

OPINION 6
ARE WE LIVING
IN A DYSTOPIA?

WORLD 8

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CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES

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NEW DELHI, THURSDAY OCTOBER 8, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

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3 BJP rebels join Chirag's crusade

Many other BJP leaders to join LJP, contest against JD(U) despite warning from BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Three senior BJP leaders have turned rebel and joined Chirag Paswan's political crusade against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, much to the discomfiture of the saffron outfit. Several other BJP leaders are in the queue to join the Lok Janashakti Party and contest against Janata Dal(U) despite strong warning from the BJP.

A day after former BJP vice president Rajendra Singh joined the LJP, two more senior BJP leaders — Usha Vidyarthi and Rameshwar Chaurasia — joined the LJP even as the State saffron leadership fretted and fumed and the JD(U) tried to calculate the loss it may have to face due to Chirag Paswan's decision to put contest against the party's nominees.

Usha Vidyarthi joined the LJP after meeting its president Chirag Paswan here, and is likely to be fielded from the Patna Assembly seat where the JD(U) will contest as well.

Sitting BJP MLA Ravindra Yadav from Jhajha also joined the LJP along with several other party rebels who have been denied tickets and see the LJP a perfect platform to take a plunge in the polls.

Rajendra Singh, who has more than three decades of association with the RSS, wanted to contest from Dinara but the seat has been allotted to the JD(U) as part of its seat-sharing arrangement with the ally.



Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Bihar BJP election in-charge Devendra Fadnavis, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi, BJP State president Sanjay Jaiswal with Vikashin Insaan Party (VIP) leader Mukesh Sahani after their alliance for the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections in Patna on Wednesday

PTI ■ that the next Government in the State will be headed by the BJP with his party's support.

Meanwhile, the BJP on Wednesday allocated 11 seats to associate partner Vikashin Insaan Party (VIP) from its quota of 121 seats in Bihar Assembly polls.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had announced at a joint press conference on Tuesday that while the JD(U) will spare some seats to Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) of former Chief Minister Jitam Ram Manjhi from its share of 122 seats and the BJP will accommodate the VIP from its quota of 121 seats in the 243-member Assembly. The JD(U) has provided seven seats to the HAM.

The seat distribution to the VIP was announced at a press conference addressed by Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi, Bihar unit president Sanjay Jaiswal and VIP chief Mukesh Sahni.

Jaiswal told reporters that the VIP will also be provided one seat in Bihar legislative council in future.

The VIP floated a couple of years ago by former Bollywood set designer Mukesh Sahni, was with the Opposition Grand Alliance till last week.

Chirag has come out strongly against JD(U) president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and claimed the rebels to come back to the party fold.

Chirag may have compulsion to fall in line — he could face action from the EC if he continued to seek votes in the name of Modi — but the BJP rebels have turned deaf ears to the warning.

Chirag has come out strongly against JD(U) president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and claimed

Ex-CBI chief Ashwani Kumar found hanging

PTI/ANS ■ SHIMLA/NEW DELHI

Former CBI director and Nagaland Governor Ashwani Kumar was found hanging at his residence in Shimla on Wednesday, officials said.

It is learnt that Kumar, also the former Director General of Himachal Pradesh Police, was under depression for sometime now. Shimla Superintendent of Police Mohit Chawla confirmed the incident.

Kumar became CBI director in 2008, succeeding Vijay Shanker, in the midst of the agency's probe into the Aarushi Talwar murder case that hogged the headlines.

Kumar later became Governor of Nagaland, they said. He was presently Vice Chancellor of a private university in Shimla, they said. The university is currently facing charges of issuing fake degrees.

The body of Kumar, a 1973-batch IPS officer, was found hanging at his residence in Shimla on Wednesday evening, they said.

A senior police officer told IANS that a suicide note was found from the crime spot.

He along with his wife was seen strolling in the evening in the city, a neighbour told the police.

The lover of cartoons, Kumar had said in an interview



to PTI in 2008 after taking over as the CBI Director, "I like Tom and Jerry cartoon show. Police is like the cat while the criminals are like mice. So Tom never leaves Jerry."

"I am in the game of Tom and Jerry and I have to do my job," he had said.

Kumar had expressed his displeasure over the probe into the Aarushi murder case and had taken upon himself to take it to a logical conclusion.

"This case is a litmus test for me. I need to know who killed Aarushi — parents or someone else. I feel agitated within over this case," he had commented.

During his stint as the CBI Director, Kumar laid a special focus on the growing economic offences and roped in the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) to help the agency in probing white collar crimes.

Protesters can't block roads, says SC in Shaheen verdict

Protest democratic right, but must be done on designated places, rules court

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Public spaces cannot be occupied indefinitely and demonstrations expressing dissent have to be in designated places alone, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday while concluding that occupation of public ways in the anti-CAA protests at Shaheen Bagh here was "not acceptable".

Observing that democracy and dissent "go hand in hand", the apex court said constitutional scheme comes with the right to protest and express dissent, but with an obligation towards certain duties.

A bench headed by Justice SK Kaul said erstwhile mode and manner of dissent against colonial rule cannot be equated with dissent in a self-ruled democracy.

"However, while appreciating the existence of the right



to peaceful protest against a legislation... We have to make it unequivocally clear that public ways and public spaces cannot be occupied in such a manner and that too indefinitely," said the bench, also comprising Justices Aniruddha Bose and Krishna Murari.

The bench delivered its verdict on a plea by lawyer Amit Sahni against blockade of a road in Shaheen Bagh area by those protesting against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which aimed to provide Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

It said protest at Shaheen Bagh was a blockage of a public way which caused grave

inconvenience to commuters.

"We have, thus, no hesitation in concluding that such kind of occupation of public ways, whether at the site in question or anywhere else for protests is not acceptable and the administration ought to take action to keep the areas clear of encroachments or obstructions," it said.

Democracy and dissent go hand in hand, but then the demonstrations expressing dissent have to be in designated places alone," it said, adding, "We cannot accept the plea of the applicants that an indeterminate number of people can assemble whenever they choose to protest".

Continued on Page 2

Centre procures 23% more paddy on MSP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid farmers' protests across India against the farm Bills and their apprehensions over the minimum support price (MSP), the Centre on Wednesday said since September 26 it has procured 15.26 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of paddy at the MSP value of around ₹2,882 crore from 1,27,832 farmers of Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Pandey said up to October 6, the nodal agencies procured 201.15 MT of moong having MSP value of ₹1.45 crore benefiting 161 farmers in Tamil Nadu and Haryana. Similarly, 5089 MT of copra having MSP value of ₹52.40 crore has been procured benefiting 3961 farmers in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu against the sanctioned quantity of 1.23 LMT for the Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Continued on Page 2

Punjab farmers reject Centre's request for meet on farm laws

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A gitating farmers in Punjab on Wednesday turned down the Centre's request for a meeting on October 8 to address their concerns regarding the farm laws, saying the Government is not serious.

The rail roko agitation by farmers under the banner of Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) has entered in 14th days in Punjab. Farmers have been blocking the railway tracks by putting up a tent on the railway lines since September 24.

In Haryana, farmers in Sirsa are squatting on a road leading to Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala's residence, demanding his resignation from the post against Centre's agriculture sector laws.

The Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, the farmers' body which is spearheading the agitation in Punjab against the Central Government's three farm laws, on Wednesday said Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar had invited it for a meeting in Delhi on October 8.

Continued on Page 2

Rhea granted bail, brother's petition rejected by HC

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday granted a conditional bail to accused actress Rhea Chakraborty in the Sushant Singh Rajput death-related drug case, after holding that there were no grounds to believe that she committed any offence involving commercial quantity of contraband and dismissing the special court's observation that if released on bail she might alert others and have the evidence destroyed by them.

Hours after the High Court granted her bail, Rhea walked out from the Byaculla women's jail on Wednesday and drove back to her Juhi residence in the full media glare and amid tight police security.

Nearly a month after she was arrested in the Sushant

death-related drug case, Justice SV Kotwal of the High Court granted bail to Rhea on a personal bond for ₹1 lakh with "one or two sureties" for the same amount and conditions like she would deposit her passport with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and not leave the country without permission from the special court and she would present herself for an attendance once in a month for the next six months.

The High Court also granted bail to the actor's housekeeper Dipesh Sawant and house manager Samuel Miranda on a surety of ₹50,000 each in cash. Justice Kotwal, however, rejected the bail plea of Rhea's brother Showik Chakraborty after noting he is part of a chain of drug dealers.

Continued on Page 2

Scribes can't chase anyone for interview in Mumbai

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

TV journalists in Mumbai will no longer be able to enjoy the thrill of chasing celebrities on the streets and shriek at them question from speeding vehicles.

After Bombay HC granted bail to Rhea Chakraborty, the police warned journalists of strict action if they chased the vehicle of any celebrity, advocate or a person they wanted to interview.

Continued on Page 2

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 68,29,678

DEATHS: 1,05,519

RECOVERED:

58,18,100

ACTIVE: 9,05,092



STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	14,80,489	39,072	11,96,441
Andhra Pradesh	7,34,427	6,086	6,78,828
Karnataka	6,68,652	9,574	5,42,906
Tamil Nadu	6,35,855	9,984	5,80,736
Uttar Pradesh	4,24,326	6,200	3,74,972
Delhi	2,98,107	5,616	2,70,305
West Bengal	2,80,504	5,376	2,46,767
Kerala	2,53,406	907	1,60,253
Odisha	2,40,998	1,011	2,10,217
Telangana	2,04,748	1,189	1,77,008
Bihar	1,91,427	927	1,79,351
Assam	1,90,209	785	1,55,074
Rajasthan	1,50,467	1,590	1,27,526
Gujarat	1,46,672	3,531	1,26,757
Madhya Pradesh	1,40,307	2,518	1,20,267
Haryana	1,37,398	1,528	1,24,841

Police give Hathras papers to CBI; SIT gets 10 more days

PREETAM ■ PNS/LUCKNOW

The Hathras police, investigating the rape and murder of a Dalit girl, has initiated the process to transfer the papers to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) who will now register a case and proceed with further legal action.

In the meantime, the Government has extended the terms of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for

ten more days as the probe by them is still inconclusive.

Sources said all the FIRs related to Hathras case have been transferred to the CBI.

The UP Government had recommended a CBI probe on Saturday last and the letter to the Union Home Ministry was sent immediately thereafter.

However, the family of the victim has opposed the CBI probe and have demanded a judicial investigation. They have also opposed the UP Government's suggestion for a Narco test on the family of the victim, accused and even of the policemen.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE
VIRUS-HIT AAP MLA MEETS HATHRAS FAMILY, BOOKED
Hathras: Delhi AAP MLA Kuldeep Kumar was on Wednesday booked for meeting Hathras victim's family even after being tested positive for coronavirus in violation of the Covid-19 protocol, police said.

3 terrorists killed in Shopian encounter

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Three terrorists, one belonging to the pro Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen and two others to Al Badr terrorist outfit, were killed by the joint team of security forces during a night long operation in the Sogun area of South Kashmir's Shopian district on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the line of control along the Uri sector in Baramulla also witnessed fresh exchange of firing with Pakistan resorting to use of mortar shelling and use of other weapons to hit the forward posts of the Indian army. In response, Indian army retaliated strongly.

Defence spokesman in Srinagar, Col Rajesh Kalia said, "Pakistan initiated an unprovoked Ceasefire Violation

along LoC in Uri Sector, Baramulla District wednesday morning by firing mortars & other weapons. A Befitting response was given, he added.

In Shopian, the operation was launched in the area on receipt of information about the movement of a group of terrorists late Tuesday evening.

Soon after the initial contact was made with the terrorists hiding inside a home, appeals were made by the security forces to lay down their arms but they refused. According to ground reports, two terrorists were neutralised late night and the third terrorist was neutralised after the operations resumed with the first light early Wednesday morning.

Jawans of 44RR, Special Operations Group of Jammu

Delhi Govt allows functioning of all weekly markets

New Delhi: The Delhi Government on Wednesday decided to allow all weekly markets to function in the national capital with immediate effect.

The decision was taken by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) after reviewing the COVID-19 situation in the city. Taking to Twitter, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that now all the weekly markets will be opened. The move, he said, will be a relief for the poor people. In his order issued on Wednesday, Chief Secretary Vijay Dev said all weekly markets, except in COVID-19 containment zones, have been allowed to function with immediate effect.

Until now, the DDMA had allowed only two such markets to open daily in every municipal zone.

"Weekly markets shall be selected by the joint team of district magistrate, DCP and zonal deputy municipal commissioner with the consultation of RWAs of the area..." Dev, who is also the chairperson of DDMA's state executive committee, said in the order.

The order said, "In case it is observed by the joint team of officers that any weekly market is unable to function on its fixed/regular place or at roadside due to obstruction to traffic, strictly as per the SOP/guidelines of DDMA, then such weekly markets can be allowed to function at some other nearby ground/school ground, purely on a temporary basis."

It stated that if it is found that vendors or customers are not following the instructions prescribed in the standard operating procedures, then such markets will be closed.

Dev directed all district magistrates, deputy commissioners of police and authorities concerned to ensure strict compliance of his order.

The coronavirus-induced countrywide lockdown was first announced from March 25 and it was extended in phases till May 31. The unlock process in the country had begun on June 1 with the graded reopening of commercial, social, religious and other activities.

PTI

ED chargesheet in PMLA court: Swapna met Kerala CM 6 times

Kochi: The ED on Wednesday filed a chargesheet in a PMLA court in Ernakulam in its probe into the money trail in the gold smuggling case, triggering another slugfest in Kerala politics after it allegedly revealed that prime accused Swapna Suresh had met Chief Minister Pinarayi Villappally Ramachandran said.

The over 300-page charge sheet includes Swapna's statement that following her resignation from the UAE Consulate, she approached Sivasankar, then Principal Secretary to Vijayan and also IT Secretary, for a job.

She was quoted as saying that he asked her to put in her CV with his reference to PriceWaterhouse Coopers and thereafter she went and met a top official of Space Park and soon got the job.

Swapna also allegedly said that Sivasankar had helped her financially and they were good friends and it was he who introduced her to chartered accountant Venugopal, who was asked to help her in financial dealings by opening fixed deposit accounts to the tune of Rs 20 lakh.

The ED charge sheet quoted Swapna as saying that she had met Vijayan on six occasions in the presence of now-suspended IAS officer M Sivasankar and that the CM knew about her appointment in the Space Park on a salary of over Rs 1.50 lakh per month.

The Congress and the BJP leadership in the southern state were up in arms and demanded the resignation of Vijayan.

"Vijayan had said he had no

clue of how she got a job in the Space Park, but the ED charge sheet says he was aware. Vijayan then said his office is not a haven for such people. That statement has since fallen flat and the onus is now on him to come clean," state Congress President Mullappally Ramachandran said.

The charge sheet was filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 against PS Sarith, Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair in the District and Sessions Court (PMLA) in Ernakulam in the gold smuggling case. All three accused are in judicial custody since July.

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Strategy afoot to deal with winter pollution

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI



Ranjan Dimri

With winters knocking on the doors, Delhi will face double threats — dust, farm fire pollution and corona making the lungs weak. The Delhi Government has set a strategy to deal with perennial winter pollution identifying 39 hotspots/red zones deploying anti-smog gun and joined hands with PUSA agriculture institute to deter farm fire issue.

As Air Quality Index (AQI) in the national Capital marked 183 micro cubic per gram on Wednesday, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai assured to reduce dust pollution with anti-smog guns.

Anand Vihar, Rohini are top areas where dust pollution is major threat for people, surprisingly, the AQI of both zones was marked above 250 Micro Gram Per Cubic.

Rai said "Our first target is to reduce pollution due to dust and around 39 sites have been identified where anti-smog guns will be used," adding "Anti-smog guns have been deployed at large construction sites in the national capital as part of the measures being taken to control pollution."

Amid rising concerns regarding air pollution in the national capital and neighbouring states, farmers in Haryana and Punjab continued to burn stubble in their fields.

Raising pollution issues, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA, Raghu Chadha said first week of October witnessed stub-

ble burning increase of nine fold in Punjab and three fold in Haryana in comparison to last year. He also said that states of Punjab and Haryana are guilty of criminal negligence towards the matter of air pollution and have not taken any serious comprehensive steps to stop stubble burning.

Citing the Centre's launch of the ambitious National Clean Air Plan (NCAP), and how Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman had announced a budget of Rs 4,400 Crore for the NCAP.

Chadha said, "Finance Minister of India Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the central government will spend Rs 4,400 Crore for a clean air plan. I want to ask the central government where is this money? The Aam Aadmi Party

wants to know why the central Government has not given this money to the farmers. We also want to know why the central government can't come up with a suitable plan to stop stubble burning."

He also said, "Today I want to tell you that this year the stubble burning started one month before October 15. In the first week of October in Punjab, the stubble burning has increased nine-fold and in Haryana three-fold." In the first week of October 606 cases of stubble burning were reported from Punjab and 137 cases in Haryana. We want to request the Supreme Court-appointed watchdog to take note of the matter and to take stern action against these states. The estimation is that nearly 35 million tonnes stubble will be burnt

this year combining Punjab and Haryana."

Chadha also said that one hand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked about combating air pollution, but on the hand the BJP government of Haryana has disregarded the PM's advice. He said that the Aam Aadmi Party demands that the Supreme Court-appointed EPCA ought to take stringent action against Punjab and Haryana for neglecting the stubble burning issue.

He said, "According to a source apportionment study published by TERI, it was noted that 70% of Delhi's pollution is caused by neighbouring states-stubble burning being one key reason of this pollution. Last year, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data showed that stubble burning causes 45% of

Delhi's air pollution. Stubble burning generally happens in Punjab, Haryana and in some parts of Uttar Pradesh. Every year, this criminal act makes Delhi a gas chamber. Starting from the Supreme Court, EPCA, the Central Government and various state governments have repeatedly requested the guilty states to take some serious actions against the stubble burning, but to no avail."

Last year in Punjab, 20 million tonnes paddy was generated, and 9.8 million tonnes of paddy was burnt. In Haryana, 60 million tonnes of paddy were generated, and 1.23 million tonnes were burnt. As per the data, 11 million tonnes of paddy were burnt combining both the states.

"One on hand, Kejriwal is working relentlessly to combat the air pollution of Delhi. He has already announced a seven-point action plan to combat air pollution. With the help of PUSA Institute, Kejriwal is trying to build up Bio-decomposers technique by which stubble burning can be avoided. On the other hand, you have Punjab and Haryana, who are showing criminal negligence and dereliction of duty over this issue. University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute has noted that if Delhi's air pollution improves then the citizens' life span will increase 9.4 years. This is following the WHO standard; but if we follow the Indian national standard, even then the life span will increase for 6.5 years," AAP targeted the neighboring states.

No need of tourism licences for running restaurants: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To bring the hospitality industry on track for the economical revival of Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday gave green signals to operate 24X7 as requirement of tourism licences for running restaurants will be removed. Importantly, the Excise department agreed to review the existing policy of a 10 percent automatic increase in the license fees every year.

Delhi government will also constitute a technical committee which in ten days will examine ways to enhance fire safety and simplifying norms in Connaught Place and heritage sites like - Khan market, without the need to make structural changes to the existing restaurants.

Based on the recommendations of the committee, the CM will decide on the application of uniform fire safety norms in Delhi.

Kejriwal met with industries and said the process has initiated to abolish police licenses and health trade licenses from local bodies for restaurants.

With this decision, now as per the major amendments planned under Excise policy and rules to restaurants, restaurants to be allowed to pay their license fee by 31st March the necessary measures and the boost that we need, and unleash the employment potential. By deregulating the industry, more restaurants will open up which will generate more employment and help the tourism industry. A lot of the most visited cities in the world are known for their nightlife and restaurants."

Interacting with National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), Kejriwal said, "Delhi's restaurants are the pride of Delhi and provide employment to lakhs of people. I have directed all the respective departments to remove unnecessary hassles in the smooth running of restaurants in Delhi."

After reviewing the letter written by the FSSAI addressing the Municipal Corporations to cease the further issuing of licenses and directed the officials to do the same, Kejriwal instructed that the health trade licenses, which are issued by the Municipal Corporations to the restaurant industries should be abolished within 10 days.



operating timings of the restaurants on the weekends till 3 AM.

Decisions were also taken in meeting to immediately amend archaic Excise rules so as to permit service in open areas, balconies, verandas, without any additional fee, to permit additional dispensing counters in the licensed premises without any additional fees, to permit branding within the licensed premises, to permit licenses for all types of music, including DJs, Live Bands, and Karaoke, to abolish the requirement of a designated liquor store and to allow the stock to be kept anywhere in the licensed premises.

Earlier, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) had exempted restaurants with less than 100 seats from the need to mandatorily install Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs). The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) had however issued recent guidelines requiring the installation of ETP for restaurants consisting more than 36 seats.

Given the extreme space constraints in and around many small restaurants, it was agreed at the meeting that DPCC will write to the CPCB with a request to revert back to the earlier decision by DPCC exempting the requirement for a dedicated Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) for restaurants below 100 seating capacity.

"DPCC will issue a clarification to the MCDs on permissibility of Wood charcoal in the grills and tandoors of the restaurants and to ensure that harassment of the restaurants be stopped on this front," a government official said.

Capital records 2,871 fresh coronavirus cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national capital recorded 2,871 fresh Covid-19 cases and the number of containment zones in the national capital fell to 2,702 on (Wednesday).

Thirty five Covid-19 fatalities reported in Delhi on Wednesday. According to health bulletin, there has been an upward trend in the number of containment zones since last week of August till October 5 when the count stood at 2,707. However, on Tuesday, it slipped to 2,697, the fall being registered after a gap of more than 40 days. At least 39 COVID-19 fatalities on Tuesday in Delhi, as the death toll

mounted to 5,581 while 2,676 fresh cases took the tally to over 2.95 lakh, authorities said.

Both the number of fresh cases and containment zones recorded a gradual rise in September, with September 16 reporting 4,473 cases, the highest single-day spike till date.

On that day, the containment zone figure had climbed to 1,637. Except September 14, the number of cases from September 9-19 was reported in excess of 4,000 per day, while the containment zones count and home isolation cases steadily increased.

The home isolation cases on

September 5 had jumped to 9,822 while the containment zones count stood at 946. On September 6, the total number of containment zones had crossed the 1,000-mark. Prior to that, Delhi had seen a big surge in cases in the month of June, but the spike had come down in July. The home isolation figures on July 1 stood at 16,703 with 437 containment zones marked in the city.

On July 31, while the home isolation cases count had come down to 5,763, the containment zones had risen to 692, according to official data. On August 3, the number of COVID-19 patients under home isolation, and containment zones

count, both came down to 5,577 and 496, respectively.

On August 25, however, there were 5,949 home isolation cases and 654 containment zones or localised areas from where infections were reported. It rose to 6,850 with 763 zones on August 28; and then to 7,876 home isolation cases with 833 containment zones on August 31; and 8,407 home quarantined cases with 894 zones on September 2.

The positivity rate on Tuesday stood at 4.99 per cent while the recovery rate was crossed 90 per cent, the Tuesday health department bulletin said.

NON-PAYMENT OF SALARY

Hindu Rao docs go on 'symbolic indefinite strike'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Resident doctors and staff members of the North Corporation run Hindu Rao Hospital on Wednesday protested over non-payment of their due salaries for the last three months and went on a symbolic indefinite strike.

Hundreds of doctors and nurses of the hospital held placards and raised slogans demanding their due salaries, at the main gate of the facility.

Doctors claimed that they have not been paid since June. Last week, the staffers were on a 'Pen Down Strike' from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. to display their ordeal.

However, the civic body officials said that the matter is being looked into.

Hindu Rao Hospital is the largest municipal hospital in Delhi with 900 beds, and is currently a dedicated COVID-19 facility. Many of its healthcare

workers had contracted the infection earlier. Since, it is a dedicated coronavirus facility, the 'services will not be essentially affected'.

Ahimsay Sardana, president of the Resident Doctors Association said "We are on a symbolic indefinite strike to make our voices heard to authorities, who have not responded to our appeal so far. We have been doing the symbolic pen down from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, for the last several days, as well as online protests, but no one listened to us."

So, the protest took place and doctors who are not on COVID-19 rotational duty joined, he said.

"We are humans too and have a family to run. We are risking our lives for humanity in this pandemic. Is it too much to ask for our due salaries," Sardana said.

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash had recently said, "We



are doing everything possible to resolve the issue".

The doctors and other staff members of the corporation has not been paid for months resulted in repeated protests.

Besides Hindu Rao hospital, doctors and nurses of other hospitals run by the corporation like Maharishi Valmiki Infectious Diseases, Kasturba Hospital, Girdhari Lal Maternity Hospital and Rajan Babu Institute of Pulmonary Medicine and Tuberculosis have also been protesting over the issue of non-payment of salary.

Maternity Hospital and Rajan Babu Institute of Pulmonary Medicine and Tuberculosis have also been protesting over the issue of non-payment of salary.

Govt OK's revised cost for Kolkata East-West Metro Corridor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways' proposal regarding revised cost estimate for construction of Kolkata East West Metro Corridor Project at an estimated cost of Rs 8574.98 crore approved by the Government on Wednesday.

The project envisages construction of a Metro Corridor between Salt Lake Sector-V to Howrah Maidan in West Bengal for a total route length of 16.6 kms. The project is being implemented by Kolkata Metro Rail Corporation Limited (KMRCL) which is a CPSE under the Ministry of Railways set up as a special purpose vehicle.

"The pre-pandemic target for completion of their project was December 2021. Efforts are being taken to minimise the impact of pandemic on completion of the project. The pro-

ject includes immense technological challenges like the tunnel below river Ganges which is the 1st transportation tunnel in India under any major river as well as Howrah Station which is one of the deepest Metro stations in India," the ministry said in a statement.

The mega project envisages creation of efficient transit connectivity between the business district of Kolkata with industrial city of Howrah in west and Salt Lake City in east through a safe, accessible and comfortable mode of public transport. Since this corridor connects three most important parts of the Kolkata Metropolitan area such as Howrah, business area of Kolkata and new settlements in Salt Lake it is going to revolutionise the mass rapid transport in Kolkata and adjoining Howrah and Bidhanagar, it said.

Govt committee to submit recommendations on licences for home delivery of ration

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Government has formed a six-member committee to submit recommendations on the issue of licences to distribution agencies for home delivery of ration under the 'Mukhya Mantri Ghar Ration Yojna'.

According to an order issued by the office of the food supplies and consumer affairs commissioner, the committee has also been asked to give suggestions on the amendments required in the Delhi Specified Articles (Regulations of Distribution) Order, 1981.

The government has asked the six-member panel to submit its report within one week.

Additional Commissioner (Food and Supplies) Anand Kumar Tiwari, Assistant Commissioner (Policy) Rajesh Ahuja and Assistant Commissioner (Distribution) Desh Raj Singh are among the members of the committee. In July, the Delhi Cabinet had approved doorstep delivery of ration and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal termed it a "revolutionary" move.

Kejriwal had said that the scheme is expected to be rolled out in the next six to seven months after completion of the tendering process and other necessities.

"Under the scheme, wheat flour, rice and sugar packed hygienically in bags will be delivered to people's doorsteps. Taking ration from a PDS shop will be optional," Kejriwal had said in July. There are over 17 lakh ration card holders in Delhi while the total number of beneficiaries is around 70 lakh.

that they were running an NGO in the name of SWO-India for the benefit of army personnel. It was also told that no profit motive was there in the projects," said the Joint CP.

"The investors were directed to deposit money in SWO-India Ltd, a company. The company, through its official, ensured that they would provide residential plots to the investors at Bokaro in Jharkhand. On his assurance, the victims invested money for residential plots," said the Joint CP.

"During investigation, it was revealed that Rana, a retired Lt Colonel, Kirti Chakra Vijeta, was the main brain behind it. He was arrested on Tuesday from one of his residences at Dwarika. He was also the authorised signatory of various accounts of the company," said the Joint CP.

"The accused assumed army personnel that they are running an NGO called SWO-India for the benefit of army personnel and was not earning any profit from the projects. However, the accused directed the investors to deposit money in SWO-India Ltd, a company of identical name," said the Joint CP.

Driver of cluster bus arrested for killing man while driving drunk

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 45-year-old driver of a cluster bus five days after he allegedly killed a man in an accident near Kashmere Gate metro station. Police said that the accused was under the influence of alcohol during the accident which took place on the night of October 1. The accused, Pardeep alias Nagraj has been found previously involved in 13 cases including three accidents.

33-year-old man, identified as Sanjay, a resident of Majupur in Northeast Delhi died in the accident. He worked as a clerk in a private firm at Chandni Chowk and is survived by wife and three children, police said. According to Anto Alphonse, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district, after the accident near Kashmere Gate, the accused driver fled from the spot with his vehicle and the same night, he hit his bus with a truck in west Delhi's Mayapuri area.

"The accused driver was nabbed from the spot by a team of Mayapuri police station and a case was registered against him in the regard. During medical examination, he was found to be under the influence of alcohol. Since it was a bailable offence, he was released later," said the DCP.

"However, the police team of Mayapuri were not aware about the accident committed by him the same night near Kashmere Gate. Police had received a PCR call at around 11.15 pm regarding an accident near metro gate no. 3, Kashmere Gate. On reaching the spot, a body of the man was found lying on the road. He was shifted to a mortuary and a case was registered in Kashmere Gate police station," said the DCP. "Since police did not find any witness in the accident, they scanned more than 2,000 CCTV footages to get clue. After enquiry, police managed to find that the offending vehicle involved in the accident was a cluster bus," said the DCP.

"Police teams are scanning CCTV cameras," said the DCP. "Kalra lived with his family in Krishna Market in Lajpat Nagar and Malhotra was a resident of Saini Enclave near Karkardooma," police said.

Retired Lt Colonel arrested for duping ex-servicemen

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

T he Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police has arrested a retired Lieutenant Colonel for allegedly cheating army personnel on inducement of providing residential plots across the Country.

The accused has been identified as Rakesh Rana, a resident of Dwarka's Sector-18A. Police said that he is found previously involved in two criminal cases.

According to Dr O P Mishra, the Joint Commissioner of Police, EOW, one Havaldar Chandan Kumar, along with other army personnel, alleged that they have been cheated by SWO-India Ltd to the tune of around Rs 88 lakh.

"They alleged that accused person showed them rosy picture about the 'Veer Aawas Bokaro Project' and assured



AIR FORCE DAY



GUARDIAN OF THE SKIES

Keeping pace with the demands of contemporary advancements, the Indian Air Force has been upgrading its combat aircraft fleet since the last few years to enhance its operational capability

The Indian Air Force, also known as the 'Bhartiya Vayu Sena', has made stellar contributions securing the Indian airspace and conducting aerial warfare during armed conflicts. The IAF not only safeguards the country's territory and national interests from all threats but it also provides strategic and tactical airlift capabilities in the battlefield and support during natural calamities. Since its inception, IAF has made remarkable achievements.

This year, India celebrates its 88th Indian Air Force Day. The day is observed to build the familiarity with Indian aviation based armed forces in any association of the national security both authoritatively and freely.

The Indian Air Force today, having completed 88 years of dedicated service to the nation, is a

modern, technology-intensive force distinguished by its commitment to excellence and professionalism. Keeping pace with the demands of contemporary advancements, the IAF continues to modernise in a phased manner. Today, it stands as a credible air power counted among the foremost professional services in the world.

The primacy of Air Power will be a decisive factor in shaping the outcome of future conflicts. In line with this dictum, the IAF has developed into a major 'Component of National Power', which can be applied quickly and decisively. The IAF has reorientated itself to a multi-role capability of platforms and equipment, along with multi-skill capability of personnel. The rapid economic growth of the country dictates the need to protect our security interests

extending from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca.

Over the years, the IAF has grown from a tactical force to one with transoceanic reach. The strategic reach emerges from induction of Force Multipliers like Flight Refuelling Aircraft (FRA), Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and credible strategic lift capabilities. There is emphasis on acquiring best of technology through acquisitions or upgradation, be it aircraft, systems, precision missiles or net centricity.

IAF has started upgrading its combat aircraft fleet since the last few years in order to enhance its operational capability and maintain its aircraft as modern weapon platforms, capable of meeting the present challenges posed by the security scenario in our region. Of the available fleet, MiG-21, MiG-27 and Jaguar aircraft have already

been upgraded and Mirage-2000 and MiG-29 aircraft are planned for upgradation. The Indian Air Force is considering upgrade of its medium lift helicopters comprising Mi-8, Mi-17 and Mi-17-IVs, as also the AN-32 transport aircraft, with the aim of improving their overall capability.

The IAF today is in the process of a most comprehensive modernisation plan. Over the next few years, the force would induct more Su-30 MKI aircraft, the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) and the Medium Multi Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA). There are plans to augment the helicopter and transport fleets too. The IAF is also in the process of acquiring radars in various categories to meet the Air Defence requirements, accurate and advanced weapons, Network Centric Warfare systems, etc, to meet its assigned tasks.

WORDS OF APPRECIATION FROM DIGNITARIES

CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF, GENERAL BIPIN RAWAT

On the occasion of the 88th Anniversary of Indian Air Force, our warm greetings to all Air Force personnel, defence civilians and their families.

The Indian Air Force has served the nation with utmost dedication, total commitment and unwavering loyalty. The recent induction of high-end combat platforms and weapons has transformed the Indian Air Force into a formidable force with multi-spectrum capability. IAF personnel have conducted themselves with



the highest standards of professionalism and valour, in times of war and peace. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by the men and women in blue during the recent operational deployment reflects on their commitment to remain prepared to touch the sky with glory.

We compliment the contribution of each and every member of the Indian Air Force and extend our best wishes to all ranks and civilians on this momentous occasion.

CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF AIR CHIEF MARSHAL, RKS BHADAURIA, PVSM AVSM VM ADC

On the occasion of the 88th Anniversary of the Indian Air Force, I extend my felicitations to all Air Warriors, NCs(E), DSC personnel, civilians and their families. My special greetings to our esteemed Air Veterans and their families.



Air Force Day is celebrated to mark the inception of IAF and to honour the courage, bravery and valour of our Air Warriors, past and present. As we pay tribute to our brave Air Warriors who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, we pledge to rededicate ourselves in service to our nation.

In the past year, we have witnessed contingencies as varied as the COVID-19 pandemic to the military face off along the LAC. The prompt response by our transport and helicopter fleets in providing 24x7 support for COVID-19 tasks was highly praiseworthy. Our squadrons and units remain on high alert in order to suitably address any adverse situation along our Northern borders.

We have fulfilled our operational charter while undertaking all pre-planned and urgent 'Air Maintenance' efforts for the Indian Army, Para-military organisations and civil agencies, in some of the most challenging terrains and weather conditions. I commend all Air Warriors on their indomitable courage in discharging their duties

and adapting to the new normal in midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A dynamic security scenario with both conventional and sub-conventional threats, emanating at short notice, make it incumbent for us to train hard and prepare ourselves for all eventualities. We must maintain very high levels of operational preparedness and hone our skills by training in realistic environment.

The high value inductions and up-gradation of legacy equipment in past few months has ensured that we gain substantially in technology and capability. It is our individual and collective responsibility to absorb the changes and operationalise rapidly. While we work professionally to ensure physical security of our borders, we need to pay serious attention to safeguarding our critical information and infrastructure from cyber threats.

I urge all Air Warriors to prepare well and participate whole heartedly in the various training exercises that are being conducted to enhance our levels of readiness and capability. We are in the process of adopting a paperless, digital work environment by this year end with the induction of e-office, e-Maintenance Management System and host of operational software to optimally utilise all resources and expedite the work flow across the IAF. Numerous HR and administrative decisions have also been taken to improve our work and social environment. All we must ensure completion of all such measures in full. Be rest assured that along with professional growth, welfare and well-being of all our personnel and families is uppermost in my mind.

I congratulate all of you for the successes of IAF which would not have been possible without your sincere and dedicated efforts as a team. My compliments to all the commanders and supervisors in the field, who have worked admirably, in spite of the difficult environment due to the pandemic, and delivered on all our operational goals. I feel proud and honoured to lead this great team of IAF.

My wife Asha and I, convey our greetings to all Air Warriors, NCs(E), DSC personnel, civilians and their families. We wish you continued success in all your future endeavours.

THE PRIDE OF INDIA

The Brahmos medium-range ramjet supersonic cruise missile, equipped with inertial navigation and global positioning systems, can effectively engage ground targets from an altitude as low as 10 m for surgical strikes



The Indian Air Force is the fourth largest in the world and has made a lot of technological advancements in the last few years. New helicopters and aircrafts have been introduced showing the progress and development in the field of creating a new benchmark each time in the history of the IAF.

Tactical deployment and utilisation of air power — arguably the most effective military tool — has become absolutely indispensable owing to planes being virtually unsurpassable in terms of speed, range and flexibility alike. It has evolved over a comparatively short span of time having impact both at operational and strategic levels boasting heightened aircraft survivability, enhanced weapon systems, air- and space-based intelligence, and surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities.

The immense potential of the BRAHMOS medium-range ramjet supersonic cruise missile combined with the outstanding performance of the Su-30MKI twin-jet multirole air superiority fighter gives the Indian Air Force the desired vital reach.

The successful test-firing of the projectile from the IAF's frontline fighter Su-30MKI provides a major deterrence against aggression. The missile, equipped with inertial navigation and global positioning systems, can effectively engage ground targets from an altitude as low as 10 m for surgical strikes. It is the sole projectile possessing this advanced ability thereby providing an edge to the user with a precise hit.

Further, the successful development of the enhanced BRAHMOS (ER) has significantly bolstered the IAF's combat operations competence from stand-off ranges. The advanced BRAHMOS air-launched

cruise missile (ALCM), after undergoing a series of successful launches from the Su-30MKI platform, was successfully inducted into the IAF's Tigersharks Squadron.

Tigersharks 222, comprising Su-30 MKI jets, is tasked with an air dominance and maritime role and equipped with the air variant of BRAHMOS. The squadron is perceived as nothing short of a "gamechanger" vis-à-vis guarding the strategically vital Indian Ocean Region. Expected to set right the military balance in the IOR, the Su-30MKI is a state-of-the-

THE BRAHMOS-NG HAS BEEN CONCEPTUALISED AS A SMARTER WEAPON POSSESSING GREATER VERSATILITY, LETHALITY AND FLEXIBILITY WITH A CRUISING SPEED OF MACH 3.5 OR HIGHER

art all-weather aircraft capable of undertaking varied air defence, ground attack and maritime missions.

The BRAHMOS-NG (Next Generation) systems, having smaller size and reduced weight, could be fitted onto India's light combat aircraft Tejas. The BRAHMOS-NG has been conceptualised as a smarter weapon possessing greater versatility, lethality and flexibility with high precision and a cruising speed of Mach 3.5 or higher. This version will be designed for

integration on a wide range of platforms. The air launched BRAHMOs missile is a 2.5-tonne supersonic air-to-surface cruise missile with ranges of close to 300 km.

The Indian Air Force has become the first force in the world to have successfully fired an air launched missile of this magnitude on a sea target on November 22, 2017. This was followed by a second live launch over a land target on May 22, 2019. The ALCM fired from Su-30MKI effectively penetrated a land target, showcasing a much-desired capability of BRAHMOS missile to strike from large stand-off ranges on any target at sea or on land with pinpoint accuracy by day or night and in all weather conditions.

The software development and integration of weapon of the aircraft was undertaken by the IAF engineers while Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) carried out complex mechanical and electrical modifications on aircraft.

The world class asset, BRAHMOS, is a product of BrahMos Aerospace Company, a joint venture between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation and NPO Mashinostroyeniya from Russia. The missile has pride of place as the fastest supersonic cruise missile operationalised in all the three services.

The versatile weapon system is based on a mobile automatic launcher, ship, submarine or aircraft.

India's mainstay in the stand-off weapons is the BRAHMOS air-to-surface cruise missile. The Su-30-BRAHMOS combination will carry out air combat operations within and beyond visibility range and will provide the IAF with the capability of attacking targets protected by powerful air defence assets.

BrahMos
Salutes all the Air Warriors
on the
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No more Shaheen Baghs

SC says public spaces can't be occupied indefinitely, upholds the right to dissent with that of commute but leaves it to police to clear site



Protests, demonstrations, mass rallies and street blockades have been resorted to by citizens across the world to register their disapproval of or discontent with the establishment. And it is because of their disruptive nature, affecting public life, that has compelled authorities to take notice or change tack. It is because of their participatory zeal that they end up becoming mass movements, encouraging change and keeping democracy alive. So the Supreme Court had an extremely tough job at hand to decide whether the prolonged protests at Shaheen Bagh, against a religion-based citizenship law, should be allowed to continue for the sake of democracy. Or whether the democratic right to dissent should also factor in the democratic right of citizens to lead their lives normally beyond a certain threshold of disruption. At the same time, would Shaheen Bagh have become a civil movement had it not been sustained over a certain period of time and forced people to sit up and take note? Would the citizens have shared a sameness of purpose if they did not have a focal point in a commoner like Bilkis Dadi and her magnetic force? But now that Shaheen Bagh has probably served its purpose and outlived its utility, the top court, which had previously sent interlocutors for mediating with protesters, has given a decisive verdict. In a carefully worded ruling, it said public spaces cannot be occupied indefinitely and that dissent and democracy must go hand-in-hand. It said protests should be held at a designated place and any occupation of public places or roads by demonstrators, which causes inconvenience to a large number of people and violates their right to movement, is not permissible under law. The Bench ruled that the right to protest had to be balanced with the right to commute. But by not mentioning the timeline and specifics, it did not disallow such blockades per se but instead entrusted the authorities concerned to act on their own in such situations without hiding behind the court. Now this latter bit could be interpreted variably by the implementing agencies in deciding to what extent could a blockade be allowed or not and what would be the contours of reasonable restrictions. This could also be open to political manipulation. The court further mentioned "parallel conversations on social media" as having fomented a polarised scenario but while these may have some mobilising ability, they cannot have as much of an impact as a physical congregation. The latter is dependent on individual will, commitment and effort. That's why, contrary to the court's perception, the Shaheen Bagh protest worked. Driven by elderly women against the Government's citizenship and identity policies, it was by and large disciplined and peaceful, one which drew many sympathisers from across the spectrum. But as it led to traffic congestion over time, resulting in hardships for commuters and emergency services, it did turn off a middle of the spectrum opinion that it had galvanised in the early stages. And the clamour for clearing the protest site gained traction.

Still, Shaheen Bagh has been an example of civil society's spontaneous combustion, one that has been taken note of by *Time* magazine as a change-making moment of our times. But now its sincerity of purpose has been drowned and become an easy fodder for political weaponisation. Just before the Assembly elections, Shaheen Bagh was swiftly turned into a test case of nationalism from being an anti-establishment forum, becoming a simplistic referendum on whether minority intrusion could disrupt majority lives — in this case, blockade-hit Delhiites — on whether it needed to be surgically cut out from the heart of the city. But despite the demonisation of the protesters, the women were able to draw not just liberal thinkers, who are easily perceived as public enemies these days, but all-faith community leaders, including the Sikhs. The BJP had lionised Shaheen Bagh to push the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) into a corner before the elections and though it could have very well used the Delhi Police to clear the roads, as the top court reminded it should have, it let the problem fester, hoping it would anger citizens enough to vote for it. That didn't happen. As for the preventive role of the police that the court insisted should have settled matters, the forces were predictably acting at the behest of their political masters. One of the principles of good policing is that the forces should function without any fear and favour, which they have failed at. This brings us to the subject of police reforms that have been stalled by successive regimes since the apex court mooted this idea in 2006, though it has been more than two decades that the call for reforming our forces gained traction. And sadly, as the crackdowns on dissenters, even at dedicated spots as the court mentioned, on some pretext or the other show, the space for alternative views is shrinking regardless of whether protesters block roads or not.

Taking shape

China's recent actions have forced the Quad alliance between Australia, India, Japan and the US to become much more formal



The Quad is the latest politico-military alliance on the block that has been under discussion over years but is picking up pace now. So far, India, one of the primary members of this alliance along with US, Japan and now Australia, seemed to be quite happy that it remained stillborn, not wanting to instigate the reason this axis was being built up for — to contain the People's Republic of China and its President Xi Jinping in the region. Then India faced a double whammy; first the pandemic imported from China, advance information of which was withheld by Xi and his lackeys, and then the murderous assault on our troops and territorial ingress in

the Galwan Valley. This forced the Indian political and bureaucratic establishment to realise that China is not even a transactional neighbour but an avaricious maximalist and having financially and militarily backed Pakistan for decades now, it now wanted Central Asia on its terms and saw India as a thorn in its flesh. Besides with India swerving towards the US-led West, the Chinese establishment thought that "teaching a lesson" would force us away from Quad. But with the meeting of Foreign Ministers and military officials in Tokyo, the Quad, an alliance to protect the Indo-Pacific, is closer than ever to being formalised.

It remains to be seen if the Quad, or whatever name the alliance takes, will have something similar to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) whereby if war is declared on one NATO member, all members are at war (although NATO doesn't know how to resolve conflicts between two members as is currently ongoing between Greece and Turkey). But China's recent belligerence despite grafting the world the pandemic that has ripped the global economy to shreds, driven millions into poverty and destabilised the global system means that the Quad is not just sending a message to Xi and other Chinese Communist Party members. It is also telling the rest of the world that four large and successful democracies are willing to stand up to Beijing's bullying and that other nations can take shelter behind them. India is slowly warming up to Australia with which it conducted a two-day mega joint exercise in the Indian Ocean Region recently, involving a range of complex naval manoeuvres, anti-aircraft drills and helicopter operations. This is progress considering that India has so far not invited Australia to the Malabar exercises as it feels that the latter's dependence on the Chinese economy would hold it back from committing to Quad effectively. But now that Australia, too, has spearheaded the campaign to unveil the conspiracy behind the Wuhan virus and is at the receiving end of Chinese hit-back at its economy, there is a shared concern. India has to map out a strategy of opening doors of cooperation in relation to its Andaman and Nicobar Islands with Australia. At the end of the day, China just has a sea or two. India is the only nation in the world to have an ocean named after it and that ocean should belong to us as a sphere of influence and used to squeeze China along maritime corridors.

Are we living in a dystopia?

The rampant police brutality and utter disregard for the rule of law compel us to question what lies ahead for India



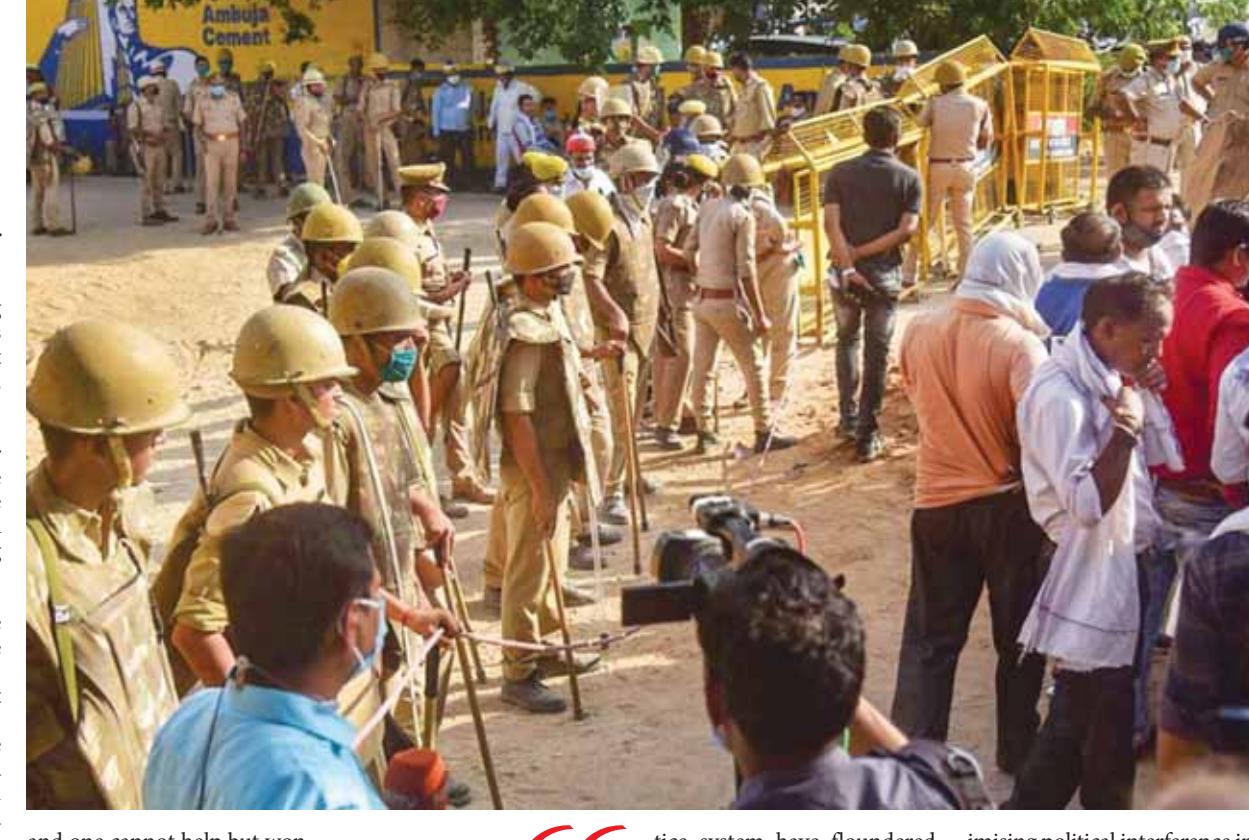
DEEPAK SINHA

The thing about young Sushant Singh Rajput's untimely passing is not so much his death, which was undoubtedly tragic, but far worse, his subsequent character assassination for dubious political ends. What the media would now have us believe is that he was just another Jekyll and Hyde character, a promising and aspiring young star on the outside but a doped out manic depressive on the inside. Thankfully, the AIIMS medical report and the CBI's initial findings seem to confirm that he indeed did commit suicide.

Over the last few months, the pot continued to boil as dribs and drabs of inconclusive information were leaked by agencies to media outlets to serve their own ends. This ensured the arrest of his former girlfriend, now granted bail by the Bombay High Court, in the ludicrous avatar of a drug financier, and a galaxy of top stars from Bollywood facing the heat for alleged drug use and peddling. The fact that the evidence investigators appeared to be working with was in the nature of some forced confessions, as some allege, and the recovery of 500 grams of a recreational drug, seemed inconsequential. Truly, we are now burdened with courts, it seems, that will believe anything, however far-fetched or fanciful it may be. In all of this, one is not quite sure what the actor's family hoped to gain from converting this tragedy into a public spectacle. In all probability, their hopes seem to have been belied and dashed, if recent reports in the media are to be believed.

The real winners are not the aspiring politicians but our very own Sherlocks, the hard-working sleuths of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) who now get to mess with the stars daily. As the good Bard wrote, each of them now gets to "strut and fret his hour upon the stage"; though at the end of it, after the Bihar elections precisely, one suspects it will be "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

There is another loser here, an institutional one, that has willingly allowed politicians to turn this tragedy into a blood sport. But then as the inimitable Charles Dickens wrote, "the law is an ass",



and one cannot help but wonder what he thought of those who meted it out. Sadly, we see that too often these days, as the verdict on the 28-year-old case over the demolition of the Babri Masjid demonstrates. BJP veterans may well celebrate but it is not innocence that has won but plain incompetence. But who are we to complain, it is probably the price we pay for our version of democracy and the right to choose who leads us.

Talking of which, in these dystopian times, we have been given a glimpse of the new and future India if the BJP and its friends have their way. Rampant brutality and utter disregard for the law, on the part of those appointed to uphold it, appear to have become the hallmark of Yogi Adityanath's Uttar Pradesh. All the people in the State are seen as lab rats for the Hindutva brigade's experimentation with governance. A rape a day is the new normal, Hathras yesterday, Balrampur today, who knows where next tomorrow?

The alleged horrific rape, that the police insist never occurred, the subsequent murder of a teenager in Hathras and the subsequent acts of indignity heaped on her family by the local administration are not just a shameful and damning indictment of the Yogi Government, but also of the Central Government that has allowed the police to run riot wherever its party controls the system. As our courts and criminal jus-

tice system have floundered, and all but surrendered, to an increasingly authoritarian regime, the latter's henchmen, in collusion with the police, act as if they are above the law, storm troopers from an earlier darker era. What else can explain the undemocratic curbs placed to prevent protests against police high-handedness?

In all honesty, it is unfair to blame Prime Minister Narendra Modi, either for most of our ills or for much that has transpired. After all, this debilitating pandemic was not of his doing and while initial reactions of the Government may not have been up to the mark, especially its handling of the migrant issue, it is really doubtful if any other Government would have done any better. Given the constraints that health is a State subject, our high population density, poor health infrastructure and lack of hygiene awareness that prevails, we have at least tried to manage resources. In fact, it is the Modi Government that has been focussed on the issue of hygiene and sanitation.

Similarly, our broken criminal justice system and the prevailing police culture that are responsible for much that is awry owe a great deal to generations of politicians of all hues, who have used, and continue to use, the police as personal lackeys for their own ends. It is they who have successfully blocked all attempts at reforms or min-

imising political interference in such matters. Also, let us not forget that this is not the first time that the issue of independence of the judiciary has been raised or its action questioned.

Most of the Prime Minister's initiatives have been stymied by the inability of his government to understand that the 30 per cent odd voteshare that it received, leading to an overwhelming majority in the Parliament, does not in any way represent the views of all the people. For initiatives to be acceptable to all, there is a genuine need for consultation and interaction with all stakeholders in a spirit of give and take without intimidation. There has also been a remarkable inability on the part of this Government to deliver, due to sheer inefficiency, on matters such as GST and demonetisation. The saving grace for him has been the military's superlative performance in the confrontation against the Chinese, especially given the way he botched up his response after the Galwan action. This is indeed ironical, given the fact that he has never lost an opportunity to do down the military, serving and veterans alike. One cannot help but wonder if his attitude towards the military will now change, or will he kill the goose that lays golden eggs.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a Consultant with the Observer Research Foundation and a Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation)



MOST OF THE PM'S INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN STYMIED BY THE INABILITY OF HIS GOVERNMENT TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE 30 PER CENT ODD VOTESHARE THAT IT RECEIVED, LEADING TO AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN THE PARLIAMENT, DOES NOT IN ANY WAY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF ALL THE PEOPLE. WE NEED CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS



I am ready to give the responsibility to strong leaders, no matter which group they belong to. I am even ready to help them.

President of Kyrgyzstan —Sooronbay Jeenbekov

It would be very meaningful if the four countries (Australia, India, Japan and US) could exchange their views in the field of defence.

Japan's Defence Minister —Nobuo Kishi

SOUND BITE

Sitting in a hotel room in quarantine once again after leaving New Zealand is not how I thought I would be arriving at the IPL, but here I am and all things considered, I'm in a good place.

Cricketer
Ben Stokes



The next parallel city to Panaji will be in Merces and it will be an attraction. It will be like Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.

Goa Chief Minister
Pramod Sawant



I am ready to give the responsibility to strong leaders, no matter which group they belong to. I am even ready to help them.

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—Sooronbay Jeenbekov



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UP Govt must be held accountable

Following the horrifying 2012 Nirbhaya gang-rape, lawmakers brought stringent reforms, including death penalty for repeat rape offenders. However, even with changes in the law and continuous media coverage, it took over seven years for Nirbhaya to get justice. Over the years, Governments have changed but nothing much has been done to improve the justice system. There is no political will to enforce the laws. Unfortunately, even a heinous crime like that of rape becomes a political issue in India as parties start exploiting the situation for their selfish gains. The brutal gang-rape and murder of the 19-year-old Dalit girl in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, is a perfect example. And Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's Government has much to answer for.

The manner in which crimes against women, especially Dalit women, are being approached and dealt with by the Uttar Pradesh police is outrageous. And what is more obnoxious is the way it justified its act of obstructing justice as necessary for maintaining law and



order before the Supreme Court. What the Yogi Government cannot deny is that the State has witnessed a 28 per cent rise in crimes against women, especially those of Dalits. The UP Government and the State police must be held accountable for caste-based atrocities and injustice inflicted upon them.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

AQI hits 207

On October 7, the capital woke up to "poor" air quality for the first time this season, with the air quality index (AQI) hitting 207. According to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), around 336 farm fires were observed around Punjab, Haryana and neighbouring border regions on October 6. Stubble burning has been a major contributor to Delhi's air pollution and coupled with the pandemic, it can prove life-threatening. In this context, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has launched a mega anti-air pollution campaign *Yudh Pradush ke Virudh* with specific plans for each of the 13 pollution hotspots in the city. The State Government is also preparing a "Green Delhi" mobile application where people can report "pollution-causing activities." These steps will not only make the public aware of their surroundings but also help the Government address the issue proactively.

Bhavesh Prajapati
Ujjain

Safety is paramount

The decision to reopen schools from October 15 is not very well thought out given the fact that Coronavirus cases are increasing at an alarming rate and more than one lakh people have died in the last six months. It would be utter folly to expose children to the risk of infection in the name of education, career

and future. The safety of children is paramount and it must override concerns like sessions and examinations. Resetting of schools, particularly classrooms, libraries and laboratories, to make them spacious enough to keep physical distancing is easier said than done. The pandemic calls for nothing short of recreating the physical educational infrastructure. It is important to foresee the difficulty in maintaining distancing as children interact and bond with their peers naturally. In fact, children are programmed to socialise as they grow up. It is difficult to foretell how far it will be possible for children to modify their behaviour and adapt to what is called the "new normal".

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Why Indian start-ups fail

The approach of entrepreneurs should be to leapfrog and learn from failures rather than succumb in the name of fortune



TUSHAR MANCHANDA

With the advent of technology and the culture of 'Make in India', the number of Indian start-ups has risen sharply. This has been strengthened by continuous support from the Government and improvement in the 'Ease of Doing Business' in the country. Plus, initiatives like Stand-Up India, Skill India, the Atal Innovation Mission and Start-Up India have established an ecosystem to encourage entrepreneurship and job creation for the State. However, despite all these efforts by the Government, 90 per cent of the Indian start-ups fail within five years of their inception as per a report by IBM Institute for Business Value and Oxford Economics. There are numerous reasons why a new firm would fail. In an emerging market like India, the needs of the people change frequently. Thus, the strategic model of a start-up needs to resonate with the changing needs of society. However, a large number of Indian entrepreneurs lack this skill. Typically, the age of founders of new businesses is in the range of 20-30. Most of them are fresh graduates who have an aspiration to grow in life and have high risk-taking abilities. However, despite such ambition and enthusiasm, their probability of being successful is very low. Since most of the entrepreneurs have very limited exposure, their understanding is limited in terms of what is required in the marketplace.

Most of the founders imitate a business model that is successful in the overseas markets. However, tweaking a model to suit the Indian geography may not be a good way to realise revenues from the business. This could fetch initial investments for the firm but may not help to retain the customers after trials, since this might not be what they are really looking for. While imitating an idea the vision is defined by the originator. This makes the scope of business limited and the team tries to adhere to what had been done earlier. As a result, the offering may not address the problem of the customers.

A lot of entrepreneurs in their initial phase think of expansion as scaling up is an important aspect that is associated with a new business. However, most of the founders from the premier B-schools forget about the viability of the model. Scaling up at a stage when the path is not clear scripts a dreadful fortune for the firm. The Indian sub-continent is a land of diversity and disparities, unlike the US where the culture is quite similar across the country. Thus implementing anything on a PAN-India level is difficult, unless a business has a stable model. Most of the teams end up in a perplexed state when they are occupied by too many issues and they lose track of their vision and how to solve the burgeoning problems. Eventually, the top talent in senior management often makes an exit in such scenarios.

There are even bigger questions that still remain unsolved. Why does this happen to start-ups in India? Why is an entrepreneur from India more innovative and productive when abroad? Why is there a race among entrepreneurs to upscale immediately? This basically dwells on the deep roots of Indian society, as our cultural barriers are strong enough to hit the vision of an entrepreneur. Failure, which is seen as the stepping stone and learning curve on the road to success, is not accepted in Indian society. In India, failure is frowned upon in all instances of life, whether it is school, higher education or profession. This tendency leads to a race to achieve something, or to fail at something and move on. If an entrepreneur fails at some point, that's the end of the road. All possibilities of improving are ruled out and often a new career option is considered.

In the US and most other nations overseas, there is an approach towards company building. A start-up recruits top talent from the industry by offering perks. However, in India, new firms have limited access to talent. But for companies with a strong business model, there is a major talent pool available. This again boils down to norms that are being inculcated within the individuals at a very young age. Indian parents nurture their kids with a phrase called "job security." Every household in India wants a promising job, a company that weather tough times and the economic uncertainty of a slowdown.

There may not be a lucid solution or a paved path to avoid these issues. However, a step-by-step approach will help the entrepreneurs realise what's required in the marketplace. One must realise that there are bumps and bottlenecks in the road to success. Further, failure will only indicate what's not right for your customer. Over a longer horizon, this would result in a better value proposition for the end-consumer. The approach of entrepreneurs should be to leapfrog and learn from failures rather than to succumb in the name of fortune.

(The writer is ASM in a leading FMCG firm. The views expressed here are personal)

analysis

07

POINT COUNTER POINT

YOUNG AND EXTRAORDINARY INDIVIDUALS DON'T JUST WAKE UP ONE FINE DAY AND KILL THEMSELVES. SUSHANT SAID HE WAS BEING BULLIED.

—ACTOR
KANGANA RANAUT



NO THEY DON'T. THEY SUFFER FOR MANY YEARS AND STRUGGLE BEFORE SOMETIMES JUST NEEDING TO OPT OUT. LET'S NOT DEMONISE MENTAL HEALTH.

—ACTOR
SONI RAZDAN

Let's talk about it

People are often reluctant to get treatment for their emotional well-being because of societal stereotypes and pre-conceived notions. This needs to change



SANTOSH K BISWAL UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

Mental illness in India accounts for 28 per cent of global suicides, as around 197 million Indians suffer from some form of it. Yet it is a subject that is ignored and brushed under the carpet as it is considered to be a stigma in the country. However, the recent suicide by the promising Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput (SSR) has brought the issue back into the spotlight, even though a lot of people were in denial that the talented, young man, who was doing well for himself, was suffering from depression and had decided to end his life at the age of 34.

Even though social media and the family of the actor are denying that SSR committed suicide, the fact of the matter is that he is not the lone celebrity with mental health issues to have done so. Hindi film and TV actors Kushal Punjabi, Jiah Khan, Gurudutt, Pratyusha Banerjee and actors from the South like Sai Prashanth, Uday Kiran, Ranganath, Santhosh Jogi, Silk Smitha and Kalpana all ended their own lives. The majority of these celebrities committed suicide when they were basking in glory and there was no dearth of fans. The award-winning Dubai-based Indian industrialist, Joy Arakkal, committed suicide as he was battling depression due to a financial crisis. The story behind Cafe Coffee Day founder VG Siddhartha's death was the same and came as a huge shock.

The fact remains that celebrities do fall prey to mental illness for all their outward fame and success. However, many conspiracy theories are doing the rounds regarding SSR's death and the larger discourse on mental health is getting lopsided, or worse totally ignored. The discussion on mental health, a part of public health, remains a low priority and a taboo. Sadly, celebrities suffering from mental health issues are not willing to forgo their fame and saleability in the process of mitigating their mental illnesses.

If like Bollywood A-lister Deepika Padukone, more of them would come out and talk about their struggle with depression, it would do a yeoman's service to Indian society as mental health is often stigmatised in the country. It would help common people to cope better with their own mental illnesses and life's struggles and hopefully get timely help. This is important as farmer deaths are at 11.2 per cent of the total suicides in the nation whereas students contribute to 6.7 per cent of the burden.

The National Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, is in a precarious condition to address this grave situation. Moreover, the World Mental Health Day campaign of "Move for mental health: Let's invest" by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Federation for Mental Health doesn't mean much in the Indian context. In an urgent note, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has shouted out to strengthen India's public health system for human resource development. Tellingly, mental health remains undeniably one of the most neglected areas of the public health system in the country, which in any case is in a poor shape.

Now, with the Coronavirus resulting in widespread joblessness and reverse migration of millions of labourers to their villages, this burden of mental illnesses-fuelled suicides is only set to grow. As many as 466 suicides were reported this year to date, which means that on an average, over two people are taking their lives daily. Reportedly, farmers top the list, followed by labourers, students, private sec-

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROSCIENCES, BENGALURU, REVEALS THAT 13.7 PER CENT OF INDIA'S POPULATION SUFFERS FROM SOME FORM OF MENTAL ILLNESS. SADLY, INDIA SPENDS ONLY 3.6 PER CENT OF THE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT ON HEALTHCARE SERVICES. MOREOVER, ITS SPENDING IS THE LEAST AMONG BRIC COUNTRIES. ADDING TO THE PROBLEM, ONLY 1.3 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL GOVERNMENT HEALTH EXPENDITURE IS ALLOCATED TO MENTAL HEALTH

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tor employees and businessmen. Over 40 suicides were reported in January, 45 in February, 32 in March, 47 in April, 89 in May, 112 in June and 101 in July. Of the total number of suicides, 302 were reported in May, June and July.

The two-fold increase in suicide cases is being attributed to the growing stress in the wake of the pandemic. In fact, suicides are believed to be the second leading cause of non-Coronavirus deaths during the lockdown. The issue in these troubled times is double-layered and has to be discussed keeping in mind plenty of factors. Fear, uncertainty and suicidal thoughts have gone up and people are becoming highly vulnerable.

Plus, the dread of contracting the disease, combined with the realisation that the incidence of COVID-19 has spiralled instead of being contained, and that the days of social distancing could extend indefinitely, have been profoundly disturbing for many. So people who were on a mild anxiety spectrum earlier have moved to moderate and severe anxiety. When anxiety gets severe, self-harm increases.

Also, psycho-social issues, such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, have added to these woes. More housewives have committed suicides because of a spurt in domestic violence, intimate partner violence and harassment.

Taking worries about the mental health of India's adolescents to another level, there has been a spurt in suicides by teenagers in these uncertain times as those already suffering from depression or anxiety can be pushed over the edge by even a small trigger. For instance, the 14-year-old daughter of a daily wage labourer in Kerala ended her life owing to the inaccessibility to a smartphone. Here, the digital divide was the trigger for the

youngster to end her life.

The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru, reveals that 13.7 per cent of India's population suffers from some form of mental illness. Sadly, India spends only 3.6 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product on healthcare services. Moreover, its spending is the least among BRIC countries.

Adding to the problem, only 1.3 per cent of the total Government health expenditure is allocated to mental health. It is hard to believe that basic healthcare facilities are not there for mentally disturbed patients in a 20-kilometre radius.

To make matters worse, India has one doctor for every 1,00,000 people. There are only 43 hospitals and 3,000 psychiatrists available in the entire nation, leaving a number of mentally challenged or disturbed patients in the lurch. Since it is a signatory nation of the United Nations' (UN) Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Government should proactively address the issues of the disabled irrespective of its nature.

The Mental Healthcare Act 2017, assures bio-medical, clinical interventions and institutionalisation to intervene in mental health issues. Despite the Act, the social determinants of health (SDH) are not fully functional. Suffice to say, the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs) offer a blueprint for human development and for addressing the SDH.

While mostly people with mental illness are unemployed, inclusive education, too, is a distant dream. The approach to deal with the issue still suffers from pity, charity and a medical model of disability.

Plus, the medical and administrative apparatus dealing with mental health is not gender and region-sensitive. There is

no discussion on women with mental illness and mental patients residing in rural and tribal pockets.

Farmer and student suicides are creating havoc in the country. Yet, there is no thorough probe or discussion on why certain States are more prone to suicides than others. People are often reluctant to get treatment for their emotional well-being because of societal stereotypes and pre-conceived notions. This needs to change.

In addition, the news media remains episodic in terms of the coverage on mental health issues. As a result, the underestimated consequences of such health issues are getting perpetuated, stressing the public healthcare system. India cannot achieve its SDGs unless it curbs its rate of suicides.

The WHO asserts, "Mental health and well-being are fundamental to the quality of life, enabling people to experience life as meaningful, become creative and active citizens." In these pandemic times, it has disseminated comprehensive guidelines to keep mental health intact.

In addition, the IMF has endorsed that India should boost its human capital by investing in education and healthcare.

The discussion on mental health needs to be re-oriented and no more compartmentalised. Socio-cultural, economic and environmental factors covering national policies, social protection and community support must be ensured. Resilience among adolescents and children needs to be exercised. A multi-pronged approach is the solution to several psychological issues.

(Biswal and Chakraborty are Assistant Professors at SIMC and SIBM respectively and are working at Symbiosis International, Pune.)

Serve humanity through sensitive policing

The distinct nature of the RAF's duties necessitates the use of non-lethal equipment and a different mindset to deal with tricky situations



NITU BHATTACHARYA

The Indian civilisation is old and it has been a synthesis of cultures, religions, races, castes and creed. Thousands of years of syncretic culture have held their own despite the vast social and economic disparities. India thus represents a multi-cultural mosaic within an integrated nation. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and test of our civilisation."

Diversity does not mean inequalities but celebrates the differences between sectionals while unity stands for integration and the bonds that hold our social fabric together. At the intersectionalities, the social fabric of the country sometimes gets frayed when emotions run high. While the Father of the Nation is known as the



'apostle of peace', India has witnessed the most gruesome riots, too. It is in this backdrop that the Rapid Action Force (RAF) was raised. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was already deployed across the country and dealing with internal security duties. Therefore, the CRPF was given the mandate to raise the RAF, which is a specialised force meant exclusively to deal with riots and riot-like conditions.

On October 8, 1992, the RAF was born as an integral part of the CRPF.

A neutral, professional force, spe-

cialised in the task of riot-control, which reaches the site in "zero-response time," it protects the vulnerable sections of society and provides succour to the victims. Distinct from the other forces in their blue duggarees, the men and women of the RAF are trained professionals who understand mob psychology and are aware of the ethos and cul-

ture in which they operate. Each is headed by an officer of the rank of Inspector-General. The smallest functional unit in the force is a team commanded by an inspector, which has three components, namely riot control, tear smoke element and fire element. It has been organised as an independent striking unit. One team in a company of the RAF comprises women personnel so as to deal more effectively with a situation where there are women demonstrators.

The President's Colours is the

highest honour that can be bestowed upon an armed unit and is presented in recognition of the invaluable contribution to the security of the nation during peace and in times of hostility. The RAF, with 11 glorious years of service, was presented the President's Colours

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The President's Colours is the

highest honour that can be bestowed upon an armed unit and is presented in recognition of the invaluable contribution to the security of the nation during peace and in times of hostility. The RAF, with 11 glorious years of service, was presented the President's Colours

routinely adopts villages in nearby areas and undertakes social responsibilities. Resultantly, the force has successfully contributed in the field of adult education and gender awareness. Working in the field of environment protection and climate change, too, the force has generated awareness about rain water harvesting, use of solar energy, plastic disposal and has worked towards reversing the loss of forest cover by planting more trees.

The proven credentials of the RAF and its unstinting work ethics have made it a force to reckon with. As part of the nation's commitment to world peace, the force was sent on its first overseas deployment to Haiti in 1994. In 2000, RAF troops were deployed in Kosovo as it faced turmoil. The force continued for five years there, providing relief. The RAF created history in July 2007 by sending the world's first female-formed unit to strife-torn Liberia. This was followed by nine other women-only contingents that are rotated annually. Male contingents were also deployed on six occasions.

The force has had an impeccable record in containing violent situations, especially communal riots. In the



FOREIGN EYE



HOPE AMID DESPAIR

Plants in offices have been linked to an increased level of generosity and trust. And while claims for plants' healing properties must not be overstated, nor should they be dismissed. Buying houseplants can be understood as an instinctive reaching for cure. "As long as you have a garden," wrote FH Burnett, the author of *The Secret Garden*, "you have a future." Even if your garden is only a snake plant or two in the corner, you have a claim on hope.

(The writer is DIG, CRPF)

2016 polls: Trump orders declassification of docu



Washington: US President Donald Trump on Tuesday ordered "total declassification" of all the documents related to the alleged interference of Russia in the 2016 presidential elections, which he described as a hoax.

"I have fully authorized the total Declassification of any & all documents pertaining to the single greatest political CRIME in American History, the Russia Hoax. Likewise, the Hillary Clinton Email Scandal. No redactions!" Trump said in a tweet Tuesday night.

The announcement came hours after the Director of National Intelligence declassified some of the documents.

The handwritten documents revealed former CIA Director John Brennan briefed former President Barack Obama on the purported plan of Hillary Clinton, the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate, to tie Trump to Russia as "a means of distracting the public from her use of a private email server", Fox News said.

Tim Murtaugh, Trump

2020 communications director, in a statement said now it is known that Hillary Clinton hatched a plan to divert attention away from her use of a private email server by falsely tying then-candidate Donald Trump to Russia.

"We also know that former CIA Director John Brennan briefed President Obama on that plot. It is imperative that the American people now learn what then-Vice President Joe Biden knew about this conspiracy and when he knew it," Murtaugh said.

"What did Biden know about Clinton's plan to use the Russia hoax to try to smear her

Nearly 40 nations criticise China's human rights policies

United Nations: Nearly 40 mainly Western countries criticized China's treatment of minority groups, especially in Xinjiang and Tibet, on Tuesday and expressed grave concern at the impact of its new national security law on human rights in Hong Kong.

The United States, many European countries, Japan and others called on China to allow "unfettered access" to Xinjiang for independent observers including UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet, and to urgently refrain from detaining Uighurs and members of other minorities.

The 39 countries also urged China in a joint statement read at a meeting of the General Assembly's human rights committee, "to uphold autonomy, rights and freedoms in Hong Kong, and to respect the independence of the Hong Kong judiciary."

Their statement, read by Germany's U.N. Ambassador Christoph Heusgen, was immediately followed by a statement from Pakistan on behalf of 55 countries opposing interference in China's affairs when it comes to Hong Kong.

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gross human rights violations."

"There are severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and the freedoms of movement, association, and expression as well as on Uighur culture," they said.

"Widespread surveillance disproportionately continues to target Uighurs and other minorities and more reports are emerging of forced labor and forced birth control including sterilization."

On Hong Kong, the mainly Western nations said they shared concern with another group of UN experts that the National Security Law "does not conform to China's legal obligations" and allows for certain cases to be transferred for prosecution to the Chinese mainland.

AP

Biden against second debate if Trump still suffers from Covid

Washington: Democratic Party presidential candidate Joe Biden on Tuesday said he is against participating in his second debate with Donald Trump next week if the president still suffers from COVID-19.

"I think if he still has COVID, we shouldn't have a debate," Biden, a former US vice-president, told reporters on his return from Gettysburg.

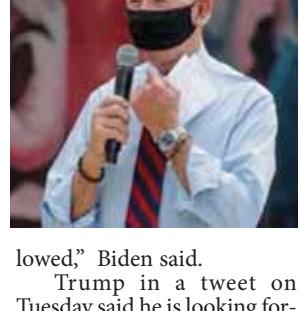
The first of the three presidential debates between Biden, 77, and Trump, 74, was held on September 29. The second debate is scheduled for October 15 in Miami and the final one on October 22 in Nashville, Tennessee.

Biden said they should follow very strict guidelines.

The only vice-presidential debate between Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris and Vice-President Mike Pence is scheduled for Wednesday in Salt Lake City, Utah.

"I think what they're doing at the Harris debate, I've been told, I don't know this for fact, they're using plexiglass, and are following what the Cleveland Clinic says," Biden told reporters in response to a question.

PTI



lowed," Biden said.

Trump in a tweet on Tuesday said he is looking forward to the debate. "I am looking forward to the debate on the evening of Thursday, October 15th in Miami. It will be great!" said the president.

Faisal Siddiqi, the lawyer representing Pearl's family, told the media that the government prosecutor, Fiaz Shah, told the judges he needed more time for paperwork to prepare for the case. The court accepted his argument and adjourned the hearing till October 21. In April, a two-judge Sindh High Court bench commuted the death sentence of 46-year-old Sheikh, who was convicted in the abduction and murder of Pearl in 2002, to seven years.

Langley School in Solihull, in the West Midlands region of England, said on Wednesday that the document, 'GCSE Religious Studies: Religion Peace and Conflict Workbook'

Daniel Pearl's murder accused to remain in jail for another 3 months

Islamabad: British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and his three aides - the main accused in the abduction and murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl - will remain in jail for another three months, according to an order issued by Pakistan's Sindh government on Wednesday.

The announcement of extending their detention was made by prosecutors during a hearing of the Supreme Court, which was to decide on Sheikhs' release. The apex court last week barred the government from releasing them.

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PTI

Two scientists win Nobel chemistry prize for 'gene scissors'

Stockholm: Two scientists won the Nobel Prize in chemistry Wednesday for developing a method of genome editing known as "molecular scissors" that offer the promise of one day curing inherited diseases and even cancer.

Gustafsson said that, as a result, any genome can now be edited "to fix genetic damage," adding that the tool "will provide humankind with great opportunities." But he cautioned that the "enormous power of this technology means we have to use it with great care."

Working on opposite sides of the Atlantic, Frenchwoman Emmanuelle Charpentier and American Jennifer A. Doudna developed a method known as CRISPR/Cas9 that can be used to change the DNA of animals, plants and microorganisms with extremely high precision.

"There is enormous power in this genetic tool, which affects us all," said Claes Gustafsson, chair of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry. "It has not only revolutionized basic science, but also resulted

in innovative crops and will lead to groundbreaking new medical treatments."

Gustafsson said that, as a result, any genome can now be edited "to fix genetic damage," adding that the tool "will provide humankind with great opportunities." But he cautioned that the "enormous power of this technology means we have to use it with great care."

It has already raised serious ethical questions in the scientific community. Most of the world became more aware of CRISPR in 2018, when Chinese scientist Dr. He Jiankui revealed he had helped make the world's first gene-edited babies, to try engineer resistance to future infection with the AIDS virus.

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Trend Slayer

'Ginny Weds Sunny' has diverse music'

Actor VIKRANT MASSEY says his film *Ginny Weds Sunny* has a song for every mood.

"The entire music album of *Ginny Weds Sunny* is so diverse. It has a song for every mood. Out of the album, *Rubaru* is my favourite. This is the song that I was waiting to be out," said Vikrant.

With composition by Jaan Nissar Lone, lyrics by Peer Zahoor, *Rubaru* has been rendered by Kamal Khan.

Directed by Puneet Khanna, the film also stars Yami Gautam.

She had earlier posted on social media, "Thank you for all the love. This film has been toughest for me for health reasons. It's my constant support system, which kept me going."



'I search for extraordinary stories of extraordinary women, that really guides my film choices. I have tried to bring stories of powerful, strong, independent women who have a voice and want to be heard. I feel I have a responsibility to portray women differently on screen. Thankfully, I have been lucky enough to find projects that did so.'

—Bhumi Pednekar

Actor SHWETA TRIPATHI talks about how she underwent gruelling prep for *Mirzapur 2* including extensive gun training.

She says, "Master ji would keep reminding me that it has to be Gol's emotions. It was a tough part to crack but it was thrilling. I prepped extensively as action is like choreography. Every step has to be planned. You have to know it well and there is no room for improvisation because you're responsible not just for yourself but people around you too. The experience was one of my most memorable character preparations ever."

The series releases on October 23 on Amazon Prime Video.

Dan slams India's Comedy Central

Actor and co-creator DAN LEVY of the Emmy Award-winning show *Schitt's Creek* has slammed Comedy Central India for taking out a scene of a same sex kiss between his character David and Dustin Milligan's character, Ted.

Levy posted a promo clip on Twitter, claiming the channel cut out his kissing scene.

He tweeted, "Why did you remove the kiss between two men? This is a show about the power of inclusivity. The censorship of gay intimacy is making a harmful statement against that message."

#loveislove. For those who are confused, this is about the channel in India. Comedy Central in America is not censoring the show."



All things green

With work-from-home becoming the new normal, experts suggest how urban gardening can help release stress and make intimate spaces more relaxing. By TEAM VIVA

The rising sensitivity towards the environment has seen the smooth slipping in of urban gardening. With city life being alienated from the calmness of countryside, it can help recreate the lush oasis by altering the interiors of one's house.

Well, this is becoming a global trend. Plants inside the home don't just lend a new dimension to the interior design but also instill a sense of ecological consciousness in the modern city development. It creates a whole new space enabling people to break free from the stress and fatigue of busy schedules and fast-paced lives. Humans do find rescue in nature by smoothly adjusting to mindful living and striking the right balance between architecture and interior. And given the current normal of working from home, one certainly needs the interior spaces to be relaxing.

The consciousness of creating natural zones and realising the soothing essence of greenery, colour, fragrance, light and texture have driven the popularity of urban gardening. Going beyond hobby, people seek advice from experts for which the IFFCO Kisan Urban Gardening sector have witnessed a promising wave of city dwellers reaching out for professional guidance to create the natural landscape," says IFFCO Kisan MD Sandeep Malhotra.

He believes that the urban indoor gardening comes with an entourage of benefits. It adds on to the aesthetic beauty of the house radiating attractive features of the residence. Offering a good range of colour and pattern, it is also a



feast for the eye.

Experts say that while we focus on the visual grandeur, we generally lose out on the healthy impact it can have on one's mind. Plants can purify the air quality, eliminating the air pollutants coming from adhesives, furnishings, clothing and solvents which can cause illness. Aradhana Dalmia, founder of The Artemist, suggests, "Adding the natural element brings a breath of fresh air into any interior or exterior space. Introducing a beautiful sculptural element will always enhance the urban landscape and add a creative touch to the aesthetics. Such features elevate the space and are always in line with the designers and the clients' vision."

She adds it greatly impacts our sub-

jective perception by enhancing the concentration capacity, imparting a sense of satisfaction to one's soul. This in turn "can hugely affect the output, increasing the productivity that remains overshadowed in the chaos of the daily life. Overcoming the sedentary lifestyle, it has the vibrancy to boost the mood and bring the creativity buried deep down within oneself."

The overall spatial design — the blooms along with the foliage — can act as an extension of indoor space showcasing the magnificence of managed indoor plants. One can use bonsai, ferns, jade plant, bonsai and other tiny-potted plants for indoors. Good luck plants are also an option as they are popular in their own ways for attracting wealth and positive vibes. The Pachira money tree, lucky



bamboo, money plant, green climber, palm plant, potted orchids and others can serve the purpose well. "With an increasing desire for multi-functional and green spaces, urban gardens have become an extension of all man-made structures, channeling the dynamism, fluidity and softness of natural foliage. These are decorative and edible plants, mixed with individualistic design elements like woven upholstery, metallic accents and artisanal ware.

They are made for individualistic and immersive spaces. They blur the lines between the inside and the outside," says interior designer Punam Kalra, creative director of I'm The Centre for Applied Arts.

The lush green ecosystem crafted out of various structures and layout of plant offers a relaxing zone for social gathering. Brimming with decorative plants, vibrant flower beds, micro-green farm-ing, it also opens up doors for healthy interaction with greens while realising entertainment to the full extent. "Urban

gardening is a great company to always keep you involved, leaving no space idle. It is just like taking care of a pet or baby, surrounding the space with positivity," adds Kalra.

Experts point out towards kitchen gardening, which has become another trend to benefit from. From organic food like bright red chilli bushes, neat rows of beetroot, fruit bearing trees in patio to purple, flowering eggplants — they enhance the texture of the garden and add depth to the structure. It makes the garden look more visually appealing.

Well, some do it for recreation, some for organic food and some for entertainment. However, Malhotra points out, "Irrespective of the passion driving one to do urban gardening, it is evident that the greenery imparts a pleasant place to relax. It brings the contrasting line of solid, man-made structures and the raw nature flowing with foliage in the same plane — a combination required for healthy lifestyle."

Lights, camera, laughter

Directed by ZAKARIYA MOHAMMED, the Malayalam film, *Halal Love Story*, through comedy, explains the struggles of making cinema for everyone



me, *Halal Love Story* is a funny, yet

beautiful, commemoration of the art of storytelling in all its forms. I am grateful to my co-writers Muhsin Parari and Ashif Kakodi,

who made this chaotic comedy pos-sible alongside me. With a unique perspective brought to life by our strong ensemble, I am confident that the viewers will enjoy this chronicle that tries to manifest that cinema is for everyone."

Speaking on the film, Indrajith

Sukumaran, superstar of the Malayalam film industry, said, "The character Shereef is quite layered. He wants to conquer his pas-sion for acting but at the same time wants to do it right by following his beliefs. The film impacts him in more ways than the other and in the

due process completely changes his outlook towards his personal life. Playing a humorous and a complicated Shereef was a phenomenal experience and I will forever be thankful to Zakariya and Aashiq Abu for giving me this opportunity."

Malayalam cinema's favourite Joju George said, "It is always fun to be a part of comedy films, especially the one that is engulfed in errors. What was most appealing to me is the opposing views that my character Siraj offers whilst taking on the challenge of directing this *Halal* film. As my character strug-gles at every phase, it's the brilliance of the writers who envisioned the comedic charm in the film. It was indeed a wonderful experience to

work alongside such an incredible cast and crew."

Thoufeek, an unmarried young man from a very orthodox family, is highly passionate about film-making. He is an active member and plays a key role in one of Kerala's popular Islamic Organisations, which has kept his cinema dreams in halt. He's approached by Raheem and Shereef with the idea of making a film as an initiative of the cultural wing of his organisation. They soon approach Siraj, popular associate director to don the cap of the director. The biggest challenge for the crew is to keep the film, *Halal*.

(The film releases on October 15 on Amazon Prime Video.)



The message hits home

Starring the father-daughter duo, SONAKSHI and SHATRUGHAN SINHA, the song *Zaroorat* reflects hope

The makers of *Guzar Jayega Zaroorat* bring us yet another song — *Zaroorat*. It is essentially a campaign for hope in these uncertain times. Its narrative has been headlined by actors Shatrughan Sinha and Sonakshi Sinha. They are seen together for the first time for a musical campaign.

Happy at the song's release, Shatrughan and Sonakshi said, "We can't wait to know the reaction of the listeners to the song and its narrative. We are rooting for it to be the spurt of hope we need currently and in the future. May the song inspire people to be kind to one another."

The song features names from diverse fields including HE Dr Kiran Bedi, Padma

Vibhushan Dr Sonal Mansingh (Member of Parliament), Laxmi Agarwal, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi and Ani Choying Drolma. It has been penned by Shravan Pundir and rendered by artists such as Simran Choudhary, Ajay Keswani, Shruti Unwind and rappers Mufaad and Violina. The track has been produced by Shishir Samant. It has been curated by Varun Prabhu Dayal Gupta, Founder and Managing Director, Republic Of Musik and Viral Motani, Founder, Beyond Music. The track has been directed by Varun. Viral and Varun jointly share, "We are happy to present the song to everyone. We hope the message and the impact of the song hits home."

ONE STEP CLOSER

The recent Indo-China standoff has brought back the nation's focus on the work of the Border Roads Organisation, says VAIBHAV DANGE

The latest standoff between India and China on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has brought focus on the Border Roads Organisation — BRO. One more significant event, which the Prime Minister dedicated to the nation is an important infrastructure project known as Atal Tunnel on Manali-Leh Highway. This nine km long tunnel shall reduce the distance by 46 km and travel time to Leh significantly, taking us one step closer to making Ladakh connectivity an all-weather one. Ladakh remains cut off from the rest of the country during winters when both routes one from Srinagar and another from Manali to Leh remains closed. The tunnel, which was under construction for about a decade, picked up pace in 2018-19. It has now been completed and will provide all weather connectivity to Lahaul and Spiti. It shall also ensure rapid and early movement of troops and logistics to Leh during the current standoff with China.

In fact, the whole situation is being attributed to the recent progress made by BRO in accelerating border infrastructure projects as these appear to have triggered alarm bells in the China Security establishment. The increased pace of road construction along our borders is seen as an indication of India's offensive intent and highlights the strategic and important role of BRO. Recently, during my interaction with top leadership of BRO, I have noticed a paradigm shift in the work culture of this organisa-

tion. Since the new Director General has been appointed, it has seen a major surge in outcomes delivered in the last couple of years. This is evident from the fact that about 30 per cent more works were executed this year in spite of COVID-19 restrictions.

The strategic focus of the present government in improving infrastructure along the Northern and Western borders has resulted in better connectivity. The Pathankot-Jammu Highway that links J&K with rest of the country has now an alternate route with 17 bridges along the international borders. Over four lakh people in 217 villages will have all weather connectivity now.

The roads and tunnels towards the LOC from places like Tangdhar, Keran, Gurez, are being upgraded. It shall not only provide connectivity but also open up numerous opportunities for the local population. The long term plan for all weather connectivity to Leh hinges upon construction of Z-morh and Zojila Tunnels on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh highway. The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways and BRO have jointly planned three



more tunnels at Baralachla, Tanglingla and Lanchungla along the Manali-Sarchu-Leh highway. BRO is also working on connecting Leh through the Zanskar Valley. This road joins Darcha on Manali-Leh highway with Nimu on Kargil-Leh Highway via Padam and Niraq in the Zanskar Valley.

While axial connectivity towards forward locations remains the area of focus, there is also a need to ensure lateral links parallel to the LAC for strategic purposes. Many plans are in place to connect the forward areas of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand from Karcham to Harsil with a tunnel at Lamkhaga Pass.

In Uttarakhand, there are three sectors wherein roads lead to China border. These are Harshil, Joshimath and Pithoragarh sectors. In Harshil sector, double lane road is complete for 316 km to PDA which is just 16 km from Thagla pass on China border. In Joshimath sector, the roads to the China border get bifurcated into two limbs. BRO has connected Mana pass and provided a double lane road till Ghastoli. Both Niti

pass and Rimkhem are connected. BRO has already connected Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra route to Navidang and also the route to Adi Kailash Parbat. BRO has also been entrusted with 400 km roads in Uttarakhand and 250 Km roads in Sikkim under the Bharatmala Project at a cost of over ₹9,000 crore. This will be a major step in upgrading infrastructure in border areas.

Trans-Arunachal Highway will connect at the base of all five valleys.

Major works are being undertaken in Arunachal Pradesh on the road to Tawang. This sector saw a lot of action during the 1962 war with China. The entire road of 317 km has been double laned with 42 km of bypasses and tunnels designed for smooth flow of traffic. This road is being given all weather connectivity by constructing tunnels at Nechiphu and Sela.

In the last two decades, China has undertaken rapid infrastructure development in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), including in the areas close to its border with India. This has enhanced China's force application and logistic sustenance capability in TAR. The improved infrastructure further facilitates deployment of Chinese missile bases and long-range bombers in Tibet. The only way to counter this is through enhancing our infrastructure in the region. The Indo-China Border Road (ICBR) Project was launched to reduce our mobilisation timings and connect our forward localities. Accordingly,

(CCS) identified 73 ICBRs. These 73 roads are spread in five states / UT bordering China. BRO has connected the farthest most localities of Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO), Hotspring, Demchok and Zursar. DBO was an air maintained post which is now connected with a 255 km long Darbuk-Shyok BRO road. This road traverses through high altitude glaciated regions totally devoid of habitation. The travel time has reduced from erstwhile seven days to only one day.

In Himachal, forward most localities of Point 4840, Lepcha and Shipkila have been connected. In Uttarakhand, forward most localities of Sumla, Mana Pass, Niti Pass, Rimkhem, Jolingkong and Lipulekh have been connected. In Sikkim, forward most localities of Kerang, Dongkyala, Goral, Chola, Nathula and Dokala have been connected. In Arunachal Pradesh, forward most localities of Kharsangla, Vasu Rock, Burnla, Chuna, Taksing, Lamang, Tadadege, Geling, Kibithu and Dicu have been connected.

Efficient and strategic infrastructure enhances capabilities of armed forces manyfold. We must congratulate thousands of Boarder Road engineers for their commendable work in building this infrastructure in extreme weather and geographical conditions. The recent push in border infrastructure by PM Modi has provided the vital muscle in securing India's borders.

(The writer is Advisor, NHAI, under MoRTH, New Delhi.)

IN SHORT



An air-conditioned, renovated canteen with modular kitchen and furniture facilities was inaugurated inside the CLW premises on Wednesday by Preaveen Kumar Mishra, General Manager, Sunita.



Mishra, President, CLW WWO along with members of CLW WWO were also present. The canteen will now provide better catering facilities to the staff and visitors to Chittaranjan. This fully air-conditioned refurbish canteen can provide service to around 40 people at a time with quality food items. Senior officers and staff were present in this inauguration ceremony by maintaining all precautionary measures of COVID-19.



CRPF celebrated the 28th Anniversary of its Rapid Action Force with zest. Raised in 1992 as a specialised force to deal with riots and situations relating to public order, the RAF has made a distinct reputation owing to its courage, commitment and professional efficacy. To mark the occasion, a parade was conducted at the CRPF Academy, Gurugram. Minister for State for Home Affairs, Nitinand Rai graced the occasion as a chief guest. On this solemn occasion, RAF Song was also released by the chief guest. Penned by Meheboob Alam Kotwal, composed by Ranjit Barot and sung by Shaan, the song reverberates the spirit of universal peace. The parade was followed by a signature rifle drill immaculately performed by Mahila Warriors of the force.



A two-day art workshop was inaugurated on Monday at the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, to commemorate the concluding of 151st birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Chairman Dr Uttam Pacharne inaugurated the workshop along with esteemed guests Dattatreya Apte and Amitava Bhownick. Secretary (I/c) Ramakrishna Vedala, Senior artist Jayant Gajera, officers/staff of LKA and artist and many art connoisseurs were also present on the occasion. Pacharne said, "After COVID-19 pandemic, it's the first time we are organising the programme physically. More than 75 working artists and research scholars are participating in the workshop. I congratulate and thank all the participating artists. Artworks created in this workshop will be a true tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. We're also working on the reconstruction of the studios of the Akademi."

Bhownick said, "Art and artists are a part of the civilisation. I hope that Akademi will organise more such programmes in future."

HDFC holds virtual India Homes Fair 2020

HDFC Ltd hosted a month-long mega online property show 'India Homes Fair', featuring over 350 projects from more than 175 renowned developers located across 50 Indian cities.

The event was inaugurated virtually by Renu Sud Karnad, Managing Director, HDFC Ltd, in the presence of other senior executives from HDFC Ltd. All NRIs and PIOs based in London, Singapore & Middle East can look forward to own their dream home in India now.

Karnad said, "The online property show enables homebuyers to view and select properties safely from the comfort of their homes amid this pandemic. We feel that the demand for housing will pick up gradually as the economy emerges out of this difficult period. We at HDFC have seen demand coming back. In July 2020, HDFC achieved 81 per cent of July 2019 disbursements, which was better than what we had expected given the lockdown and other restrictions and the subsequent months have been even better. The recent reports by agencies indicate that sales have been improving and this festive season should be better. One must not forget that structural demand for housing for India will always be strong due to factors such as improved affordability, government's thrust on affordable housing, favourable demographics, increasing urbanisation and rising aspirations. Affordability was never better given the huge concessions under PMAY, tax benefits on home loans, lowest-ever interest rates and property prices having seen both price and time correction. With people working from home more often, the demand for homes with larger spaces will only increase. All this will not only reaffirm the importance of a home but has also built a sense of urgency to own a home. We hope that our customers will immensely benefit from this initiative."

CLEANER AND GREENER

The ICAR-Central Research Institute for Jute and Allied Fibres (CRIJAF), Barrackpore, aims to fulfill Mahatma Gandhi's dream to make India clean and healthy by replacing plastic with natural fibres



In an effort to avoid inconvenience, we are now increasingly opting for cheap and easily available polythene over eco-friendly bags, and forgetting that every easiest path does come with a consequence. About 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags used worldwide every year, adds tons of carbon emission into the air; and many of these bags used, ultimately make their way into rivers and oceans, killing thousands of animals, marine lives, and also leaching into our own food chain at some point. Apart from ending up as unsightly litter and landfills, they very often wreak havoc by clog-

ging drains and causing urban flash floods. The fact that a single polythene bag may take over a thousand years to decompose compounds the problem. It is almost as if we are smothering our planet in an ever tightening plastic trap.

The ICAR-CRIJAF has been mandated to undertake research and developments on six natural fibre crops like jute, mesta, flax, ramie, sisal, sunn hemp which are

versatile, biodegradable and carbon-neutral, relatively inexpensive substitute for polythene, said Dr

Gouranga Kar, Director of the Institute. Jute plants are a huge source of renewable bio-mass and sequester 3.80 tonnes of carbon per hectare from the atmosphere in only 120 days, which is several times higher than that of trees. Dr AK Singh, principal scientist of the institute, said that jute crop sheds about 15 tons of green leaves, which helps in maintenance of soil fertility.

The sunn hemp can be used as green manure crop and minimise nitrogen requirement by 50 per cent and also potential to reduce

nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas. The biomass jute, mesta, ramie can also be used as paper-pulp, thus use of tree-based paper pulp will be reduced. It will help to make India greener by keeping a check on deforestation. Jute sticks are a cheap source for biofuel, charcoal, coarser paper and durable hardboard as a substitute of wood thereby also helping in reducing deforestation.

Due to its biodegradable nature, natural fibre products are 100 per cent safe for environment and will play a tremendous role to replace plastics from our planet, said Dr Satpathy, Head, Plant Protection Division of the institute. The institute has developed high-yielding varieties and suitable agro-technology to promote and upscale natural fibre production in the country, which will not only help to meet domestic demand to build self-reliant India but also will have the potential to earn more foreign exchange through export.

Thus, ICAR-CRIJAF is determined to fulfill Gandhiji's dream to build "clean and green" India by replacing plastics with biodegradable natural fibres. Let's aim for a better, cleaner and greener India using natural fibre products and work together to achieve it.

WRWWO president applauds women's contribution to Railway Protection Force

A webinar was organised on the 36th Raising Day Ceremony of Railway Protection Force of Western Railway, in which Tanuja Kansal, President of the Western Railway Women's Welfare Organisation (WRWWO), while extending her wishes to WR's Railway Protection Force, applauded women in the Railway Protection Force. She appreciated the bravery and valour of RPF personnel, especially the 'Naree Shakti' in the RPF organisation. Kansal praised the outstanding and selfless work by the RPF as frontline Corona warriors during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kansal said that this day is not only a symbol of formation of one of our nation's elite and dedicated Armed Forces, but it is also a day to remember their bravery, dignity and service to the nation. She expressed her joy to know that there are 165 women in WR's RPF force, including two ladies as Security Commissioners heading the divisions. It made her extremely happy to know that 79 more women are undergoing training at the RPF



A view of RPF parade by trainee lady constables at RPF Training Centre at Valsad



Bhavpreet Soni (Left), Senior Divisional Security Commissioner of Vadodara Division, & Tanvi Gupte (Right), Divisional Security Commissioner of Bhavnagar Division of Western Railway

Training Centre at Valsad and will be inducted soon into the force. She said that it was a matter of immense pride to see such good number of women staff serving in the RPF and appreciated the devotion to work shown by various women personnel during their course of duty, even in such trying times. She lauded the efforts by



Tanuja Kansal, President of Western Railway Women's Welfare Organisation (WRWWO)

several RPF women staff who voluntarily prepared face masks and handled both official work as well as domestic chores with ease. These women 'jawans' put their best foot forward to shoulder the jobs of their male counterparts with the same dedication and determination.

As a token of appreciation for the courage and bravery displayed by RPF 'jawans' and to boost their morale, WRWWO has provided an assistance of ₹41,500, under which two washing machines have been provided to Ahmedabad and Rajkot RPF post, while three hot plates have been donated to the Bhavnagar RPF post. Earlier, the WRWWO had given a nod to the RPF of Mumbai Central to purchase three deep freezers.

Guwahati Airport's new look



Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, also known as Guwahati International Airport, is the biggest and busiest international airport of Northeast India. To meet the futuristic demands of Guwahati and add to the infrastructural development of the expanding city, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has undertaken the work for Construction of New Integrated Terminal Building at the cost of ₹1,232 crore. The airport currently handles over six million passengers annually. The New Terminal Building will be capable of handling 4,300 domestic and 200 international passengers during peak hours and about 10 million passengers annually. Equipped with 64 check-in counters, 20 self check-in kiosks, six baggage carousels, in-line baggage security screening system and 10 aero bridges, the terminal will be an energy-efficient building.

With total built-up area of 1,02,500 sqm, the terminal will have two levels, arrival at the lower/apron level and departure at the upper level. In addition, there will be two more floors, a mezzanine between the two levels, part of which serves as the air-side arrival corridor for passengers alighting from the boarding bridges. The other part of this mezzanine acts as a service floor for the baggage handling system used for outbound baggage.

The design of the terminal building

is inspired by Icarus, the mythological figure, one of the earliest inspirations of human flight. The airport roof is styled using the Origami art, the design is an ode to human endeavour, crafts and innovation. More than 38 per cent of the work has been completed and the new terminal building is scheduled to be ready by June 2022.

The 88th Indian Air Force Day will be celebrated today at the Hindon Airways campus adjacent to the country's capital, New Delhi. On Tuesday, the Airbase saw a full-dress rehearsal for the parade, which showcased the courage and might of our air men and women.

The programme was inaugurated by the Milky Way Team by jumping from AN-32 to a height of 8,000 feet by parachute. Post this, the commanders started the parade ground to the tune of 'Saare Jahan Se Achha Hindostan Hamara'. Battle ships flew past. The state-of-the-art fighter Vimal Rafael from France joined the show for the first time. The audience could see the Rafael tearing the sky.

Next came the Chinook, post which, in the blink of an eye, five Apache helicopters were seen. The spectators at the parade ground were delighted to see the Chinook and the Apache, which is the world's most dangerous com-

bat helicopter. The Hercules C17 Globemaster Mirage 2000 and Jaguar represented the strength. The Swadeshi Tejas staged a long walk above the parade ground. Meanwhile, the audience heard a roar from the Rafael and the spectators were lifted from their seats and were forced to stare the bright sky at once.

Seeing the aerobatics of

the indigenous aircraft Tejas certainly became a moment of pride. When the Tejas passed over the parade ground from 125 mph in slow motion, the spectators were stunned. At the end of the air show, which lasted for 40 minutes, the audience was stunned as the Suryakiran aerobatics team made a perfect 88 in the air, marking the 88th Air Force Day!

FLY HIGH

ASHOK NIRWAN reports about the full-dress rehearsal of the 88th Indian Air Force Day parade



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TODAY

VS



Live from 7:30pm
STAR SPORTS 1



IPL
2020

KL Rahul

302 runs

Kagiso Rabada | 12 wickets



We strive to play with power. We've got quality in this squad. We've given confidence to each one of them because we know they're very talented



I think losing wickets early doesn't help, we haven't been able to get off to a good start. Outside of Buttler and Archer at the end, we have a bit of work to do on our batting



We have not managed to come off as a top-order in the last three games. We lost three wickets in power-play and in T20s you never win too many games from that position



Sitting in hotel room in quarantine once again after leaving New Zealand is not how I thought I would be arriving at the IPL, but here I am and all things considered, I'm in a good place

KXIP, SRH look to turn around fortunes

PTI ■ DUBAI

Their bowling attacks struggling to find form, Kings XI Punjab and Sunrisers Hyderabad will look towards their power-hitters to do the job when the two erratic teams go head to head on Thursday.

KXIP are currently languishing at the bottom of the table after losing four of their five games, while SRH are only slightly better at sixth following two wins and three losses so far.

KXIP's strength has been in a formidable opening duo. Skipper KL Rahul has been in scintillating form this year, scoring two fifties and a century, while Mayank Agarwal also has a half-century and a ton to his credit. The two have done the heavy-lifting for the team.

Nicholas Pooran has also looked sharp but Glenn Maxwell is yet to fire.

But despite the solid batting performances, KXIP have been unable to win because of their disappointing bowling attack.

Apart from Mohammed Shami,

all the other bowlers have failed to take wickets, conceding far too many runs in death overs.

They were unable to defend 223 against Rajasthan. In their 10-wicket loss in the previous outing, KXIP bowlers were at their wits end as Chennai Super Kings overhauled a 178-run target with 14 balls and 10 wickets to spare.

And come on T h u r s d a y , Sunrisers, who are blessed with a strong top order comprising

Jonny Bairstow, David Warner, Manish Pandey and Kane Williamson, will look to exploit a low-on-confidence KXIP's bowling unit.

Having lost their opening two games due to the middle order, Sunrisers addressed the issue by bringing in Williamson to the playing XI at the expense of an all-round option.

Skipper Warner backed youngsters Abhishek Sharma and Abdul Samad to fill in for the fifth bowler and the risk paid off as the former champions won two games on the trot.

However, the Orange Army was dealt a massive blow when senior pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar was ruled out of the tournament with a thigh muscle injury.

In Bhuvneshwar's absence, Sunrisers struggled with their bowling. Apart from T Natarajan, pacers Sandeep Sharma and Siddarth Kaul leaked runs.

Samad was also expensive,

which led Warner to turn to Williamson to bowl two overs of off-spin against Mumbai.

Going ahead, there will be added pressure on yorker specialist Natarajan and star spinner Rashid Khan.

Sunrisers face the conundrum of either providing stability in the middle order or strengthening their bowling attack.

They have the option of playing experienced Afghan all-rounder Mohammad Nabi or West Indies' Fabian Allen but that would mean Williamson will have to sit out.

KKR SNATCH WIN FROM CHENNAI



KKR batsmen Rahual Tripathi & Shubman Gill IPLT20.com



Sunil Narine celebrates after taking wicket of Shane Watson IPLT20.com

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Rahul Tripathi celebrated his promotion to the top by striking a 51-ball 81 as Kolkata Knight Riders returned to winning ways with a 10-run victory over

In reply, CSK were stopped at 157 for five.

Having restored his confidence with a whirlwind 83 not out against Kings XI Punjab, veteran CSK opener Shane Watson picked up

from where he had left to slam a 40-ball 50, his 21st in the lucrative league.

Watson feasted on the short-ball strategy of KKR bowlers in a 69-run partnership with Ambati Rayudu (30 from 27 balls).

Needing 78 runs in the last 10 overs, the CSK duo departed for addition of just two runs, while Mahendra Singh Dhoni, coming out to bat at No 4, got out for 11.

Sam Curran hit 17 from 11 balls, but that was not

enough as CSK fell short.

The win catapulted KKR to the third place in the table with three wins from five matches, while CSK remained at five with four points from six games.

Earlier, Chennai Super Kings staged a remarkable comeback as KKR lost three wickets in the last over with 'birthday boy' Dwayne Bravo removing two of them for an impressive 3/37.

Tripathi raced to his fifty in 31 balls to give KKR a solid foundation after Dinesh Karthik called it right at the toss.

At 93 for two at the midway stage, KKR looked set for a big score but Bravo struck after that.

Leg-spinner Karn Sharma (2/25), Shradul Thakur (2/28), Sam Curran (2/26) claimed two wickets each as the Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led side bounced back in the back-10 by taking eight wickets while giving away just 74 runs.

Dhoni picked up four catches, the last one being his best effort.

Bumrah was keen to take new ball & back his yorkers: Bond

PTI ■ ABU DHABI



Mumbai Indians pacer Jasprit Bumrah @mipaltan

ball in the tournament and Bumrah didn't disappoint, returning with the impressive figures of 4/20, including the prized scalp of Steve Smith.

"Jasprit genuinely wanted to take the new ball so there was a discussion that went on one day before the game against Royals, we obviously have used him in a defensive manner at the back-end of the powerplay," said Bond during the post-match conference.

"It was a fresh wicket and there was grass on it, he has the ability to nip the ball around, we knew Rajasthan's key players were in the top-order so we wanted to give him an opportunity to get out

there, take the new ball and take some wickets for us," he added.

Bond said the Indian pace spearhead was unhappy with his performances in the tournament and wanted to make the kind of impact that is expected from a bowler of his calibre.

"Jasprit really wanted to back his yorkers against Royals, he wanted to go back to his strengths and use his bouncer as he normally does," the New Zealander said.

"That's his strength, if he is not happy with his performances, he tends to bounce back to a new level. I know, traditionally through IPL, Bumrah tends to get better and better," he added.

Ailing father told Stokes to get back to playing

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Mumbai Indians bowling coach Shane Bond has revealed that star pacer Jasprit Bumrah took the new ball and backed his yorkers with a renewed vigour against Rajasthan Royals as he was a bit disappointed with his IPL performances so far.

Bumrah, who was having a rather ordinary tournament, was back to his destructive best, claiming a four-wicket haul as his side inflicted a 57-run defeat on Rajasthan on Tuesday.

It was the first time the 26-year-old was handed the new

ball in the tournament and Bumrah didn't disappoint, returning with the impressive figures of 4/20, including the prized scalp of Steve Smith.

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Ali Khan out with injury

Abu Dhabi: Kolkata Knight Riders fast bowler Ali Khan, who had become the first USA cricketer to be signed by an Indian Premier League franchise, has been ruled out of the tournament due to an injury.

A media advisory from IPL confirmed his injury but did not provide any details.

The two-times winners had signed Khan as a replacement for the injured English seamer Harry Gurney ahead of the tournament.

"Khan became the first USA cricketer to be signed up by an IPL franchise. Unfortunately, Khan has since been injured and will miss the rest of the Dream11 IPL 2020 season," the statement read.

PTI

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PTI

POINTS TABLE

	P	W	L	NRR	PTS
1 MI	6	4	2	+1.488	8
2 DC	5	4	1	+1.060	8
3 KKR	5	3	2	-0.002	6
4 RCB	5	3	2	-1.355	6
5 CSK	6	2	4	-0.371	4
6 SRH	5	2	3	-0.417	4
7 RR	5	2	3	-0.826	4
8 KXIP	5	1	4	+0.178	2

Ailing father told Stokes to get back to playing

PTI ■ BRISBANE

London: Star England all-rounder Ben Stokes has revealed that his ailing father, for whom he took a break from cricket, encouraged him to return to action in the IPL by telling him that he was duty-bound to do the job.

Stokes took compassionate leave in the middle of the home Test series against Pakistan in August and travelled to New Zealand to attend to his father who has been diagnosed with brain cancer.

After spending five weeks with his family,

Stokes, who is contracted with Rajasthan Royals, has landed in the UAE and is currently in quarantine.

"Saying goodbye to my dad, my mum and my brother in Christchurch was tough. It has been a difficult time for us as a fam-

ily, but we've pulled together and supported each other as best we can," Stokes wrote in his column for the Daily Mirror.

"And I was able to get on the plane with my parents' love and blessing after we reached the decision, for

me to get back playing, as a family with no external influences."

Recalling the conversation he had with his parents, Stokes said, "My dad was also very strong on the responsibilities I have. He told me I have a duty to do the job that I do and I have a duty as a husband and father as well. "We gave it all a lot of thought and talked it over at length, and we came to a decision that now sees me back focusing on the game and then I'll be heading home to Clare and the kids."

PTI

Czech seventh seed Kvitova, a two-time Wimbledon champion, will now face Australian Open winner Sofia Kenin who knocked out fellow American Danielle Collins 6-4, 4-6, 6-0 for a place in Saturday's final.

"It means a lot to be back in the semi-finals," said 30-year-old Kvitova who was beaten by eventual champion Maria Sharapova when she made the same stage in 2012.

"After my last match, I was very emotional to be in the quarter-finals. Now I am in the semis. I never imagined this would happen after everything that has happened."

"This is my lucky place."

It was Paris where Kvitova made her comeback in 2017 after spending six months recovering from a terrifying knife attack at her home in December 2016.

The frenzied assault required a four-hour operation and left her with damaged ligaments in her playing hand. Doctors warned her that her career may be finished.

It was Paris where Kvitova fired 22 winners and six aces past 32-year-old

Petra Kvitova returned to the French Open semi-finals for the first time in eight years on Wednesday after defeating Germany's Laura Siegemund 6-3, 6-3, describing Roland Garros as her "lucky place".

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It was Paris where Kvitova fired 2