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BENEDICT TO
BE DOCTOR
STRANGE AGAIN
12 VIVACITY

Aarey forest stays, car shed goes

Metro car shed will now be located at Kanjurmarg, additional 200 acre at Aarey Colony to be declared forest, announces Maha CM

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

More than 10 months after he stayed its construction in the wake of protests by environmentalists, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday announced that the proposed car shed for the Metro phase-III project would now be located at Kanjurmarg in north-east Mumbai to save forests at Aarey Colony at Goregaon in north Mumbai, where the project was initially located.

Meanwhile, former Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis — under whose regime the Mumbai Metro —III car shed construction started — slammed the Uddhav Government for its decision to shift the project, saying its re-location would result in an additional cost of ₹ 4000 crore.

Addressing the people across the State through social media, Uddhav said the Maharashtra Government would not spend any money for acquiring the land for shifting the Metro phase-III car shed project from Goregaon and locating it at Kanjurmarg as it owned land at the new location.

"We will now shift the car shed for the Metro phase-III project from Goregaon and locate it at Kanjurmarg. We will



■ Fadnavis slammed the Uddhav Govt, says its re-location would result in an additional cost of ₹ 4000 cr

■ The Maharashtra Government would not

spend any money as it owns land at the new location

■ We will now add another 200 acres area to the earlier 600 acre area and declare a total of 800 acre area as forest area

at Aarey colony, said the CM

■ The State Government will not do anything that would affect the lives of Adivasis living in the Aarey forest area, he said

not be spending even paisa to acquire the land, as we have our land at Kanjurmarg. The structure that was earlier constructed for the car shed will be utilised for some other purpose.

"Since the State Government has invested ₹100 crore on the construction of the structure, we will utilise the structure constructed for the car shed at Goregaon for some other purpose," the CM said.

Uddhav said his Government had declared ear-

lier 600 acre at Aarey colony as forest area.

"We will now add another 200 acre area to the earlier 600 acre area and declare a total of 800 acre area as forest area at Aarey colony. The State Government will not do anything that would affect the lives of Adivasis living in the Aarey forest area. We will take all steps to protect the animals in the Aarey forests," he said.

"After the shifting of proposed car shed Metro phase-III, the two Metro corridors — Colaba-Bandra-Seepz (Line 3)

and Swami Samarth Nagar-Vikhroli (Line 6) will be integrated," Uddhav said.

The CM — who in his first major decision taken after assuming the highest office in the State had on November 29 last year stayed the work on the construction of a car shed for Metro phase-III at Aarey Colony in the wake of Shiv Sena-supported protests — said his Government had already withdrawn cases filed against all the green activists who had opposed the location of Metro car shed at Aarey

Colony.

It may be recalled the MVA Government's decision to stay the construction of Metro phase-III car shed project and order a review of the project should be seen in the developments that took place in the run-up to the October 21 Maharashtra Assembly polls.

The Shiv Sena had vehemently opposed "illegal" tree felling at Aarey Colony to pave way for the construction of a car shed for Metro phase-III.

After the Bombay High Court on October 4, 2019 dismissed all petitions challenging the proposed felling of 2,646 trees in Aarey Colony at Goregaon, the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) felled 2,141 trees on October 4 and 5 following the HC's order upholding of the BMC's Tree Authority's permission to fell 2,185 trees at Aarey Colony.

After the MMRCL felled the trees indiscriminately at Aarey Colony on the night of October 4, 2019, the Shiv Sena, which was ruling the State in alliance with the BJP then, had two days later joined the activists and various political parties against the tree felling and also the arrest of 29 activists who had resisted the tree felling by the workers hired to fell the trees on the previous night.

Continued on Page 4

Article 370 will be restored with China's help: Farooq

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Sitting Member of Parliament from Srinagar and former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah on Sunday made yet another provocative statement claiming China "never accepted" the Abrogation of Article 370 and hoped that it will be restored with China's support.

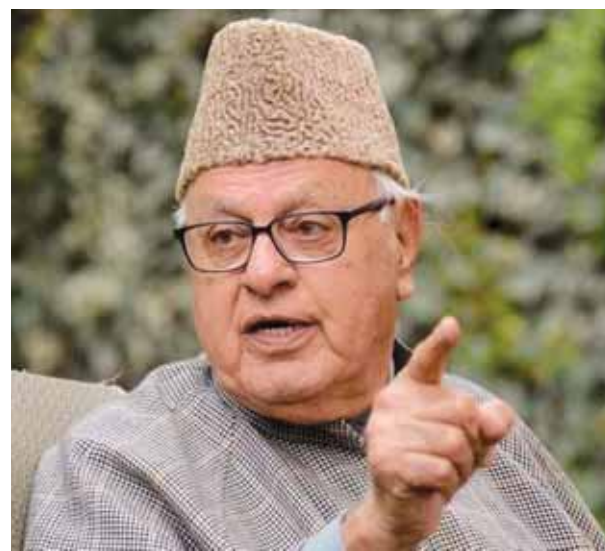
It is for the second time Farooq has attempted to link the issue of Abrogation of Article 370 and the Chinese aggression at the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh.

In the last week of September 2020, Farooq had also claimed in an interview with a news portal that after the abrogation of Article 370, the Kashmiri people "do not feel or want to be Indian" and they would rather prefer to be ruled by China, instead of India. Speaking to a reporter of a private news channel on the sidelines of a function in Srinagar on Sunday, the National Conference president, wearing a black hat, also held the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370 responsible for the Chinese aggression at the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh.

Further provoking New Delhi, Farooq went on to claim that China "never accepted" the Abrogation of Article 370, and hoped that it will be restored with China's support.

"Whatever they are doing at LAC in Ladakh all because of the abrogation of Article 370,

Ex-CM holds Centre's move to change J&K status responsible for Chinese aggression



which they never accepted. I am hopeful that with their support, Article 370 will be restored in J&K," Farooq said.

Taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Farooq claimed, "I never invited the Chinese President, it was the Prime Minister who not only invited him to Gujarat but did jhoola sawari with him."

"He even took him to Chennai and had food with him. Even then the decision (Abrogation of Article 370) taken by the Government was not unacceptable to them."

Referring to the recent Parliament session, Farooq

said he was not even allowed to speak on the problems of Jammu & Kashmir in Parliament. In his brief speech inside the Parliament on September 22, Farooq had sought the restoration of Jammu & Kashmir's special status which was abrogated on August 5 last year.

"There will be no peace in Jammu & Kashmir unless decisions taken on August 5, 2019 are not revoked and the region's special status is restored."

Farooq had also participated in the protest outside the Parliament along with sitting PDP MPs.

CBI takes over Hathras case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Sunday registered an FIR under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections related to gang-rape and murder among others, and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and took over investigation into the alleged gang-rape and murder of a Dalit woman last month in Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh.

The agency assigned the case to its Ghaziabad unit with a special team to investigate the crime that has led to a nationwide outrage, officials said.

The 19-year-old girl was allegedly raped by four men on September 14. She succumbed to severe injuries at a hospital here a fortnight later. Her death culminated in reportedly a hushed up cremation at night allegedly at the behest of the district administration. The political slugfest was further accentuated following the controversial statement by the State police claiming there was no evidence of rape. The brutal injuries suffered by the victim and the local administration's

move to cremate her body late at night triggered massive outrage among people resulting in a political battle from the national capital to Lucknow and Hathras.

The political slugfest was further accentuated following the controversial statement by the State police claiming there was no evidence of rape.

The widespread public outcry compelled the State government to transfer the case, originally registered at Chandpa police station in Hathras.

The Hathras police had registered a case of attempt to murder on a statement by the victim's brother who had said the accused had tried to strangle his sister in a millet field and escaped when she raised an alarm.

Following the State government's request to probe the case, the notification issued by the centre had asked the CBI to probe rape, murder and atrocity and "any attempt, abetment and/or conspiracy, in relation to or in connection with such offence(s) and/or for any other offence committed in the course of the same transaction or arising out of the same facts."

"The complainant had

alleged that on September 14, 2020 the accused tried to strangle his sister in the millet field. The case has been registered by CBI on the request of Uttar Pradesh Government and further Notification from Government of India," the CBI said in a statement.

A team has been constituted and investigation is continuing, it added.

Agency sources said the CBI will not probe the international plot and criminal conspiracy to defame the Uttar Pradesh Government as claimed in an affidavit by the State Government before the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the family members of a 19-year-old Dalit woman, who died after allegedly being raped by four men in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district, will appear before the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court amid tight security on Monday.

The court will record the version of the victim's family members in the case. It had on October 1 asked the woman's parents to come to apprise it of their version of the incident.

The hearing is likely to be held in-person. The court had ordered the Hathras district

Continued on Page 4

UP Cong woman leader thrashed for opposing ticket to rape accused

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress leader Tara Yadav was manhandled after she allegedly threw a bouquet at party national secretary and Purvanchal co-incharge Sachin Nayak in protest against the party's decision to give a ticket to a "rape accused" leader from the Deoria Assembly seat in the upcoming bypolls.

Meanwhile, two party workers of Deoria, Deendayal Yadav and Ajay Kumar Sainthwar, have been expelled from the party for the incident.

A video has been doing rounds on social media in Deoria district in which a group of Congress workers is seen thrashing a woman party leader at an event. Yadav alleged on Sunday that she was thrashed by the party workers for questioning the party's decision to give a ticket to a rape accused to contest bypoll.

She said, "I was thrashed by party workers when I questioned the party's decision to give a ticket to a rape accused, Mukund Bhaskar Mani Tripathi, for the bypoll.

Continued on Page 4

Farmers can use Agrix1 drone sans Govt nod to protect crops

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tech-savvy farmers in the country can now look towards using an indigenous-manufactured microdrone, 'Agrix1', equipped with multi-spectral sensors and artificial tools, to identify crop diseases and pests and take timely remedial steps to boost their agri-income. And in doing so, they need not require the Government's permission.

Agrix1 drone is the first remote-controlled unmanned vehicle in the country under the micro category to get the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) nod for the agriculture sector, requiring no special permit for flying.

"It can be flown without requiring a special UAOP permit from the Government. In other words, farmers do not need to seek special pilot



approval and can fly them on their own. However, since the technology is new, we are interfacing with the interested farmers," said Ashish Sinha, CEO of Omnipresent Robot Technologies which has launched the micro agriculture drone with multispectral capabilities.

The remote-controlled vehicle allows farmers to detect crop diseases up to 10 days

before any visual features of the malady show up, thus helping them save the crop from damage and boost yield up to 20 per cent, Sinha said.

He further explained that detection of the disease is achieved with the help of on-board five-band multispectral sensor that can gather information in red, green, blue, infrared, near red and red-edge bands.

Continued on Page 4

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CAPSULE

'SVAMITVA' HISTORIC MOVE: PM MODI

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched the physical distribution of property cards under the 'SVAMITVA' (ownership) scheme via video conferencing, and asserted that it is a "historic move" that will transform rural India.

ONLY AC COACHES FOR TRAINS AT 130 KM/H

New Delhi: Trains running on identified routes at a speed of 130 kmph or above on the railway network will have only air-conditioned coaches in the near future as part of the Railways' plans to upgrade the network, an official said on Sunday.

'LOWER FARE LIMITS FOR PREMIUM ECONOMY TOO'

New Delhi: Lower fare limits decided by the Government for economy class seats of domestic flights on May 21 would now also be applicable to premium economy class seats, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has said.

39,989 villagers given property cards in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a landmark step towards reducing conflicts in villages, about 40,000 villagers in 346 villages spread across in 37 districts of the state were distributed property cards under the Swamitva Yojana, which experts said could speed up development.

The property cards were given at a function which was presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Panchayati Raj Minister Narendra Singh Tomar were also present in the function.

The Swamitva Yojana, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 24, was monitored by state Panchayati Raj department and the Government of India.

Terming the property card scheme a historic effort towards rural transformation, the prime minister said that it would lead to holistic change of rural landscape and would be a big step towards the country's Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

"Even international experts say that ownership papers play a vital role in the development of a country. For the past six years, efforts were made to further strengthen the panchayati raj system of the country and the ownership scheme is a step towards it," Modi said.

As many as one lakh property cards were distributed to the beneficiaries across the country. UP was the biggest



‘Rape cases have come down during BJP regime’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Claiming that rape cases have come down drastically in the state due to the stringent laws and prosecution of the criminals, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked the Allahabad High Court to expedite the pending cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) so that the guilty could be punished.

The chief minister has asked the High Court to issue directives to the district and sessions courts to take up

the POCSO cases on a priority so that girls get justice.

The chief minister has also announced that the government will observe Women Security Week from October 17 to 25 and will launch a special drive during the week, according to official sources here.

According to official figures, over 20,000 cases of rapes and atrocities on women are pending in the courts. During the lockdown, 1,835 cases were heard and 612 accused were convicted.

During the present Bharatiya Janata

Party regime, five rapist have been given capital punishment in the state while in 193 cases the accused have been sentenced for life.

In 2019, a total of 15,116 cases of atrocities against women were disposed off.

According to the figures of the NCRB, UP has topped in punishing the guilty in crime against women though in 2020, in comparison to 2016, the number of rapes came down by 42 percent and the number of cases of kidnapping women came down by 39 percent.

THE CHIEF MINISTER HAS ASKED THE HIGH COURT TO ISSUE DIRECTIVES TO THE DISTRICT AND SESSIONS COURTS TO TAKE UP THE POCSO CASES ON A PRIORITY SO THAT GIRLS GET JUSTICE

records also assist in employment and self-employment," he said It may be mentioned here that in UP, hard copies of

the property cards were distributed to the beneficiaries in the villages by the local district level officers.

330 test positive in Lucknow city, 498 recover

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As many as 330 people tested positive for coronavirus infection in Lucknow, taking the tally of confirmed cases to 57,386 on Sunday evening.

With 498 COVID-19 patients recovering in the last 24 hours, 51,996 infected persons have been cured in the city and 4,944 active cases are undergoing treatment.

There COVID-19 death toll in the city also pushed up to 776, with four more fatalities. The deceased included one each from Azamgarh, Lakhimpur, Hamirpur and Bahraich districts.

A senior official at the CMO office said that among those who tested positive included 35 from Indiranagar, 27 from Rae Bareilly Road, 19 each from Cantonment and Chowk, 17 from Gomti Nagar, 15 from Hazratganj, 14 each from Chinhat and Alambagh, 13 from Sarojininar, 11 from Mahanagar and 10 each from Aliganj, Gudamba and Thakurganj

The Health workers collected 6,851 samples in the district.

There were six COVID-19

Males more prone to COVID-19

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Even as the number of active coronavirus positive cases are on the decline in Uttar Pradesh, it has emerged that males are more prone to COVID-19 than females but the fatality is the highest among the elderly people.

For the 24th day in a row, the number of COVID-19 patients across the state came down on Sunday. On September 17, it had touched the peak with 68,265 active cases but on Sunday, the figure was 40,019, almost 28,000 less than the peak figure.

On Sunday 3,348 fresh coronavirus positive cases were reported in the state while 3,417 COVID-19 patients recovered. The recovery rate now stands at 89.37 percent.

In the last 24 hours, 41 COVID-19 deaths were reported across the state.

Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said that for the first time the

FOR THE 24TH DAY IN A ROW, THE NUMBER OF COVID-19 PATIENTS ACROSS THE STATE CAME DOWN ON SUNDAY. ON SEPTEMBER 17, IT HAD TOUCHED THE PEAK WITH 68,265 ACTIVE CASES BUT ON SUNDAY, THE FIGURE WAS 40,019, ALMOST 28,000 LESS THAN THE PEAK FIGURE

government-run RT-PCR labs in the state tested over 63,000 samples on Saturday. A total of 1,72,726 samples were tested taking the total number of Covid tests in the state to 1,18,98,777.

Prasad said there were 18,167 asymptomatic COVID-19 patients in home isolation while 3,250 patients were admitted to private hospitals and the rest were convalescing in government-run Covid hospitals.

He said there were 68 percent males and 32 percent females among the positive cases reported in the state. He said among the confirmed

positive cases, 13.77 percent were in the age group of 0-20 years, 47.29 percent in the age group of 21-40 years, 29.04 percent in the age group of 41-60 years and 9.49 percent above the age of 60 years.

However, the additional chief secretary said that though the percentage of positivity of people above 60 years of age was 9.49, the fatalities in this age group was 45 percent.

He said over 4.13 lakh surveillance teams had covered 1,37,149 areas of the state and visited 2.67 crore houses to check the health of over 13.22 crore people.

deaths in the city. The deceased patients included one each from Azamgarh, Lakhimpur, Hamirpur and Bahraich, Sultanpur and Lucknow.

Samples were collected from 6851 persons under contact surveillance in the district.

Meanwhile in the state, 3,348 persons tested positive, including 234 from Prayagraj, 177 from Moradabad, 174 from Meerut, 161 from Varanasi, taking the tally of confirmed cases to 4,36,979.

There were 41 deaths in the state, including five in Varanasi, two each in Kanpur, Prayagraj, Moradabad, Ayodhya, Ghazipur, Unnao, Farrukhabad, one each from in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bareilly, Jhansi, Shahjahanpur, Kushinagar, Maharajganj, Azamgarh, Hardoi, Sultanpur, Chandauli, Rae Bareilly, Sonbhadra, Firozabad, Sant Kabir Nagar, Kannauj, Amethi, Fatehpur and Shamli, taking the toll to 6,394.

As many as 3417 persons recovered in the last 24 hours. With this 3,90,566 infected persons have recovered in the state and at present 40,019 active cases are undergoing treatment.

Mayawati attacks Congress over priest's death in Raj

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party supremo and former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati, has attacked the Congress for keeping silence over the killing of a temple priest who was burned to death in Rajasthan.

"The priest, Babulal Vaishnava, was burnt alive at Bukna village in Karauli district of Rajasthan but the Congress leaders took time to meet the family of the rape victim of Hathras district but forgot to mention even a word on Rajasthan," Mayawati said.

Mayawati in two tweets on Sunday said, "Like UP, in Rajasthan, which has a Congress government, there is an extreme limit in all kinds of crimes and killing of innocents, harassment of Dalits and women. It shows the prevailing jungle rule in both the states. Very shameful and over-alarms. But the Congress leaders here are silent instead of cracking down on their government. This makes it seem that whoever victims they have met in UP so far, is only their vote politics and nothing. The

Priest shot at in Gonda

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Unidentified miscreants shot at a priest of the famous Ram Janki temple in Gonda district late Saturday night when he was sleeping inside the temple premises.

The priest, identified as Samrat Das alias Chhote Baba, is junior to the head priest of the temple, Mahant Sitaram Das, and was shot at from close range. He suffered injuries on his shoulder.

He was rushed to the district hospital from where he was referred to the KGMU Trauma Centre in Lucknow in view of his serious condition.

Police suspect the priest was attacked over a dispute involving the temple's land which is said to be of several acres and costing several crore rupees. The temple is situated in the Ityathok police station area.

The doctors attending on the priest at the Trauma Centre said his condition was improving and he was out of danger.

The Mahant Sitaram Das alleged that the local village pradhan and others were involved in the attack.

He said that land mafia were trying to grab 100 acres of land of the temple. The temple is controlled by the Tapsvi Chhawni Math of Ayodhya.

Recently, a brawl had taken place over the grabbing of the temple's land.

Two home guards were deployed for the security of the temple, but they could not prevent the attack.

The attackers scaled the boundary wall of the temple and reached the place where

Police suspect the priest was attacked over a dispute involving the temple's land which is said to be of several acres and costing several crore rupees. The temple is situated in the Ityathok police station area

the priest was resting and escaped after attacking him.

The gunshot woke up the other staff of the temple and later the priest was rushed to the district hospital.

After the attack, more security personnel have been deployed in the temple.

Superintendent of Police Shailendra Singh said the attack took place around 3 am and a case was registered against four miscreants.

He said investigation was underway and very soon the culprits would be nabbed.

Police sources said two persons had been detained in connection with the attack and they were being interrogated.

Teams have been formed to arrest the accused.

Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party MLC Sunil Singh Sajjan slammed the government for failing to control crime in the state.

"Now priests and mahants are also not safe in the state," he said.



people are well-off with such dramas, this is BSP's advice."

The UP government also targeted the Congress over the Karauli incident. Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were targeted by a minister and asked if they would go to

Karauli. In a tweet, government spokesman Sidharth Nath Singh wrote, "Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Vadra are going to Karauli (Rajasthan)? Someone must tell you if they hear it."

Three labourers electrocuted

Lucknow (PNS): Three labourers were electrocuted while another labourer sustained critical burn injuries when they came in contact with a live wire while constructing a public toilet in Sarkan police station area of Sitapur district on Sunday. Police said the incident occurred at Duguna village when an iron rod being used for the ceiling of the toilet touched the live wire.

In the incident, Anil Kumar (45), Vineet (15) and Neeraj (14) died on the spot.

The injured labourer was rushed to a hospital. The police said the case was being investigated and a police force had been deployed in the area for security.

Both the teenagers were working as labourers in the construction work.

Police have registered an FIR and necessary action would be taken. Police sent the bodies for autopsy.



NOTICE

I have change my name Parvaz Alam to Parvez Alam S/o Mohammad Kaleem for future purpose. Atta Nagar Kunda Pratapgarh.



Samajwadi Party state president Naresh Uttam and Rajendra Chaudhary paying tributes to Loknayak Jai Prakash Narayan on his birth anniversary at JP Centre in Lucknow on Sunday

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY INTRODUCTION OF 25KV AC TRACTION "WARNING TO ROAD USERS"

It is notified for the information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25kV AC Electric Traction over the Aunrihar (Incl.)-Taraon (Incl.) section of North Eastern Railway during doubling with OHE works, height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings with clear maximum height 4.78m above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wires (Contact wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.5m above the rail level at level crossings.

Public are hereby noticed to observe that height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances.

The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows:- (i) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the roads as well as the Railway line. (ii) Danger to the materials or equipment carried out or the vehicle itself. (iii) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

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CITYBRIEFS

ADMISSION OFFER

Ayushi Singh, a student of City Montessori School, Gomti Nagar Campus II, has been offered admission by the prestigious University of Illinois, USA, for pursuing higher studies. She has got this opportunity for higher education due to academic excellence and diligence. She attributes her achievement to the robust academic atmosphere of CMS.

BA-LLB (HONS)

Vic-Chancellor of RMLNLU Prof Bhatnagar said on Sunday that the university will be offering nine seats in BA-LLB (Hons) course to the students of EWS category of Uttar Pradesh. He said the order and merit for the admission will be as per the rank and the score in Common Law Admission Test (CLAT)-2020. "The aspirants are advised to visit the university website," he said



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Positivity rate in district comes down to 5.1 pc

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The positivity rate in Lucknow has come down to 5.1 per cent while fatality rate is 1.5 per cent, which is below the state average of 1.6 per cent. The CMO office released these figures and the status of contact tracing in the district on Sunday.

As per figures, the total number of samples tested in the district this month so far is 98,706 and 5,000 have come out positive, giving a positivity rate of 5.1 per cent.

A senior official at the CMO office said it was a good sign because earlier, the positivity rate of the district had been bordering around 10 per cent. "Lucknow is second in the state in terms of the positivity rate this month while the first is Gautambuddh Nagar with 5.9 per cent," he said.

Lucknow is followed by Meerut with 5 per cent positivity rate, Prayagraj 4.5 per cent and Ghaziabad 4.1 per cent. However, Kanpur Dehat has the lowest positivity rate at 0.3 per cent, followed by Hathras 0.4 per cent, Baghpat 0.5 per cent, Shravasti 0.5 per cent and Pilibhit 0.6 per cent.

The official said one reason why the positivity rate of Lucknow is higher than that of other districts is that more RT-PCR tests than antigen tests were carried out unlike other districts.

In July, the fatality rate of Lucknow was 1.1 per cent, which increased to 1.4 per cent in August, then to 1.3 per cent in September and 1.5 per cent this month.

For the 403 cases which were detected in Lucknow on October 10, contact tracing of 366 were done and the number of contacts traced within 24 hours was 4,469. As many as 247 contacts were traced after 24 hours. The total number of high-risk contacts traced was



Visitors to Asafi Imambara being monitored through a thermal scanner on Sunday

Pioneer

2,945 and the total number of asymptomatic cases monitored daily has been 62.

The senior official said that for bringing down the number of deaths in the district, they were working at two levels. "In tackling the curative part, we are ensuring that rapid response teams visit patients in home isolation on the first fourth and seventh day," he said.

He further pointed out that in terms of treatment, their effort was that the patient should be sent to SGPGI or KGMU. "For controlling deaths, we want patients to be taken to these hospitals for treatment," he said.

The official said that with schools re-opening on October 19, they were making a plan to contain the spread of virus. "We are making a concrete plan on how to manage Covid with

unlock. There will be some strict guidelines framed. A unit will be created with a staff nurse at all the schools and we will be screening all the children so that no symptomatic child is allowed," he said.

Meanwhile, incharge of Infectious Diseases Hospital and nodal officer of Covid hospital at KGMU Dr D Himanshu said that with coronavirus affecting the brain, they have done cerebro-spinal fluid examination for some patients to test whether the fluid carried corona virus or not but they did not find the virus. "However, we are collecting the data for the same," he said.

The senior doctor said they have noticed mental alterations in some Covid patients who get delirious in the ICU. "There could be several reasons for this change of

behaviour. This could be due to ICU-induced psychosis where patients do not like the closed environment, falling levels of oxygen in the brain which affect its functioning of the brain and drug-induced behaviour, wherein the steroids and other medicines can cause these changes. One cannot say that because of coronavirus only," he said. Dr Himanshu said that they were still collecting data for the same.

As far as the impact on infants in case of deliveries of Covid positive women, he said most the newborns tested negative and only two or three were found to be positive. He pointed out that for checking the brain functioning, they checked the crying and feeding of the child, which are normal milestone checking and they all were normal.

Two held for duping job-seekers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Sluths of the Special Task Force (STF) nabbed two persons on the charges of duping job-seekers on the pretext of facilitating jobs at Secretariat and other government departments, in Indiranagar on Sunday. Those arrested were identified as Devesh Kumar Mishra of Hardoi and Vinit Kumar Mishra of Kheri.

The team recovered fake appointment letters, fake appointment letter, academic documents of different candidates, two mobile phones, two ATM cards, two PAN cards and other documents besides a car and Rs 1,100 in cash. The accused were arrested from Aurobindo Park where they were trapped by the STF sluths.

Police said Devesh is the kingpin of the gang while Vinit his subordinate. The accused trapped gullible job-seekers through their contacts among people and lured them for government jobs. They would take huge amount of money from job-seekers and hand over fake appointment letters to them. To win the confidence of the victims, they would call them to meet outside Secretariat and take them inside. They would take Rs 4-5 lakh for a post of clerk and Rs 2-3 lakh for the post of peon. The money earned through illegal ways used to be distributed between them.

In another case, two property dealers were detained on the charges of harassing three girls who had gone shopping at a mall in Gomtinagar on Saturday night. Police said they were being interrogated. Reports said the accused were stalking the girls for hours and were trying to get close to them. A polygon team spotted the girls desperately looking for help and sought to know the reason. On their complaint, the police detained the accused.

58% attendance in UPPCS prelims



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The preliminary exams of UPPCS on Sunday witnessed 58 per cent attendance. ADM, Civil Supplies, said the exams passed off peacefully with no untoward incident reported. As many as 56,907 candidates had registered for

the examination and 33,510 of them turned up while 23,397 were absent.

In the first shift, 34,242 were present and 22,665 absent while 732 skipped the exams in the second shift. The exams were conducted at 120 centres.

UPPCS officials said all

Covid-19 precautions were followed as all the candidates wore masks, used sanitisers and ensured social distancing. There was a separate room at each centre for any candidate having fever. It may be noted that since 2018, UPPCS exams are conducted on the pattern of civil services exams.

16-yr-old boy mowed down by train

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 16-year-old boy preparing for physical test for competitive exams was fatally mowed down by a train in PGI police station area on Sunday morning. The deceased was identified as Sameer Kumar aka Prince of Neelmata in Cantonment police station area.

As per reports, Sameer left his house for running early morning on Sunday. After covering some distance, Sameer reached railway tracks in Vrindavan (sector 8) under PGI police station area and sat there to catch his breath. However, a speeding train crushed him to death on the spot. His cousin Akhilesh

Kumar lodged a case in this connection.

In another case, reckless driving by a SUV driver injured a motorcyclist in Hazratganj police station area on Sunday. Reports said the victim, identified as Ramraj Tiwari of Hazratganj, was passing via Balu Adda around 3:15 pm on Sunday when an SUV (Fortuner) took a sudden turn and hit Tiwari's bike. Tiwari suffered injuries and was rushed to a hospital where his condition was said to be improving. Police said the SUV occupants were identified as Shah Nawaz of Mumbai (in the driving seat) and Mohammed Qasim of Sarvodaya Nagar under Ghazipur police station area.

SUICIDE ATTEMPT

A youth from Bihar, who was preparing for UPSC exams, jumped into Gomti river under Gomti Nagar police station area on Sunday afternoon. A huge number of passersby assembled at the spot, causing traffic jam. Sub-inspector Rajesh Kumar Saroj from Gautampalli police station area said the youth, identified as Vivek Kumar of Darbhanga in Bihar, was staying at a house in Gomti Nagar and was preparing for competitive exams. He said Vivek jumped into the river from Gomti riverfront, but a team of police and divers rescued him. "Vivek is said to be suffering from mental agony," he said.

CISH training farmers for turning crop residue into compost

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Smog formation at the onset of winters in cities of north India due to stubble burning has been a major cause of air pollution. Paddy stubble burning is a practice which farmers find easy for removal of the crop residue before the sowing of winter crops.

Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) is engaged in training and demonstrations for conversion of organic wastes into quality compost, wherein these crop residues can be utilised in compost production.

CISH director Shailendra Rajan said these organic wastes can be converted into useful agri-inputs for the agricultural system. "This has become more important because compost pits have disappeared from villages due to declining domestic animal population. Using organic material for different farm inputs will not only improve the soil organic carbon but also reduce the pollution caused by burning of organic matter which has a lot of value for sustaining fertility," he said.

At CISH, RA Ram is pro-

moting organic cultivation through training and guiding farmers for farm input preparations. "For organic production technology transfer, the institute is conducting on and off-farm training and technology transfer. Specialised courses are conducted on organic input preparation from farm waste. Package of practices for organic cultivation has been developed and shared with the farmers," he said.

"Crop residues and organic wastes can effectively be used as mulch in fruit trees. Mulching is helpful in weed management, reduces evaporation, minimises soil erosion, maintains soil temperature and improves physical, chemical and biological property of the soil," the CISH director said.

He said rotavators can be used after harvesting of paddy as well as wheat ploughing of field as it breaks crop residues in small pieces and this can be followed by the irrigation of field with bio-enhancers which helps in fast decomposition of organic wastes.

"Bio-enhancers can easily be prepared at the farm and used in crop production. They con-

tain fast fermenting and beneficial microbes. In-situ decomposition of organic waste improves soil as well as crop health," he said.

He added that although stubble burning is banned, farmers find it easy and practice for preparation of the field before wheat sowing. "In rural India, thousands of tonnes of organic waste is being burnt to clean the places or get rid of organic waste. Farmers are aware about the importance of manure and compost but most of the time they ignore and don't value the organic residue produced on the farm from different crops. This can be converted into valuable inputs required for the cultivation of crops," he said.

He pointed out that crop residue burning has become popular in north-west India where wheat and rice are harvested and threshed mechanically. "Several years ago, animals were a part of the farmers' family and most of these wastes were used as feed. Compost pits were common in each and every household used for production of organic manure mostly using cow dung," he added.

Traffic dept cracks whip against offenders

Lucknow (PNS): Traffic department carried out a special drive in the city on Sunday. A senior traffic official said the action was taken for bikers without helmet, vehicles parked in no-parking zone, overloading, checking of retro reflective tape, triple-riding, movement on wrong side of the road, overspeeding and driving cars without seat belts. A publicity and awareness programme was also carried out by the traffic department regarding the rules and regulations.

He said 440 were challaned for riding bikes without helmets, 47 for triple-riding, 87 for not wearing seat belts, 109 for moving on the wrong side, 332 for parking vehicles in no parking zones and 380 for other violations under MVA Act.

BBAU prof doing research on Bacillus bacteria

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Assistant professor Pankaj Kumar Arora from the department of Microbiology, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, is doing research on Bacillus bacteria and how it can be used for extracting harmful compounds from environment. He has also published his research paper on this subject in an international journal of Switzerland this month.

"When we look at the conditions of pollution in the environment today, we understand it is a serious problem. This bacteria has the ability to remove harmful compounds from the environment. Bacteria use these

THIS BACTERIA HAS THE ABILITY TO REMOVE HARMFUL COMPOUNDS FROM ENVIRONMENT

compounds as their food and eat them and hence can be utilised in this direction," he said. He said pollution impacts many people and several diseases spread due to pollution. "The main cause of pollution is the release of harmful compounds into environment by various industries which cause serious diseases such as cancer. Therefore, removing these chemicals from the environment is an essential step to secure our lives," he added.



शिक्षा व्यवस्था में बढ़ते कदम

वर्चुअल स्कूल

कक्षा-10 एवं 12 के विद्यार्थियों के लिए दूरदर्शन. उत्तर प्रदेश (DD UP) चैनल और कक्षा-9 एवं 11 के विद्यार्थियों के लिए चैनल e vidya-9 एवं e vidya-11 पर शैक्षणिक वीडियो के माध्यम से

12.10.2020 से 16.10.2020 तक ई-लर्निंग प्रसारण का आठवां वरण

दूरदर्शन, उत्तर प्रदेश (DD UP) चैनल पर यू.पी. बोर्ड की कक्षा-10 एवं 12 हेतु शैक्षणिक प्रसारण की समय-सारिणी									
दिनांक तथा समय	कक्षा-10				कक्षा-12				
	अपराह्न 1:30 से अपराह्न 2:00 बजे तक	अपराह्न 3:30 से अपराह्न 4:00 बजे तक	अपराह्न 4:30 से सायं 5:00 बजे तक	सायं 6:00 से सायं 6:30 बजे तक	अपराह्न 1:00 से अपराह्न 1:30 बजे तक	अपराह्न 2:30 से अपराह्न 3:00 बजे तक	अपराह्न 4:00 से अपराह्न 4:30 बजे तक	सायं 5:30 से सायं 6:00 बजे तक	
12-10-2020 सोमवार	सामाजिक विज्ञान अध्याय-7 लोकतंत्र के परिणाम भाग-1	सामाजिक विज्ञान अध्याय-7 लोकतंत्र के परिणाम भाग-2	सामाजिक विज्ञान अध्याय-7 लोकतंत्र के परिणाम भाग-3	गणित अध्याय-14 सांख्यिकी भाग-1	संस्कृत अध्याय-2 (व्याकरण) कारक भाग-1	संस्कृत अध्याय-2 (व्याकरण) कारक भाग-2	संस्कृत अध्याय-2 (व्याकरण) कारक भाग-3	अर्थशास्त्र अध्याय-1 परिचय भाग-1	
13-10-2020 मंगलवार	गणित अध्याय-14 सांख्यिकी भाग-2	गणित अध्याय-14 सांख्यिकी भाग-3	हिन्दी अध्याय-4 मेवाड़ मुकुट भाग-1	गणित अध्याय-11 रचनाएँ भाग-4	अर्थशास्त्र अध्याय-1 परिचय भाग-2	अध्याय-6, अवकलज के अनुप्रयोग भाग-1	गणित अध्याय-2 के अनुप्रयोग भाग-2	रसायन विज्ञान अध्याय-4 रासायनिक बलगतिकी भाग-1	
14-10-2020 बुधवार	सामाजिक विज्ञान अध्याय-2, राष्ट्रीय अर्थव्यवस्था की जीवन रेखाएँ, भाग-1	सामाजिक विज्ञान अध्याय-2, राष्ट्रीय अर्थव्यवस्था की जीवन रेखाएँ, भाग-2	अंग्रेजी अध्याय-14 Translation Part-1	अंग्रेजी अध्याय-14 Translation Part-2	रसायन विज्ञान अध्याय-4 रासायनिक बलगतिकी, भाग-2	अर्थशास्त्र अध्याय-2 उपभोक्ता के व्यवहार का सिद्धांत, भाग-1	अर्थशास्त्र अध्याय-2 उपभोक्ता के व्यवहार का सिद्धांत, भाग-2	अर्थशास्त्र अध्याय-2 उपभोक्ता के व्यवहार का सिद्धांत, भाग-3	
15-10-2020 गुरुवार	अंग्रेजी अध्याय-14 Translation Part-3	हिन्दी अध्याय-व्याकरण सविन भाग-1	हिन्दी अध्याय-5 देशभक्त चंद्रशेखर भाग-1	सामाजिक विज्ञान अध्याय-4 वैश्वीकरण और भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था भाग-1	हिन्दी अध्याय-हिन्दी काव्य काव्य साहित्य का इतिहास, भाग-1	हिन्दी अध्याय-हिन्दी काव्य काव्य साहित्य का इतिहास, भाग-2	हिन्दी अध्याय-हिन्दी काव्य काव्य साहित्य का इतिहास, भाग-3	हिन्दी अध्याय-हिन्दी काव्य काव्य साहित्य का इतिहास, भाग-4	
16-10-2020 शुक्रवार	गृह विज्ञान अध्याय-5 गृह गणित भाग-1	गृह विज्ञान अध्याय-5 गृह गणित भाग-2	संस्कृत अध्याय-पद्य-पीयूषम् लक्ष्य वेध परीक्षा भाग-1	संस्कृत अध्याय-पद्य-पीयूषम् लक्ष्य वेध परीक्षा भाग-2	अर्थशास्त्र अध्याय-2, उपभोक्ता के व्यवहार का सिद्धांत, भाग-4	हिन्दी अध्याय-हिन्दी गद्य गद्य साहित्य का इतिहास, भाग-1	हिन्दी अध्याय-हिन्दी गद्य गद्य साहित्य का इतिहास, भाग-2	हिन्दी अध्याय-हिन्दी गद्य गद्य साहित्य का इतिहास, भाग-3	

नोट : DD-UP, अब आप इन चैनलों पर भी देख सकते हैं, डी डी फ्री डिश-45, डेन-137, नेटविजन-138, डिश टीवी-229, लखनऊ 9-237, विंग टीवी-250, एयरटेल-400, हाथवे-400, सिटी केबल-671, वीडियोकॉन डी 2 एच-889, टाटा स्काई-1195

चैनल e vidya-9 पर कक्षा-9 एवं चैनल e vidya-11 पर कक्षा-11 यू.पी. बोर्ड हेतु शैक्षणिक प्रसारण की समय-सारिणी				
दिनांक तथा समय	कक्षा-9		कक्षा-11	
	प्रातः 8:30 से प्रातः 9:00 बजे तक	प्रातः 9:00 से प्रातः 9:30 बजे तक	सायं 6:30 से सायं 7:00 बजे तक	सायं 7:00 से सायं 7:30 बजे तक
12-10-2020 सोमवार	गृह विज्ञान, इकाई 1 (गृह प्रबन्ध) अध्याय-2, व्यवस्था, गृह और परिवार के संदर्भ में, भाग-1/2	विज्ञान अध्याय-10, गुरुत्वकर्षण भाग-1/2	हिन्दी, अध्याय- काव्य, संस्कृत दिग्दर्शिका हिन्दी कहानी का उद्भव एवं विकास, कहानी के तत्व (गद्य, कथा साहित्य), भाग-1/1	भौतिक विज्ञान अध्याय-9 (भौतिकी भाग-2) दोस्रो के यांत्रिक गुण, भाग-1/4
13-10-2020 मंगलवार	गृह विज्ञान, इकाई 2 अध्याय-8 (स्वास्थ्य रक्षा) पर्यावरण एवं प्रदूषण का जनजीवन पर प्रभाव, भाग-1/2	अंग्रेजी अध्याय-2, The Sound Of Music Part-2, Bismillah Khan (Beehive Textbook), भाग-1/2	संस्कृत अध्याय-खण्ड-व्य (व्याकरण-3) समास-तत्पुरुष, कर्मधारय, बहुव्रीहि भाग-1/1	अर्थशास्त्र अध्याय-1 (अर्थशास्त्र में सांख्यिकी) अर्थशास्त्र का महत्व भाग-1/2
14-10-2020 बुधवार	गृह विज्ञान, इकाई 1 (गृह प्रबन्ध) अध्याय-2, व्यवस्था, गृह और परिवार के संदर्भ में, भाग-2/2	विज्ञान अध्याय-10, गुरुत्वकर्षण भाग-2/2	अंग्रेजी, अध्याय-2-Reading Skills We Are Not Afraid to Die if We Can All Be Together, भाग-1/1	भौतिक विज्ञान अध्याय-9 (भौतिकी भाग-2) दोस्रो के यांत्रिक गुण, भाग-2/4
15-10-2020 गुरुवार	गृह विज्ञान, इकाई 2 अध्याय-8 (स्वास्थ्य रक्षा) पर्यावरण एवं प्रदूषण का जनजीवन पर प्रभाव, भाग-2/2	अंग्रेजी अध्याय-2, The Sound Of Music Part-2, Bismillah Khan (Beehive Textbook), भाग-2/2	भूगोल अध्याय-2 इकाई-2-पृथ्वी (भौतिक भूगोल मूल सिद्धांत), पृथ्वी की उत्पत्ति एवं विकास भाग-1/2	अर्थशास्त्र अध्याय-1 (अर्थशास्त्र में सांख्यिकी) अर्थशास्त्र का महत्व भाग-2/2
16-10-2020 शुक्रवार	हिन्दी अध्याय-3, पुरुषोत्तम: राम: (संस्कृत) भाग-1/1	हिन्दी, अध्याय-(हिन्दी काव्य), हिन्दी पद्य के विकास का संक्षिप्त परिचय-आदिकाल एवं पूर्व मध्यकाल (भक्तिकाल), भाग-1/1	गृह विज्ञान अध्याय-इकाई-2, खाण्ड-क अस्थिपंजर शरीरक्रिया विज्ञान तथा स्वास्थ्य रक्षा, भाग-1/4	भौतिक विज्ञान अध्याय-9 (भौतिकी भाग-2) दोस्रो के यांत्रिक गुण, भाग-3/4

नोट: e vidya-9, जियो टीवी एप, डिश टीवी चैनल-950, वीडियोकॉन चैनल-447, एयरटेल चैनल-440, फ्री डिश-128 तथा टाटा स्काई चैनल-756 पर उपलब्ध है। e vidya-11, जियो टीवी एप, डिश टीवी-952 तथा NCERT OFFICIAL YouTube पर उपलब्ध है।

माध्यमिक शिक्षा विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश की एक पहल

Pak violates ceasefire in J&K’s Poonch, Rajouri

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

The Pakistan Army late Sunday evening resorted to “intense” artillery/mortar shelling along the line of control in Poonch and Rajouri sectors. In response the Indian Army retaliated befittingly.

Till the time of filing the report, tensions prevailed in the Poonch sector as two back to back incidents of ceasefire violation were reported in Degwar and Khari Karmara sectors of Poonch. Artillery shelling was also reported from Sunderbani sector of Rajouri.

Unconfirmed reports claimed, by regularly targeting several forward posts of the

Indian army, the Pakistan army is attempting to push small groups of heavily armed infiltrators inside the Indian territory. In retaliatory strikes, some of the Pakistani forward posts suffered heavy damages after they caught fire. Meanwhile, according to eyewitness reports, several shells fired by the Pakistani army landed in thickly populated areas.

A cordon and search operation was also launched in the Balakote area of Poonch in the wee hours of Sunday after several rounds of firing was reported from the close vicinity of a house of a local BJP leader.

According to a Jammu based Defence spokesman, Lt-

Col Devender Anand, “a total number of three incidents of ceasefire violations were reported along the line of control in Rajouri and Poonch sectors on Sunday evening where Pakistan reported intense artillery shelling”.

According to a Defence Spokesman, “at around 6.45 p.m Pakistan initiated ‘unprovoked’ ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and artillery shelling along LoC in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri.

Indian army retaliated befittingly. Earlier, the Pakistan army had also targeted forward Indian locations in Degwar and Khari Karmara sectors of Poonch using intense mortar and artillery shelling”.

SIKH MAN HECKLING CASE IN BENGAL

Sikh delegation meets Guv, State says incident given communal colour

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A Sikh delegation on Sunday met Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar seeking justice for Balwinder Singh whom a cop allegedly pulled down by his Pagdi (turban) during the Thursday’s BJP march to the State secretariat even as the Bengal Home Department rejected the allegations saying what happened with Singh was non-discriminatory and that the “Sikh brothers and sisters live in Bengal peacefully and happily”.

With Assembly elections scheduled to take place in mid 2021 and the BJP managing to make it a pan-India issue questioning Mamata Banerjee Government’s true secular credentials, the State Home Department tweeted a clarification saying the Sikh man was

detained after he was found with a gun in the middle of the rally.

“Our Sikh brothers and sisters live here in West Bengal in perfect peace and harmony, in happiness and tranquility, with respect from all of us for their faith and practices. A recent incident when one isolated individual got caught with one illegally carried firearm ... in an agitation that was not authorized is now being twisted out of context, being distorted, and being given communal colors in fractional and partisan interest,” an official statement from he Home Department said.

Stopping short of naming the BJP the Government said “One political party is giving communal colour to the subject in narrow partisan interest in a manner that Bengal does not

believe in. Policing was done as per law, but highest respect for the Sikh panth and ways from GOWB is affirmed.”

The Government statement came almost in tandem with a delegation led by Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee member Manjinder Singh Sirsa meeting the Governor seeking speedy justice for Balwinder Singh.

“We are determined to take this issue to its logical conclusion,” said Sirsa after meeting the Governor wondering “is this the way you treat your men in uniform who have taken all the risks to fight the terrorists near the border.” SGMCM had lodged a complaint with the Howrah Police Station.

Balwinder Singh who was reportedly present in the BJP crowd in the capacity of a per-

sonal security guard of a safron leader Priyangshu Singh when he was caught carrying a gun is an ex-central forces officer.

Subsequently he was detained and forcibly pinned down by an overenthusiastic police man following a minor scuffle.

The accused who was earlier given four-day police custody was on Sunday presented before a local court one day in advance where the magistrate allowed another 8-day police custody for him.

With the Sikhs having a sizeable presence in parts of Bhawanipore area (Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s constituency), Asansol, Siliguri and Kharagpur the BJP has been firmly backing Singh accusing the Government of religious persecution.

Meghalaya reports 139 new +ve cases, one death

Shillong: At least 139 persons tested positive for Covid-19 in Meghalaya on Sunday, pushing the tally to 7,683, while one more death raised the toll to 63, a senior health department official said.

East Khasi Hills, of which state capital Shillong is a part, continues to be the worst-affected district with 74 new cases, Health services director Aman War said.

Ri Bhoi registered 25 fresh cases, followed by West Garo Hills at 17, East Garo Hills at nine and South West Khasi Hills at five. Four cases were recorded in South West Garo Hills, two each in West Jaintia Hills and West Khasi Hills and one in South Garo Hills. *PTI*

Maha new cases drop to 10,792

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 infections dropped below 11,000-mark in Maharashtra for the second time in less than a week on Sunday, even as 309 more people succumbed to pandemic in various parts of the state. Six days after the state recorded a daily infection tally of 10,244 on October 5, as many as 10,792 people tested positive for Covid-19 in the state.

With the fresh infections, the total infected cases in the state jumped from 15,17,434 to 15,28,226. Similarly, with 309 new deaths, the Covid-19 toll in the state mounted from 40,040 to 40,349.

On a day when 10,461 people were discharged from various hospitals in the state, the number of people discharged from various hospitals

after full recovery since the second week of March this year went up to 12,66,240. The recovery rate in the state rose from 82.76 per cent to 82.86 per cent.

Of the total 309 deaths reported on Sunday, Mumbai accounted for a maximum of 42 deaths, followed by 35 deaths each in Thane and Nagpur, 30 in Pune, 25 in Kolhapur, 20 in Satara, 19 in Ratnagiri, 15 in Sangli, 14 in Solapur, 11 each in Nashik and Ahmednagar and 10 deaths in Nanded.

In the lower range, there were 9 deaths in Raigad, 5 in Jalgaon, 4 each in Palghar and Akola, 3 each in Beed and Gondia, 2 each in Amravati, Bhandara and Gadchiroli and one death each in Aurangabad, Jalna, Latur, Osmanabad, Yavatmal and Chandrapur. In addition, two persons from

outside the state died in Maharashtra.

With 42 deaths, the Mumbai Covid-19 toll went up from 9,391 to 9,433 while the infected cases rose by 2,170 to trigger a jump in the total number of infections from 227,276 to 229,446.

Meanwhile, the mortality rate in the state stood at 2.64 per cent. The authorities pegged the number of “active cases” at 2,21,174.

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases to up to 3,15,774, while the total number of deaths in Pune increased increased to 6248

Thane district remained in the third spot --after Pune and Mumbai -- with 2,04,437 total cases, while the pandemic toll rose to 5201..



Farmer carries a basket of papayas at Rethare village in Karad on Sunday

PTI

Recent chain of events in Bengal call for imposition of President’s Rule: Supriyo

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A war of words broke out between the BJP and the Trinamool Congress with Union Minister Babul Supriyo on Sunday prescribing imposition of Article 356 in Bengal even as he said that the State combined all the material conditions required to enforce President’s Rule.

Supriyo, a second-time MP from Asansol, said that the recent chain of events in Bengal demanded imposition of Article 356.

“From the arrest of six Al Qaida terror moles from Murshidabad to murder of opposition workers including BJP councilor Manish Shukla to insulting the Sikh community by assaulting a Sikh man by his turban during a BJP rally, shows that Bengal is a fit case for Article 356,” the singer-turned-politician said drawing sharp remarks from senior Trinamool Congress leadership. Senior TMC MP Sougato Roy promptly hit back saying Babul Supriyo was a political greenhorn with little knowledge of the constitutional laws.

“A novice as he is, Babul has jumped into politics from Bombay where he was a singer. He

has no idea of constitutional laws. He should know that before imposing Article 356 there is an advisory needed under Article 355,” Roy said wondering whether in Uttar Pradesh where one person had killed 8 cops President’s Rule had been imposed. He also said “the murder of Manish Shukla was an affair among the Bahubalis (strongmen) which however is being investigated into by the CID.”

He further said that union minister was making “absurd claims to hug attention, as he is not in good terms with State BJP president Dilip Ghosh which is why he is not getting any prominence in his party.”

Incidentally a BJP delegation led by its all-India vice president Mukul Roy on Sunday met Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar with a demand for a CBI investigation into the Shukla murder case. This even as BJP strongman and MP from Barrackpore Arjun Singh on Sunday alleged that the State Government was trying to implicate him in the murder case.

Shukla, a former TMC leader like Singh, was considered the right hand man of the Barrackpore MP.

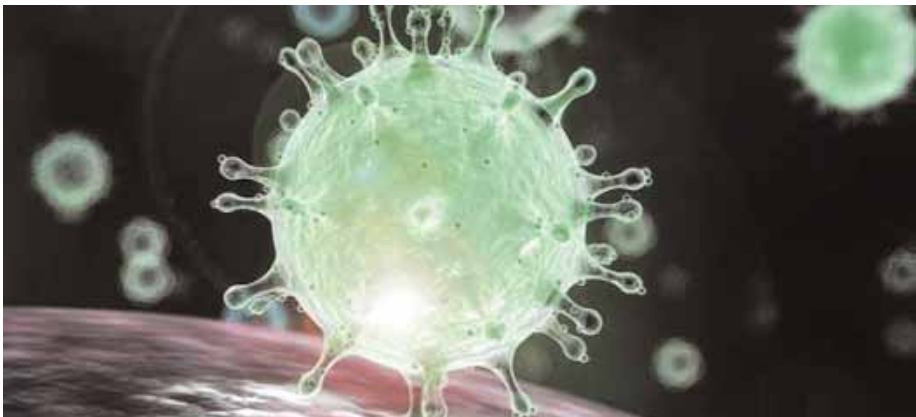
Raj reports 2,144 fresh corona cases, 14 deaths

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan recorded 14 more fatalities due to the novel coronavirus on Sunday, taking the death toll in the state to 1,650, a health department bulletin said.

The state also reported 2,144 new cases on Sunday. The total number of infected people now stands at 1,59,052, out of which, 21,412 are under treatment, it said.

As per the bulletin, 1,35,106 people have been discharged after treatment till



now.

In Jaipur, the COVID-19 death toll is 336 followed by 156 in Jodhpur, 123 in Bikaner, 119 in Ajmer, 107 in Kota, 85 in Bharatpur, 71 in Pali, 49 in Nagaur, 54 in Udaipur, 46 in Alwar, 42 in Sikar, 30 in Barmer, 26 in Dholpur and 25 in Rajsamand.

Of the 2,144 fresh COVID-19 cases, 389 were recorded in Jaipur, 303 in Jodhpur, 346 in Bikaner, 152 in Alwar, 100 in Kota, 96 in Ajmer besides the cases reported in other districts of the state, the bulletin added.

FROM PAGE 1

AAREY FOREST STAYS, CAR SHED GOES

Yuv Sena leader Aditya Thackeray, who had steadily been opposing the tree felling at Aarey Colony and was among the first lot to raise a protest against massive tree felling that took place on the night of October 4 2019, had tweeted, “A project that should be executed with pride, the Metro 3, @MumbaiMetro3 has to do it in the cover of the night, with shame, slyness and heavy cop cover. The project, supposed to get Mumbai clean air, is hacking down a forest with a leopard, rusty spotted cat and more”.

On the following day, Aditya had come out with one more tweet, “The use of a large number of police personnel. Hacking trees in the dead of the night, even after winning in court (then why not broad daylight) and detention of peaceful protesters and citizens. Who is authorising this? During Code of Conduct? All these powers handed to MMRC?”

Later on October 7 2019, the Supreme Court had restrained the MMRC from cutting any more trees at Aarey Colony till October 21. Hours after the apex court restrained it from cutting any more trees till October. On its part, MMRC had said that while it “respected” the apex court’s order, it had already felled 2,141 trees on October 4 and 5 following the Bombay High court’s order upholding of the BMC’s Tree Authority’s permission to fell 2,185 trees at Aarey Colony.

However, on October 21, 2019 the Supreme Court clarified that the controversial Metro car shed project in Mumbai’s Aarey Colony could continue, but the freeze on tree cutting would remain. The apex court had also asked for a White Paper on the issue, seeking details on the trees cut, transplanted and those that survived the transplant.

Subsequently, a day after it assumed office, the Shiv Sena-led MVA Government assumed office had on November 29 last year, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray stayed the work on the construction of a car shed for Metro phase-III at Aarey Colony in north Mumbai, pending a total review of the project.

Within a couple hours after assuming the office at Mantralaya (State Secretariat), Uddhav said, “I believe in fulfilling promises I make... I have been thinking what to do for Mumbai... You may remember the Mumbai car shed issue had generated considerable heat during the elections.

As a first, I have stayed the Metro car shed at Aarey Colony. The car shed work will not resume till we take a full review of the project”

Speaking to mediapersons after he was felicitated by the State Secretariat and Legislature Reporters’ Association on his assuming the office, Uddhav said: “This (the review of Metro car shed work) is essential. I read news reports today that some trees were felled at Aarey Colony last night. I will not allow this kind of butchering of trees. I will take a total review of the whole thing,” the Chief Minister had said.

Indicating that he was per se not against the Metro project, Uddhav had said, “Whatever necessary will happen. I am all for development. I have not given any stay on the development work. But, I do not want any development that comes at the cost of our precious assets. Hence I have given direction to the people concerned that not even a leaf is removed from Aarey Colony.” “Unfortunately decision to shift Metro CarShed from Aarey to Kanjurmarg and that too just to satisfy ego. This decision will increase the cost of the project by at least Rs 4000 crore and this cost escalation is assessed by the committee appointed by this Government,” Fadnavis tweeted.

“This means that the Metro project, which would have been in the service of Mumbaikars just next year, has now been postponed indefinitely. Rs 400 crore was already spent for Aarey Car Shed, Rs 1300 crore wasted due to staying of project & additional cost escalation of Rs 4000 crore... Rs 2400 crore cost burden if in case Kanjurmarg land dispute remains as it was. What will be today’s cost?,” the former chief minister tweeted.

“Metro project delayed for indefinite period. What exactly does the state Govt want to achieve by blocking the seamless journey of Mumbaikars? MVA Govt misleading Mumbaikars,” Fadnavis added.

FARMERS CAN USE AGRIX1 DRONE SANS GOVT NOD TO PROTECT CROPS

Sinha pointed out that the Artificial Intelligence software called ‘Nerve Centre’ (developed by his firm) helps quickly identify crop diseases from UAV data and automates the process of digitisation and classification of crops.

Given that at least 50 per cent of India’s GDP is still agriculture-based, it is hoped that such

drones can play a big role in boosting agriculture yield by 10-20 per cent. Crop diseases and pests have become a major headache for the farmers in recent years due to pollution and climate change impacts.

However, as Indian farms tend to be small and a single farm’s plots are often scattered throughout a region, Agrix1 is currently helpful for large agricultural areas only.

To this effect, Omnipresent is working jointly with a large agriculture industry player in Telangana using the drone. “We are developing machine learning algorithms to quickly identify diseases in crops using large amounts of training data. Additionally, we plan to deploy a sprayer drone for taking appropriate corrective action on affected crops.

“Automated disease identification and remedial measures using drones would be a big game changer for the agriculture industry and farmers and we are looking forward to disrupting this segment,” said Sinha.

UP CONG WOMAN LEADER THRASHED FOR OPPOSING TICKET TO RAPE ACCUSED

“Now, I am waiting for Priyanka Gandhi to take action.”

“On one hand, our party leaders are fighting for justice for Hathras victim and on the other, party ticket is being given to a rape accused. It is a wrong decision. It will malign the image of our party,” Yadav said.

The leader, who has been associated with the Congress for the past four years, said she went to the party office to meet Nayak to oppose the party’s decision to give ticket to a tainted candidate but was manhandled by the male party workers. Three other women were also manhandled, Yadav alleged.

The Deoria assembly seat fell vacant after the demise of Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Janmejaya Singh. The bypoll for the seat will be held on November 3. The Congress announced Mukund Bhaskar Mani Tripathi as its candidate after a meeting on Saturday.

Tripathi has rubbished the allegations, saying they were baseless.

He said that he was not convicted in any case. However, taking cognisance of the incident, UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu said the top leadership had taken notice of the incident in Deoria and had assured that strict action

would be taken against the guilty.

The three-member team comprises AICC member Talat Aziz, president of Mahila Congress’ Purvanchal unit Sahala Aharari and vice-president Mahila Congress Purvanchal unit Chandrakala Pushkar, will submit its report to Lallu within three days.

CBI TAKES OVER HATHRAS CASE

administration to arrange for the family’s travel.

The case is listed for hearing before a division bench of Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice Rajan Roy at 2:15 PM.

The high court had directed the district judge to ensure that the victim’s family members appear before it on Monday.

It has also summoned additional chief secretary, home; director general of police; ADG, law and order; and district magistrate and superintendent of police of Hathras to furnish the status report of the investigation in the case.

The state government has asked additional advocate general V K Sahi to represent it before the court.

“The district judge, who has been appointed as the nodal officer for the appearance of the Hathras victim” family members before the high court, is in touch with it as to when the case is listed. The family will move accordingly. The family is in Hathras as of now,” Superintendent of Police (SP) Vineet Jaiswal told PTI on Sunday morning.

Police did not divulge the details of their security plan on the movement of the woman’s family members.

Sixty security personnel have been deployed and eight closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras installed at the victim’s house to ensure the safety of her family members, according to the police.

With the help of CCTV cameras, the victim’s house is being monitored round-the-clock, the police said.

Jaiswal said a register of visitors is being maintained by policemen deployed at the entrance of the house.

Deputy Inspector General of Police Shalabh Mathur, who has been sent to Hathras from Lucknow as a nodal officer, had on Friday said if needed, a control room would also be established.

No road tax for battery-operated vehicles in Delhi

AAP Govt’s EV Policy aims to register 5L vehicles by 2024

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Transport Department of the Delhi Government has issued a gazette notification stating full waiver on road tax on the battery-operated vehicles under the electric vehicle policy of the Delhi Government. The decision was taken on the direction of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

The Department has also sought suggestions from the public on the exemption on the registration fee even as the orders to waive off the fee will be issued in the next three days. Kejriwal had announced the Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy (EV) 2020 last month with a focus to increase the adoption of electric vehicles in Delhi by incentivising the purchase and use of the EVs. The policy aims to register five lakh electric vehicles in the city by 2024.

Taking to twitter, Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gehlot said, “Congrats Delhi! As promised by CM @ArvindKejriwal when announcing landmark EV Policy, Delhi govt has exempted road tax on Battery Operated Vehicles. With right incentives & supporting infra, we are determined to ensure Delhi leads the country in

rapid transition to Elec Vehicles.” As per the notification issued by the department, the rules issued in the policy for the exemption of registration fee have been opened for public opinion.

“The draft will be taken into consideration after expiry of a period of three days from the date on which the copies of this notification as published in the Gazette of Delhi are made available to the public. Objections or suggestions in this behalf should be addressed to Secretary-cum-Commissioner (Transport), Government of National Capital of Delhi, Transport Department,” it said.

The Delhi Government led by Kejriwal has implemented the electric vehicle policy to promote the use of electric vehicles to reduce Delhi’s air pollution. Thereafter, the Special Commissioner of transport department Shashi Kaushal has issued a notification with the order of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, under which tax exemption on all battery electric vehicles has been provided.

This policy has come into force from the date of issue of this notification, i.e., road tax will not be paid on the electric vehicles starting October 10 this year. As per the notification, the Delhi EV policy 2020 has been hailed as one of the most progressive EV policies in the world, which aims to have 25 percent of total vehicles as electric by 2024.

COVID-19: Varanasi close to 15K-mark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The district has inched close to the 15K-mark as 141 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district here on Sunday, increasing the total number of cases to 14,963. Besides, the day also saw two deaths, increasing the toll to 245. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 173 patients and all of them were recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 10,789. As none of the patients has been discharged from the hospital, the number of cured patients from the hospitals has remained at 2,758. The total number of patients who have been discharged from the hospitals is 13,547, leaving 1,171 active patients. The recovery rate has improved slightly to 90.53 per cent but the mortality rate has remained at 1.63 per cent.

According to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB

Singh, in the first report of the day by 11 am, 111 positive patients were detected out of 3,363 received reports. Till then, the total test reports received were 2,50,980 and the results of 879 are awaited. Out of them, 2,36,047 were negative, while 14,933 positive. The total number of samples collected was 2,66,277. Earlier, two females aged 52 and 58 and two males aged 70 and 73 from Katauna (Pindra), Sikraul, Sundarpur and SSU respectively succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital (SSH), Banaras Hindu University (BHU). With the addition of 11 new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,165 including 303 red zones. Three green zones have been converted into red zones again. There are 1,862 green zones with 11 new ones.

Earlier, under ongoing mass/ group antigen tests, one person out of 405 tests were

detected positive at Shree Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Hospital, Kabirchaura while all the 335 tests were negative at adjacent Government Women's Hospital. However, two out of 83 were found positive at CHC Shivpur, five out of 82 at Swami Vivekanand Government Hospital, Bhelupur, seven out of 125 at LBS Hospital, Ramnagar and three out of 328 at SSH BHU. Besides, the health department has distributed 7,064 Ivermectin tablets to 883 persons. So far, 10.46 lakh tablets were distributed to 1.30 lakh persons and out of them, 8.56 lakh tablets to 1.07 lakh persons were distributed only by the Health department while rest of tablets by other departments including Supply and Education departments and Civil Defence so far.

In this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) comprising 10 districts of three divisions, as many as 328 new cases were

found on Saturday with maximum 139 COVID-19 positive in Varanasi (total 14,822), 38 in Azamgarh (4,940), 31 in Sonbhadra (3,152), 28 in Jaunpur (5,357), 24 in Mau (2,520), 20 in Ghazipur (4,087), 18 in Mirzapur (2,830), 15 in Chandauli (3,289), eight in Ballia (5,864) and seven in Bhadohi (1,781). The total number of patients has increased to 48,722. Out of them, maximum number of cases (27,635) was in Varanasi division followed by Azamgarh (13,324) and Vindhyachal (7,763). The best mortality rate (1.19%) was of Vindhyachal, while the same was 1.17% in Azamgarh and 1.48% in Varanasi, while the best recovery rate was in Varanasi division (91.49%) followed by Azamgarh (90.68%) and Vindhyachal (87.35%). The overall recovery rate in the region was 90.61% while mortality rate 1.35%.

218 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Two corona infected persons died late on Saturday night while 218 new cases were detected on the same day. The number of people who got free from infection was 167. This brought the recovery rate closer to 90 per cent. This was confirmed by Dr Rishi Sahai, the nodal officer for Corona.

CMO Dr GS Bajpai said that the total number of corona patients in the district has now reached 21,159 with 218 new infections. While 18,928 people have become infection free. With this, the recovery rate continues to increase. The total number of active cases on Saturday has been 1,945. There are 191 people admitted in different hospitals while the rest are in home isolation.

Corona's testing has started from the new Cobas Lab at Moti Lal Nehru Medical College. 94 samples were examined on Saturday. It was confirmed in nine cases. Dr SP Singh, Principal of Moti Lal Nehru Medical College gave this information. He said that after its inauguration by the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Cobas machine was trialled continuously for three days. The testing was conducted on Saturday after the trial was successful. With the introduction of this machine, the total capacity of testing in the medical college has been close to 3,500.

Corona has hit several officer-employees, including



A nagar nigam tanker sanitising road in Prayagraj

Pioneer

Professor of Allahabad University, Advocate of High Court.

The report of the lab superintendent of the railway hospital has also come up positive. This was confirmed by Dr. Rishi Sahai, the nodal officer for Corona.

He said that on Saturday, one professor each of Allahabad University and Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna at Naini, Staff Nurse of Dufferin, a teacher of Government School at Karchhana, Review officer in Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission, one advocate each of District Court

and High Court, Nasir's accountant, clerk, a senior from Central School in New Cantt, senior section engineer of railways, Canara bank manager, a JE have been infected. These are all in home isolation. He said that a total of 4,350 tests were conducted on Saturday. Of them 2,787 tests were done through antigens, 1,459 RTPCRs and 104 tests conducted by trunat.

A 22-year-old girl is among the two people who died of Corona. The girl is a resident of Kheri while the other person is 60 years old.

Both were admitted to SRN

Hospital for treatment. According to the Health Department report, a 60-year-old resident of Madhupur Ramnagar was admitted to the SRN Hospital for five days. His report came positive on October 5. He was shifted to Covid ward after the report came positive.

While the 22-year-old girl, resident of Jhamroi, Baghol Kheri, was admitted here seven days ago on October 3. Both have been reported to have multiple problems with anaemia, difficulty in breathing. Both of them were cremated after death.

DM presents property certificates to 18

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In response to the launching of Svamitva (ownership) Scheme through video conferencing in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented Sampatti (property) cards to 763 of six states, District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma presented digital property certificates to 18 persons of different villages of Sewapuri block under Raja Talab tehsil here on Sunday. After receiving the certificates, a rare happiness returned to the faces of property owners. The function was also attended by senior officers of Revenue and Panchayati Raj departments apart from others.

In the beginning, the DM and other officers listened the PM and watched the launching of Svamitva Scheme through web link. Then the DM presented digital property certificates to 18 persons from different villages of Raja Talab tehsil including Saraswati, Chandravati, Prashant Singh, Rajesh Singh, Vijay Bahadur, Saroja Devi, Phulpatti, Kamlesh, Umashankar, Munshi, Ramji, Prem Kumar, Ganesh Gaur, Laxman, Dinanath, Ramaulajagir, Brijesh and Jawahar.

DM informed that after from the function at nine revenue villages, the officers and



DM KR Sharma presenting property certificates to land owners in Varanasi on Sunday

Pioneer

public representatives had also presented property certificates to 591 owners at different programmes organised at Panchayat Bhawans, community centres and primary schools in the district. According to him, till date it was implemented in only nine revenue villages but after launching of the scheme, it has been implemented in all the 760 villages of the district and the process

of presenting property cards would be completed in the next six months.

During the launching of the programme, the PM talked to Ram Milan and Ramrati of Barabanki district of the state, highlighting the benefits of the scheme in the field of land reforms and expressing hope that the same would help in resolving the cases of land disputes. Under this scheme,

about one lakh land owners will be able to download property cards from the link received through SMS on their mobile phones. After this, the respective state governments will distribute physical cards. With this scheme, landowners will be able to use their property as a financial asset. It can be used for other financial benefits including application of loan etc.

‘Ensure repair of roads approaching all 9 temples of Goddess Durga’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

UP Minister of State (Independence Charge) for Tourism, Culture and Religious Affairs Dr Neelkanth Tiwari has instructed the Divisional Commissioner and Municipal Commissioner to ensure repair of roads approaching all the nine temples of Goddess Durga apart from making proper lighting arrangements there prior to the start of forthcoming Shardiya Navratra so that the devotees do not face any inconvenience during their visit to these temples.



UP Minister Neelkanth Tiwari hearing grievances of people in Varanasi on Sunday

The minister was hearing the grievances of the people at his Nichibagh office here on Sunday.

During the meeting when the matter of temples was raised, Dr Tiwari directed the officers on their mobile phones to make proper arrangements at temples of Goddesses before Navratra, starting from October 17.

He also stressed the need for maintaining social distance during the visit of the devotees to different temples during Navratra and instructed the officers to maintain COVID-19 guidelines.

Sports psychology lab inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An advanced laboratory of sports psychology equipped with state-of-art facilities was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor Prof Rakesh Bhatnagar at Department of Physical Education in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, Prof Bhatnagar said that the initiative of establishing the lab would improve the standard of research work and ultimately, it would help in the improving the ranking of the university at international level.

According to the head, Department of Physical Education Dr Abhimanyu Singh, this lab of international standard is well equipped with the facilities of testing human behaviour and psychosomatic state of sportspersons apart from helping in quality research work in sports psychology and different training

programmes. ‘This lab will also be a unique where the testing and evaluation process of sportspersons will be done with high accuracy. Before establishing this lab most of the research work were based on only questionnaires and the accuracy of the same was always questionable. All the equipment established in the lab have been chosen on the basis of their uses keeping in view of present sports competitions in the world. All the equipment is computer-based digitally operated which would fulfill the standard of psychological tests’, he said.

He further stated that the players representing the country in international competitions will be tested and evaluated and in this direction an MoU with Sports Authority of India (SAI) and Ministry of Sports will be done in near for better uses of facilities. ‘The sports scientists will also be

trained in the laboratory to work with different sports teams of the country’, he added.

Dean, Faculty of Arts Prof Vijay Bahadur Singh, Vice-President, University Sports Board Prof Dinesh Chandra Rai, Prof SK Singh and Prof GP Singh (both from Department of Statistics), Dr Manoj Kumar Pandey, Dr Vidya Sagar Singh, Dr Gyan Prakash Mishra, Prof Sushma Ghildyal, Prof BC Kapri, Dr Rajiv Vyas, Dr Vikram Singh, Dr T Onima Reddy, Dr Akhil Mehrotra, Dr Binayak Kumar Dubey, Dr Krishnakant, Dr Deepak Kumar Dogra, Dr Abhishek Verma, Dr Pradeep Singh Chahar, Dr Shailesh Kumar, Dr Linet Khakha, research scholars and students were also present.

FDP ORGANISED BY SMS ENDS: Asserting that, getting NBA accreditation is not easy and one has to work hard to do mapping on the pre-

scribed ten-criteria, the former Vice-Chancellor, Gautam Buddha Technical University, Lucknow, Prof Kripa Shankar said, ‘Time has come to return ourselves to research’. He was delivering a valedictory speech in the closing session of week-long Faculty Development Programme (FDP) organised by School of Management Sciences (SMS), Varanasi under the aegis of IQAC on the theme of ‘Acumen for multiple managements in academia’.

Earlier, Prof Shankar while chairing the technical sessions addressed the issue of drafting a research proposal and the process of applying for NBA. He emphasised on two sets of documentation required for NBA accreditation and said, the first involves preparing pre-qualifier having two sessions-Institutional profile and the details of the programme for which accreditation has been sought.

HC declines to quash chargesheet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Taking serious note of mob attack on police personnel, the Allahabad High Court has declined to quash the chargesheet filed against two of the accused in the case.

However, the court made it clear that it is not adjudicating charges against the accused at this stage and the same will be tested during the trial pending before the trial court.

Justice JJ Munir passed the order while dismissing a petition filed by Shahabuddin and another.

Petitioners' plea was that he was falsely implicated in the case as he refused to bribe

police during vehicle checking. Counsel for state government argued that it is a case of rioting and obstructing the police in the discharge of their duties.

The court, after going through the documents of the case, observed, ‘It appears from a perusal of the police papers that it is a case which shows a new found behaviour amongst citizens of disobeying the law.’

Prima facie, the act of the applicants and all those who were part of this mob, constitutes an offence that strikes at the roots of established order in society.

‘The fact that the applicant asks this chargesheet to

be quashed is almost preposterous.

There is absolutely no abuse of process of court involved in the matter,’ observed the court while refusing to quash the chargesheet filed against the petitioners in the case.

It is to recall that on March 14, 2019 an FIR was registered against a mob of 200-300 at Syohara police station of Bijnor by head constable Rajveer Singh that during vehicle checking near a polo post Sahaspir, three men riding a motorcycle did not stopped during checking and during the course of event, motorcycle hit one of the

constable and all the four got injured.

As per FIR, when all injured were being taken to hospital at that time a mob of 200-300 belonging to the villages of motorcycle riders blocked the road.

Later, they pelted stones and attacked police personnel with rods and sticks in which some of the policemen were injured.

On May 31, last year a charge sheet was filed in the case and the Magistrate after taking the cognisance summoned the petitioners. Petitioners approached the High Court seeking quashing of chargesheet filed against them.

Hookah Bar owner arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The Civil Lines police arrested the owner of Hookah Bar after raiding here which was being run under the guise of a restaurant near the Civil Lines bus depot late on Saturday night. A case has been registered against the owner in other sections including the Pandemic Act.

It was revealed here recently through print media how hookah bar is being operated under the garb of the restaurant. In which youth and teenagers are being made drunk. In this particular news, it was revealed two hookahs running near Georgetown and Naini jail road.

The police finally came into action after continuous news was published in print media.

On Saturday, the outpost incharge Rajesh Kumar Singh raided the Mahfil restaurant on the second floor of the shopping complex located

near the Civil Lines bus depot and found that hookah bar was being run there.

The youths found on the spot were released, but the police took the owner Manish Srivastava, resident of Mall Godam Leader Road into custody.

Simultaneously, two hookahs and other items found from the spot were brought to the police station. After handing over a written complaint, he said that Hookah bar was operating illegally in the restaurant. Inspector Abhay Srivastava, in charge of Civil Lines police station, said that the accused has been arrested after filing a case in other sections including the Pandemic Act.

On Saturday, the owner of the Hookah Bars put a lock in their bar in Georgetown and Naini area on Jail Road. In relation to which, it was prominently published in the print media.

The investigation of the

case has also been started by the DIG.

On his behalf, IPS Somendra Meena has been asked to investigate and report it to him.

WOMAN ALLEGEDLY SEXUALLY ASSAULTED : A woman was allegedly sexually assaulted by brother in laws in Kazi ka Pura, under the Mauima police station of the district. A complaint in this regard has been registered by the police and the woman will be taken for medical examination on Monday.

According to the registered complaint a youth from the above village developed friendship with a girl of Hazaribagh, Jharkhand through facebook. Later the girl put pressure, and the youth had to call her to Mauima to marry her. When she bore a child, mother in law and brother in law tried to abort the pregnancy but she did not allow. Later two brothers of her husband sexually assaulted her. After this her

husband took her to Delhi, but after some time, he too started misbehaving with her. Now she has come to Mauima to lodge a complaint.

PCS PRELIMS EXAM HELD: Preliminary examination of UP PCS 2020 was conducted by the UP Public service Commission Prayagraj at 1,282 examination centres in 19 districts on Sunday.

As many as 148 centres had been created in Prayagraj, while their number was 120 in Lucknow. Around six lakh (5,95,696) candidates had submitted applications. The examinations were held in two shifts—from 9.30 am to 11.30 am, and from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm

Elaborate arrangements had been done at examination centres keeping COVID-19 in mind, and the candidates had been asked to come with mask and sanitiser.

Till filing of the report the actual number of candidates who appeared at the examination could not be known.

No nation can progress sans the girl child, says DM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

District Magistrate Alok Tiwari, while addressing a seminar on 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' as part of the International Girl Child Day at BNSD Shiksha Niketan Inter College on Sunday, said the objective of the campaign was not only to generate awareness about the importance of girls' education but also to ensure that the welfare services meant for girls were being delivered in an efficient way.

He said no nation could progress sans the girl child and it was the duty of every individual to not only save the girl child but to educate it fully.

He said ironically around 39.4 percent of girls in the age group of 15-18 did not have access to basic education and around 65 percent of them were either forced into handling household chores, were dependant or were engaged in beggary. He said many initiatives had been taken by the government for the girls but still much more was needed to be done. He said one such initiative was taken by the Government of India three years ago and the objective of 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign launched in 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi



District Magistrate, City, Alok Tiwari lights the lamp to inaugurate the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' at BNSD Shiksha Niketan Inter College on Sunday

was not only to generate awareness about saving the girl child and the importance of girls' education but also to ensure that the welfare services meant for girls were delivered in an efficient manner. He said because of this initiative the

society had started realising how important it was for girls to have access to education for their overall development.

He said educated women with the right skills and knowledge had the power to bring socio-economic changes in

society. He then handed over cheques of Rs 5,000 each to the girls for their outstanding performance in examinations.

He later presented special Baby Kit to all the girl child born on Sunday at the Dufferin Hospital.

DM: Identify & counsel persons under great mental stress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar District Magistrate Alok Tiwari, while inaugurating the World Mental Health Day seminar titled 'Dayaluta' (kindness) at Ursula Hospital said in the current times there was a sharp rise in suicides and it was just on trivial issues.

He said life was precious and could not be brought to an end and this engendered the need to come out of this morass.

He said the emphasis of the World Mental Health Day was that each one should identify such persons who were under great mental stress. He said such people, if counseled timely, could save precious life.

He said one must remove thought of suicide and bring in positive thoughts for survival and enjoying life happily.

Additional City Magistrate Mahesh Kumar said in the present time of stress and race of materialism it was very necessary for every individual to find time for self and also to learn the art of living sans stress.

He said it was essential to include yoga and exercise in daily life as health in fact meant being healthy physically, mentally and socially. He said absence of disease did not mean one was healthy. He advised people to ensure they were healthy in the three ways.

Addressing the seminar,

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra said World Mental Health Day was observed and the theme for this year was 'Mental Health for All — Greater Investment, Greater Access'.

He said the whole world had been hit by the coronavirus pandemic which had caused immense mental stress and there had been a rise between 18 percent and 28 percent in mental health problems during the last six months.

He said a recent survey in India reported that more than 80 per cent of the participants experienced anxiety and pre-occupation with contracting COVID-19, while 12.5 percent faced sleep difficulties and 34.6 percent suffered distress related to social media.

He further said it was a matter of great concern as it represented a greater demand on the limited mental health care resources, over and above the existing treatment gap.

He said COVID-19 pandemic had changed the circumstances in which people live and had led to increase in stress levels. He added that there was reportedly a significant effect of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health.

He said the pandemic continued to affect all segments of the population since its origin and while dealing with such public health emergencies, the past experiences had testified generalised public fear and

anxieties due to uncertainty, fatality, and lack of public health preparedness.

He said for the general population at large, the mental health effects of COVID-19 were as important to address as were the physical health effects.

He said there had been a sudden surge in domestic violence and child abuse incidents in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis and during the lockdown, there had been a number of stresses which had caused distress amongst population, for example, quarantine, pay-cuts, unemployment, uncertainty, fear, violence, abuse etc.

He said while quarantine was a necessary preventive measure to check the spread of this infectious disease, many studies had reported a negative psychological impact of quarantine on individuals. He said lockdown had aggravated the situation for victims of domestic violence according to the statistics released by the National Commission for Women.

The CMO said the total complaints from women rose in the period between March and September 2020. He said the increase had been attributed to abusers being confined in homes with no outlet to their anger or frustration and the helplessness of the victims to share their grief or travel to their near or dear ones due to social isolation.

He said in India, 10 percent of the population had common mental disorders and 1.9 percent of the population suffered from severe mental disorders like schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, depression, anxiety disorders, psychoses, phobia, suicide, mood disorders, neurotic or stress related disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, marital disharmony, sleep disorders, alcohol dependence and substance misuse and dementia.

Dr Kalim Ahmed said the biggest challenge faced by the Indian mental health system was lack of knowledge about the mental illnesses as well as lack of adequate mental health services. He added that due to lack of awareness, the stigma attached to mental illnesses resulted in poor utilisation of the available services and problems continued to compound and persist.

He said there was a need for effective engagement of communities in preventing and promoting mental health of the population. He said in context of the present COVID-19 situation where there was likelihood of grave mental health problems in communities, with the given challenges it was going to be a difficult task for the nation.

Prominent among others present on the occasion included director, additional director health, CMS, mental health officials and doctors.

93 more test +ve

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 93 more coronavirus positive cases on Sunday evening.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 93 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Saturday evening and Sunday evening taking the tally of confirmed cases to 26,714 cases. He said one COVID-19 deaths in the city pushed the toll to 703 on Sunday evening.

The CMO said with 34 COVID-19 patients were discharged from hospitals the cured figure in the city was 6859 and at present 2765 active cases were undergoing treatment. Dr Mishra said 4411 samples were sent for testing in the city.

LLRH to start medicine OPD from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

GSVM Medical College Principal Prof RB Kamal on Sunday said that LLR Hospital would run separate medicine OPD from Monday onwards to cater to the needs of all the on-COVID-19 patients.

Prof Kamal said this decision was taken as per the directives of state Medical Education Minister Suresh Khanna who had directed that in view of the decline in COVID-19 cases and deaths due to the coronavirus, LLR Hospital could be allowed to run separate Medicine OPD for non-Covid patients. He said although the Level-3 Covid care facility would continue at the LLRH, it would now be run separately and there would be no intermingling of Covid and non-Covid patients.

The GSVMMC principal said the decision came following the recent inspection of the hospitals to identify the COVID-19 patients. It was found that the number of COVID-19 patients was well reduced and under control.

He said there had been a pressure on the LLR hospital to start OPD as hundreds of non-Covid patients were eagerly waiting for the medicine OPD to start treatment of patients of other diseases. He said a feedback taken from the chief medical superintendent, senior doctors, junior residents favoured starting of the non-Covid OPD and also teaching at the medical college. He said the resident doctors would be reaching the college from November 1 and thus studies would also be started but under the new parameters as advised in the Covid guidelines. Prof Kamal said first the students of the first year of the last session would be called. He said preparations for running medical education was being carried out as per the government guidelines. He said the guidelines on wearing mask and social distancing would be strictly followed.

9 shops gutted

KANPUR (PNS): As many as nine shops were gutted in a fire which broke out in Bakarganj market under Babupurwa police station late Saturday night. According to reports, the grocery shop of Sohanlal of Ajitganj in the Bakarganj market suddenly caught fire. It was not known what sparked the fire. By the time the local residents called the fire brigade, the fire had spread to eight more shops. Even as the residents made all possible efforts to extinguish the fire, the Babupurwa cops along with four fire tenders reached the spot. It took around two hours for the fire tenders to control the fire. The local residents said that the shops of Sohanlal, his brother Bharat Lal, Rajendra Sahu, Bauwa Sahu, Sunil Sahu, Vijay Sahu, Mauj Kushwaha, Ram Ratan Sahu and Raju Sahu of Bagahi were gutted in fire. Goods and property worth around ₹.50 lakh were gutted in the incident. Meanwhile, an electronic goods shop also caught fire on Birhana Road on Saturday night. The shop was owned by Rakesh Ahuja of Lajpat Nagar. On the first floor of the shop, he had opened a TV showroom. On getting information a fire tender from Latouche Road Fire Station reached the spot. The fire was extinguished after half-an-hour.

Two missing girls recovered

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

City Kotwali police succeeded in recovering two missing girls within few hours.

Giving details at City Kotwali on Saturday officiating SP Sanjay Kumar said that on Friday a man had lodged an FIR at City Kotwali about his two daughters going missing. Acting swiftly in the matter the police became successful in tracing the whereabouts of the girls. As per the police, the two sisters had left their house late at night and taken shelter in a friend's house located under Katra Kotwali. After recovery the girls said that they had left their house as they were angry their guardians. Completing the legal formalities the police handed over the girls to their guardians. At the successful operation the ASP patted the back of police team which was involved in it.

THANA SAMADHAN DIVAS : Under the Thana Samadhan Divas out of 100 only 12 matters were disposed off in the district. Joint teams

were formed to settle the remaining matters. At City Kotwali the Thana Samadhan Divas was held under the presidency of DM Sushil Kumar Patel and officiating SP Sanjay Verma. The officials were directed to make the day more useful with instant disposal of the matters on merit. The DM



DM Sushil Kumar Patel and officiating SP Sanjay Kumar at the Thana Samadhan Divas at City Kotwali in Mirzapur on Saturday

asked the officials concerned to deal with the matters brought on the day as per the spirit of the government. On the occasion Sheshmani Gupta, a resident of Morchaghar under City Kotwali put up his application that despite a stay order issued

by the court construction was on. A team of revenue along with the police was sent to the spot to take the action on merit. In another application Shrawan Kumar, a resident of Anagarh Road under Katra Kotwali informed the DM that the land of his share was being grabbed by his adversaries. Taking instant action the DM sent a team on the spot and sought the report without delay. The DM inspected the register under which the applications were registered and inquired about the action along with the satisfaction of the parties.

HELD: The Vindhyachal police arrested one person with intoxicating powder. The police during routine patrolling spotted suspicious-looking person near Badhawa Mahabir temple, caught him and after frisking him recovered 50 gram of intoxicating powder from his possession. After lodging a case under NDPS Act the police sent him to jail. The accused was identified as Sujeet Kumar, a resident of Phulwariya village under Vindhyachal police station.

CRS to conduct safety test of second line today

PNS ■ VARANASI

The safety test of the newly-constructed second line in the Aunrihar-Taraon rail section under the ongoing doubling project on the Varanasi City-Chhapra rail section of Varanasi division of North Eastern Railway (NER) for upgradation of passenger facility and operational ease will be done by Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), NE Circle, Mo. Latif Khan, on Monday. He will be accompanied on the occasion by NER CAO, Construction, RK Yadav, DRM, Varanasi, Vijay Kumar Panjari, principal heads of departments along with divisional officers and senior officers of Construction Organisation, Public Relations Officer (PRO) Ashok Kumar said. After the thorough inspection speed trial will be conducted from Aunrihar to Taraon station by electric locomotive. There is an appeal to citizens living in this area that during the speed trial they should stay away from the railway track and take full precaution and not let their children and cattle go on the railway track at all. Till now the construction of this track was going on. For the first time the train of the CRS will run on this track after which it will be accessible for traffic.

Two Rajdhani spls to run between New Delhi-Dibrugarh

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

As per the instructions of the Railway Board the railway administration is running additional special trains for the convenience of passengers under which the movement of 02505/02506 Dibrugarh-New Delhi-Dibrugarh Rajdhani biweekly special train will be done via Bogibeel from Dibrugarh from October 12 every Monday and Friday and from New Delhi from October 15 every Thursday and Sunday till further notice. In addition 02503/02504 Dibrugarh-New Delhi-Dibrugarh Rajdhani biweekly special will be run from Dibrugarh from October 15 every Thursday and from New Delhi from October 20 every Tuesday till further notice. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved category, CPRO Pankaj Kumar Singh said. Passengers will have to follow the Covid-19 safety norms while travelling.

The 02505 Dibrugarh-New Delhi Rajdhani biweekly special from October 12 every Monday and Friday will depart from Dibrugarh at 22.00 hrs, on second day from North Lakhimpur at 00.25 hrs, from Harmurti at 00.57 hrs, from Rangapara North at 03.30 hrs, from New Misamari at 03.51 hrs, from Udalguri at 04.42 hrs, from Tangla at 05.07 hrs, from Rangia at 06.34 hrs, from New Bongaigaon at 08.11 hrs, from Kokrajhar at 08.40 hrs, from Alipurduar at 09.40 hrs, from New Cooch Behar at 10.07 hrs, from Newjalpaiguri at 12.30 hrs, from Kishanganj at 13.30 hrs, from Katihar at 15.35 hrs, from Begusarai at 17.37 hrs, from Barauni at 19.00 hrs, from Hajipur at 20.35 hrs, from Chhapra at 21.55 hrs, from Ballia at 22.55 hrs, the third day

from Varanasi Junction at 01.40 hrs, from Lucknow at 06.10 hrs, from Bareilly at 09.30 hrs, from Moradabad at 11.07 hrs and arrive at New Delhi at 13.55 pm. During the return journey the 02506 New Delhi-Dibrugarh Rajdhani biweekly special will from October 15 every Thursday and Sunday depart from New Delhi at 09.25 hrs, from Moradabad at 12.10 hrs, from Bareilly at 13.45 hrs, from Lucknow at 17.35 hrs, from Varanasi Junction at 22.25 hrs, on the second day from Ballia at 00:35 hrs, from Chhapra at 01.55 hrs, from Hajipur at 03.05 hrs, from Barauni at 05.00 hrs, from Begusarai at 05.18 hrs, from Katihar at 08.30 hrs, from Kishanganj at 09.57 hrs, from Newjalpaiguri at 12.05 hrs, from New Cooch Behar at 14.07 pm, from New Alipurduar at 14.36 hrs, from Kokrajhar at 15.34 hrs, from New Bongaigaon at 16.20 hrs, from Rangia at 18.10 hrs, from Tangla at 18.42 hrs, from Udalguri at 19.04 hrs, from New Nisamari at 19.49 hrs, from Rangapara North at 20.30 hrs, from Harmuti at 22.44 hrs, from North Lakhimpur at 23.22 hrs will reach Dibrugarh at 03.00 hrs on the third day. A total of 20 coaches, including 01 first AC, four second AC, 12 third AC, a pantrycar 01 and two of generator-cum-coach van will be attached in the train. Meanwhile the 02503 Dibrugarh-New Delhi Rajdhani biweekly special will from October 15 every Thursday depart from Dibrugarh at 19.50 hrs, from Moranhat at 20.24 hrs, from Simaluguri at 21.27 hrs, from from Mariani at 22.30 hrs, on second day from Dimapur at 00.35 hrs, from Diphu at 01.14 hrs, from Lumding at 02.00 hrs, from Hojai at 02.50 hrs, from

Guwahati at 05.38 hrs, from New Bongaigaon at 08.11 hrs, from Kokrajhar at 08.40 hrs, from New Alipurduar 09.42 hrs, from New Cooch Behar at 10.07 hrs, from New Jalpaiguri at 12.30 hrs, from Kishanganj at 13.35 hrs, from Katihar at 15.25 hrs, from Samastipur at 18.45 hrs, from Muzaffarpur at 19.40 hrs, from Hajipur at 20.35 hrs, from Chhapra at 21:55 hrs, from Ballia at 22:55 hrs, on third day from Varanasi Junction at 01.40 hrs, from Lucknow at 06.10 hrs, from Bareilly at 09.20 hrs, from Moradabad at 11.07 hours and arrive at New Delhi at 13.55 hrs. During the return journey, 02504 New Delhi-Dibrugarh Rajdhani weekly special will from October 20 every Tuesday depart from New Delhi at 09.25 hrs, from Moradabad at 12.18 hrs, from Bareilly at 13.50 hrs, from Lucknow at 17.35 hrs, from Varanasi Junction at 22.25 hrs, from Ballia at 00.35 hrs, from Chhapra at 01.55 hrs, from Hajipur at 03.05 hrs, from Muzaffarpur at 04.08 hrs, from Samastipur at 05.10 hrs, from Katihar at 08.40 hrs, from Kishanganj at 10.12 pm, from Newjalpaiguri at 12.05 hrs, from New Cooch Behar at 14.07 hrs, from New Alipurduar at 14.36 hrs, from Kokrajhar at 15.34 hrs, from New Bongaigaon at 16.20 hrs, from Guwahati at 19.20 hrs, from Hojai at 21.37 hrs, from Lumding at 22.37 hrs, from Diphu at 23.11 hrs, from Dimapur at 23.57 hrs, on the third day from Mariani at 02.35 hrs, from Simalguri at 03.22 hrs, from Moran Halt at 04.16 hrs and reach Dibrugarh at 05.15 hrs. A total of 20 coaches will be installed in the this train, including one of first AC, four of second AC, 12 of third AC, a pantrycar and two of generator-cum-luggage van.

NTPC Vindhyachal bags Greentech CSR Award

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

NTPC Vindhyachal has been honoured with Greentech CSR India 2020 Award for its contribution towards women empowerment and gender equality. ED (Vindhyachal) Munish Jauhari and GM (HR) Uttam Lal, received the award in an online ceremony in the virtual presence of former Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and Director, Greentech Foundation Kamleshwar Sharan. NTPC Vindhyachal not only contributes to the development of the nation by demonstrating excellence in power generation but also works tirelessly for improving the standard of living for the people living in the vicinity of India's largest power station through its CSR initiatives. NTPC Vindhyachal has undertaken several development initiatives to improve the

quality of education, ensuring gender equality and women empowerment, availability of potable water and sanitation etc for the residents of Singrauli. NTPC Vindhyachal has been undertaking the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) to aid the holistic development of girls aged between 10 to 12 years. The primary objective of this initiative is to ensure that girls of this age are provided the right exposure for confidence building. During the summer and winter residential programmes held in 2018 and 2019, around 247 girls from 19 government schools were provided classes and training on academic subjects, computer literacy, life skills, gender sensitisation, personal hygiene, yoga, karate music dance etc to aid their personality development. NTPC Vindhyachal also signed an MoU with SEWA NGO for undertaking women empowerment campaigns in Singrauli.



Economy of the country has collapsed: Shivpal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) national president Shivpal Singh Yadav, while making a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party government, said the economy of the country had collapsed.

He said youths were unable to get government jobs and the days were not far when the employees would be deprived of their salary.

Shivpal Yadav visited the house of PSPL state secretary Narsingh Yadav in Jhijnhak (Kanpur Dehat) to express condolences to the party leader on the death of his mother, Ruprani.

Talking to media persons, Shivpal Yadav said the government's promise to double the income of the farmers was not fulfilled and instead, their earnings were reduced to half.

He said the other promises to bring back the black money and transfer of Rs.15



National President of PSP (Lohia) Shivpal Singh Yadav addressing mediapersons on Sunday

lakh to the accounts of all the people in India also appeared to be a distant dream. He said under the present regime, only 10 big industrialists were being benefited.

The PSPL chief said the BJP government had miserably

failed on almost all fronts.

On the dilapidated condition of roads, Yadav said these used to shine when he was the PWD minister in the state.

He said that many good quality roads were constructed in Kanchausi and surrounding

areas of Kanpur Dehat by him but the present government was unable to even repair these roads, what to say about their reconstruction.

However, Shivpal Yadav parried questions on the Hathras incident.

SVAMITVA (OWNERSHIP) SCHEME

PM launches distribution of property cards via video link

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Terming the property cards, which he distributed under the 'SVAMITVA' (ownership) scheme, as a "historic move" that will transform rural India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said this will pave the way for villagers to use the property as a financial asset for taking loans and other financial benefits, and end disputes among villagers over land ownership.

The Prime Minister launched the physical distribution of property cards under the scheme via video conferencing and interacted with several beneficiaries of the scheme called Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA). Modi said it is a big step for the country towards becoming 'aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant).



"Experts across the world have stressed that property ownership rights play a big role in a country's development," he said to highlight the significance of the measure and noted that only one-third population globally has a legal record of the properties they own.

The youth living in villages now can avail of bank loans against their properties to start out on their own, he said, asserting it is necessary

for a developing country like India to have clear land ownership rights.

Property rights will give the youth self-confidence that can lead to their self-reliance, he said.

The beneficiaries are from 763 villages across six states, including 346 from Uttar Pradesh, 221 from Haryana, 100 from Maharashtra, 44 from Madhya Pradesh, 50 from Uttarakhand and two from Karnataka.

Stay away from crowds, follow Covid guidelines: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India gears up for a string of festivals against the background of rising coronavirus cases, Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Sunday urged people to stay away from large congregations and diligently follow Covid-19 guidelines, saying no religion or God asks people to celebrate ostentatiously.

He also warned that upcoming winter season may see increased rates of transmission of the novel coronavirus, citing the nature of such pathogens.

Requesting people to celebrate the approaching festivals at home with their loved ones instead of going out to fairs and pandals, he said fighting against Covid-19 is everyone's foremost "dharma" and as the country's health minister it is his "dharma" to mitigate the virus and prevent deaths at any cost.

He invoked Bhagwad Gita message to make his point saying that the "Bhagwat Gita condones war for the warrior class. So, there is no need to



congregate in large numbers to prove your faith or your religion," he said during the fifth episode of 'Sunday Samvaad', a virtual interaction with people on social media.

"Extraordinary circumstances must draw extraordinary responses. No religion or God says that you have to celebrate in an ostentatious way, that you have to visit pandals and temples and mosques to pray," Dr Harsh Vardhan underlined.

He also discussed the possibility of increased novel coronavirus transmission during the coming winter season as transmission of respiratory viruses is known to increase during the colder weather.

These viruses are known to thrive better in the cold weather and low humidity conditions. In view of these, it would

not be wrong to assume that the winter season may see increased rates of transmission of the novel coronavirus in the Indian context too, he noted.

He stressed that if people congregate in large numbers to celebrate festivals, "we may be heading for big trouble". India has recorded 70,53,807 Covid cases while deaths have climbed to 1,08,334 as on Sunday.

"Lord Krishna says concentrate on your goal...our goal is to finish this virus and save humanity. This is our religion. The religion of the whole world," he said.

Answering questions on the efficacy of AYUSH formulations in the treatment of Covid-19, Dr Harsh Vardhan explained the concept of Salutogenesis and how these formulations target holistic recovery of patients.

Pointing to in-depth study of literature and scientific evidence generated from in silico studies, experimental studies, and clinical studies, he said, Guduchi, Ashwagandha, Guduchi and Pippali combination and AYUSH 64 have a sub-

stantial number of studies which prove their immuno-modulatory, anti-viral, antipyretic and anti-inflammatory properties.

On progress about the indigenously developed Feluda paper strip test for SARS-CoV-2 diagnosis, he said it could be rolled out in the next few weeks.

Presently Covid-19 vaccines are in various stages of phases 1, 2 and 3 of human clinical trials, the results of which are awaited. "Adequate safety and efficacy data is required for emergency use authorisation, vaccine approval for ensuring patient safety. Further course of action will depend on the data generated," the Minister underlined.

Categorically rejecting speculation that the government is prioritizing young and working-class for the Covid-19 vaccine for economic reasons, Vardhan said, "The prioritisation of groups for Covid-19 vaccine shall be based on two key considerations -- occupational hazard and risk of exposure to infection, and the risk of developing severe disease and increased mortality."

Asked how the government plans to roll out the Covid-19 vaccine, he said that it is anticipated that supplies of vaccines would be available in limited quantities in the beginning.

"In a huge country like India, it is critical to prioritise vaccine delivery based on various factors such as the risk of exposure, comorbidity among various population groups, the mortality rate among Covid-19 cases, and several others," the minister said.

Vardhan also highlighted the need for massive advocacy for building community sensitization activities to understand the reasons for vaccine hesitancy and address them appropriately.

Referring to reports of reinfection surfacing in various states, Vardhan said an analysis by the ICMR has revealed that many cases reported as COVID-19 reinfection have been misclassified because RT-PCR tests can detect dead-virus shed for prolonged periods after recovery.

Bihar poll: Surjewala named Cong poll mgmt panel chairman



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday formed several panels for the Bihar Assembly polls with party general secretary Randeep Surjewala named chairman of the election management and coordination committee.

Mohan Prakash was made the convenor of the 14-member election management and coordination committee. The panel includes senior leaders like Meira Kumar, Tariq Anwar, Shatrughan Sinha, Kirti Azad, Shakeel Ahmed and Sanjay

Nirupam.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi also approved the setting up of the publicity committee, media coordination committee, public meeting and logistics committee, legal committee and office management committee for the Bihar elections, a party statement said.

While Subodh Kumar has been appointed the convenor of the publicity committee, Jaeya Mishra was named the co-convenor of the panel.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara has been named the chairman of the media coordination committee for the polls, while Prem Chand Mishra will be the convenor and Rajesh Rathor co-convenor of the panel.

Brijesh Kumar Munan has been appointed convenor of the public meeting and logistics committee, while Varun Chopra has been named the chairman of the legal committee. The party's office management committee includes the likes of Ashok Kumar and Kaukab Quadri.

The party had announced a list of 30 star campaigners a day earlier with leaders like Sonia, Rahul Gandhi, Shatrughan Sinha, Kirti Azad, Navjot Singh Sidhu amongst others in the star campaign panel.

Congress is contesting the Bihar assembly polls as part of the Grand Alliance. Under a seat-sharing formula for the upcoming assembly polls, the Congress will contest 70 of a total 243 seats.

The Bihar Assembly polls will be held in three phases on October 28, November 3 and November 7, and the counting of votes will take place on November 10.

Modi, Shah, Yogi among star BJP campaigners for first phase polls



DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI



campaigners in the three-phased election.

Several of the central ministers who hail from the state and form the core of Bihar leadership including Ravi Shankar Prasad, R K Singh, Giriraj Singh, Ashwani Kumar Chaubey, Nityanand Rai have been given charge of spearheading the campaign in the high-stake Assembly poll.

This apart, former central Minister R K Yadav, former Delhi BJP Chief Manoj Tiwari, former state Chief Mangal Pandey, Sanjay Paswan and Nivedita Singh are also to hit the campaign ground.

BJP has also enlisted services of former Chief Ministers of Jharkhand Raghuraj Das and Babul Marandi for the state poll besides Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, an old hand in the State affairs.

The BJP is contesting the assembly elections in alliance with the JD(U). Two other parties --Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) -- have also been included in the alliance.



BJP will 'focus on the governance of the Modi-Government' and its fulfilment of the centrally-funded state projects, including major bridges, roads, railway lines, power projects, many of which have been completed and inaugurated recently by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The brand Modi will play and work in the state," sources said.

Hours before releasing the list of 30 star campaigners, the BJP released a list of 46 candidates for the second phase of the Bihar Assembly elections which will be held on November 3.

Launching the party's campaign for the Bihar polls at the historic Gandhi Maidan in Gaya, Nadda listed out the BJP-JD(U) government's achievements and lauded Nitish Kumar for his handling of the coronavirus crisis in the State. "Leadership of India is secured in the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and it is important that the leadership of Bihar is secured with Nitish Kumar," Nadda further said.

Necessary to take extra precautions during festive season: BSY

Bengaluru: Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Sunday said it was necessary to take extra precautions during the upcoming festive season, amid Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chief Minister held a meeting with Chief Secretary T M Vijay Bhaskar and other senior officials of the state government to discuss the precautions that need to be undertaken to check the spread of COVID-19, during the Mysuru Dasara.

"It was necessary to take extra precautions during the upcoming festive season amid COVID-19 pandemic. A meeting was held with the Medical Education Minister, Chief Secretary and senior officials regarding the precautions that need to be undertaken to control the spread of COVID-19 specially during the Mysuru Dasara," Yediyurappa tweeted. With COVID-19 pandemic casting a shadow, the government has decided to organise the world famous Dasara celebrations in the palace city of Mysuru in a "simple" way. Celebrated as "Naada Habba" (state festival), the 10-day event every year showcases Karnataka's cultural heritage resplendent with folk art forms, and attracts large crowds and tourists. This year Dasara festivities are likely between October 17-26, the last day being Vijayadashami.

The recommendations, include Mysuru Dasara inaugural on October 17 being strictly limited to 200 people, cultural programmes in the evening for 8 days shall be limited to 2 hours per day by local artists only not exceeding 50 people, police personnel at strategic places shall prevent crowding and check wearing of facemasks by all. Only 300 people shall be allowed for the world renowned Jambou Savari (procession of caparisoned elephants) with all COVID precautions.

'Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana' brings smile on potters' face

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Just two years ago, nobody had even thought that the marginalised potters' community in Bihar would have their day. But life is changing for hundreds of them now thanks to the "Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana" launched by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) to empower the Kumhar community in Bihar.

"It was the dream of none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi to empower the Kumhar community through modern technology and revive the dying art of pottery making in the country," says KVI chairman VK Saxena.

Saxena points out that one such beneficiary of the program is Jai Shankar Pandit, a potter in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar who along with his father used to work earlier on stone chaak. His life has changed after he received an electric potter wheel from KVIC. High productivity and higher income are all that he can boast of now. And the family has a unique way to express their gratitude to the Prime Minister.

Jai Shankar is now making the idols of the Prime Minister and also earning a respectable livelihood by selling them in Bihar and West Bengal. Pandit could now also earn a sustainable livelihood. "The idols of the PM are selling in good numbers and fetching me good



price. So far he has sold 75-80 such idols at a rate of ₹800 per piece," Saxena points out.

Keeping in view the festive season and the ban on Chinese clay items by Modi, he is also making idols of deities - Durga, Laxmi and Ganesh - and a variety of diya (earthen lamp) and decorative items to reap maximum advantage.

"Empowerment of the marginalised potters' community is the dream of the Prime Minister and it is heartening to see potters like Jai Shankar expressing their gratitude to the

Prime Minister in such a noble way," Saxena maintains.

Connecting the potters' community with the mainstream of society by increasing their production and income is the sole objective of Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana. The program has been currently suspended in Bihar due to the Model Code of Conduct but soon after the elections, the Mission will be restarted and spread to the remotest parts of Bihar empowering every potter family.

In just two years KVIC has

distributed 500 electric potter wheels to an identical number of potter families and empowered nearly 20,000 people in Bihar with an estimated 10 lakh potters population. KVIC has distributed electric chaak to potters in districts like Rohtas, Bhojpur, Nawada, Samastipur, Muzaffarpur, Patna, East & West Champaran, Khatwa and Sitamarhi.

Earlier, a potter could hardly make 100 to 150 diya or Kulhar a day, but on the electric chaak, he is able to make 500 to 600 of them daily.

Cong seeks resignation of K'taka CM over graft

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday sought the resignation of Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa over the ₹662-crore corruption allegations against him, his son, grandson and son-in-law.

Launching a sharp attack at the BJP Government in Karnataka, Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi said that it is engulged in a clutch of corruption with "dented and painted leaders ruling".

Singhvi was referring to the allegation levelled by leader

of opposition Siddaramaiah against Yediyurappa's son BY Vijayendra of taking a bribe from a Bangalore development authority contractor.

He also said that alleged audio and Whatsapp conversation involving Yediyurappa's son and grandson disclose thire direct involvement in the corruption and asked why no criminal complaint has been filed so far. "You have a bribe giver and a taker in front of you".

"Why is he not subject to criminal proceedings?" he also asked. Is "Karnataka chief minister has special leverage?"

Singhvi said while questioning the Government's silence over the matter.

"If BJP and the chief minister has a basic sense of shame then Yediyurappa should resign or be sacked," Singhvi said at a press conference.

He further took a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying, "Why the watchman is sleeping in Yediyurappa's case?"

"It is unfortunate that you (PM Modi) are being watchmen for others' homes but letting corruption take place in your own home," Singhvi said.

Major spike in pulses' price

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After vegetables, it is the turn of the pulses to witness a major spike in their prices. In the retail markets, tur (arhar) is being sold between ₹120 and ₹140 a kg while dhuli urad is between ₹90 and ₹120 a kg.

As per the Ministry of Consumer Affairs (MoCA), the wholesale prices of gram, tur and urad is ₹6,700, ₹9,700 and ₹9,700 per quintal in the markets. Besides tur and dhuli urad, masoor dal prices increased from ₹60 to ₹80 per kg and moong dal prices increased from ₹80 to ₹90-100 per kg. The prices of kabuli chana (chickpea) and gram dal are also skyrocketing in the retail markets.

Traders say prices of pulses are rising due to short supply. Another reason is that there is a possibility of a further increase in pulses stocks. The rainfall in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh has led to the low production of pulses. The traders complain that the speedy increase in prices has reduced the sale by 60 per cent. They added that the price hike has taken a toll on retail business with the con-



sumption of pulses which is drastically reducing.

Prices of vegetables are also high in the retail market. Potato prices have increased from ₹25 to ₹40 per kg, capsicum from ₹80 to ₹120, cauliflower from ₹70 to ₹100, green chilli from ₹70 to Rs 100, onion from ₹30 to ₹50 per kg.

In an attempt to check the rising price of pulses, MoCA has offered 'urad' and 'tur' at subsidised rates for retail sale to state governments.

Tur is being offered for retail intervention at ₹85 per kg. Accordingly, dhuli urad is being offered to states at ₹79 per kg for K-18 variety and at

Rs 81 per kg for K-19 variety.

According to the ministry, the retail packs are being provided for retailing fair price shops of Public Distribution System (PDS) and other marketing/retail outlets of the state governments such as dairy and horticulture outlets and consumer corporation society.

The ministry had earlier introduced a mechanism to supply pulses from the buffer stock to states at minimum support price plus 10 percent other charges.

Overall, India is a pulse-deficient country, with the overall domestic production falling short of consumption.

Agriculture Ministry invites farmers' outfits for meet again on Oct 14

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With Punjab's farmers' organisations continuing with their agitation against the farm laws, the Ministry of Agriculture has once again invited them for a meeting on October 14.

Beginning October 13, the BJP has lined up its Cabinet ministers to address farmers, arthiyas, agriculture experts, educationists and the media over eight consecutive days in a bid to counter the protests.

The ministers namely Hardeep Singh Puri, Kailash Chowdhary, Smriti Irani, Anurag Thakur, Dr Sanjay Kumar Balia, Som Parkash, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Dr Jitendra Singh will address and answer queries over farm bills in district-specific video conferences.

The farmers' organisations had last week rejected the Union agriculture department's



invitation to participate in a "conference to address their concerns" on October 8. "We have received an invitation for a meeting on October 14," said Jagmohan Singh, general secretary of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Dakaunda).

"Though the invite has come from the agriculture secretary, it mentions that the central government wants to talk to farmers," he said. "All farmers' organisations will decide whether to go to Delhi for talks in a meeting slated for October 13 in Jalandhar," he added. Farmers in Punjab have been demanding that these three laws be repealed.

Farmers from Amritsar, Ferozpur in Punjab have been holding a 'rail roko' agitation against the "anti-farmer" laws, with protesters squatting on railway tracks at various places in the state since September 24. In Haryana, farmers are protesting in sporadic manner across the state.

Farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws will destroy the minimum support price mechanism, end Agricultural Produce Market Committees and allow corporates to arm-twist them. The Government, however, has been saying that these laws, which were passed by Parliament recently amid a vociferous Opposition protest, will raise farmers' income, free them from the clutches of the middleman and usher in new technology in farming.

Prevention vs cure

Govt, IMA clash on Ayush COVID protocol; doctors say evidence merely anecdotal and a placebo, not clinically proven



When Kerala, the hub of Ayurveda with some of the best practitioners, arrested the spiral of the pandemic in the early stages, its Health Minister KK Shailaja made a crucial observation. That once the disease had set in, there was no alternative to the clinically proven and medically tested protocols. And that traditional systems of medicine, like Ayurveda and homoeopathy, were good for overall well-being and body resistance. So they could be used only as part of a protective or convalescent routine. The deadly virus itself had to be treated with proven drug combinations. This distinction is very important in a country growing up in

a culture of naturopathy and home remedies, and, therefore, prone to trusting conventional wisdom. But this is a novel virus we are dealing with. There is no doubt that traditional systems of medicine in India have not only survived but flourished over the centuries and there are virtues embedded in our huge herbal heritage that are good for disease prevention, improving immunity and overall health management. So far, the evidence of their curative potential has largely been anecdotal than empirical. But overplaying our herbs as part of a COVID-19 medicare protocol, when they are yet to cross the threshold of medical reason, comes with the attendant ills of misconception that they are just as effective as allopathic drugs. Particularly in a country where most cannot understand the fine line between preventive care and cure. This is the reason why the Indian Medical Association (IMA) has taken umbrage to Health Minister Harsh Vardhan's upgradation of protocols on October 6 for managing and treating COVID patients with mild symptoms in AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) hospitals and by AYUSH practitioners. It asked the Minister to authenticate efficacy claims made from studies done on asymptomatic COVID patients, make them public and available for scientific scrutiny or else be responsible for "inflicting a fraud on the nation and gullible patients by calling placebos as drugs." In a sharp attack, the IMA asked how many of Vardhan's ministerial colleagues have so far made the informed choice of getting treated under these protocols. It wondered if the proponents of this claim and his Ministry would subject themselves as volunteers to an independent prospective double-blind control study in the prevention and treatment of COVID. This is a pertinent question considering almost all of our Ministers have chosen private multi-speciality hospitals with advanced allopathic protocols to treat themselves when they got infected. The IMA even asked what was stopping the Minister from handing over COVID care and control to the AYUSH Ministry. The problem with the AYUSH protocol at hospitals is that it legitimises Ayurveda as a line of treatment when fact is that there has not been a sustained trial and a consistent similarity of results to prove that it works in arresting the spread of the disease. Till then, AYUSH treatments can at best be prophylactic in nature and must be emphasised as such in officialese.

It is true that a few Ayurveda pharmaceutical companies have been working on simulation studies where few plant molecules have shown the ability to halt the alarming multiplication of the SARS CoV-2 virus in an Artificial Intelligence (AI) modelling. Researchers at IIT Delhi, in collaboration with Japanese scientists, have found that properties of the Ayurvedic herb Ashwagandha have "therapeutic and preventive value" against COVID-19 infection. But they are working on more conclusive proof that could allow for pharmacological interventions. Let us not forget that callous official endorsement can lead to outrageous claims like the recent one made by Yoga guru Baba Ramdev that he had found two new medicines — Coronil and Swasari — that had shown a 100 per cent recovery rate in patients within just 14 days. He quoted clinical trials at the Jaipur-based National Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (NIMS) which denied it subsequently. He applied for a licence duplicitously, claiming that his was a cold, cough, fever drug with immunity-boosting properties. And once the licence was got and the time for a rollout came, he claimed it was a cure. Besides, Ramdev's Patanjali group sidestepped the Drug Controller General of India, whose approval must be sought before a medicine is put out in the market. In our search for a cure among herbs, we are doing a disservice to what Ayurveda stands for. It is not just about COVID prevention but a holistic system of medicine involving herbs, diet, lifestyle and other measures that helps the body fight off all kinds of pathogens and diseases. Ayurveda has never been in conflict with science and is actually about scientific management of life. The IMA statement is all the more significant because it draws attention to the flawed pandemic management in India as we race to become the worst affected country. With the disease expected to see a painful peak by November, in no small part aided by the festive season and the opening up of every sphere of human activity, spare a thought for our overworked healthcare personnel. Most of them are battling depression, exhaustion and pay cuts even as the stream of patients is constant. Hundreds of them have lost their lives while on frontline duty and the IMA has been demanding martyr status for them as they went down fighting a new age battle. The infrastructure, even in bigger cities, is still short of handling a bad winter surge should it happen as predicted. Rather than upgrading AYUSH protocols, we need to upgrade practical solutions.

The hunger project

World Food Programme rightfully wins the Nobel Peace Prize as it fights a global nutrition crisis caused by the virus and war



It was a long time coming but in the end, the United Nation's (UN) World Food Programme (WFP) awarded the coveted Nobel Peace Prize 2020 for its efforts to combat hunger, its "contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict." It is in a long time that a cause has been prioritised over a face. The WFP, which was set up in 1961 at the behest of then US President Dwight Eisenhower, combines humanitarian work along with ensuring peace in war-torn regions because it firmly believes that without tackling war, hunger cannot be eradicated. How much effort the WFP puts in and how much the world needs its help can be gauged by the fact that there are 690 million hungry people around the world and around 60 per cent of them live in conflict-torn nations. In 2019, the WFP assisted 97 million people, the largest number since 2012, in 88 countries. It manages one of the world's largest logistics chains as on any given day, it has 5,600 trucks, 30 ships and nearly 100 planes on the move. The Nobel Peace Prize to it couldn't have come at a better time as the UN has been under a cloud with its health watchdog, the World Health Organisation (WHO), mishandling the Coronavirus crisis. The honour is also a validation of the UN's yeoman's service to humanity and has silenced its detractors.

Like all other countries that have benefitted from the WFP, India, too, has a long association with it. The aid organisation has been working with respective governments to eradicate hunger since 1963, when India was a major food importer and was battling shortages. Now the WFP is working to reform our notorious Public Distribution System (PDS) through its Annapurati initiative whereby automatic grain dispensers — or ATMs for rice — will be set up across States. It is also working on fortifying food distributed under the mid-day meal scheme. Now, with the pandemic disrupting food security, it is setting up supplementary nutrition production units in Uttar Pradesh. Its mobile storage units in Odisha have contained starvation deaths there. The Nobel Peace Prize, which has often been under a cloud of controversy due to the selection of people who are deemed "undeserving" or "unworthy" of it, will be heartily endorsed by the global community, which owes the WFP a lot. This year the selection committee has got it bang on.



PRAFULL GORADIA

Politics is the engine of society. The best of carriages, bogeys and saloons would come to naught if the engine was not maintained well. India has had satisfactory governments and poor ministries but still little thought has been given to the quality of men and women who should govern the country. Neither voters nor parties and their leaders or even our political scientists have given much thought to this subject. If the latter have thought about it, they do not seem to have written or propagated any ideas about it.

Indian elections have experienced positive polling, negative voting, voters choosing with their feet and polarised mandates, caste, class or community-wise. People have been heard saying that they voted to feel safe as a country after Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. Never have I heard anyone saying that he/she voted to try and ensure good governance. Although after the 2019 polling, I did hear some Kolkata voters say that they voted for Narendra Modi for he was the fittest ruler among the choice before us at the Centre, although they did not agree with his party's ideology.

That a successful democracy needs an effective Opposition is universally agreed. To add, a credible Opposition should also have an inner-party democracy. Out of the 68 years of India's democratic functioning, most of the time we have either not had an adequate Opposition or the main Opposition party lacking internal democracy that would have injected fresh energy and perspectives. Lately, we have the doubtful benefit of hereditary parties or family-led organisations. The flip side to this problem is that most politicians in recent decades belong to mainly three categories — a family tradition, the unemployables and the freaks. Most others and their parents prefer secure careers or pursuits. Even well-to-do, financially secure families do not encourage their offspring to risk years in politics. Yet it is the same India which sent out their best youth, grown-ups and old, women and men to agitate for freedom. Was this patriotism spontaneous to the people or was it inspired by the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi? Before 1920, there was no tradition of such mass participation in the country's political



ical destiny, although India, certainly large swathes of it, was under the heels of invaders since the 12th century. And soon after 1947, the patriotic enthusiasm began to dry up.

Independence from the British did not mean that freedom was guaranteed or even secured forever. We experienced a shock in 1962 in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh (then North-East Frontier Agency, NEFA) at the hands of China to the extent that the Prime Minister appeared to weep on All India Radio when he said, "my heart goes out to the people of Assam". Radio China was broadcasting in November 1962 that the brave soldiers of People's Liberation Army (PLA) were looking forward to spending Christmas at Calcutta. And the State Bank had unlocked its treasury at its branch in Tezpur and currency notes were being blown by the breeze on the streets.

Retaining freedom is more important than winning it. Therefore, the best talent in the country should try going into politics. Everyone would not succeed. As planned, I rounded up my commercial career and came to Delhi nearly 40 years ago en route Gujarat. In those years caste mattered so much that even the most generous political party could not allot any seat (Lok Sabha). I, therefore, held back in Delhi and worked here quietly for 16 years and then got to the Rajya Sabha for a part term as a result of a byelection.

I did my best and that was my satisfaction out of the service I performed. For example, I was able to build 49 Sulabh *shauchalayas* in Baroda city and in all 88 bus stops in the district with the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds I was allotted.

In India, members of the elite and intelligentsia often console themselves that politics is a dirty game and good people should avoid it. This is not true. In my years, I found politics was cleaner than my earlier 25 years in business. Let me quote one example, most of the non-performing assets (NPAs) with the banks are purely business failures. There are much fewer scams in politics.

If I did not go farther in politics, it was because of my peculiarities. I was an ethnic Gujarati, brought up in Bengal and had spent 25 years in business with no experience in politics. We must remember that while business management is a game of selection, politics is one of elimination and in business one generally succeeds without grabbing anyone else's money. In politics, one wins by dispossessing someone else of his seat. Nevertheless, one's attitude should be similar to the military national service. Whether one likes soldiering or not, two years are to be devoted to training as a matter of duty. In Britain, many Oxbridge graduates join politics as do a significant number of public school boys and girls. True, in the US it has not been

quite the same. When my father was at the University of Boston, between 1929 and 32, he often said he would return to India and join the Congress party. Gandhi was already an acclaimed leader and yet the reaction was often, "After such expensive studies, why go to politics?" Yet the American standards are reasonably good.

Our voters should be more demanding and not so tolerant of standards as they often can be. Take the issue of dynasty. In May 1981, when Rajiv Gandhi was contesting his first byelections from Amethi, I spent a few days motoring through the constituency accompanied by a colleague. One afternoon we stopped at a *dhaba* where an enthusiastic discussion was going on. The general tenor was how well Rajiv spoke. What chaste Hindi he used and so on. After 15 minutes or so I intervened to ask, "What service has he done for the country except for flying aeroplanes for Indian Airlines?" One sleepy person present suddenly woke up to assert, "He is learning his mother's vocation. Don't doctors bequeath their dispensaries to their children? Don't lawyers train their children how to be advocates? At least Rajivji had to come and get elected again and again to get the people's approval."

Coming to corruption, we came across a lucid explanation on the outskirts of Malihabad in the 1984 General Election. Again a *dhaba* discussion,

Anwar Ahmed, a Minister in the State Cabinet, was being praised for being such a good and honest man. One of the participants lost his patience and intervened to ask, "Yes, Anwar *Saheb* is very upright and honest, he has been a Minister for 10 years but has not been able to build a house for his family. If a person cannot do this least bit for his wife and children, what can he do to help common people like you and me?"

What management is to a company and its success, the Government is to a country. Yet most of our people do not connect the country's stake when they go to the ballot box. The debacle of 1962 caused by unpreparedness needs recollection. The Indian Army did not have mountain guns or howitzers to fire in mountainous NEFA. The second batch of troops that was sent up to 16,000 feet had canvas shoes, no gloves and ordinary woollen pullovers. General Rob Lockhart, the interim Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army after Independence, said that we are a peace-loving nation. We do not really need an Army. And that the police is sufficient for our purpose. After all this, the same political party was re-elected in the following election. And in the 1990s, our Prime Minister told in a reply to a journalist that India is too large a country to worry about terrorism.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. Views expressed are personal)

SOUND BITE

If Beijing can heed Taiwan's voice, change the way it handles cross-strait relations and jointly facilitate cross-strait reconciliation and peaceful dialogue, I believe that regional tension can surely be resolved.

Taiwanese President
—Tsai Ing-wen



Credit to him (Stefanos Tsitsipas) for fighting back. He's a fighter. He's one of the best players in the world...There was a lot at stake for him.

Tennis player
—Novak Djokovic



In Haryana, around 1,500 to 2,000 kg of millet is produced in one acre of land but the farmers are not getting more than ₹850 per kg due to the BJP's anti-farmer policies.

Aam Aadmi Party leader
—Sushil Gupta



The time has come to accept that dialogue and agreements will not persuade or compel the People's Republic of China to change.

US Security Advisor
—Robert O'Brien



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AIADMK's woes

Sir — J Jayalalithaa, the late Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and leader of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), never entertained any alliance with the BJP despite its repeated requests. And was adept at extracting favours that helped her State. On the contrary, the present leaders of the AIADMK have started to play second fiddle to the saffron party by adhering to all their dictates despite most of their plans being detrimental to the interest of the people of Tamil Nadu. Their subservient attitude is visible and the electorate is angry with the ruling dispensation for pawning the self-respect and rights of the State for the personal interests of its leaders.

It is time the AIADMK realises its folly and drops the saffron party from any plan it might have on seat adjustments. This way it can save its face by winning at least a few seats in the forthcoming Assembly elections. The people of Tamil Nadu, who are fed up and angry with the functioning of the AIADMK Government as well as the BJP at the Centre, are eagerly waiting to pack both off lock, stock and

barrel in the polls, paving the way for Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam led by MK Stalin.

Tharcius S Fernando
Chennai

Economic boost

Sir — When the pandemic muted our growth completely across the globe, our immediate response should have been to

absorb the shock and embrace the new normal. But unfortunately, a conservative investment approach holds the economy, something that has never truly benefitted society at large. Also, business houses are conserving cash across organisations, leading to a significant shrinkage in the market economy. Thus, big-spending decisions must start from somewhere to support

the growth of credit demand. Fortune 500 companies should come forward, lending a hand to rebuild the ecosystem with their high-risk appetite, like rolling out a capital expenditure outlay plan, without waiting for this pandemic to be over. However, the conservative approach should not be completely foregone. Yet the limit needs relaxation up to a certain extent. Without that finan-

Reforms in post-retirement jobs for judges

There has been a long-standing debate on the issue of post-retirement jobs for judges. Generally, a resting period is advocated for top civil servants and judges before they take up a new post after retiring from service. Earlier jurists favoured a five year cooling off period for judges. But that's in a way too long, considering the enactments of Parliament from time to time providing for the appointment of sitting or retired judges to various commissions and authorities. However, it is pertinent to note that the present Government has ruled out a cooling off period for retired judges before their appointment to tribunals or commissions.

Over the years, the trend of judges taking up post-retirement posts has drawn heavy criticism. Many of the 50 Supreme Court judges, who have retired over the past decade, went on to take up other jobs all too quickly. Of these, at least 26 accepted Government jobs while 13 started practising law again.

In 2012, BJP leaders Arun Jaitley and Nitin Gadkari had suggested that the clamour for post-retirement jobs



was affecting the court's judgments. The reality is that the Government holds the power to offer a post-retirement position to judges and this leads us to question the independence of the judiciary and judicial bias. Reforms are urgently needed to uphold the sanctity of this august institution.

Ganapathi Bhat
Akola

cial flexibility, the recovery is not expected to happen.

SK Nag
Mumbai

Distasteful hate circus

Sir — The love for cricket in India is well known but nothing can remotely justify the disturbing incident of Mahendra Singh Dhoni's five-year-old daughter receiving rape threats from social media trolls following Chennai Super Kings' loss to Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on October 6. It was Dhoni's wife, Sakshi, who received the threats on her Instagram account. It makes one wonder where the "New" India is heading?

While the Hathras rape-murder case questions the political will to bring justice to the 19-year-old Dalit gang-rape victim, obnoxious comments being made towards a child on social media highlight the mental state of the country. Rape threats should be taken seriously and the culprits should be punished.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Some hope in grim times

In these difficult days, there is reason to believe that the tribe of progressive social critiques is still heard



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The COVID experience has been unique in more ways than what most of the webinars are talking about. For example, social media is not exactly known to elaborate concepts. However, the online versions of printed news media platforms appear to have widened and deepened their reach and impact as compared to the pre-Coronavirus era. The galloping use of smartphones in the country has enabled the reach and availability of news through a large part of the day, beyond the morning. At times, the impact is even clearer. Thankfully, the print media has not fallen prey to that claim that resonates through the electronic channel news daily: The phenomena called “breaking news.”

The concept of “breaking news” has undergone a sea change over the years and it doesn’t even titillate like before. “Breaking news” in years past used to be the equivalent of “Stop Press”, in the print media, when they used to stop the printing presses because something of phenomenal importance just had to be reported in the next day’s newspaper. For instance a war, or the declaration of Emergency, or demonetisation or the assassination of an important leader. Now, like many advertisements, “breaking news” seems more like an attempt to grab attention rather than share any meaningful news story that is unfolding at that time.

Then there is the claim of “impact-making” news. For instance, the gate of a VIP’s residence was plastered with a quarantine notice, which was found to be very embarrassing by the bureaucrat who lived there. Reportedly, the notice was torn away. One of the news channels picked this story up and ran a campaign on “differential treatment.” Soon after, the notice was restored by the authorities that be. Subsequently the news channel claimed to have run an “impact-making” story. Maybe, it was because of the news coverage of the channel that the notice was restored. Maybe it was not. Maybe colleagues persuaded the bureaucrat to tone down the reaction to the quarantine notice. Or maybe the bureaucrat’s good sense prevailed in the end. However that may be, not long thereafter, the practice of pasting quarantine notices on the entrance of households with Coronavirus patients was reportedly discontinued by the Haryana Government.

The impact may not be monocausal. There may be many claimants to the impact and many perspectives. Be that as it may, one thing is obvious that the media does carry a clout, though one-to-one impact-change correlation is difficult to establish. However, when one notices a change after reading something in news columns, it does raise the possibility that the writing made an impact and caused the change.

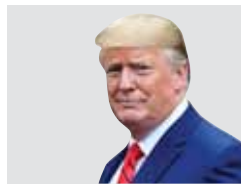
In these columns on September 28, para three of the text said “...even today in a city that is the proverbial centre of power, pick up a phone and call a landline of the metropolitan telephone service, the ring is preceded by a recorded voice message which, when translated into English, goes something like this: ‘In the entire country the process of un-lockdown has begun. In such circumstances, move out of the house only when it is totally necessary.’” What followed was a light-hearted banter on the intended impact of the message. Several days later that message was replaced by one from a well-known voice from Bollywood. Significantly, the text of the new message on the telephone service resonates far better than the preceding one. Now the person holding the telephone is reminded that not only India but the whole world is grappling with the impact of the Coronavirus.

The purpose of the above narrative is not to claim that the September 28 write-up in this column triggered this modification. Far from it! However, it pleases one to note that somewhere, someone has contributed towards a change for the better. In the past, too, I have flagged such correlations. It is possible that others have written on similar things, too. Others may have talked or others may have noticed what I noticed too. The important thing is we should be proud of having a responsive governance system at least in some kind of experiences and cases. Once should notice the brighter aspects of public life in an otherwise grim scenario. It keeps hope alive. Hope need not come in large parcels or in areas where someone feels fatigued. It is just the indicator of life. In these difficult times, there is reason to believe that the tribe of progressive social critiques is still heard. Whether it is heard often or not often enough is a matter of perception and appetite for favourable response. For some it is still a matter of joy that sometimes those who matter do hear and do respond. We are blessed!

(The writer is an internationally-acclaimed management consultant)

I AM NOT GOING TO WASTE MY TIME ON A VIRTUAL PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE. I WANT A LIVE ONE.
—US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



HIS RECKLESS PERSONAL CONDUCT SINCE HIS DIAGNOSIS, THE DESTABILISING EFFECT IT’S HAVING ON OUR GOVERNMENT, IS UNCONSCIONABLE.
—FORMER US VICE-PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

Cancel culture decoded

In spite of buzzwords such as diversity and heterogeneity, such a culture stands for homogeneity and singularity in thought and action



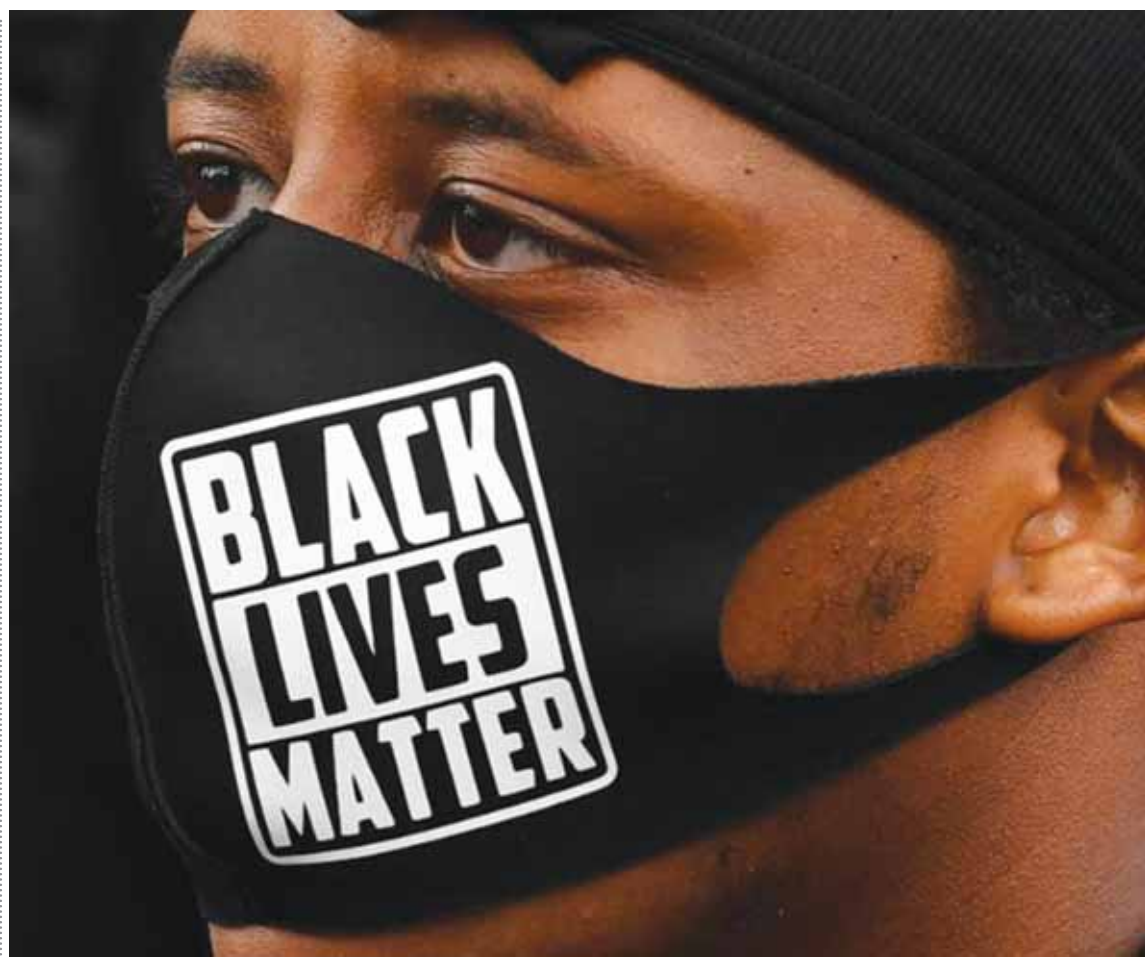
JYOTIRMAYA TRIPATHY

That an innocent sounding word, “cancel”, has come to define contemporary culture in modern democracies may sound rather baffling to a lay person. The fact that it actually has, at least in select spaces involving debate and dialogue, reveals the degeneration of those spaces, theoretically given to welcoming diverse opinions. In everyday usage, cancel may mean withdrawal or scrapping of a contract, but the “cancel culture”, which unfortunately has become the logic of an impatient generation, has many more layers of meaning that are interlocking and complex. Regardless of its advocates from contrasting ideological umbrellas, “cancel culture” implies that the country and its institutions have failed the people, prompting the militantly “conscientious” groups to take over. Needless to say, such campaigns remain predominantly urban and middle-class. Analysts have traced the prevalence of this culture as definitive of our intellectual reality to the #MeToo campaign in the US. A powerful and perfectly legitimate movement slowly became the weapon of a generation glued to the internet, though without any sincere commitment to the cause that defined earlier generations of protesters, involving marches or picketing, which were demanding in terms of time and energy. Before we realised its frequent occurrence and increasing moralising tendency, it had become part of our cultural sphere and expressed itself through withdrawal of support, challenging authority and advocating suspension of the offender. Thus, Starbucks was targeted for asking its employees not to wear “Black Lives Matter” badges, a gym club brand, Equinox, faced backlash after its owner was found collecting donations for US President Donald Trump. Opinion writer Bari Weiss resigned from her job when her employer, *The New York Times*, failed to protect her from constant harassment by her colleagues for holding on to different political values. JK Rowling was “cancelled” because of what was seen as her intolerance of trans-women.

The war among liberals: In-built into “cancel culture” is an ethical imperative on the part of the people championing it, who see themselves as the defenders of democratic ethos, prompting them to raise their voices against what they feel is unjust. What is ignored in this so-called ethical order is the reality of an anti-democratic force that betrays intolerance of difference and disagreement. That explains why the same group of people demanding freedom end up cancelling conservative intellectuals. So “cancel culture” remains anti-democratic and promotes a culture of purity where being different and adversarial are offensive. In spite of buzzwords such as diversity and heterogeneity, such a culture stands for homogeneity and singularity in thought and action. It always looks for new outrages almost as an obsessive compulsive and pounces upon the politically incorrect to threaten him/her or the organisation so as to impose costs.

If it silences democracy in the name of democracy, tramples upon freedom in the name of freedom, we must understand where this habit of speaking in a forked tongue is coming from. It is not difficult to understand that it emanates from within liberal discourse and survives on its propensity towards double-speak and obfuscation. Writing letters to put pressure on governments and organisations for protecting rights, which the Left liberal intelligentsia excels in, is a technique whereby they legitimise themselves. When JK Rowling joined hands

“THE CULTURAL RIGHT IS LEARNING FROM ITS PAST MISTAKES AND USING THE VOCABULARY OF DEMOCRACY AND VICTIMHOOD FOR ITS OWN PURPOSE. LIKE ITS LEFT ADVERSARIES, ITS SUPPORTERS ARE WRITING LETTERS TO THE PUBLIC OR TO THE PRESIDENT TO RAISE AWARENESS. THEY ARE WRITING BOOKS AND SPEAKING FROM PUBLIC FORA AND FORCING THE LEFT TO DEHUMANISE ITSELF BY TURNING VIOLENT. EVEN AS THE RIGHT IS LEARNING FROM THE LEFT, THE LATTER IS GETTING INTO THE SLUSH OF WHAT IT ACCUSED THE RIGHT TO BE. THE LIBERAL LEFT, WHICH CLAIMED TO HAVE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT OVER FREE SPEECH, NOW UNDERSTANDS THAT LIBERTY AND FREE SPEECH ARE NO LONGER ITS EXCLUSIVE DOMAINS



with Chomsky, Fukuyama, Rushdie, Atwood and so on, and called out this “cancel culture” as intolerance in an open letter published in *Harper’s Magazine*, she was, to some extent, joining hands with those who gave oxygen to such a culture. They wrote, “Censoriousness is spreading more widely in our culture: An intolerance of opposing views, a vogue for public shaming and ostracism, and the tendency to dissolve complex policy issues in a blinding moral certainty.” What these people often forget is that writing such letters is always more about protecting their authority over liberalism than the cause itself. If they suddenly realise the violence of “cancel culture”, they should not look beyond themselves to find its provenance. “Cancel culture” is a product of their muscular approach to truth.

Even as “cancel culture” is a product of liberal discourse, it poses an existential threat to that discourse in its demand for a forced outcome rather than a process-oriented approach. It is equally protestant in nature in the sense that it has scant respect for liberal idols and high priests who symbolise entitlement. In fact, we may discern inter-generational conflict within this liberalism or a kind of castration anxiety (in Freudian terms). It marks the coming of age of the next generation of relatively young champions, who see their ideological fathers as patriarchs who have always benefitted from peddling liberal values. When Pankaj Mishra trashed the *Harper’s Magazine* letter, he showed a mirror to these ideologues and accused them of fighting for their own freedom rather than that of free speech. This competitive liberalism is not a fight between right and wrong, but the sign that a smooth transition is not taking place.

Unlike political parties or sports teams, the “liberal progressive” shop has the same set of owners who refuse to allow the new generation to replace them. Impatient, restless, combative and young, “cancel culture” warriors cannot see themselves waiting perpetually to be counted as intellectual adults. When Pankaj Mishra took issue with Rushdie for being called “the voice of the continent”, he was protesting against an intellectual culture that condemns authors like him (Mishra) to the waiting room of intellectual history.

The Indian story: In India, unlike the US, this culture has traversed both Left and Right-wing narratives as well as not so politically-conscious actors. In the recent Bloomsbury controversy relating to a book on Delhi riots, the first move came from the Left to cancel the book followed by backlash from the non-Left quarters, who took issue with Bloomsbury’s cancellation and then cancelled Bloomsbury as a publisher of their choice. The death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput (SSR) also created a polarising climate where the outsiders to Bollywood, such as SSR, were pitted against the privileged insiders, who took their stardom for granted. This infuriated and angry group collectively trashed *Sadak 2*, a movie made by one who is seen as a promoter of nepotism.

However, it will be off the mark to project this as the expression of Right-wing angst. On most occasions Bollywood prima donnas of liberal hue have voiced their opinion against politicians, fellow actors and producers and whoever they imagined is expressing anti-democratic values. The present polarisation of Bollywood and its adoption of “cancel culture” implies the culture’s traction, cutting across ideological lines.

“Cancel culture” in India remains derivative of American leads, as in the “Black Lives Matter” movement being converted into “Dalit Lives Matter”. However, the cultural Right is learning from its past mistakes and using the vocabulary of democracy and victimhood for its own purpose. Like its Left adversaries, its supporters are writing letters to the public or to the President to raise awareness. They are writing books and speaking from public fora and forcing the Left to dehumanise itself by turning violent. Even as the Right is learning from the Left, the latter is getting into the slush of what it accused the Right to be. The liberal Left, which claimed to have exclusive right over free speech, now understands that liberty and free speech are no longer its exclusive domains. Leftists fear that liberty can be effectively used by the Right and this makes it suspect liberty as an impediment to its ideals of democracy and justice.

Economic imperative: There is yet another dimension of “cancel culture”, namely the economic imperative. Sometimes, acting on public outrage, as in sacking an employee for contrarian political values or insensitive posts, organisations seek to arrest a backlash or cash in on public outrage or hold on to their clientele. Given that the US intellectual sphere is totally dominated by the Left and the so-called multi-culturalism complex, and common people do not care much until election time, the media and publishing industry actually gain from this competitive outrage. In India however, due to its millennia old culture that has been evolutionary rather than revolutionary, such disruptive changes remain confined to select, elite spaces.

(The writer is Professor, IIT, Madras)

Understand psychology for better decision-making

This approach can help in reducing stock market movements and losses on the bourses



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Ever wondered why stock markets have huge upswings or downswings? Most of the times, they are like a domino effect, a chain reaction, caused by herd behaviour. Herding is an inclination of investors to follow the crowd, thus destabilising stock prices. It is a very powerful bias, and in the process of mimicking each other, the impact on the stock prices gets intensified, leading to bubbles when the demand is high and crashes when investors detect overpricing.

This is contrary to the classical finance theory, which believes that investment decisions are taken by rational investors. But are investors really rational? A Boston-based research group reported in 2007 that

an average stockholder earned 4.3 per cent per annum returns where the returns of American S&P 500 Index averaged at 11.8 per cent per annum. The reason for this variance was the irrationality of investors of buying high and selling low.

A peek into the past can show that players in the stock market have been irrational since the time the bourses have existed. One of the earliest instances of unreasonable herd behaviour is the Dutch tulip bubble of the 1630s, also known as “Tulip Mania.” When the tulip was introduced as a new variety of flower in the Netherlands, the Dutch people, because of some strange reason, became excited about this new exotic flower and vied to invest in tulip bulbs.

Progressively, the investments grew huge and at the pinnacle of this mania, a single bulb was sold at a price that was more than ten times the annual income of a skilled worker. But when people realised that investments in tulip bulbs were way more than their actual worth, they panicked and started selling tulip stocks, leading to a sharp fall in the

stocks, resulting in huge losses.

This and many other subsequent events after this, like the dot.com bubble and the more recent real estate bubble, have led to the belief that investors do not behave rationally and that their decisions are mostly driven by emotions like panic, fear and greed. These instances are in contradiction of the traditional financial theories that are based on efficient market hypothesis, that assume that all the information is reflected in the stock prices efficiently and in a timely manner. So much so that the investors are unable to make any abnormal profits by buying stocks. There are four pillars of traditional finance: Rational investors; efficient markets; traditional portfolio designs; and linear expected returns-risk relationship.

However, stock markets in reality are largely inefficient, which is evident due to various market anomalies, speculative bubbles and over or muted reaction to any new information about stocks. These prevalent conditions in the stock markets suggest that investors are more emotional than rational about their investment decisions, leading to creation of bubbles.

ment decisions, leading to creation of bubbles.

A bubble is created when the stock price is driven higher than its fair value as people invest in these stocks, neglecting the fundamental valuation. Such investments strengthen the overpricing even more and put pressure on the stock prices to generate higher returns for investors, failing which, the selling starts and picks up momentum when investors follow one another, leading to the bursting of the bubble. Behavioural finance, as a discipline, emerged as an attempt to explain the psychology of financial decision-making and how the human angle affects the same. Several researchers believe that principles and morals of people influence their economic, social and financial decision-making. Sentiments like pride, shame, insecurity and egoism also play an important role in investment decisions. By accepting the fact that investors are irrational and have biased decision-making, behavioural finance intends the limitations of traditional finance theories into possible inefficiencies in the financial

markets and provides a realistic view.

Research has identified two types of behavioural biases. The first one, a heuristic-driven bias, also known as cognitive bias, acknowledges that investors are investigative in nature and use rules of thumb to process data for decision-making. For example, people predict future performance of stock market movements through historical data. Emotions like overconfidence, anchoring and adjustment, reinforcement learning, excessive optimism and pessimism form a part of this bias. The second one, frame-dependent bias, is where the investors’ decision-making process is affected by the way they frame their options, like narrow framing, mental accounting and the disposition effect.

It can be concluded that awareness about behavioural biases is indispensable since it is unequivocally associated with human beings and its implications are far and wide. Ignoring such behaviour of the decision-making process can prove to be quite expensive in the financial markets as it can result in stock market

anomalies. Financial investment managers and advisors can identify investment mistakes if they have a good understanding of this behaviour of retail investors and become more effective by understanding their clients’ psychology and needs. It helps them in creating a behaviourally-adjusted portfolio, which best suits their clients’ requirements. Investment bankers can put this knowledge to use by correctly timing the IPOs and understanding the general sentiment in the stock markets. Behavioural finance also helps financial analysts in forecasting future stock market movements and recommending appropriate stocks for investments. Finally, individual retail investors can use this expertise to make wise, rational and effective financial decisions.

Investors, financial advisors and fund managers are all humans and are subject to biases. Understanding the psychology of financial decision-making can help in reducing the stock market movements and reducing losses on the bourses.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida)



FOREIGN EYE



THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING LIFE

The health of people-facing, service-sector organisations matters enormously to their employees. But it matters to people too. By emptying out shops, cinemas, market squares, that people used to share, and forcing them to spend more time at home, the pandemic has made them less public and more private. An end to this anti-social chapter and reclamation of the outside world of friends and fun cannot come soon enough. (The Guardian, editorial)

GST Council to discuss compensation issue

THIRD TIME IN A ROW ON MONDAY

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Council in its meeting on Monday is likely to discuss the suggestion of non-BJP ruled states of setting up a ministerial panel to develop consensus on the issue of compensation, sources said.

The Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising of State finance ministers, will for the third time in a row discuss the issue of funding the shortfall of Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue of States.

While some opposition ruled states are demanding that a Group of Ministers be set up to arrive at a decision on the

mechanism for funding compensation shortfall, BJP ruled states, which have already opted for the borrowing option given by the Centre, are of the view that they should be given a go ahead so that they can get money quickly.

The single agenda 43rd meeting of the Council will discuss on the way forward, sources said.

In its previous meeting last week, the Council had decided to extend the surcharge on taxes on luxury goods such as cars and tobacco products beyond June 2022, but failed to reach a consensus on ways to compensate states for loss of tax revenue.

The projected total compensation shortfall in current fiscal stands at ₹2.35 lakh crore.

The Centre in August gave two options to the states to borrow either ₹97,000 crore from a special window facili-

tated by the RBI or ₹2.35 lakh crore from market and had also proposed extending the compensation cess levied on luxury, demerit and sin goods beyond 2022 to repay the borrowing.

Following demand by some states, the amount of ₹97,000 crore was increased to ₹1.10 lakh crore. As many as 21 States -which are BJP ruled or have supported it on various issues -- have opted to borrow ₹1.10 lakh crore to meet the compensation shortfall. The Centre has released ₹20,000 crore to the states towards compensation shortfall so far in the current fiscal. Under the GST structure, taxes are levied under 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent slabs. On top of the highest tax slab, a cess is levied on luxury, sin and demerit goods, and the proceeds from the same are used to compensate states for any revenue loss.

‘Don’t levy GST on auto, realty, hospitality for 6 months’

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

As the pandemic has severely hit businesses and more so in the case of automobiles, hospitality and real estate sectors, a PwC report has suggested the suspension of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on these sectors for a minimum of six months.

The report titled “Reimagining GST@3” said that such a measure will provide much-needed cash liquidity to these sectors and ensure business continuity.

It noted that considering the impact on the economy, the Centre provided relief to the industry by extending deadlines for payment of taxes. Businesses were allowed to delay their tax payments for 15 days without incurring interest.

“However, several sectors such as hospitality, automobile and real estate have been severely impacted and the government should consider sus-

pending the GST payments of these sectors for at least six months,” it said. It has also recommended the implementation of a facility to deposit GST to the government treasury on cash basis and suggested dispensation of credit reversal requirement on expired stock during this period. Among other suggestions, the report has also recommended expanding the tax base under GST.

It noted that a reason for the implementation of GST was to levy a single tax on all goods and services, resulting in free-flowing credit in the country. However, at present, certain items such as petroleum products -- petrol, diesel, aviation turbine fuel and natural gas -- and alcohol are outside the GST net. To reassure states regarding protection of their fiscal autonomy, the government had initially decided to keep petroleum products, which form a major part of state revenues, outside the

ambit of GST till revenue collections stabilise.

However, it is notable that due to the inward supplies of these sectors being subject to GST and the output supplies being beyond the scope of GST levy, the tax incidence in these sectors is significantly high, it said, adding that moreover, their compliance-related requirements have become fairly complicated. “This is to some extent defeating the Government’s purpose of implementing the new tax regime. Representations have been made to bring industrial fuel, including natural gas and ATF, under the GST net,” it said.

Noting that bringing the petroleum sector within the GST net requires more consensus-building, however, in the absence of constitutional limitations, it is only a matter of time before this shift takes place and states are assured that they can maintain their levels of tax revenues.

Govt may consider allowing GST deposit on cash basis: PwC report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government may consider allowing India Inc to deposit GST on cash basis to help them tide over the liquidity woes during the Covid-19 pandemic, a PwC report said.

It said while formalising its support strategy for the industry in the next phase, the government could also consider suspending GST payments for select sectors during the COVID-19 period.

In its report titled ‘Reimagining GST@3’, PwC said cash liquidity support schemes that advance business continuity are the need of the hour.

“The government has announced a timely budgetary support scheme in line with the relief packages of various developed nations. Despite these steps, much ground remains to be covered,” it said.

The report said that some key issues which require immediate attention of the government before taxpayers get entangled in long-drawn litigation include eligibility of ITC on expired stock, intermediary services and taxability of discount schemes.

“The government should consider issuing clear guidelines around these critical issues, keeping in mind the evolving international taxation principles and business models prevalent in the trade and industry,” it said.

With regard to suggestions to overcome the current crisis, the PwC report suggested some measures the government could consider while formalising its support strategy for India Inc in the next phase.

These are facility to deposit GST to the treasury on cash basis, suspension of GST payments for select sectors during the COVID-19 period, dispensation of credit reversal requirement on expired stock

PwC report suggested some measures the government could consider while formalising its support strategy for India Inc in the next phase

during this period.

It also suggested one-time dispute settlement scheme under Goods and Services Tax (GST).“The government can consider introducing a scheme under the GST regime for voluntary disclosure of tax payments before the taxpayer undergoes GST audits. The GST law has evolved over the past three years and the government has clarified several provisions after its introduction. Therefore, a one-time scheme to clear previous irregularities can be considered, which will help the industry in clearing past baggage and reduce litigation,” it said.

PwC India, Partner & Leader, Indirect Tax Pratik Jain said with the wealth of data available with the government and measures such as coordination between direct, indirect tax administrations and technological advancements such as E invoicing and E waybills, tax base is likely to expand further.

“We now need a ‘white paper’ articulating what is the form of GST we want in the next few years. The regime requires more stability, simplicity and transparency. The report provides some food for thought as we reimagine the new and much improved GST regime,” Jain added.

Digital payments soar manifold in 5 years to FY20: RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Concerted efforts by the Reserve Bank to move to a non/less-cash economy by pushing digital payments have begun to pay rich dividends as the volume of such payments has jumped manifold in the past five years, the latest data from the central bank showed.

Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, digital payments have grown at a compounded annual growth rate of 55.1 per cent - from 593.61 crore in the year to March 2016 to 3,434.56 crore in the year to March 2020.

In absolute terms, value has grown from ₹920.38 lakh crore to ₹1,623.05 lakh crore during this period, clipping at an annual compounded rate of 15.2 per cent.

Giving a year-wise data, in 2016-17 digital payments jumped to 969.12 crore from 593.61 crore in the previous year in volume terms, while in value the same rose to ₹1,120.99 lakh crore.

Similarly, the numbers continued to scale new peaks with volume growing to 1,459.01 crore and value jumping to ₹1,369.86 lakh crore in 2017-18.

Come 2018-19, the numbers clipped at a faster pace with volume jumping to 2,343.40 crore transactions while the value rose to ₹1,638.52 lakh crore.

However, FY20 saw a massive spike in volumes over the previous year to 3,434.56 crore but in value slipped down to ₹1,623.05 lakh crore, which can be attributed to the steep

fall in the overall economy and the massive job losses, forcing people to spend less and preserve more cash.

Yet from a five-year growth perspective, the numbers shine with an annual growth rate of 55.1 per cent in terms of transaction volumes and 15.2 per cent in terms of value, show the RBI data.

Given the pandemic and the lockdown restrictions, digital payments volumes are set to jump manifold while the value could see a further plunge given the mammoth crisis that everyone faces following the pandemic.

Digital payment push started almost a decade back with limited access to NEFT, RTGS and ECS payments.

Later with the government push following the controver-

sial note ban, digital payments rose sharply.

The development of UPI-based payments as well as app-based payments just pushed the boundaries and has since witnessed blossoming of a myriad of payment systems, entry of non-bank players, and a gradual shift in the customer behaviour from cash to digital payments.

Behind all these, the Reserve Bank has played the crucial role of an operator, catalyst and facilitator, regulator and supervisor, as the occasion demanded towards achieving its public policy objective of developing and promoting a safe, secure, sound and efficient payment systems.

Some of the initiatives introduced decades ago in

payment systems to safeguard the interests of customers are valid even today.

Some of the recent RBI initiatives for enhancing security and increase customer confidence in digital payments include mandating use of only EMV chip and PIN-based debit and credit cards from January 2019; tokenisation from January 2019, when RBI issued a framework for tokenisation of card transactions which allowed all authorised card networks to offer tokenisation services, irrespective of the app provider, use case; facility to switch on/off transaction rights; mandatory positive confirmation to remove any ambiguity for funds transferred through NEFT and RTGS from March 2010, and

January 2019, respectively.

Another innovation has been contactless cards which allows cardholders to “tap and go”; mandatory data storage within the country; harmonisation of turnaround time for failed transactions from September 2019 and setting up of a digital ombudsman and also institution of the Central Payment Frauds Information Registry among others.

One of the biggest outcomes of these measures is the massive change in the behavioural trends of customers--for instance, as percent of card usage, they are being used increasingly for payments--from 20 per cent in FY16 to 45 per cent in FY20, with debit card turnover outpacing credit card values.

Mobile operators’ revenues to improve in Q2 on more recharges, reverse migration: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Revenues for mobile operators are expected to improve sequentially in September quarter, as factors like increased recharges, reverse migration, and easing of lockdown curbs helped overcome what is otherwise a seasonally weak quarter, say sector analysts.

In its note on earnings preview, Axis Capital said revenue for wireless service providers is expected to improve in the second quarter on increased recharges as lockdown restrictions eased.

“Subscriber addition expected for RJio/Bharti Airtel (though at muted levels), while Vodafone Idea to continue losing subscribers,” it said adding that margin improvement from revenue increase is likely to be partially offset by higher commissions, and sales and marketing cost.

The Axis report said Jio will benefit from higher subscriber addition than competi-



tors, as well as per user realisation improvement from addition of higher ARPU Jio Fiber customers.

“Bharti Airtel’s and Vodafone Idea’s revenue also to improve quarter on quarter in seasonally weak Q2, as recharges improve on easing of lockdown restrictions,” it said but added that margin expansion will be “muted” in Q2.

For infrastructure providers, it expected a gradual

sequential recovery.

“Bharti Infratel to post flat ex-penalty rental revenue though tenancy addition is expected to pick up QoQ,” Axis said. In its September quarter preview, Emkay talks of a “stable quarter despite seasonality”.

It said, in a seasonally weak quarter, wireless revenue will inch up sequentially driven by the reverse migration, better gross additions and data subscriber additions.

Festive season: Majority to shop online, 80% to look for local items

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Online shopping is likely to get a new boost in the coming festival season, as around 51 per cent consumers are likely to shop online during the period, according to a recent survey.

In the 2019 survey of ‘LocalCircles’, only 27 per cent of those planning festive spending had indicated using e-commerce sites as their primary channel for shopping.

“This shows that 51 per cent of those doing festive shopping this year will use e-commerce sites and apps as their primary channel, a sizable change from previous years,” said the 2020 survey for festive season by LocalCircles.

Further, on the question of willingness to buy from MSMEs, small businesses, emerging brands, weavers and artisans, around 80 per cent said a definite ‘yes’ while only

10 per cent said ‘no’. Around 10 per cent were unsure.

The survey received over three lakh responses from over 330 districts of India.

In the survey, 61 per cent consumers have indicated that they will engage in festive spending this year, a reduction from 2019 when 78 per cent consumers had indicated that they will shop during the festive season.

“When consumers in the 2020 survey were asked about the primary channel they would use for their festive shopping, in response, 26 per cent said e-commerce sites and apps, 11 per cent said they will call local retail stores and get home delivery, 25 per cent said local stores and e-commerce sites, while 24 per cent said they will visit malls, local retailers, and markets. Only 14 per cent were unsure about it,” said a statement by LocalCircles.

IRDAI panel suggests lower capital requirement for microinsurance firms

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

A committee constituted by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has suggested that the capital requirement for entities entering into the microinsurance segment should be lowered to Rs 20 crore.

Currently the entry-level capital requirement is at Rs 100 crore under the Insurance Act.

The ‘Report of the Committee on the Standalone Microinsurance Companies’ noted that the penetration of insurance is “all the more urgent” now in the context of the pandemic when millions of Indians, especially in the informal sector, have lost their livelihoods. It said that dedicated standalone microinsurance institutions can play a major role in such situations by making insurance affordable and available to low-income families, thereby providing a mea-

sure of risk mitigation and security.

“The committee therefore recommends that the government and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) license such businesses which can cater to the low-income segment,” it said.

Recommending a cut in the capital requirement, the report said that the minimum capital requirement of Rs 100 crore stipulated under the Insurance Act has acted as the biggest impediment to the expansion of the microinsurance market. It also recommended that the risk-based capital (RBC) approach should be adopted to enable the progressive growth of the microinsurance business while maintaining the highest prudential standards. Further, microinsurance companies should be allowed to act as composite insurers to transact both life and non-life business through a single entity.

Global PC market growth breaks 10-yr record with 13% rise

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The global PC market climbed 12.7 per cent from a year ago to reach 79.2 million units in the third quarter of this year, registering the highest growth the market has seen in the past 10 years, according to the latest report from Canalsys.

After a weak Q1, the recovery in Q2 continued into Q3 this year in which Lenovo regained the top spot, showed data released by the analyst company. Global notebook shipments touched 64 million units -- almost as much as the record high of Q4 2011 when notebook shipments were 64.6 million -- as demand continued to surge due to second waves of Covid-19 in many countries and companies continued to invest in longer-term transitions to remote working.

Shipments of notebooks and mobile workstations grew 28.3 per cent year-on-year.

FPIs pump in net ₹1,086 cr so far in October

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) have invested ₹1,086 crore on a net basis so far in October in Indian markets, tracking encouraging factors including improved GST collection, acceleration in economic activity and positive global cues.

According to the depositors data, overseas investors pumped in a net ₹5,245 crore into equities and withdrew ₹4,159 crore from the debt market during October 1-9.

This translated into a total net inflow of ₹1,086 crore.

In September, FPIs were net sellers at ₹3,419 crore.

Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO at Groww, said that both domestic as well as global factors contributed to net inflow so far in October.

“Better than expected Q2 (earnings) performance, rising

GST collection and a general opening up of the economy are helping India in becoming an attractive investment destination,” Jain said.

In addition, the global markets are performing at pre-COVID-19 levels, he added.

“Few of the Asian markets like Japan, S Korea and Taiwan also saw positive FPI flows this week. The reversal of INR Vs USD from 74 to 73.1 and correction in the dollar index have been supportive for FPI flows into India,” Rusmik Oza, executive vice president, head of fundamental research - PCG, Kotak Securities Ltd, noted.

Going forward, continuation of accommodative stance by global central banks may ensure flow of foreign investments into emerging markets including India, said Himanshu Srivastava, associate director - manager research, Morningstar India.

Multiplexes still awaiting approval from State Govts to resume operations

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Multiplex operators are still awaiting nod from many state governments to resume operations even though the Centre has already issued guidelines with regard to reopening of cinemas and theatres.

Multiplexes, cinema halls and theatres have been allowed to reopen from October 15, with up to 50 per cent of their seating capacity. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) have been issued by the central government.

Though the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has given its go-ahead to resuming cinema and theatre activities under Unlock 5.0, it has left for the states to take a final call in this regard.

Multiplex chains including PVR, Inox, Cinepolis and Mukta A2 Cinemas are all set to re-open their cinema halls from october 15 with half of their seating capacity while ensuring contactless operations and maintaining social distancing norms. These oper-

ators have lined up “promising contents” to entertain the audiences in the coming months.

Leading multiplex operator PVR, which operates 875 screens in 22 states, would be able to open only 496 screens as only 14 state governments have granted permission to re-open its multiplexes, according to its CEO Gautam Dutta.

The company is yet to receive any direction from the state government of Maharashtra, where it operates the highest number of screens.

“Maharashtra is an extremely important market for us, occupying the largest percentage of our screen share,” he said.

Mexican movie theatre chain Cinepolis said the company is fully ready and would abide by the directions issued by the government.

“We welcome the move from the central government. Almost 75 per cent screen of the 350 screens, which we operate in India would be open. We are requesting the other state governments to allow us to open the balance

The company is yet to receive any direction from the State Government of Maharashtra, where it operates the highest number of screens

screens as soon as possible,” Cinepolis India Chief Executive Officer Devang Sampat said.

Subhash Ghai’s film production company Mukta Arts, which runs multiplex chain under the brand name ‘Mukta A2 Cinemas,’ said it will be able to open approximately 40 per cent of the screens which it operates.

“We welcome the decision to reopen cinemas and multiplexes. The SOPs that have been released are highly comprehensive and will guarantee that the return to normalisation is a smooth one. This announcement brings enormous relief to media and entertainment industry and the

thousands of people it employs, many of whom have been severely impacted by this shutdown,” Mukta Arts MD Rahul Puri said.

Moreover, as the number of permissible seating in the auditorium has gone down to 50 per cent under the Unlock 5.0 guidelines, some multiplex chains are now exploring private screenings for families and smaller groups.

INOX Leisure CEO Alok Tandon said, “We are also looking to innovate with private screenings, where families or smaller groups of guests can book the entire auditorium and enjoy the content of their choice.”

“Our shows will be programmed in such a manner that there are no simultaneous entries, intermissions and exits,” he said.

All multiplex chains have assured that they will strictly follow the SOPs issued by the government in this regard.

“We have some very promising content lined up in the coming months, and Maharashtra opening makes us

hopeful of things speeding up in this direction. With that we must also reiterate our priority to ensure the safety and well-being of our customers through strict adherence to all the safety protocols and guidelines laid down...,” said Dutta.

Besides mandatory temperature checks, masks, pedal-operated touch-free hand sanitisers, the multiplexes would now rely on the digital ways such as e-tickets instead of traditional paper tickets, self-check in with QR codes, sharing of auditorium’s seat chart and location of the seat and online order of food and beverages, under the new normals.

Some multiplex operators like Mukta A2 Cinemas is using ‘matrix seating’ method, which will ensure an empty seat between patrons, while allowing families and groups to sit together.

“This starts right from the booking of the tickets, which will take place exclusively through the Mukta A2 Cinemas website and mobile application. Upon arrival at the theatre, customers will be able

to self-check by scanning a QR code. Social distancing will be also be maintained during screenings, with occupancy of the cinema hall capped at 50 per cent,” Puri said.

Inox will also keep PPE kits available for purchases, which would include a mask, a pair of gloves and sanitiser. It would also provide a web link to its viewers through SMS to access the food and beverage menu to place order.

Many cinema halls were closed even before the lockdown period started.

Several states including Delhi, Kerala, J&K, Maharashtra etc had directed to close the cinema halls between March 11 to 16 for a temporary period, till March 31, 2020.

Later, the central government had directed a complete lockdown of the country, effective from March 25.

According to estimates, India has a total number of around 8,750 screens, in which 3,100 are in multiplexes and balance 5,650 are single screens operating mostly in small tier II, III and below cities.

Trump accuses Biden of shipping jobs to China

Washington: US President Donald Trump has alleged that Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden in his previous capacities as Senator and vice president was busy shipping jobs to China, prompting the latter to hit back.

Biden said Trump will be the first president in modern American history to "leave office with fewer jobs than when it began".

Making his first public address from Blue Room Balcony of the White House after being discharged from hospital where he was treated for COVID-19 infection, Trump charged Biden and his campaign of taking the country on the path of socialism, which he vowed would not let him do.

"The Democrats' is a socialist program and platform -- and it really is more than socialist. It's not just socialist; it's beyond socialism," he said.

As one member from the audience screamed "communist", Trump said, "Communist. That's about right".

Biden, who was campaigning in Erie city in the battleground state of Pennsylvania, on the other hand alleged that Trump was only protecting the interests of the rich and billionaires.

"The Trump presidency will be the first presidency in modern American history to leave office with fewer jobs than when it began. And President Trump is leaving us a 'K-shaped' recession, where those at the top keep going up, while everyone in the middle and below are seeing things get worse," Biden said.

"It means that while the top 100 billionaires in America have done pretty well, they're up more than USD 300 billion this year -- you get the bottom half of that K-shape. The downward slide. Because the fact is, President Trump can only see the world from Park Avenue. I see the world from Park Avenue. From Erie. And that's who my Build Back Better agenda is for," he said.

The Democratic presidential candidate's campaign does not allow a large gathering because of COVID-19 restrictions, with at the most a score of people sitting at a distance.

On the other hand, Trump's first public event at the White House was full of enthusiasm and energy with his black and Hispanic supporters chanting "We Love You" and "Four More Years".

Trump, 74, and First Lady Melania, 50, tested positive for COVID-19 last week. The president was taken to a military

hospital for treatment. After spending four days there, he came back to the White House on Monday.

His White House address on Saturday to "Peaceful Protest for Law and Order" was described as an official event, but had all the inklings of an election campaign.

"We're starting very, very big with our rallies and with our everything, because we cannot allow our country to become a socialist nation. We cannot let that happen," Trump said.

"Black and Latino Americans are rejecting the radical socialist left, and they're embracing our pro-jobs, pro-worker, pro-police -- we want law and order; we have to have law and order -- and pro-American agenda," he said.

Trump alleged the agenda of the Democrats was "much beyond socialism" and they had been "shipping jobs to China for half a century".

"Sleepy Joe Biden has betrayed black and Latino Americans. If you think he can run this country, you're wrong... For half a century shipping your jobs to China. That's what they've been doing. We are bringing the jobs back. We have been charging China a lot of money too, with the tariffs. Billions and billions of dollars," Trump added. **PTI**

Prominent cleric shot dead in Pakistan's Karachi

PTI ■ KARACHI

A prominent Pakistani Sunni Muslim cleric was shot dead along with his driver by unidentified assailants in Karachi, police said on Sunday.

Maulana Dr Adil Khan, head of Karachi's Jamia Farooqia seminary, was attacked in a market on Saturday evening, they said.

According to a senior police official, as the car carrying Khan stopped near a shopping centre in Shah Faisal Colony to purchase sweets, armed pillion riders opened indiscriminate fire on the car and fled.

The police official said it appeared to be a targeted attack.

Khan was the son of late prominent scholar Maulana Saleemullah Khan, who founded the Jamia Farooqia, a seminary located in Shah Faisal Colony.

Jamia Farooqia adheres to the Sunni Muslim teachings of the Deobandi sect.

The seminary spokesperson, Amjad Rizvi, said that the Maulana expired in hospital from multiple bullet wounds while his driver, Maqsood Ahmed, died on the spot.

Khan was shifted to the Liaquat National Hospital

where he was pronounced dead on arrival. His driver was also declared dead on arrival at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC), the hospital's executive director Dr Seemin Jamali said.

A third person, Umair, who was accompanying the scholar, survived the incident as he had gone inside the shopping centre to buy sweets.

"We are gathering statements from eye-witnesses," Police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon said.

On Sunday, the funeral prayers of the religious scholar were offered by his brother Maulana Obaidullah Khalid. The deceased was buried in the vicinity of his father's grave in Jamia Farooqia.

According to Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in-charge Raja Umar Khatab, the attack is "a conspiracy to incite sectarian violence".

President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan strongly condemned the assassination of Maulana Khan.

Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa also condemned the assassination of Khan, said a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the army.

Azerbaijan, Armenia report shelling of cities despite truce

Baku (Azerbaijan): Azerbaijan on Sunday accused Armenia of attacking large cities overnight in violation of the cease-fire deal brokered by Russia that seeks to end the worst outbreak of hostilities in the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Azerbaijani authorities said that nine civilians were killed and more than 30 others wounded after Armenian forces fired missiles at Ganja, Azerbaijan's second-largest city, and hit a residential building. The city of Mingachevir also came under missile attacks, according to Azerbaijan's Prosecutor General's office.

Nagorno-Karabakh's military officials denied attacking Ganja and said the territory's army is observing the cease-fire. They added that during the night Azerbaijani forces shelled Stepanakert, the region's capital, and other towns in violation of the truce.

The recent bout of fighting between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces started Sept. 27 and left hundreds of people dead in the biggest escalation of the decades-old conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh since a separatist war there ended in 1994. The region lies in Azerbaijan but has been under control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia.

The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a truce in Moscow after Russian



Rescuers work at the scene of damage after shelling by Armenian's artillery during fighting over the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh in Ganja, Azerbaijan on Sunday **AP**

President Vladimir Putin had brokered it in a series of calls with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian.

The ceasefire took effect at noon Saturday, after talks in Moscow that were sponsored by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. The deal stipulated that the ceasefire should pave the way for talks on settling the conflict.

If the truce had held, it would have marked a major diplomatic coup for Russia, which has a security pact with Armenia but also cultivated warm ties with Azerbaijan. However, minutes after the cease-fire took force, both sides accused each other of continuing attacks in violation of the deal. The situation in the region was "relatively calm" on Sunday morning, according to Nagorno-

Karabakh leader Arayik Harutyunyan, with only minor hostilities along the front line. But it was unclear whether the calm would last, he said.

"There is no shelling of our towns and villages. At the front line, there is some shooting with the use of artillery. There are some skirmishes on the border," Harutyunyan said. "Since the morning, it seems calm, but within minutes the situation can change."

Nagorno-Karabakh's army in a statement Sunday promised a "disproportionately harsh" response if Azerbaijan "continues to violate the cease-fire." The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said that "the political and military leadership of Armenia bears the responsibility for the aggravation of the situation in the region." **AP**

Iran-backed militias offer truce for US troop withdrawal

Baghdad (AP): Iraqi militias backed by Iran have agreed to temporarily halt attacks targeting the American presence in Iraq on the condition that US-led coalition troops withdraw from the country in line with a parliamentary resolution, three of the militia officials said Sunday.

The militia officials spoke to The Associated Press just hours after a roadside bomb targeted a convoy transporting equipment for the US-led coalition on a highway south of Baghdad, damaging one vehicle, an Iraqi army statement said.

The attack prompted questions over whether such a truce could hold across all militia factions.

Roadside bombs and especially rocket attacks targeting the US Embassy located inside the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad have become a frequent occurrence and have strained ties between Baghdad and Washington.

The militia factions offered a truce and will refrain from targeting the US in Iraq, including the the US.

Embassy, on the condition that American forces withdraw within an acceptable timeframe, said Mohammed Mohie, a spokesman for the powerful Iran-backed Kataib Hezbollah.

If it does not withdraw, the resistance factions will resume their military activities with all the capabilities available to them, he said. Two other factions from different Iran-backed groups echoed Mohie's comments, without specifying a length of the truce, and said it was open-ended.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to give statements.

Iraqi lawmakers vote in January on a non-binding resolution to oust US-led coalition troops in the country, following a Washington-directed drone strike that killed Iranian general Qasim Soleimani and Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis outside Baghdad's international airport.

The militia factions' comments indicate some deescalation following weeks of tensions.

The Trump administration has warned Iraq's leadership it would close the US Embassy in Baghdad if the militia groups were not contained.

American officials have said that while it was a serious threat, it was not an imminent ultimatum.

French police station attacked with fireworks

Paris (AP): Dozens of people attacked a police station outside Paris early Sunday with blasts of fireworks and damaged several police cars, officials said. No one was injured.

It was the latest action among numerous attacks against police officers, and sometimes firefighters, that Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin says are a sign that France is growing savage.

Last week, two police officers in civilian clothes were pulled from their vehicle in a Paris suburb and shot multiple times with their own guns. One officer remains in serious condition.

In the early hours of Sunday, a large gang showed the police station in a housing project in Champigny-sur-Marne, east of Paris, with fireworks and other projectiles, Paris police headquarters, in charge of the region, said in a tweet.

bars to smash five police cars, the newspaper Le Parisien reported, quoting police officials who estimated that there were 40 attackers. Three windows of the station were broken.

The attack with fireworks lit up the area. Fireworks have been increasingly used by gangs to head off police in neighbourhoods known for drug trafficking. Firefighters on rescue missions also come under attack.

The little bosses impress no one and don't discourage us in our fight against drugs, the interior minister tweeted, saying an investigation was underway. It wasn't immediately clear if there had been arrests.

Investigators were still trying to find the three men who shot two police officers last week after pulling them from their car and disarming them in an industrial section of the town of Herblay, in the Val d'Oise northwest of Paris.

China backs Iran nuclear deal, calls for new Middle East forum

Beijing: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has called for a new forum to defuse tensions in the Middle East after a meeting with his Iranian counterpart where he reiterated Beijing's support for Tehran.

Wang and Javid Zarif also reaffirmed their commitment to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, according to the Chinese foreign ministry, an implicit rebuke of the United States for abandoning the accord during their Saturday meeting in China's southwestern Tengchong city.

Iran has been locked in an acrimonious relationship with Saudi Arabia, the other major Middle Eastern power, over the war in Yemen, Iranian influence in Iraq and Saudi support for Washington's sanctions on Tehran.

"China proposes to build a regional multilateral dialogue platform with equal participation of all stakeholders," said the Chinese foreign ministry statement.

The forum would "enhance mutual understanding through dialogue and explore political

and diplomatic solutions to security issues in the Middle East", the statement added.

Wang added that support for the Iranian nuclear deal, negotiated by the Obama administration but ultimately abandoned by Donald Trump, would be a precondition of entry to the forum.

Zarif said on Twitter his "fruitful talks" with Wang amounted to a rejection of "US unilateralism" and had also focused on strategic ties and collaboration on the development of a coronavirus vaccine. **AFP**

28 arrested, tear gas used in Wisconsin protests

Wauwatosa: Police used tear gas on demonstrators and arrested 28 people during a third straight night of protests over the lack of charges against a suburban Milwaukee police officer who fatally shot a Black teen, authorities said, as they took to Twitter on Saturday to outline what they called an "escalation in force by the protesters."

About 100 people gathered outside City Hall on Friday past Wauwatosa's 7 pm curfew and refused multiple orders to disperse, according to police.

Police said they used tear

gas on the crowd, after bottles were thrown at officers.

On Saturday, the Wauwatosa Police Department posted on Twitter that people have been asking valid questions about the police response over three nights of protests.

Police posted a picture of bottles they said were found in a backpack, including a bottle of lighter fluid, noting that the materials can be used to start fires.

"Over the past three nights, we have seen an escalation in force by the protesters. Our law

enforcement response is in reaction to this escalation," police tweeted.

They said that on Friday night, protestors had Molotov cocktails and other fire starting supplies and guns were spotted in the crowd.

Protesters have gathered every day since prosecutors announced Wednesday that they would not charge Officer Joseph Mensah in 17-year-old Alvin Cole's death. Mensah, who is Black, shot Cole after a foot chase outside a Wauwatosa mall in February. **AP**

New Zealand PM encourages supporters to vote in election

Wellington: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has visited supporters in an area that is especially popular with her Labour Party, encouraging them to vote in the October 17 general election.

Ardern was thronged by supporters during her visit Saturday to a market in the heavily Polynesian south Auckland suburb of Otara.

Her Labour Party has governed since the 2017 general election, when it was able to forge a narrow majority in New Zealand's 120-seat Parliament in a coalition with the left-wing Greens and right-wing New Zealand First parties.

Recent polls show a more comfortable result this year, with the Labour Party leading the National Party, led by 61-year-old conservative Judith Collins, by as many as 13 points. Ardern's visit to Otara was an effort to get out the vote in an electorate in which Labour out-polls National by around four votes to one. "We're seeing really high turnout at the moment for advance voting," said Ardern. **AP**

Jamaicans in Florida energised by Kamala Harris on 2020 ticket

Fort Lauderdale (US): President Donald Trump and Joe Biden are entering the final stretch of the campaign in a fierce battle for Latino voters who could sway the results in Florida and determine who wins the White House.

But in this ultimate battleground state where nearly 10 million voters participate in elections often decided by a mere percentage point, other communities could suddenly become critical.

That's where the booming Black Caribbean community centered in Broward County comes in.

Voters in this Democratic stronghold are eager to defeat Trump, but say they are even more energized to turn out in support of California Sen. Kamala Harris, Biden's running mate whose father is Jamaican.

"The fact she has a lineage means you are going to see a lot of Jamaicans voting even if they were not doing so before," said Antoinette Henry, director of corporate relations at the Dutch Pot Jamaican Restaurant, a company with several locations in South Florida.



"Part of Jamaica will be in the White House."

Broward County, home to Fort Lauderdale, is the county with the most Jamaicans in the United States. Florida has more than 974,000 people of West Indian ancestry—a Caribbean category that excludes Hispanic nationalities such as Cuban.

That total includes more than 300,000 Jamaicans and more than 530,000 Haitians, according to census figures.

A conservative estimate for the number of Jamaican voters in Florida stands at 91,000, because many may not report Jamaica as their country of origin. Haitian voters are estimated at about 115,000.

"These naturalized citizens vote. They turn out," said Dan Smith, a University of Florida political science professor.

"We also know that there is a lot of mobilization that goes on in these communities."

Laura Uribe, who is getting her doctorate in political science at the University of California, San Diego, has closely studied five immigrant groups in Broward County.

She said 77% of voters of Jamaican origin are Democrats whereas 3% are Republican and 20% have no party affiliation.

In the last presidential election, 78% of Jamaican-American voters turned out to vote, while the total turnout was about 66%. Between October 2016 and September 2018, more Jamaicans became naturalized US citizens than did Venezuelans, a group pursued by the GOP, according to the most recently available data from the Department of Homeland Security.

"I can tell you Kamala is in the tongue of everyone. They are talking about what must be done to make sure we deliver for the team of Biden and Sen. Harris," said Jamaican-born Hazelle Rogers, the mayor of Lauderdale Lakes who in 1996 became Florida's first Jamaican to be elected to office. **AP**

Trend Slazer

A lion cub named after Urvashi

Actor **URVASHI RAUTELA** is ecstatic that a lion cub has been named after her. "I'm so delighted that after Jackie Chan and Rihanna, one of the most inspiring entrepreneurs Saif Ahmed Belhasa named one of the baby lionesses after my name 'Urvashi', and it was a very lovely experience visiting the zoo in Dubai," Urvashi said. "When we got the invitation to visit the fame park, me and my team were delighted and happy as I'm passionate about animals. I played with a crocodile, snakes, giraffe, lions, and leopards. It was a very happy day out with animals," she added.



'Netizens don't matter to me. I have never met them. How can they affect me? How do I even know they are real people? They could be anybody, codes or algorithms. Technology has reached such a stage that you really don't know what is happening. I would rather distance myself from them and be happy with those who love me.'

—Saqib Saleem

Actor **ANITA HASSANANDANI** announced her pregnancy on Saturday. Anita and her husband, businessman **Rohit Reddy**, posted a video to announce.



"Love you @rohitreddygoa #gettingreadyforredy," Anita captioned the post.

Wishes have been pouring in. "Wow! Congratulations. This is awesome," actor Karanvir Bohra commented.

"This is such a beautiful news. Congratulations Anita! Enjoy this awesome journey of becoming momma," actor Supriya Shukla.

Anita and Rohit tied the knot in Goa on October 18, 2013.

Benedict to return as Doctor Strange

Actor **BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH** will reprise his role of the sorcerer superhero, Doctor Strange in the third part of the revived Spider-Man franchise. Tom Holland

returns as Spider-Man in the film. Cumberbatch's casting marks the third major crossover between the films produced by Disney's Marvel Studios and Sony Pictures' Spider-Man movies.

The move puts him in the role of Peter Parker/Spider-Man's mentor, which was previously carried out by Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark in *Spider-Man: Homecoming* (2017).



The novel Coronavirus has grabbed a large-scale attention across the globe. However, it also needs an effective solution of an equal scale to build awareness, bust myths and educate everyone about maintaining health and distance. The solution needs to be customised to cater to the audience being spoken to in different parts of the country, and even the world. Various government and health organisations have a huge responsibility here of keeping the public informed and educated about the preventive measures, a guide on the next steps to tackle infection, and enforce lockdown rules on a large scale.

The sudden and fast-spreading crisis has put all organisations and their communication measures to test. It now encourages governments and agencies to think beyond the traditional media (radio, TV, print) and basic one-way information-disseminating websites and to fully leverage cutting-edge technology that will reach and engage the audience from metros to rural cities using smartphones and the internet. And one such technology that has enabled authorities to build awareness and enhance their responsiveness to this mega-crisis is — Conversational Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is the set of technologies behind automated messaging and speech-enabled applications that offer human-like interactions between computers and humans.

At the forefront of creating deep and engaging conversations via media interactions, conversational AI has proven itself to be of immense value in the current crisis with vast potential as a new powerful form of two-way communication. It enables brands to overcome the difficulties and limitations that they face while communicating digitally with their customers and always be accessible and consistent across multi-platforms.

THE NEED

False information about Coronavirus has been spreading faster than the virus itself. And has further given rise to concerns, questions, and requests for more information. It made its way to the top of search terms and trending topics on social media and has created a paranoia everywhere. Nefarious parties on social media add fuel to the fire with the esca-



THE MEDICAL FUTURIST

Here are some ways in which conversational AI can bring about a digital revolution in the healthcare sector and enhance the citizen-to-government engagement. By **KARTIK WALIA**

lated spreading of misinformation. There is a need to put an end to misconceptions regarding the outbreak and its risks, symptoms, and statistics, and disseminate real-time, up-to-date information on the ways to tackle it. It is very clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has strangely changed our work and life culture globally. Traditional forms of communication or mass-broadcasting were not as effective as the reach was still restricted with publications slow-

ing down or even closing during the lockdown, call centres employees being restricted to their homes for safety purposes. The speed of disseminating relevant information as the news and updates too kept changing quickly and what was being shared soon became stale. Even the text-based notifications executed by certain local authorities were not effectively reaching their target audience, leaving a large part of the population living amid outdated or erroneous information.

Apart from this, many companies faced problems while communicating with their customers due to the lockdown.

HOW IT COMES TO RESCUE

The importance and effectiveness of Conversational AI have always been spoken about in the ecosystem. In fact, before the pandemic, a Gartner report from July 2019 stated that by 2025, customer-service organisations that embed AI in their multi-channel customer engagement platform will elevate operational efficiency by 25 per cent. The Conversational AI platforms have also helped authorities in disseminating information

and solving crises across borders in real-time, enabling the pro-active distribution of real-time information, receiving feedback, evaluating needs, and anticipating outbreaks. These platforms are not restricted to linguistic barriers and support healthcare authorities and government in engaging in meaningful conversations and offering emergency services in times of the pandemic. From automated patient outreach to patient engagement and reminders, and providing the right drug information, the conversational AI can act as a complete remote medical equipment kit.

The best use of technology is when it can help enhance a human's

productivity and efficiency. In these unprecedented times, Conversational AI has also enabled call centres to deploy minimum human agents to maintain social distancing norms while functioning itself at the forefront of this battle. To fight back COVID-19, the Indian government deployed a conversational AI-based virtual assistant through MyGov, a government-to-citizen digital infrastructure, with more than half a billion users. This unique engagement solution is discoverable on the website (www.mygov.in) via webchat, on Google Search, Maps, Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and WhatsApp. Not only were these services accessed by millions of users across India but they were also accessed by people around the world that were monitoring the rapidly changing pandemic.

REDEFINE THE COMMUNICATION WAYS

Brands are also leveraging Conversational AI to redefine the way they communicate with consumers as their focus moves further into digital with always-on, real-time, and interactive experiences. These changes spurred on by the pandemic will become part of the new normal for digital communication. This shift is happening across the customer journey, from driving user acquisition to sharing updates about their orders, products, and promotions. Conversational AI superpowers are enabling natural language-driven, self-service engagement.

Well, the tool has certainly been a powerful one to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic. It has proven its utility at scale, working to address the concerns of millions of citizens around the world while personalising the experience along the way, keeping millions informed and at ease, and most importantly, safe. It has brought about a digital revolution in the healthcare services and enhance the citizen-to-government engagement. It opens a lot of opportunities for government and healthcare authorities to tap into the power of Conversational AI to vastly improve the dissemination of important information and to engage constituents in interactive experiences that will enrich and empower citizens around the world.

(The writer is Head of Operations, India, Amplify.ai.)

WEBBED



WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME

Live Broadway cast production of Heidi Schreck's play presents multiple facets, historical perspectives and her personal experiences with the Constitution of USA. The drama releases on October 16 on Amazon Prime Video.



SOCIAL DISTANCE

Conceived, cast and executed entirely remotely during quarantine, the narrative anthology series features both dark and funny takes on how people strive to stay connected while staying apart. It releases on October 15 on Netflix.



THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO 7

What was supposed to be a peaceful protest turned into a violent clash with the police. What followed was one of the most notorious trials in history — the 1969 trial of seven defendants charged by the US federal government. The film releases on October 16 on Netflix.



DRIVE PAST LODHI ART DISTRICT

India's first and largest public art display is the perfect Venue

The Hyundai Venue was the Indian Car of the Year (ICOTY) for 2020 because the jurors felt that the small Sports Utility Vehicle ticked all the boxes when it came to affordability and performance against some very stiff competition. The car was named what it was because it was a new space in itself — a 'Venue' in a manner of speaking and at The Pioneer we celebrate a year of tremendous sales and critical success of the Hyundai Venue by taking the latest 'Sport' variant of the car to some great venues across the capital, starting with India's first large public art district, the Lodhi Art District in Lodhi Colony, New Delhi.



CELEBRATING THE HYUNDAI VENUE

St+Art India Foundation started work by painting the outside walls of the apartments with giant murals. Supported by the likes of Google Arts, St+Art had already commissioned giant murals of Dadasaheb Phalke in Mumbai as well as the famous mural of Mahatma Gandhi on the wall of the Delhi Police Headquarters. With the support of the central and the Delhi government and the New Delhi Municipal Corporation, 50 prominent street artists from across the world — Japan, Poland and many countries in between as well as both renowned and young Indian artists were let loose on the walls of the colony.

What Delhi received was India's largest public art areas, a place where anybody and everybody can walk or drive through and while the pandem-

ic forced the closure of several public spaces, the Lodhi Art District remained open for families and everyone to visit at any time. Old murals are constantly being changed. The murals are not just colourful but many of them send a powerful social message as well. The NDMC has further added a skating and cycling park and is building cycling lanes across the area. It is a great 'Venue' indeed and is coupled with the fact that there are several top restaurants in Lodhi Colony Market and Meherchand Market in the area, including Jamun and Tres.

The Hyundai Venue 'Sport' edition has several touches to make it stand out from the crowd, including dashes of red on the interior and a very special 'Red Cross' on the grille. We were driving the 1.5 U2 CRDI diesel variant with 100PS of power and a six-speed manual gearbox that is both extremely economical and offers a lot of options to the driver when they want to have a splash of fun.

KEEP THE SPIRIT ALIVE

A teenage activist from Palghar, SALONI TODKARI uses Gandhian methods to fight for the rights of children and raise social concerns. By ALKA GADGIL

The law of love could be best understood and learned through little children,” believed Mahatma Gandhi who always had a special place for children in his heart. His immense belief in children has, undoubtedly, inspired generations and the values he had advocated continue to guide the young minds even today. One such young mind following the teachings of Gandhi is Maharashtra’s 16-year-old Saloni Todkari.

“Non-violence is a successful strategy. It is a tool that we use to fight for our rights such as right to education and right to healthy childhood,” believes Saloni who has been protesting against injustice using Gandhian methods since she was just 12 years old.

Saloni’s journey into “activism” began when she had started attending the *Baag Shala* (garden school) of Maitrakul — a residential study centre for students run under the aegis of *Chhatrashakti Sanstha*. Maitrakul is an abode for children from the weaker sections who find it difficult to pursue school education due to challenging circumstances at home. Here, the children study in a local aided school. In 2014, Maitrakul boarding was established by Kishor at Bapgaon, Kalyan in Thane district realising the need for a shelter for the children coming from low-income background such as Saloni’s. Originally from Virar, a town in Palghar district, Saloni convinced her mother to allow her to relocate to Thane. Her mother Manali Todkari who works as a domestic help understood her daughter’s dream and helped her achieve that.

After moving there, Saloni started attending the local secondary school not very far from the boarding. While she was studying in Class 10th, she learnt that students wanting to appear for the Secondary School Certification (SSC) Board exam directly had to fill the form 17 exam form through a school. Although the charge for the form is ₹400, the schools were overcharging these adolescents around ₹4000-5000 per form. When Saloni noticed the exploitation, she raised the issue with the school administration but they dismissed her concerns. Looking at the administration’s response, she and the fellow students decided to peacefully protest against the SSC Board.

“We tried to seek an appointment with the SSC Board officers but to no avail. We wrote several letters but didn’t receive any reply. As our pleas were falling on deaf ears, we staged protests outside the board office. Even after days of protests when the board refused to act, we decided to change our strategy. We created a trophy — an effigy of a beggar with a note pasted on its torso



that read: “Since the officers don’t get paid, they have turned to begging” and entered the office. We wanted to present the trophy to the officer but we were whisked away. Although none of the office bearers met us, the board took cognisance of our grievance and acted on the schools which were overcharging the students for the form,” remembered Saloni.

She also informed about the protocols they had followed while organising the protests. “We had informed the nearest police station about our plans. We went by the regulations and used peaceful methods for making our voices heard,” explained she emphasising on the need of following the constitutional norms while organising peaceful protests.

Known for her understanding, peace-loving and empathetic nature at the boarding, Saloni was entrusted with the responsibility of reaching out to the neighboring Katkari Wadi (Hamlet), under Maitrakul’s *Chiranjeevi* programme. The Katkaris are an aboriginal forest tribe who continue to live in abject poverty even today. Parents go for work leaving behind young children at home. It was found that schools in and around the area had limitations in meeting their educational needs and almost no



Katkari child was enrolled in school.

When Saloni entered the hamlet, she was welcomed with mud and stones, hurled at her by older children. Saloni persisted and tried to broker a truce with the children by proposing to play games. Soon, the children were playing games with her. In a month’s time, she was able to hold an exercise on alphabets with them in the Katkari Wadi. Since then, regular *Baag Shala* is being organised by Maitrakul activists here.

As she grows older, her grasp on social concerns especially on the challenges faced by the deprived children has also matured. On her way to school, Saloni started noticing the child beggars stalking the walkers on the street for money and food. She felt for the children who have been robbed of their right to live with dignity.

Swayed by the issue, Saloni decided to act by staging a protest outside Kalyan station. Maitrakul backed the decision as she went on to fast for three days against the insensitivity of the administration, police and public regarding child beggars. Her protest and fast against child begging attracted the attention of the administration, media and political leaders. Saloni was just 15 when she launched the agitation and fast for the cause. But how did she cope with the pangs of hunger?

“When I decide, I act. There were friends from Maitrakul who joined my agitation and they took turns to fast for a day with me. When my mother came to see me, she was shocked and broken but didn’t discourage me. She understood that I was doing it for a good cause and gave me her blessings,” shared Saloni.

On the third and the last day of the fast, the local corporators and members of political parties came to meet her and promised to address the child beggars’ issue. The fast was undertaken in the second week of March after which the pandemic had set in. Saloni has not been able to pursue the issue of child beggars since then but she keeps the issue alive by fasting once a month. Other children at Maitrakul also join her for the cause.

“Saloni is not all agony and anguish, she’s fun loving and easy going. She’s a good actor and a performer. Her coordination skills are great; she plans the schedule, helps in contacting the resource persons and seeks police permission for the camps,” shares Ashish Jadhav, one of the functionaries of Maitrakul.

This adolescent is one of the many young minds who are trying to keep alive the spirit of the father of the nation by walking on the path of *Satyagraha* and *Shanti*.

—Charkha Features



Give up resistance

We must be open to fresh ideas and perspectives and let go of our false beliefs and knowledge to transform ourselves positively, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Most of us have a deep quest to know the truth that is complete and unmixed. However, it has been learnt from experience that generally, when a man is told the truth which does not square well with his current belief, he does not accept it, or at least, puts up a strong resistance towards it.

Man has so much attachment to his existing beliefs that he has learned from history that not only does he offer resistance to new ideas and knowledge but also becomes intolerant to new thoughts so much so that he can commit violence and indulge into destructive acts. This prejudice towards fresh perspective is built not merely by people’s ignorance or attachment to old beliefs but also by established schools or institutions of learning.

They have been resisting knowledge that contradicts with what is stated in the course books or the authorised versions. However, the degree of the action has decreased nowadays because the educated people are more open to new ideas. The educational institutions also encourage research on various fresh and new topics. There is thus some change in the environment as compared to what it was about a hundred or fifty years ago. But the in-built prejudice towards new ideas and resistance and new beliefs has not yet completely vanished. There are religious fanatics around the world who still threaten people with death who vehemently express opinions opposite to their beliefs and try to influence the general mentality of the society.

It should be remembered that false knowledge or ignorance builds up deep prejudice, hatred and emotional attachment which leads to violent reactions. Hence, in order to remove prejudice and hatred, we need to work on its base, that is, false knowledge. For that, it is important to tell the truth so that people can frame right opinions. This might also lead to violence. Therefore, we should devise methods which can stop people from putting up violent reactions.

We must understand the fact that people who oppose new ideas or knowledge are too small in number. Through this, we must also understand that this has always been the case. Initially, only a small number of people would accept new knowledge. However, as time goes by, more and more people have started accepting the truth. Remember, the truth of the knowledge should not be judged by the number of people but by the change it brings in the life of those who accept it. Hence, we must now rise up from deep slumber and give up our resistance and opposition and try to learn a lesson from history. We must start recognising and accepting new ideas and knowledge which would help in bringing about a great transformation worldwide.



Taking a cue from the edutainment show *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* (MKBKSH), a group of young women from Nawada district of Bihar have set up a sanitary napkin bank. They collect ₹1 a day from each girl and use the money to buy sanitary pads for themselves and other girls who may not have the means to purchase them. The girls decided to come together to assist each other when they saw how their individual menstrual needs were often not met due to lack of money. This initiative is helping young girls from the district to speak up about their menstrual needs.

Ahead of International Day of the Girl Child, they share how they were inspired to act by MKBKSH, a trans-media initiative launched by the Population Foundation of India to address issues of family planning, early marriage, unplanned or early pregnancies, domestic violence and adolescent reproductive and sexual health.

Addressing why and how the sanitary napkin bank was created, youth leader Anu Kumari from Amawa village says, “To help someone who doesn’t have money, we deposit one rupee every day. That means each girl raises ₹30 a

Witness the change

Ahead of International Day of the Girl Child, the Population Foundation of India shares how its show, *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon*, has inspired young women to set up a sanitary napkin bank in their district and address issues of family planning and domestic violence

month. We buy sanitary pads and distribute it among poor girls, who cannot afford to buy them, in order to protect their menstrual health.”

The creator of the show, film and theatre director Feroz Abbas Khan says, “When I wrote the concept for the show seven years ago, I could have never imagined the kind of impact we have seen over these years. I wanted to make a show that was effectively communicating important social issues without being preachy. It makes me happy that *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* has become an empowering slogan for young, adolescent girls who are now spearheading the change on the ground.”

Not just creating and sustaining a sanitary napkin bank, the



message of self-reliance and empowerment in the show inspired these girls to also conduct dia-

logues about critical but taboo subjects like contraceptive options. As Mausam Kumari, a 17-year-old

youth leader from Hardiya says, “Now we talk about family planning too. We visit villages and explain these subjects to women. We tell them about options like Antara injection, Chhaya, Copper T and condoms.”

The girls also came together to demand youth-friendly health clinics to be set up in existing public health centres. “Authorities hold a public dialogue twice a year and we expressed our wish of having a youth-friendly health clinic so that we can discuss our issues and talk without any fear. Our request was fulfilled and now all the girls of the village go there and use the services available,” adds Mausam.

Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director of Population Foundation of India is delighted with how the show has given voice to young girls and women. Says she, “I am glad that the show is impacting their lives. That is our goal precisely. Through the character of Dr Sneha Mathur, the protagonist of the series, we have initiated difficult but important conversations about sex selection, violence, gender discrimination, safe sanitation, family planning, spacing, child marriage, mental health, drug abuse, nutrition and adolescent health.”

The women watching this change unfold are recognising the shift in the conversation around menstruation. Community member Sangeeta Devi observes, “In the past, we used to suffer silently during menstruation. Our daughters told us about napkins. We also saw the show and felt encouraged.”

The show revolves around the inspiring journey of Dr Sneha, a young doctor who leaves behind her lucrative career in Mumbai and decides to work in her village. It focusses on Sneha’s crusade to ensure quality healthcare for all. Under her leadership, village women find their voices through collective action.

Over three seasons, it has dealt with various issues. The first season comprising 52 episodes discussed issues like child marriage, sex selection at birth and gender discrimination. The second season focussed on youth and adolescents. Season 3 of the show was produced with support from the REC Foundation and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The first 104 episodes were supported by DFID (UK’s Department for International Development) and BMGF also supported 27 episodes of Season 2.

“What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family. —Mother Teresa”

RISE IN MENTAL HEALTH CASES DUE TO COVID

Public health experts have flagged a manifold increase in mental health cases amid the Coronavirus pandemic, with many attributing the rising stress and anxiety levels to isolation, loss of loved ones, economic uncertainty and the fear of contracting the disease.

According to a survey by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the pandemic disrupted critical mental health services in 93 per cent of the countries worldwide. World Mental Health Day is observed on October 10 every year with the objective of raising awareness about mental health, global mental health education, awareness and advocacy against social stigma.

During the pandemic people have been experiencing anxiety, fear, frustration, sadness and loneliness to the point that these feelings have become constant and overwhelming or promoting the urge to attempt suicide. Existing mental health conditions, including severe anxiety and major depression, have also worsened.



EGGS IMPORTANT TO BOOST IMMUNITY

Top poultry experts on the occasion of World Egg Day on Friday highlighted the importance of this protein-rich food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The experts got together to discuss the vision forward for the industry and the importance of eggs in diets. Eggs are counted amongst the most economical, accessible healthiest foods across the globe.

At a webinar hosted by Suresh Chitturi, Chairman of the International Egg Coordination Committee (IEC) along with Tim Labert, former chairman of IEC, Dr Raghav Sunil, MS Orthopaedics, and Sanjoy Mukerji, CEO, Indian Poultry Review, they discussed case studies and shared business insights about the industry during the new normal.

Suresh Chitturi noted that the egg supply chain remained strong in 2020 and even during the pandemic, egg farmers worked with gusto with their partners to deliver fresh, local, high-quality eggs in India.



PREGNANCY ISSUES MAY UP STROKE RISK

Researchers have found that pregnancy complications such as miscarriage, pre-eclampsia, diabetes in pregnancy (gestational diabetes) and pre-term birth are linked to a heightened risk of heart disease or stroke in later life.

Several other factors related to fertility and pregnancy also seem to be associated with subsequent cardiovascular disease, including starting periods early, use of combined oral contraceptives, polycystic ovary syndrome, and early menopause, the study published in the journal *The BMJ*, reported.

However, a longer length of breastfeeding was associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease.

Previous research has suggested that risk factors specific to women may be linked to cardiovascular disease and stroke but clarity on the quality of the evidence is lacking and on how the findings can be translated into public health and clinical practice.



WAYS TO OVERCOME CORONA FEAR, ANXIETY

As the COVID-19 has led to rise in mental health issues, experts have suggested some simple ways to overcome fear and anxiety about the pandemic and thus avoid feeling depressed.

The World Mental Health Day this year is being celebrated at a time when the world is in the grip of the pandemic, which is affecting mental health of millions of people.

Fear and anxiety about a new disease and what could happen can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Public health actions, such as social distancing, can make people feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety, says Dr Charan Teja Koganti, Consultant Neuropsychiatrist, KIMS Hospitals, Kondapur.



NEW HYDROGEL CAN REPAIR DAMAGED NERVES

Researchers have developed a stretchable conductive hydrogel that could someday be used to repair damaged nerves.

According to the study, published in the journal *ACS Nano*, injuries in which a peripheral nerve has been completely severed, such as a deep cut from an accident, are difficult to treat.

A common strategy, called autologous nerve transplantation, involves removing a section of the peripheral nerve from elsewhere in the body and sewing it onto the ends of the severed one. However, the surgery does not always restore function, and multiple follow-up surgeries are sometimes needed.

The research team from Nanjing University in China wanted to develop an effective, fast-acting treatment that could replace autologous nerve transplantation.



If we don't get a good start at the top, we're falling into a hole. So we're looking for positive solutions. What I'd like is a little bit more intensity through the middle overs

However, there was to be no miracle recovery as a double fault handed Nadal a 6-5 lead and he took the title with an ace.