially after the 2017 loss in Punjab), and then the rout in the Lok Sabha elections. Yet, Kejriwal has consistently learnt lessons and evolved.

From being seen as a disruptor, he transformed his image to that of a leader focused on meeting basic needs and aspirations of citizens — improving schools, public health facilities, and providing electricity and water at subsidised rates. He also toned down his opposition to Narendra Modi, and decided to support the BJP on contentious national issues, from the nullification of Article 370 to the judicial order on the construction of Ram Temple. He stayed away from JNU and Shaheen Bagh to prevent the BJP from getting any additional room to score political points.

All of this helped. The AAP was fighting a battle for survival — a loss would have raised questions about its very future. The win re-establishes Kejriwal's dominance in Delhi politics; it consolidates the AAP's position as a key regional party; and it potentially opens the door for national expansion. Becoming chief minister for the third time will ensure

Kejriwal has led AAP's transformation from a start-up to an established player in India's political marketplace. He will now have to make hard choices — priorities in the next term, whether he wants to move beyond Delhi, and if he wants to take an aggressive position against the BJP or stick to his non-confrontational approach.

Rahul Gandhi Gandhi must look for ways to reclaim space lost to AAP

It may be difficult to remember this now, but the Congress governed Delhi for three straight terms — until 2013.

The erosion in the party's strength — it lost all seven seats in both 2014 and 2019 elections, failed

to win a single seat in the 2015 assembly polls, and has failed to do so yet again — is a classic case study of how once dominant political forces can witness a sharp decline in the absence of a local leader, depleted social base, and failure to articulate an agenda that appeals to citizens.

Rahul Gandhi, who is

with the BJP.

Amit Shah Vote gain aside, loss shows limits of Shah's campaign

From the BJP, this was a campaign that was shepherded entirely by Union home minister Amit Shah. The party's improved performance — it only got three seats in the last assembly election — is

make no mistake, in an election, victory is what matters — and it came across as divisive. The larger pattern of the party facing state-level setbacks is also an issue that Shah and party chief JP Nadda will have to work on.

Manish Sisodia AAP's key face will remain vital to governance matrix

party's priorities in the next term. The AAP has a set of new leaders which it may seek to accommodate in the next cabinet, from Atishi Marlena to Raghav Chadha.

This may mean a certain reallocation in duties. But irrespective of that, Sisodia will remain the clear number two in the party. If Kejriwal decides to expand nationally, Sisodia will become even more crucial for the party in managing Delhi.

Manoj Tiwari After loss of Purvanchali vote, Tiwari may lose ground

The Delhi BJP state unit chief, Manoj Tiwari, was not appointed the party's chief ministerial face in the election. This, itself, indicated that he did not have the requisite appeal or stature to take on Kejriwal. Tiwari also had to manage internal factionalism, with senior leaders such as Vijay Goel, Harsh Vardhan, and its different parliamentarians having their independent bases.

Tiwari's calling card was his Purvanchali identity, and the party hoped that it would expand its base from its traditional Punjabi and Bania communities to migrants from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. But this was clearly not enough, as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has managed to win a substantial segment of the Purvanchali vote.

Tiwari, as a member of Parliament, will remain a figure in the city's politics. But his position does become vulnerable as the party's chief — for there will be questions about the weaknesses of the local unit and demand for accountability. In his media interviews, Tiwari, through the campaign, came across as a likeable leader, but who was out of touch with policy issues. The problem for the party however remains that it still has not been able to develop a strong enough local leader who can be given an opportunity to take on Kejriwal next time around. (Gns).



admittedly no longer the party president but remains its key leader, campaigned in the last lap of the Delhi polls. It did not yield any success, which will once again raise questions about his connect with the electorate. Any recent success the Congress has had has not been due to the Gandhi family.

In Haryana, Bhupinder Singh Hooda put up a credible performance; in Maharashtra, Sharad Pawar of the Nationalist Congress Party led the charge; in Jharkhand, it was Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's Hemant Soren who was the face of the alliance. Put it together, and the Delhi election reinforces the pattern of Gandhi's limited impact and appeal, and the continued crisis of the Congress.

It may be happy at the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) defeat, but it should worry that it has ceded space to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the Capital — a party that may once again seek to displace Congress from states where it is in direct contest

being attributed to Shah's aggressive campaign, which made Shaheen Bagh protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the AAP's alleged support for it as a central issue. This was meant to polarise the election on both ideological and communal lines.

The BJP did gain, and it managed to retain not only in 2015 assembly vote share but exceeded that by around five percentage points, is primarily due to Shah's forceful campaign. But it was not enough to offset the absence of local leaders and factionalism, and the perception that Kejriwal had delivered.

With the poll outcome, Shah has once again reinforced his reputation as a leader who does not give up, and who fights every election with all the intensity possible. But it also raises legitimate questions about the BJP's shrill campaign — when many of its leaders made provocative statements and were penalised by the Election Commission.

The party did not win —

Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia had emerged as a key governance face of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government over the last five years. As education minister, his role in improving public schools was a key poll plank for the party in the campaign. Sisodia's open support for Shaheen Bagh did create a degree of nervousness in the party — and he became the prime target of the BJP in its campaign.

Kejriwal had been careful to stay away from the issue, and subsequently, took charge of the messaging on it. Sisodia had a difficult Tuesday morning, for he was trailing in his constituency, causing moments of anxiety for the AAP. However, he did manage to recover ground and won his seat by 3,207 votes.

He will remain an important figure in AAP's internal functioning, as well as in the larger governance matrix. It is to be seen which portfolios he gets this time around, for that will also be a sign of the

"A strong negative character has always fascinated me", says

Vimarsh Roshan aka Baambaal from Sony SAB's Baalveer Returns

What made you accept Baalveer Returns? How does it feel to be associated with Sony SAB?

I welcome any role that has something to offer me as an artiste and have a strong penchant for playing powerful negative characters. I was thrilled when I was offered a negative character in Baalveer Returns, given the immense popularity of the fantasy show, with fans spread across not only in India but also world over. Sony SAB is a true family entertainment channel full of positivity and feel good content. There was no way I could've let such an opportunity to work with a popular show on a beloved channel slip out of my hands! I cherish this opportunity to work for a channel that offers shows for all age groups in a family.

Is this the first time you have stepped into a fantasy genre? If yes, how has been your experience like so far?

While this isn't the first time that I've been a part of a fantasy show, the last show I did in this genre was way back in 2009. It's been more than a decade and it seems like completely a new experience now! The fantasy genre gives you a unique experience. What impressed me after joining the Baalveer Returns family is the advancement in the visual and special effects technology. As an actor I enjoy learning through my projects and the opportunity to keep pace with the

latest technology in the space keeps me excited.

How is the character of Baambaal different from any characters you have essayed so far? Tell us something about Baambaal?

Baambaal, who is power-hungry and desires to rule the under-



water kingdom, Shinkai, has many interesting aspects. To begin with he is a larger than life character in an underwater world kingdom which is being shown for the first time on Indian television.

He is a rather volatile character and viewers will be at the edge of their seats witnessing how the character oscillates through various moods and shades. Baambaal can be fierce, committed, strict, lenient, ruthless, funny, cunning, sharp and more in various situations. I am confident that this dynamic quality is something that the audience will really enjoy.

Moreover, viewers will have the opportunity to see Baambaal in three different avatars - his true

self, inspired by an alligator, his disguise as the funny Principal Aghadi and also as the cool sauve Baambaal on Earth. As an actor, to be able to portray a wide range of his emotions and a wide breadth of personalities, is the opportunity of a lifetime for me.

What do you love the most about your character?

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Baambaal is that although he maintains his larger than life aura, he does not really possess such great powers. His powers are limited. It is his sharp mind and cunning nature which allows him to think big towards destruction. I enjoy this element of my character. He is never resting, always thinking ahead to achieve his mission.

How challenging is it to shoot in front of the green screen imagining the beautiful underwater world?

Shooting in front of a green screen challenges your imagination because nothing exists around you while shooting. It was a little challenging at first as I had to imagine a world that I had never seen before but the team narrated the world so precisely that now I am able to imagine the world around me while being in front of the green screen.

How do you feel about essaying a negative character in the show?

A strong negative character has always fascinated me. While playing a negative character you have to accept that people are not going to adore the character. But the antagonist of any show becomes the most crucial part of even the viewer's life. You always try to anticipate his next move. Baambaal also brings the element of suspense in the show and that makes my work as an actor even more exciting.

Any special preparations you did for this role?

I am still an artiste who is learning. I am incorporating new skills and tricks that I have learnt so far in my career, to ace the role of Baambaal. There is no reference character or literature for this character so whatever comes to me organically after receiving the brief, I embed that in my character. I think a lot about how I want to play out the scene. I turn into Baambaal and try to think like him before any shot.

Any message for the fans and viewers of Baalveer Returns

Baalveer Returns is an Indian superhero show with Indian ethos and spirit. Keep showering us with your love and support. The upcoming episodes are set to bring the viewers on the edge of their seats. Stay tuned and watch Baambaal's next move unfold.

Watch Vimarsh Roshan as notorious Baambaal every Monday-Friday at 8PM only on Sony SAB

Sachin Tendulkar to promote fantasy sports after signing on as Paytm First Games' brand ambassador

In a major marketing coup, Paytm First Games - the gaming subsidiary of homegrown digital financial services major Paytm --has signed up sporting legend Sachin Tendulkar as its brand ambassador, a move the startup hopes will inspire gaming enthu-

ing legend Sachin Tendulkar

Onboarding our newest @Paytm family member!

pic.twitter.com/12AqGwnWV0

— Vijay Shekhar Sharma (@vijayshekhar)

action. By welcoming Sachin as brand ambassador, we wish to inspire mobile gaming enthusiasts to experience fantasy sports which are about tactics, strategic planning, and research," Sudhanshu Gupta, COO, Paytm First Games, said.

sport, and we all tend to have opinions about the game - right from player selection to playing strategies. Paytm First Games will give fans the opportunity to don their thinking hats and experience the thrill of making the correct choices and getting their



siasts to experience fantasy sports and expand its reach in smaller cities and towns.

As brand ambassador, Sachin will create awareness about fantasy sports, a virtual game where participants put together virtual teams of real players of a professional sport, and help Paytm First Games generate excitement around all fantasy sports, including fantasy cricket, kabaddi, football, and basketball.

Paytm Founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma and cricket sport-

September 14, 2020

As the Indian digital gaming industry, in particular fantasy sports, takes off, Paytm First Games is setting aside Rs 300 crore to invest in growing the market for fantasy sports and other online gaming events during this financial year, the company said.

"The icon of a billion cricket-loving Indians, Sachin would be instrumental in creating awareness about the exciting genre of fantasy sports in the country. Most of us have grown up watching the Master Blaster in

Sachin Tendulkar Paytm First Games expects to feature more than 200 live events, including international and domestic cricket tournaments, and soccer leagues, on the Paytm First Games platform.

A recent survey by the Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports (FIFS) and Kantar on fantasy sports engagement in India showed that cricket, followed by football and kabaddi, are the most popular sport among fantasy sports. "Cricket is an engaging

teams to win. I am happy to partner with Paytm First Games to enable cricket fans to engage more with the ever-popular game of cricket," Sachin said.

Fantasy sports, where players apply research and strategy to engage with live sporting events, is the most popular sport among the 50-odd games that Paytm First Games offers. The platform also boasts engagement from over 80 million gaming enthusiasts, the majority of whom are from smaller cities and towns across India. (Gns).

RAJKOT DIVISION'S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT UNIT CREATED A NEW RECORD OF HIGHEST SINGLE TRIP LOADING TO WEST BENGAL

Mumbai. The Business Development Unit (BDU) of Rajkot station has hit a unique achievement of transporting more than 84 thousand kilograms of essential commodities from Rajkot station to West Bengal. This remarkable feat was achieved in a single trip of the Porbandar-Shalimar parcel special train and is a new record of highest single trip loading.

According to a press release issued by Shri Sumit Thakur - Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, the Zonal Headquarters of Western Railway and the newly formed Business Development Unit (BDU) in all divisions are doing a commendable job of attracting new customers for freight movement. In the same sequence, BDU of Rajkot Division transported 84,140 kg of essential materials by Train No 00913 Porbandar-Shalimar parcel special train. This astounding achievement was made possible in a single trip from Rajkot station to Shalimar station in West Bengal on 14th September 2020. The loading is by far the highest figure of loading from a single station in Rajkot division. A total of 98,717 kgs of material was loaded from Rajkot, Jamnagar and Surendranagar stations, due to which Rajkot division received a revenue of about Rs 5.47 lakh. Materials like hardware, kitchenware, auto parts,

imitation goods, pesticides for agriculture, medicines, surgical goods, sanitizers etc. were loaded in this parcel special train. This loading was possible due to various incentives provided by Western Railway, as well as tapping prospective customers. Since the time of lockdown from March 23 to September 14, 2020,

tonnes have been transported by Western Rly through its 537 parcel special trains, which mainly included agricultural produce, medicines, fish, milk etc. The revenue generated through this transportation, has been approx. Rs 41 crore. During this period, 88 milk special trains were run by Western Rly,

which 14,553 trains were handed over and 14,543 trains taken over at different interchange points. The revenue generated through these goods trains is about Rs 3909 crore. **LOSS OF PASSENGER REVENUE DUE TO LOCKDOWN**
The total loss of revenue over Western



Views of parcel loading activities in Rajkot and Jamnagar stations respectively.

about 4,376 tonnes of essential materials have been transported by Rajkot Division through 158 parcel special trains, which has generated revenue of more than Rs 2 crore.

Shri Thakur stated that, on 14th Sept, 2020, five Parcel Special trains left from various stations of WR. These included, 2 indented rakes, one from Linch to Sankrail Goods Yard and another from Karambelli to Azara station, 2 Parcel Special trains viz. Banda Terminus to Jammu Tawi and Porbandar to Shalimar and a milk special train from Palanpur to Hind Terminal. Since 23rd March to 13th Sep, 2020, commodities weighing more than 1.23 lakh

with a load of approx. 67 thousand tonnes and 100% utilization of the wagons. Similarly, 412 Covid-19 special parcel trains with a load of almost 40 thousand tonnes were also run to transport various essential commodities. In addition to this, 37 indented rakes carrying more than 15 thousand tonnes were also run with almost 100% utilization. During the lockdown period from 22nd March till 13th Sept, 2020, total 14,814 rakes of goods trains have been used by WR to supply essential commodities amounting to 31.04 million tonnes. 29,096 freight trains have been interchanged with other zonal railways, in

Railway on account of Corona Virus, has been approx. Rs 2552 crore, which includes about Rs 387 crore for suburban section and approx. Rs 2165 crore for non-suburban. In spite of this, resulting in cancellation of tickets since 1st March, 2020 to 13th Sept, 2020, Western Railway has ensured to return refund amount of Rs.428.29 crore. It's worth mentioning that in this refund amount, Mumbai division alone, has ensured refund of APPROX. Rs 207 crore. Till now, 66.36 lakh passengers have cancelled their tickets over entire Western Railway & have received their refund amount accordingly.

WESTERN RAILWAY PROVIDES A THRUST TO DIGITAL MODE OF PAYMENTS & TRANSACTIONS



Views of various Digital initiatives introduced by Western Railway.

Mumbai. Western Railway is continuously striving to promote the "Digital India" initiative to transform India into a digitally empowered society. As a part of this endeavour, W.Rly has enabled the facility of digital transactions at many places including 354 stations at various points of customer interface. These include UTS/ PRS locations, catering units, goods and parcel offices and other service contract locations.

According to a press release issued by Shri Sumit Thakur- Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Rly, with a view to maximize digital transactions, these stations have been provided with the facility of cashless transactions through various digital modes. On an average 4.50 lakh passengers per day are using the facility of ticketing through digital means over Western Rly. In addition to the above transactions, other miscellaneous transactions such as bills recoverable, payments for deposit works, auction sales, ground rents and other miscellaneous receipts which were hitherto being transacted through cheques/ DDs have also been brought under the ambit of digital transactions using the portal "Miscellaneous e-Receipts System" (MERS).

Shri Thakur informed that in order to promote and proliferate digital and cashless transactions & increase in outreach, various unique initiatives have been implemented by Western Railway. Till now 928 POS machines have been installed for facilitating cashless transactions. The facility of payment through UPI and BHIM has also been enabled at all UTS and PRS counters. UTS on mobile app for unreserved ticketing initiated on Western Railway as pilot project for Mumbai suburban section has been extended for all the Western Railway locations. QR code based ticketing has been implemented over Mumbai Suburban and the same will also be extended soon to non-suburban locations. 64 Hand Held Terminals (HHTs) have been provided to TTEs of Rajdhani/Shatabdi Special trains with provision of digital payment. 100% catering units over Western Railway are equipped with Cashless Transaction facilities including POS machines, Paytm /BHIM app etc. E-payment has been implemented across Western Railway for goods traffic. 92 POS machines have been installed at all important Goods shed and parcel locations for facilitating digital transactions by customers. With good

response, a large number of customers have opted for e-payment facility as on date. Digitalization has also been introduced in other areas such as Parking & in Pay and Use contracts. Total 88 locations have been covered under digitalization. Similarly, 19 locations of Pay & Use facility and Retiring rooms at 30 stations have been covered. In addition to this, flash plays at stations, help desk in station premises, display of posters, etc for promotion of digital payments are being done on regular basis. Further incentive in the form of bonus is also being given on ATVM and UTS on mobile app. WR's all divisions have been instructed to get all the new customers registered under E-RD so as to achieve 100% issuance of ET-RR. Recently introduced MERS system for remitting amounts of miscellaneous receipts is being proliferated. Payment to all contractors, vendors and employees is being done electronically through CIPS and has been made mandatory. Wide publicity is being arranged to promote digital payments through press releases at regular intervals. Publicity is also being done by posting on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook & Instagram in the form of

text, pictures, infographics & GIFs from time to time to reach out to the customers on one-to-one basis with the message for its effective promotion. Shri Thakur further informed that in this direction, Indian Railways have launched the IRCTC - SBI Contactless Credit Card on 28th July, 2020. This credit card is fully 'Made in India' card developed by IRCTC & SBI & powered by RuPay. This unique initiative will definitely help in paperless transactions in the entire ticket booking & ticket checking process. Shri Alok Kansal - General Manager of Western Rly has commended the good progress of digital payments & transactions over Western Rly. He said that Western Railway is leaving no stone unturned to accomplish the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister of "Digital India" as well as "Atma Nirbhar Bharat". As a part of this very endeavour, Western Railway is striving to achieve 100% cashless transactions at all points of sales covering all business streams and at all stations. Western Rly has urged all its valuable customers to be a part of this important initiative by adopting digital means and to transform India into a digitally empowered society.

UAE approves coronavirus vaccine emergency use for at-risk workers

Image Source : AP
UAE approves emergency use of coronavirus vaccine
The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has approved the use of emergency authorisation of the coronavirus vaccine to at-risk workers on Monday. In a series of tweets, UAE allowed the emergency use of coronavirus vaccine saying one of the very first doses will be available to "first defence" workers who are at risk. The UAE government informed that those who received the vaccine during the trials have developed antibodies and did not reflect any harmful side-effects. As the world continues to battle coronavirus, over development with some of them are in final stage clinical trials.

UAE's move to allow emergency use of the vaccine, which is still under phase-3 trials, seems to have been motivated towards curbing the virus to spread further but the risk involved in the move cannot be ignored too. UAE is also hosting the Indian Premier League (IPL) this year after the scheduled tournament -- one of the most popular cricket formats ever -- was postponed in India due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

170 vaccines for the infectious disease are under development with some of them are in final stage clinical trials. UAE's move to allow emergency use of the vaccine, which is still under phase-3 trials, seems to have been motivated towards curbing the virus to spread further but the risk involved in the move cannot be ignored too. UAE is also hosting the Indian Premier League (IPL) this year after the scheduled tournament -- one of the most popular cricket formats ever -- was postponed in India due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

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Covid enters Parliament: 25 MPs, 56 staff test positive

New Delhi (Gns). On Monday, Parliament sat for its monsoon session of Parliament. The mood was considerably chastised since its previous sitting on the last day of the budget session back in March. On March 23, when Parliament wound up its budget season, there were 499 cases of coronavirus and 10 deaths in the country. By Monday, when MPs shuffled into their sanitised seating arrangement, the number had ballooned to 4.9 million cases and 80,000 deaths. The corona case load includes 25 MPs — 17 of the Lok Sabha and 8 of the Rajya Sabha. Of the 17 Lok Sabha MPs, 12 are from the BJP, with prominent ones being Meenakshi Lekhi and Parvesh Verma (both from Delhi) and controversial MP Anant Kumar Hegde. Two YSR Congress MPs were positive, while the Shiv Sena, DMK and RLP have one MP each affected by Covid-19. About 200 MPs are above 65, including some in the 85-90 age bracket, most prominent among them being former prime minister Manmohan Singh, a Rajya Sabha member, who is 87. Incidentally, while briefing the Lok Sabha on the government's handling of the Covid situation by the Centre, health minister

Harsh Vardhan said it had done 'very well'. Interestingly, prime minister Narendra Modi, addressing the media prior to the start of the session, acknowledged it was being held 'under special circumstances as there is a corona pandemic on the one hand while our obligation towards fulfilling our duties lies on the other'. He said several important decisions would be taken during the session, and 'the more diverse the discussion is in the House, the more beneficial it is for the country'. Elaborate arrangements have been made by the Lok Sabha Secretariat as the session is being held while

the pandemic seems to have peaked again across the country. It is estimated that 56 persons have tested positive within the entire Parliament House complex, period last month, had to be admitted again to AIIMS a couple of days ago. He had earlier been admitted there on August 18 for post-corona care but was discharged on August 30-31. In a first, all MPs marked their attendance through an app called Attendance Register on the first day of the session, Lok Sabha secretariat sources said. Normally MPs sign the attendance register that is kept outside each House. Speaker Om Birla welcomed the MPs, saying it was an extraordinary occasion, and urged them to follow all arrangements and guidelines for safety during the Covid-19 pandemic.

which include MPs, personnel from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha secretariats and also mediapersons. Sources said these people tested positive during the RT-PCR tests which were conducted in the Parliament complex prior to the session's start. Earlier, at least seven Union ministers and around 25 MPs and MLAs had contracted the disease. Among them is home minister Amit Shah, who after undergoing the mandatory quarantine



Govt imposes ban on export of onions

New Delhi (Gns). The Union government on Monday banned export of all varieties of onions, anticipating a supply crunch in the coming weeks, as exports surged. In the April-July period, export of onions rose an unusual 30%, causing prices to show signs of firming up. A notification by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) on Monday said that exports of onions, which were so far "free", now stood "prohibited with immediate effect". A key kitchen staple, onions tend to suffer frequent price and supply volatility.

The government had last banned onion exports on September 29, 2019, after a bad crop crimped output. In December 2019, prices soared to Rs 80 per kg in the national capital. The government had lifted the ban on March 15, 2020. Retail prices this week rose to Rs 40 a kg from Rs 30 a kg in several cities. According to official trade data, the country exported US \$328 million

worth of fresh onions and US\$ 112 million worth of dried onions in 2019-20. Between April and July 2020, exports of onions to neighbouring Bangladesh soared 157.7%. Since the bulb is a common base ingredient of most Indian dishes and widely consumed, consumers are quite sensitive to a rise in onion prices, relative to many other commodities. The country's consumer or retail inflation in August

rose 6.69%, slightly lower than 6.73% recorded in the previous month, according to government data released on Monday. According to the consumer price index data, food inflation in August fell marginally to 9.05%. Yet, overall food & beverages inflation rose to a high of 8.3% in August, Monday's data showed. "Retail inflation in last five months have been in excess of 6%. Unless retail inflation in September 2020 declines sharply to around 4.5%, the retail inflation in three consecutive quarters will exceed 6% and monetary policy committee (of the Reserve Bank) will have to respond to the government on the steps taken to keep inflation in 2-6% range," said Sunil Kumar Sinha, Principal Economist, India Ratings and Research in a statement. High inflation shrinks the scope of Reserve Bank of India to lower lending rates to boost sagging growth.



'Only people of Delhi invited': AAP leader on Kejriwal swearing-in ceremony

New Delhi (Gns). Aam Aadmi party (AAP) leader Gopal Rai has said that the oath-taking ceremony of chief minister-designate Arvind Kejriwal will be a Delhi specific event. Kejriwal will take oath as Delhi Chief Minister on Sunday, February 16. "No chief minister or political leader from other states will be invited for the ceremony that is going to be specific to Delhi," Rai, who is also the convenor of party's Delhi unit, told news agency PTI on Thursday. Kejriwal will take oath with the people of Delhi who

have reposed their faith in his leadership, he added. Kejriwal will take oath as Delhi chief minister at a grand ceremony at the Ramliya Maidan. This will be his third stint as chief minister. Also Watch | Delhi gives thumbs up to Kejriwal: What it means for AAP, BJP & Congress
The AAP secured a stunning victory securing 62 seats in the 70-member Delhi assembly. The BJP increased its seats tally to eight, from three in 2015. The Congress, however, once again drew a blank.

Acknowledging the mandate from Delhi, Kejriwal gave a big "I love you" shout-out to the city and thanked it for reposing its faith in its son. He further added that AAP's victory will give birth to "kaam ki rajneeti (politics of work)". The party leaders, meanwhile, indicated that the AAP government is set to repeat all its ministers in the Cabinet, adding that the CM, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, and the five other ministers will take the oath of office and secrecy on Sunday. The swearing-in

ceremony in 2015, when the AAP won 67 seats, was also held at the Ramliya Maidan on February 14. The win assumes even greater significance as the AAP was routed in the Lok Sabha polls. The party won only 18% of the votes polled, coming third in five of the seven parliamentary constituencies. When it first emerged on the political stage, winning 28 seats in the 2013 election, most political veterans of other parties were dismissive of AAP's prospects — they saw it as a one-election wonder.

Chief Minister Vijay Rupani volunteers to live up to his own appeal 'Test is Best', undergoes testing for coronavirus – tests negative



Gandhinagar. Chief Minister Vijay Rupani here today himself volunteered to undergo testing for coronavirus, setting an example of living up to his own appeal to the people of Gujarat – 'Test is Best'. His report found to be negative.

As the Chief Minister, Mr. Rupani has been trying to convince people and remove their fear since the very beginning of outbreak of global pandemic to undergo testing, to ensure timely treatment if detected early.

More Covid-19 Tests in Delhi Than in Any Other Part Of The World: CM Arvind Kejriwal

New Delhi (Gns). Delhi is conducting the highest number of COVID-19 tests in the whole world, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said during the one-day session of the Assembly on Monday. Amid a surge in COVID-19 cases, Kejriwal said the matter of concern should be the number of deaths and not cases as he claimed that the coronavirus death rate in the national capital is perhaps the lowest in the world.

The largest number of COVID-19 tests are being conducted per day per million population. In the UK, around 3,000 tests are conducted per million population, 1,388 in the USA, 2,311 in Russia, and 8,58 in Peru. In India, the figure is 819 tests per day per million. So, Delhi is conducting the highest number of tests in the whole world,' the chief minister said.

the toughest in Delhi. 'First, we need to understand that the COVID-19 situation of was the toughest in Delhi. We must keep this the governments that they wanted to go back to Delhi,' he said.



The Indian government decided to bring these people back to India by sending special flights, the chief minister said. 'Delhi is the national capital of India and so 80-90 per cent of all flights landed in Delhi. Indians living there asked

COVID-19 was a new disease then, and nobody knew about any protocol or guidelines to be followed, no quarantine, and no isolation,' Kejriwal said.

Kejriwal said the pandemic made him realise that nobody can handle it alone. 'If Delhi would have tried to handle it alone, we would not have been able to do it. We took help from everyone. I want to thank the Centre for helping us whenever we needed them. They gave us PPE kits, oxygen cylinders and testing kits. No government can handle it alone.

'We have a weakness. We do not know how to do politics, but this weakness has become our biggest strength right now. I

Same sex marriages not recognised by our laws, society and our values: Centre to HC

NEW DELHI (Gns). The Centre on Monday told the Delhi High Court that marriage between same sex couples was "not permissible" as it is not recognised by "our laws, legal system, society and our values".

He said the plea to grant recognition to or permit registration of such marriages was "not permissible" for two reasons - firstly, the petition was asking the

under the HMA, the various provisions regulating marriages or prohibited relationships talk of husband and wife and therefore, who would be assigned these

The submission was made before a bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan by Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta during hearing of a PIL seeking a declaration that same sex marriages be recognised under the Hindu Marriage Act (HMA) and Special Marriage Act.



Mehta opposed the relief sought in the petition saying "our laws, our legal system, our society and our values do not recognise a marriage, which is a sacrament, between same sex couples".

court to legislate and secondly, any relief granted "would run contrary to various statutory provisions". "Unless court does violence to various laws, this cannot be done," he added.

roles where a same sex couple was concerned.

The bench observed that the world over things were changing, but it may or may not be applicable to India.

It, however, questioned the need for a PIL in the

instant case, saying the people who claim to be affected are well educated and can themselves approach the court.

"Why should we entertain the PIL," it added. The counsel for the petitioner stated that the affected people were not coming forward themselves as they feared reprisals and therefore, a PIL was preferred.

It asked the lawyer appearing for the petitioner, Abhijit Iyer Mitra, to give details of the persons who were not permitted to register their same sex marriage.

With the direction to place these factual aspects before the court, the bench listed the matter for further hearing on October 21.

The petition has contended that despite the Supreme Court decriminalising consensual homosexual acts, marriages between same sex couples was still not possible.

UK tests to determine if COVID vaccines work better inhaled

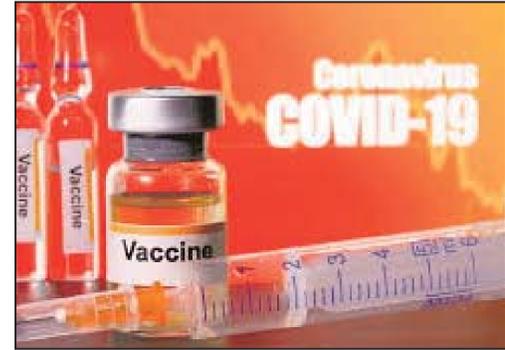
London (Gns). British scientists are beginning a small study comparing how two experimental coronavirus vaccines might work when they are inhaled by people instead of being injected.

He suggested that might also be the case with COVID-19.

In a statement on Monday, researchers at Imperial College London and Oxford University said a trial involving 30 people would test vaccines developed by both institutions when participants inhale the droplets in their mouths, which would directly target their respiratory systems.

Larger studies of the Imperial and Oxford vaccine are already under way, but this study aims to see if the vaccines might be more effective if they are inhaled.

"We have evidence that delivering influenza vaccines via a nasal spray can protect people against flu as well as help to reduce the transmission of the disease," said Dr. Chris Chiu of Imperial, who is leading the research.



"It is critical we explore whether targeting the airways directly can provide an effective response compared to a vaccine injected into muscle," Chiu said in a statement.

The study is currently recruiting participants aged 18 to 55 and hopes to begin vaccinating people in London in the coming weeks.

group has the right vaccine but the wrong delivery method, and only trials such as this will be able to tell us that," said Robin Shattock, who is leading the development of Imperial's vaccine.

The Imperial vaccine uses synthetic strands of genetic code based on the virus.

Once injected into the muscle, the body's own cells are instructed to make copies of a spiky protein on the coronavirus.

That is expected to trigger in turn an immune response so the body can fight off any future COVID-19 infection.

In comparison, Oxford's vaccine uses a harmless virus - a chimpanzee cold virus, engineered so it cannot spread - to carry the coronavirus' spike protein into the body, which should apparently trigger an immune response.

"It may well be that one

Japan's LDP gets new leader

Tokyo (Gns). Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga was on Monday elected as the new leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), replacing outgoing Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who announced his resignation last month due to health issues, from the top post.

garnered 89 and 68 votes, respectively. In the scaled-down vote, 394 Diet

Under normal circumstances, the top leader of the LDP would be chosen with Diet members belonging to the party and rank-and-file members holding 394 votes each.



The 71-year-old was elected at a joint plenary meeting of party members from both houses of the Diet (Parliament) and delegates from local chapters earlier in the day, reports Xinhua news agency.

At the meeting, Suga won 377 votes while the other two contenders, LDP policy chief Fumio Kishida and former Defence Minister Shigeru Ishiba

Suga is now expected to win a vote at an extraordinary Diet session on Wednesday to become the new Prime Minister.

Monday's election was triggered by Abe's abrupt August 28 announcement that he was stepping down citing his chronic illness, but said he

members cast their ballots. A total of 141 votes were cast by three delegates each from the country's 47 prefectural chapters.

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Trump says Europe has more 'explosive' trees than California

California (Gns). Donald Trump and California state officials sparred over whether climate change is contributing to out-of-control wildfires across the West, after the president insisted that poor forest management drives the conflagrations.

More than 5 million acres have been burned across the West this season, killing dozens of people and ruining air quality from California to Washington.

Wade Crowfoot, the secretary of California's Natural Resources Agency, told Trump in a meeting in Sacramento on Monday that a warming climate is making the state's fires worse.

Newsom on Friday argued that flawed forest management practices of the past can't explain the state's worsening fire seasons. California has been stepping up its use of controlled burns to thin out vegetation and has accelerated cutting fire breaks around vulnerable communities, he said.

"We want to work with you to really recognize the changing climate and what it means to our forests, and actually work together with that science," Crowfoot told the president. "The science is going to be key. If we

But the recent drought and a tree-killing beetle infestation, both of which Newsom tied to climate change, have killed more than 150 million trees across the state, leaving ample fuel for fires.



together protecting Californians."

Trump responded: "It'll start getting cooler, you just watch."

Sacramento after a weekend campaign swing through Nevada in order to discuss the fires with California officials including Governor Gavin Newsom.

Experts divided on new UP special force

New Delhi (Gns). The Uttar Pradesh government defended on Monday a controversial new security force with sweeping powers to arrest or detain suspects even as some legal experts cautioned about the possibility of misuse and the Opposition alleged the force could be used to muzzle dissent.

CISF Act," he said.

of human rights, constitutional rights," said the Samajwadi Party. The Congress party compared the provisions to the Rowlatt Act of 1919 that gave British forces power to indefinitely detain and jail without trial. Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee president Ajay Kumar Lallu called the act undemocratic and said it could be used against citizens.

The constitution of the UP Special Security Force (UPSSF) to guard strategic and vital installations, courts, government premises, religious spots, transport hubs, industrial undertakings, and private buildings – if permitted by the state government – was announced on Sunday. The first phase of the 9,919-strong force is expected to be launched in three months, at a cost of Rs 1,747 crore.

Section 10 of the UPSSF Act empowers the force to arrest any person without a warrant or order from a magistrate on suspicion that the suspect is connected to an offence or taking steps to commit one. Section 11 allows the force to detain, and search without a warrant. In both cases, the suspect is to be handed over to a police officer "without delay". Section 13 said personnel of this force would be considered on duty round-the-clock and could be deployed for security anywhere in the state.

The legal foundation of this force is the UPSSF Act, 2020, which was passed by the state's legislative assembly in its monsoon session and assented to by the governor on August 28. The act, which followed an ordinance, was passed after the Allahabad high court in December 2019 took cognisance of a murder inside a courtroom in Bijnor and ordered the state government to strengthen security inside court campuses.

Additional chief secretary (home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi said UPSSF's work profile will be similar to the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), which guards airports and vital installations across India. "We have not given the new force any extraordinary powers and most of the provisions are similar to the

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) backed the force. "This is an excellent initiative by chief minister Yogi Adityanath ji to protect the sovereignty of institution of state. This is also a good step to win confidence of investors. The opposition should rise above vote bank politics and join in welcoming this move," UP party secretary Subhash Yaduvansh said.

But the Opposition called the force a deception. "It's a tool and conspiracy to crush constitutional rights by political power...this is violation

But a CISF officer disagreed, saying the central paramilitary force doesn't have arrests or search powers.

of public and private industrial undertakings, it did not have the power of arrest, raid or seizure.

their view of the provisions – especially Sections 15 and 16 that provided protection to force from prosecution for



ers. "It can detain people at the place of its duty like airports or metro stations but they are handed over to the police ultimately...we don't know how SSF will work but we are a completely different force," said the officer who didn't wish to be named.

In Maharashtra, the state security force was formed after the 26/11 terror attacks to guard vital installations and institutions. "We can arrest a person without a warrant but cannot search a place without it," said D Kanakratnam, director general of police (DGP), Maharashtra State Security Corporation.

under Sections 15 and 16 seem to be pari-materia [dealing with the same subject] with similar provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), the Act when taken as a whole, constitutes a special force, gives them a carte blanche and assures them of state protection against allegations of misuse. Absolute, unaccountable power to a police force is the hallmark of a police state," said senior Supreme Court advocate Sanjay Hegde.

He agreed that the force was given wide powers to arrest, even in situations that may otherwise be a non-cognizable offence (less serious offences for which a warrant is needed to arrest), like lurking in a court building or near a bank premises.

Alok Prasanna Kumar, a senior resident fellow at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, said Sections 15 and 16 were "very standard provisions".

"The function of UP Special Police as per section 3 (of the Act) is very clear – to protect institutions, high court, district courts, state government administrative premises, religious spots,