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USUAL SUSPECTS
SWAPAN DASGUPTAEveryone whistling
in dark on Covid

Looking at two different parts of the world, it is sometimes difficult to believe that the whole world is engaged in a relentless but common battle against a deadly — and often lethal — viral illness that has been dubbed Covid-19.

First, there is the case of the United Kingdom. Prime Minister Boris Johnson — otherwise a smooth-talking charmer — is confronted with a rebellion within his own party and a wave of public resentment over draconian steps his Government has taken to lessen the impact of a “second wave” of Covid-19. Among the steps just announced are restrictions in lockdown areas on people meeting those who don’t live in the same household. In other areas, there are strict instructions against more than six people assembling under the same roof. There are expectations that these restrictions will persist until the New Year. Consequently, Johnson is fearful that he will be the first ruler after Oliver Cromwell to prevent Britons from celebrating Christmas.

The second example is nearer home and centres on the anti-Covid-19 strategies of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, a feisty lady who had once proclaimed her intention of transforming Kolkata into another London. On Mahalaya, the beginning of the auspicious season — this year’s almanack deems it to be nearly a month, unlike the traditional 10 days — that culminates in the immersion of the Goddess Durga on Vijaya Dashami, she made a momentous announcement. Dispelling Bengali fears that this year’s Durga Puja celebrations will be extremely low key and, in some cases, non-existent, she tweeted that life will be festive during the five-days when the whole of West Bengal turns into a carnival.

The awkward reality is that at present there is no science behind the public health strategies. Everyone seems to be whistling in the dark, evolving strategies and hoping that things will keep ticking until the wonder drug — whether discovered in the laboratories of Putin’s Russia or Johnson’s alma mater Oxford — rescues everyone from this uncertainty

The Democratic Party and its candidate Jo Biden is treading cautiously, trying to maintain a semblance of social distancing and advising its campaigners to wear masks. The rival Republican camp and incumbent President Donald Trump is not similarly inhibited. He is proceeding with mass rallies and large numbers of his supporters don’t seem to bother with either masks or social distancing.

Meanwhile, the US retains the top slot in the Covid-19 infection league. It is also a control that has dispelled with the idea of a national strategy against the pandemic. The country’s celebration of fierce individualism appears to have spilled over into the realms of public health. All attempts to curb individual freedom at the time of a pandemic is being seen as intrusive and, consequently, un-American.

India, thankfully, doesn’t have a Constitution that celebrates 1.3 billion people doing their own thing, although it is not China where 1.4 billion people are expected to do only one thing. Our Constitution advises citizens to acquire a “scientific temper”. In everyday understanding this implies that, confronted with a serious public health challenge, we are expected to follow specialist, scientific advice and not leave things to individual flights of whimsy. Unfortunately, that’s easier said than done.

At the national level, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has advised utmost caution. Despite the country being in the so-called un-lockdown stage, he has repeatedly emphasised the importance of social distancing and the fanatical use of the face mask. The ongoing session of Parliament has seen staggered sittings of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and MPs are seated in different sections of Parliament House. In Bihar, where campaigning for the Assembly election has begun hesitantly, the ruling National Democratic Alliance is focussing on virtual rallies, despite the uneven nature of internet connectivity.

In West Bengal, where the number of daily cases is around 3,200 and the public health infrastructure is not exactly fit for purpose, there have been random lockdowns whose dates are chosen as if it is a game of Russian roulette. In Parliament, MPs from the Trinamool Congress boasted that the State Government is being guided by a Global Advisory Council headed by a Nobel Prize winner in economics. Presumably they suggested to the Chief Minister that random lockdowns would confuse the virus totally. Presumably they must have also suggested that while it was a danger to young students to sit for the Joint Entrance Examinations, it was safe to go out and boisterously celebrate Durga Puja. It’s all very confusing.

The awkward reality is that at present there is no science behind the public health strategies. Everyone seems to be whistling in the dark, evolving strategies and hoping that things will keep ticking until the wonder drug — whether discovered in the laboratories of Putin’s Russia or Johnson’s alma mater Oxford — rescues everyone from this uncertainty. Like the mathematical modelling by epidemiologists that suggest nearly 70 per cent of India is bound to get infected or those who couldn’t care less because cow’s urine is the deadly virus killer, it is all a game of chance. In this lottery of life there is no science, just plain luck.

Amend farm Bills,
BKS asks Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The RSS affiliated Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) has joined hands with critics of the three farm sector-related Bills that will come up for passage in the Rajya Sabha on Sunday. This could put up added pressure on the Government to bring in some changes in the Bills to allay the fear of the farmers about continuation of the minimum support price (MSP) regime in future. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill on Friday.

After Akali Deal leader Harsimrat Kaur walked out of the Modi Government to protest against the Bills, the BKS stand shows that the BJP stands completely isolated on introducing these radical measures. Amid rising apprehensions that farm sector Bills passed in the Lok Sabha may not protect the interest of the agriculturists, the BKS has demanded that the Bills must be sent to the Standing Committee for wider consultations and changes.

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi blamed the Opposition for misleading the farmers, the BKS said the Bill is “tilted heavily towards the corporate” and would not improve the lives of farmers and should be whetted by the



Members of various farmers’ organisations block Sangrur road during a protest against the Central Government over agriculture related Bills, in Patiala on Saturday

PTI

Standing Committee on Agriculture headed by BJP’s PC Gaddigoudar for the benefit of small farmers before turning into a law.

Opposing the Bills in their current form, the organisation has also written to Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, demanding pro-farmer provisions that do not benefit the big firms and corporates.

On Thursday, the Lok Sabha passed two agriculture-

related Bills — Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 — by voice vote. On Tuesday, the House passed the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which seeks to deregulate food items, including cereals, pulses and onions. As farmers in Punjab,

RSS-affiliated
Kisan Sangh
wants Bills to
be cleared by
House panelNIA averts terror attacks with
arrest of 9 al-Qaeda terrorists6 arrested from
Bengal, 3 from
Kerala in early
morning raids

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday conducted simultaneous raids at several locations at Ernakulam (Kerala) and Murshidabad (West Bengal) and arrested nine terrorists associated with Pakistan-sponsored module of the UN-banned global terror outfit al-Qaeda.

“The group was planning to undertake terrorist attacks at vital installations in India with an aim to kill innocent people and strike terror in their minds,” the NIA said.

The search operation followed registration of a case (No. RC-31/2020/NIA/DLI) by NIA on September 11 and subsequent investigation into the matter. This led the NIA to learn about an inter-State module of al-Qaeda operatives at various locations in India,



Switches, batteries and other items used to assemble an IED by al-Qaeda terrorist Abu Sufiyan’s house, recovered by NIA, in Murshidabad district on Saturday

PTI

including West Bengal and Kerala.

“The NIA has arrested six terrorists from West Bengal and three terrorists from Kerala in the early morning raids. Large quantity of incriminating materials including digital devices, documents, jihadi literature, sharp weapons, country-made firearms, a locally fabricated body armour, articles and literature used for making home-made explosive devices have been seized from their possession,” the agency said.

As per preliminary inves-

tigation, the arrested accused were radicalised by Pakistan-based al-Qaeda terrorists on social media and were motivated to undertake attacks at multiple places, including the National Capital Region. For this purpose, the module was actively indulging in fund raising and a few members of the gang were planning to travel to New Delhi to procure arms and ammunition. These arrests have pre-empted possible terrorist attacks in various parts of the country, it said.

Chopper scam: CBI
chargesheet names
Rajeev Saxena,
Agusta former MD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Saturday filed a supplementary chargesheet in the AgustaWestland chopper scam case against controversial businessman Rajeev Saxena and then Managing Director of AgustaWestland International Ltd Giacomino Saponaro.

In its final report filed before Special Judge Arvind Kumar, the CBI has named 15 accused persons, which includes Saponaro and Saxena among others. The court is likely to take up the matter for consideration of the chargesheet on Monday.

The investigation report filed on Friday details the alleged role played by Saponaro and Saxena among others in delivering bribes to politicians, bureaucrats and Indian Air Force (IAF) officials for swinging the deal for supply of the VVIP copters.

Dubai-based businessman Saxena was the director of Interstellar Technologies Ltd, Mauritius.

Govt should admit
it is community
spread, says Jain

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid surge in coronavirus cases across India, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Saturday took a jibe at the Centre as he said, “We’re stuck in technical terms” and the Government should have admitted India is in the “community spread” stage.

“There has been a downward trend in Covid-19 positivity rate in the national Capital and it will lead to good results by next week. The positivity rate was 6.76 per cent on Friday. It has remained below seven per cent in the last two-three days. Last week, it was around 8 per cent,” he said.

Jain said that the cumulative positivity rate has also dropped below 10 per cent for the first time. “Due to the increased testing over the last 10 to 12 days, Delhi has been witnessing a “downward trend” in the Covid-19 positivity rate over the past two to three days. It should lead to good results by next week,” he said, he added.

The national Capital reported 4,127 new cases and 30 deaths on Friday.

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	11,67,496	31,791	8,34,432
Andhra Pradesh	6,17,776	5,302	5,30,711
Tamil Nadu	5,36,477	8,751	4,81,273
Karnataka	5,11,346	7,922	4,04,841
Uttar Pradesh	3,48,517	4,953	2,76,690
Delhi	2,42,899	4,945	2,05,890
West Bengal	2,21,960	4,298	1,93,014
Odisha	1,75,550	744	1,41,657
Telangana	1,69,169	1,025	1,37,508
Bihar	1,66,987	861	1,52,956
Assam	1,55,453	548	1,23,684
Kerala	1,31,027	520	92,947
Gujarat	1,21,930	3,303	1,02,671
Rajasthan	1,13,124	1,322	93,805
Haryana	1,08,952	1,120	86,150
Madhya Pradesh	1,00,458	1,901	76,952

INDIA OVERTAKES US TO BAG TOP SPOT
IN TERMS OF COVID-19 RECOVERIES

New Delhi: “In a landmark global achievement”, India has overtaken the US and become the top country in terms of Covid-19 recoveries, the Health Ministry said on Saturday. The country has reported the highest number of recoveries with 42,08,431 Covid-19 patients having recovered from the disease so far, pushing the national recovery rate to nearly 80 per cent.

INDIA’S SINGLE-DAY RECOVERY
MORE THAN FRESH CASES

New Delhi: India’s single-day recovery outstripped the number of new infections as nearly 96,000 people recuperated from the novel coronavirus, even as the total number of cases went past 53 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry data on Saturday.

tive in the test.

Apart from staffers and media persons, security personnel are also subjected to the mandatory testing. Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and Prahlad Patel have tested positive in the tests. Three MPs have already died of Covid-19.

Government officials accompanying their respective Ministers during Bill discussions also have to show a negative report of RT-PCR test taken within the last 72 hours of their visit to the complex.

“Since the commencement of the Session the number of positive cases has gone up, so the Government is thinking of cutting short the session. Next week also many have to undergo mandatory tests and the number of positive cases is rising,” said an official.

Before ending the session, the Government wants to get 11 ordinances passed as laws by Parliament, sources said.

At Lok Sabha’s business advisory committee meeting several Opposition parties said that they are in the favour of the decision, asserting that conducting the full 18-day session could be a risky affair.

The meeting also apprised that among the 264 total cases including MPs, the majority are from the staffers.

CAPSULE

'ARRESTED SCRIBE WAS
PASSING INFO TO CHINA'

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Saturday said arrested freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma was allegedly passing sensitive information about India’s border strategy and Army deployment to Chinese intelligence. At a press conference, Special Cell DCP Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said Sharma was writing on defence-related issues for some Indian media organisations, as well as China’s Global Times.

INDIA HANDS OVER TWO
MODERN TRAINS TO NEPAL

Kathmandu: India has handed over two modern trains to Nepal that would run between Jaynagar in Bihar and Kurtha in Dhanusa district from mid-December, marking the beginning of the first broad-gauge railway service in the Himalayan nation, officials said on Saturday.

COVID-19 IN MADHYA PRADESH

Dist	Total Cases	Fresh Cases
Indore	19,125	408
Bhopal	14,602	263
Gwalior	8,938	218

Covid-19
IN INDIATOTAL
CASES: 53,67,647
DEATHS: 86,210
RECOVERED:
42,66,171
ACTIVE: 10,14,509

A man holding an Umbrella walks on the road during rain in Bhopal on Saturday

Pioneer photo

HOME THEATRE

Laugh the American way



OUR CARTOON PRESIDENT
Disney+Hotstar
Season 3, Episodes 10
Animation
Rated: 6/10

Trump roasts Trump with his own signature brand of stupidity, outrage and elan. Season 3 takes off with the Impeachment sham that Trump survived with flying colours. As he puts it: "I can do anything and get away with it as I have been chosen by the people of America."

The self-deprecating humour, the audacity of impunity that Trump wears brings in a lot of laughter into this very American series much like *The Simpsons*. It will appeal to the people who are in the knowledge of America's domestic politics, policy blunders and the demeanour that the President sports.

Trump is undoubtedly a globally recognised political

clown so situations around him are insanely funny and the scriptwriter has done well to catch all the nuances to present Trump roasting himself, more specifically roasting the citizens of America for voting him in.

Ticklish subjects like foreign affairs, economy and the upcoming Presidential elections are issues some of the episodes touch upon and that includes the Clintons coming into the picture from their living room television viewing and keeping their hyper candidate in the race who is on a personal high of anxiety, aspiration, scepticism of her prospects and yet compelling optimism in dreaming to be the possible first-ever native American woman President!

Entirely up to you whether you are in a mood to connect to this sort of very American comedy. One thing is there though, Season 3 shows no fatigue whatsoever in pressing the funny bone button.

Sleep over this one

HOLLY SLEPT OVER
Amazon Prime
***ing: Josh Lawson, Nathalie Emmanuel, Britt Lower, Erinn Hayes, Ron Livingston**
Rated: 3/10

Some movies are made out of nothing, conveying nothing and thinking nothing about the amount of waste they produce. *Holly Slept Over* tops in that segment. A thoughtless, disastrous comedy-drama propelling sexual adventurism to save a sagging marriage where sex has become boring and a tool to somehow have babies, it is a romp in the bed by a committed couple and the wife's lesbian girlfriend who stops over for a night after 12 years of a breakup.

Other than the protagonists being extremely pretty, the house where the action takes place being sexy, the neighbours having their own between the sheets issues with yucky outcomes, there is nothing in the movie that will keep you interested, or let me say not get you irritated.

Holly (girlfriend) breezes into the couple's home with not even a blink, sleeps straight seven hours, gets up all decked up and her friend's husband proposing a threesome! They agree and do it without wasting any time or sparing a thought to even their



viewers. And then it is all over, Holly leaves, the couple rocks and the neighbours too learn to live, well, between the sheets once in a while.

Who, how, what, why? Don't look for answers in this one which much too casually degrades the entire institution of marriage, fidelity and the works.

Can be totally ignored even on a very idle week day or week-end.

Watch it for Holland & Pattinson

THE DEVIL ALL THE TIME
Netflix
***ing: Tom Holland, Robert Pattinson, Bill Skarsgård, Jason Clarke, Eliza Scanlen**
Rated: 6/10

Almost all of us find it difficult to see a character that we have followed over the years and identify with, see playing another role — definitely not the fault of the actor. But the truth is that the characters that they have played leave such an impact that it becomes impossible to break the mould in which we are used to seeing them. This probably makes the task of the director and the actor tough but the end result is worth it and *The Devil All The Time* is a prime example how actors step out of the mould that viewers put them in and show that at the end of the day, it is job and a role that they stepped into even if it was for a few years.

The psychological thriller based on the novel of the same name by Donald Ray Pollock is directed and co-written by Antonio Campos and produced by Jake Gyllenhaal and Randall Poster. The story is simple enough. But there are many characters

and while it does, at times, become difficult to follow the thread of each character's journey, they tend to collide with each other from time to time. The way it all comes together is interesting.

What is even more brilliant about this movie is the performance that Tom Holland and Robert Pattinson have given. Holland as a young man trying to protect his family from all the evil gives a stellar performance. However, it is Pattinson who stands out here even though he doesn't have as meaty a role as Holland. He may have a total screen presence of 30-35 minutes but the way he manages to break away from Edward Cullen is stunning. As the preacher in this one and a high-pitched Southern drawl, he is a surprise.

A report says that the actor had crafted the accent in his room for days and didn't let anyone hear it — not even Campos. It is riveting to watch him deliver the dialogues in this accent, so different from the extremely polished Cullen.

While the movie itself doesn't have much to say apart from the good versus evil, God versus the devil, what makes this 138-minute film worth a watch are Holland and Pattinson's acting.

— Shalini Sakseena

Smashes patriarchy



DOLLY KITTY AUR WO CHAMAKTE SITARE
Netflix
***ing: Konkona Sen Sharma, Bhumi Pednekar, Amol Parashar, Aamir Bashir, Kubra Sait, Vikrant Massey, Neelima Azmi**
Rated: 5.5/10

Off late, Bollywood has started making movies that are beyond glam women and having them be an arm candy for the hero and do a song and dance. Not that there is anything wrong with such films, the only problem is that few realise that what they see on the screen is a make-belief world and there is more to life, especially for women — they have aspirations, ambitions and needs.

Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamakte Sitare by director Alankrita Shrivastava and produced by Ekta Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor under their banner Balaji Telefilms is one such film. Shrivastava is known to make films that explore gender roles and the judgement on how women in our society should behave

without questioning the moral values of the men. The film tries to bring out complexities of relationships, questions what is right and wrong as the story progresses.

The good part is that it doesn't pass any judgement on the choices the women make. In fact, it goes on as far as saying that it was the choice that they made because there is more to them than needs to be explored. The two-hour running time may appear to be a bit longer than what we are used to, but the story keeps the viewer engrossed.

Konkana Sen as Radha *aka* Dolly gives a great performance as she explores her relationship — with her husband, with her younger son, with her sister, with her a delivery boy and her mother. Bhumi Pednekar as Kaajal *aka* Kitty too gives a brilliant performance. Amol Parashar, Vikrant Massey and Aamir Bashir do justice to their performances.

— Shalini Sakseena

Plan Your Day

Catch your favourite musicians live in an all-star virtual fundraiser event 'Together, Louder, Stronger' on September 26, 2020 at 6:30 pm, helping and supporting the performance industry workers and folk artists during the ongoing pandemic crisis.

Hosted by Anahad Foundation and produced by Believe Entertainment, the digital event will be live on Facebook and YouTube and will see a stellar line-up of 20 mainstream, independent and talented artists like Shaan, Mame Khan, Jonita Gandhi, Benny Dayal, Mamta Sharma, Bhuvan Bam, Nithyasree Mahadevan and many more supporting the cause and raising funds during this critical time.

Tune in to this exclusive digital event and provide your support to the entertainment industry — Together, Louder, Stronger!

Log on to <https://www.facebook.com/anahad.ngo/>.

प्रधानमंत्री जी के जन्मदिवस अवसर पर नरीब कल्याण सप्ताह



सशक्त महिलाएं सशक्त मध्यप्रदेश



क्रेडिट कैंप कार्यक्रम

महिला स्व-सहायता समूहों को 150 करोड़ रुपये का ऋण वितरण

मुख्यमंत्री श्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान हितग्राहियों से करेंगे सीधा संवाद

20 सितम्बर, 2020, पूर्वाह्न 11:00 बजे

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‘I love playing Kalyani’

SHEETAL MAULIK, who plays Kalyani in *Pyar Ki Luka Chhupi*, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about how she ended up playing a negative character, her first break and challenges in shooting under the new normal

■ You play a negative character in *Pyar Ki Luka Chhupi* for the first time. How is it going?

I am thoroughly enjoying it and the same can be seen on screen. It depends on how far you are willing to take the role and how you play it out. You know your limitations and playing such a character is tougher since you are not playing just one role. Earlier, I have been part of comedy shows and done lead roles that have been positive. Doing a show where you are playing a negative role, it gives you an opportunity to explore yourself and do something that you would not do in real life. You are portraying something that is opposite to what you are, be negative and yet be funny.

■ Were there apprehensions in taking up the role?

I have always wanted to explore my acting abilities. When I got an opportunity to be part of this show, I had no reason to turn it down. There were two things playing. First, I have been waiting to work with the makers of *Pyar Ki Luka Chhupi*. Second, since I had already done lead roles and comedy, I wanted to take up this project. The only challenge was to train myself for the accent. Kalyani is a totally Kanpuriya woman.

■ You also had to perfect a new language. What was the preparation?

When I gave the auditions, I knew that I didn't have the accent correct. The only reason why I got the role was because they felt that I could act. But after that the team really helped me. The script comes in the language that I am supposed to speak. The only thing that I had to perfect the accent correctly for the dialogues. For this, I heard a number of jokes from the region. An assistant, Prem, who is from the area, would tell me how to speak certain words. This helped.

■ How did you get interested in acting?

I am a trained Bharatanatyam dancer. I have been dancing since I was three. I still practice it and Kuchipudi. There was a contest but I couldn't participate. The organisers asked me to open the contest. I performed. Sachin Pilgaonkar, who was there, told me to take up acting. I told him, I couldn't act. He said not to worry and took me for a role in an episodic show of his. Once the make-up is on, it has been on. I have done Hindi and Marathi theatre. I have worked with the likes of Bhavana Balsavar and Shubha Khote. My journey has been that of a learner. I have not taken any acting lessons. I am able to emote and understand the character because I have done theatre.



■ How did you get your first break with *Akkad Bakkad Bambey Bo*?

Actually, I did *Hello Dolly* before this. I had played a kleptomaniac for production house Sagar Films Pvt Ltd. When they came up with *Akkad Bakkad Bambey Bo*, they knew I could act and that is how I came on board for this project as a lead. It was a different role. I played a student.

■ You have now been in the industry for over a decade. How has the journey been thus far?

It has been good. One has to go with the flow. Yes, there have been changes. But if we don't move forward, we won't be able to move past the negatives. The good is that we are paid better. Then, there were actors, today we have stars. It is important to understand that change is a reality. To accept it is necessary. When I was young, I played roles according to my age. Now I am doing roles that fit my

age.

■ What is the toughest thing about being an actor?

Everything that comes your way is tough. Even with Kalyani's role, I still get butterflies when I am on camera. There is always the fear that I may not be able to remain the skin of the character. The good is that it makes me more determined to do my work better.

■ How tough is it to shoot under the new normal?

When we first started, I was afraid. I have a four-year-old daughter. My father lives with me. The fear was very high. I was not sure whether I should get back to work or not. But the makers have been thorough with precautions and I am doing the same.

■ What next?

I am concentrating on this show. I work 25 days a month. The rest of the days I want to spend with my family and catch up spending time with my daughter.

No compromise with tribals’ respect: Chouhan

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that he has seen the suffering and struggle of the tribals since childhood. Since childhood, he yearned to improve their condition. We have always ensured that the tribal brethren of the State do not have to suffer any loss. There should be no compromise with their respect. Our ideology is that one who is at the bottom of the society, are the poorest, they are our God and we will leave no stone unturned to bring them forward. The system of this Government is to met out justice to every poor and serve the people better.

The tribals have equal rights to all resources and development opportunities to live their lives. The State Government is committed to giving them this right. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan was addressing the Vanadhihar Utsav.

On this occasion, Chouhan distributed Van-Adhihar Patras and also released the Vandhihar Pustika. Chouhan also interacted with the beneficiaries. Tribal and Scheduled Castes Welfare Minister Meena Singh and Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and

Science and Technology Om Prakash Sakhlecha were also present in this State-level programme organised at the Tribal Museum under Gareeb Kalyan Saptah. Forest Minister Vijay Shah, joined the meeting through video conferencing from the hospital where he is undergoing treatment for Corona.

Chouhan said that the state government is constantly active for the welfare and development of tribals. A network of roads has been laid down all over the State. Our effort is that every child and girl belonging to the Scheduled Tribes category should get all opportunities to pursue studies.

A large number of ashrams, schools, hostels, Eklavya schools have been established in the state. The tribal welfare budget was only ₹635 crores in 2003-04, which has now increased to ₹7,384 crores.

In the last 15 years, number of tribal high schools has risen by 112 percent, higher secondary schools by 81 percent, sports complex by 85 percent and an unprecedented rise in the number of pre and post matric hostels.

The State Government is making all possible arrangements for education. The

scholarship process has been simplified. In order to ensure better and transparent arrangements in hostels, vigilance was increased by making children and parents participate in the hostel management.

The State Government will soon start senior hostels and college hostels as well. Fifty tribal high schools of the state will be upgraded to higher secondary schools. Our effort is to ensure that children of Scheduled Class also learn computers. For this, IT centres and video conferencing rooms are being built in 33 Eklavya schools at a cost of ₹7.20 crore. Along with the construction of school buildings, construction of 25 new hostel buildings is in progress at a cost of ₹50 crores.

Arrangements have also been made to provide rent to help students who go to cities to pursue further studies after school education and who are unable to find hostels. Scholarship is being provided to 50 students of the state every year to enable students of Scheduled Tribes to get education abroad. Every effort is being made to change the life of this class.

As many as 24 residential sports complexes have been set up to train and nurture the talents of tribal children.

Policybazaar.com showcases its commitment to customers in its new television campaign AapKiSideHai

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Policybazaar.com (Twitter handle: PolicyBazaar), India's largest online insurance marketplace with over 10 million customers, showcases its commitment to customers in its new television campaign AapKiSideHai. The new ad campaign featuring Policybazaars brand ambassador, Akshay Kumar, highlights the brand's promise of embracing a holistic customer centric approach while helping to bridge the insurance protection gap in India.

Policybazaar seeks to reassure its customers on being a dependable Insurance partner for them, every step of the way. The brand has always focused on distributing products like term insurance, health insurance, zero commission ULIPs and motor insurance that are optimal from a customer perspective. Policybazaar is now extending the brand promise beyond the purchase experience to ensure that consumers get the highest levels of service throughout the policy lifecycle.

The new brand campaign reinforces Policybazaars core value of putting the customer first by delivering on its promise of providing a trusted

Policybazaars AapKiSideHai campaign seeks to reassure its customers on being a dependable Insurance partner for them

platform for all types of insurance products. The brand is committed to guiding the customer throughout the insurance journey, starting from recommending the right products at affordable pricing, ensuring that the policy issuance process is smooth and fast, and, to providing services and claims assistance when needed.

"While we continue to highlight the importance of Health & Term life Insurance through our marketing campaigns, with the brand promise of Policybazaar AapKiSideHai, we also intend to position Policybazaar as a customer centric brand, that is committed to stand by its customers, both pre and post purchase, said Samir Sethi, Head of Brand Marketing, Policybazaar.com.

Efforts should be made in districts to check Covid-19: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that efforts should be made in the districts to not let the number of active cases rise by taking measures as per local conditions. Discussions can be held with the traders community to limit the time of opening of shops in the markets and arrangements can be made to voluntarily close the market for half day or full day one or two days a week so that infection does not spread. We all have the responsibility to stop the spread of the virus. Also, all measures of social distancing must be adopted compulsorily.

Chouhan said that better services can be provided to the patients of home isolation by the officers of the Indian Administrative Service in charge of the districts in coordination with Red Cross, private hospitals and other health centres. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan was reviewing the condition of Corona in the state today.

Chouhan sought information about each district in a meeting held today. He said that no amount is being charged for the treatment of Corona. A large section of the society cannot pay this amount. Those patients who are financially stable must voluntarily pay for their treatment to the hospitals.

The Chief Minister said that he himself is depositing the amount payable for his treatment at Chirayu Hospital in Bhopal. Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang who was present in the meeting, said that he himself has decided to pay the amount for his treatment to the hospital management. Chief Minister Chouhan appealed to the affluent section of the society that if they can pay the amount of their treatment without any problem, then they should volunteer to do so. This will be a support given to the entire health machinery, medical institute and society.

Chouhan reviewed the treatment and care being given to the patients in various districts of the state in the meeting. Chouhan said that all fever clinics should be run in an effective manner. Oxygen and other arrangements should also be ensured. Chief Minister Chouhan said that the use of pulse oximeter should be ensured. The home isolation system should also be strongly monitored.

Chouhan said that necessary support should also be extended to the private hospitals which provide better treatment and care to the patients. On this occasion, information was also sought about the continuous monitoring of home isolation patients by the command and

control centres. It was told in the meeting that the positive rate was 8.9 between September 2 and 16. Along with this, the fatality rate was 2 percent, which has been steadily decreasing. Madhya Pradesh is ranked 14th in the number of active patients in the country. The recovery rate of Madhya Pradesh which is 76.8 percent is better than most states.

Chouhan instructed the collectors to control the activities that can draw crowd. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that it has been decided not to organize Garba this year to prevent spread of virus infection. Along with this, it was told to adhere to Durgotsav guidelines sent earlier which includes not organizing chal samaroha, limiting the height of Durga idol to six feet, limiting the size of temporary pavilions in the tableau to 10 × 10 feet and limiting the participants in the idol immersion to 10.

During a review of Indore, Chouhan said that if the traders decide to fix the time limit of opening shops, then Indore can set an ideal example. This would be exemplary in terms of preventing spread of infection and reducing risk. Collector, Indore informed that at present there is no oxygen related problem in Indore.

Guest lecture series held under Toornayad Hindi fest

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A guest lecture series is being organised under Toornayad Hindi festival. On the fifth day, renowned writer Kamlesh Kamal addressed the audience.

It is to be noted that Toornayad is the biggest festival of Hindi being organised from September 15 to September 26 by the Official Language Implementation Committee of Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal.

In the guest lecture series on the fifth day of the programme, Kamlesh Kamal addressed the audience. In addition to Hindi poetry, Kamlesh Kamal, who has a deep understanding of Hindi grammar, is associated with the

editing of many magazines and is a trustee of the Nationalist Union Writers. Kamlesh is currently working in the Home Department of the Government of India.

He spoke on the topic "technical analysis of Hindi language words and grammar". In an effort to increase the knowledge of the students and increase their thinking ability, they gave information about the meanings of many important words of daily conversation.

Kamlesh answered many language related questions of the audience and addressed their doubts. In the end, former General Secretary of the committee Ashutosh Singh Thakur thanked Kamlesh for understanding such difficult words so easily.

Farmers need maximum relief under present circumstances: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that there is need for maximum relief to farmers under the present circumstances. The two Bills brought by the Central Government for agricultural reforms, so that the farmers can decide the prices for their crops themselves and avail maximum benefits as per one nation one market, will prove to be revolutionary.

Chief Minister Shri Chouhan has welcomed the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill 2020 and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Service Ordinance, 2020 passed in Lok Sabha. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan has described the steps being taken by Prime Minister Shri Modi for the welfare of the farmers of the country as very effective and relevant.

Chouhan said that today the farmer of the country is keen to become self-reliant. The Central Government also wants to realise this mantra. Today the farmer of the country wants to be free from control. The intention of the Agricultural Reforms Bill is also that the farmer can fix the price of his crop himself and will be free to sell and purchase the produce outside the boundaries of the States. The farmer will be able to get beneficial price through the medium of alternative trade.

This will help in simplifying the inter-state and intra-state business. Mandis operating under the States' Act will also function, while keeping the Minimum Support Price (MSP) unchanged.

The Chief Minister said that positive changes will result due to increase in investment in agriculture sector. As a result of these bills, not only the agricultural sector but our entire economy will become

stronger.

Chouhan said that now marketing options are available to farmers. The PM Kisan Scheme was also implemented for income support to farmers. The central government also made a significant increase in the budget in the field of agriculture. ₹1,34,399.77 crore was allocated in the year 2020-21, which is more than 1,30,485.21 crore in the previous year. The allocation was also increased in the year before the previous year. The minimum support price was set at one and a half times the cost of production in the Union Budget 2018-19.

Sowing of most crops also increased significantly. In the Rabi season 2020, 3.9 crore metric tonnes were purchased in the country till last month. ₹75,000 crore was paid to the farmers on the support price. Similarly, an amount of ₹24,000 crore has been paid to farmers by purchasing 1.32 crore metric tonnes of paddy.



Vishwa Hindu Parishad All India General Secretary Milind Parande interacts with media persons after a two-day meeting in Bhopal on Saturday
Pioneer photo

Central and State Govt want to make farmers slaves of capitalists: Patil

District Congress gives effective strike in Mandsaur regarding various public interest issues

STAFF REPORTER ■ MANDSAUR

The Shivraj Singh Chauhan Government, sitting in the undemocratic system of Madhya Pradesh, is not giving compensation to farmers due to crop failure, not waiving electricity bills of common citizens in spite of poor economic system, foundation of economic exploitation of farmers and laborers through the new Mandi Act Apart from fixing the budget of the Gaushalas, the District Congress Committee effectively staged a sit-in at the Gandhi Square on several public interest issues, including the opposition of the Shivraj Government reducing the budget.

The District Congress Committee under the leadership of District Congress President Navkrishna Patil staged a sit-in and accused the BJP Governments of the Centre and the State of continuously working against the interests of common citizens. During this, the memorandum in the name of His Excellency the Governor was submitted to the representative of the District Administration, Narayan Nandeda.

District Congress President and former MLA Navkrishna Patil said that the farmers of the country, Narendra Modi sitting in the center and the Shivraj Government of the State, want to make slaves of the capitalists. Through the Naveen Mandi Act, there is a conspiracy to end the unity of the farmers along with avoiding the support price of the crop.

He expressed his indignation at reducing the budget per cow from ₹20 to ₹1.75 by Shivraj Singh Chauhan, while drawing attention to the construction of Gaushalas by Kamal Nath and said that this move has exposed the real Hindutva of the BJP.

District Congress President Patil also expressed his opposition to reducing the affected citizens by twenty percent amount during the construction of four-lane coming out of Mumbai from Delhi and not waiving the electricity bills of common citizens.

Former District Congress President Prakash Ratadiya raised the issue of poor citizens not getting health services and the economic system in the Corona period.

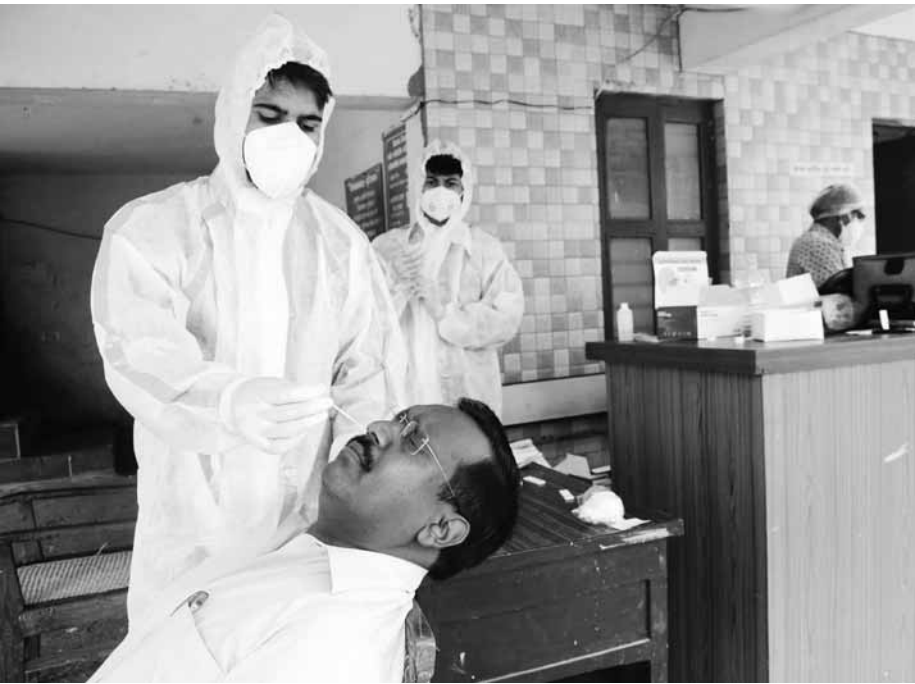
He said that Shivraj promised to give ration to the

people without ration cards, but till this day those citizens have not got ration. There is bad condition of health services in the district during the Corona period which should be rectified immediately.

During this period State Congress General Ministers Mahendra Singh Gurjar, Parashuram Sisodia, Shyamal Jokhanda, District Congress Executive President Azhar Hayat Meo, Vipin Jain, Govind Singh Sisodia, Sheldendra Bagherwal, Block Congress President Anil Sharma, Kishore Goyal, Shitsingh Dorwada, Aadi were also addressed.

A large number of Congress officials, activists and general public were present on the occasion including Mahila Congress State Secretary Rekha Bagherwal, Sheldendragiri Goswami, Sudeep Patil, Sadiq Gauri, Narayan Kumawat, Bhavani Shankar Dhakad.

The operation was conducted by former SP chief Mohammad Hanif Sheikh and District Congress spokesperson Suresh Bhati and gratitude was given by District Congress Working President Anil Borana.



Health workers take swab samples from Congress MLA and former Minister Kamleshwar Patel for COVID test during a camp organised at Member of Legislative Assembly rest house premises in Bhopal on Saturday
Pioneer photo

‘Power of a woman should never be underestimated’

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The power of a woman should never be underestimated, when she raises in power, she brings positive changes. This was seen in the play 'Kunti Ka Paritap'. The play was presented at Madhya Pradesh State Tribal Museum Youtube Channel on Saturday marking the second day of three day theatre festival.

'Kunti ki Paritap', written by Dr. Ram Kumar Verma is about Kunti. Kunti is the lady who knows the meaning of service in the form of sacrifice and

remains consumed in her service.

For ages, every era has been the custodian of the entire limit of women. Whenever there is a cloud of distress on the establishment of a law or on the establishment of religion in the society, then the woman has emerged as the power that has been a major participant in the structure and conservation of the universe by sacrificing.

In this play, a virgin girl Kunti puts all her feelings on stake for the society. Her affection, motherhood and her heart all of it she puts on stake.

A VIRGIN GIRL KUNTI PUTS ALL HER FEELINGS ON STAKE FOR THE SOCIETY

She goes through an emotional struggle which was beautifully depicted in the play.

Directed by Devi Lal Nag the play presented her with great beauty on stage. The music and essence of brilliant light design added much to the play.

Case filed against 22 Congmen in face blackening incident



STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A case has been registered against 22 Congress workers in connection with the incident in which the face of a senior district official was allegedly blackened during a protest in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara, police said on Saturday.

The action was taken after Congress leader Bunty Patel smeared black colour on the face of Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) CP Patel during the protest held at Chaurai town on Friday to seek compensation for damages caused by the recent floods. A purported video of the incident has also gone viral on social media.

"After the protesters smeared black colour on the SDM's face, 22 Congress workers, including Bunty Patel, have been booked," Superintendent of Police (SP) Vivek Agrawal said.

Offence under IPC sections 307 (attempt to murder), 353 (assault or criminal force

to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) and others was registered against them. Provisions of the Disaster Management Act 2005 were also invoked, he said, adding that the action was taken based on a complaint by the SDM.

Meanwhile, the district unit of the Congress distanced itself from the incident. "The Congress has been holding protests to draw the administration's attention towards the problems being faced by common people and farmers in the flood-hit areas. But Bunty Patel did so at his personal level," district Congress office-bearer Anand Bakhshi said.

BJP's district unit chief Vivek Sahu condemned the incident and demanded strict action against the Congress leaders involved in it. The administration officials also submitted a memorandum to the district authorities demanding strict action against the accused, said Atul Singh, a member of Prashasnik Adhikari Sangh.

‘Sangeet Prasang’ held

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

On this occasion, a performance of well-known singer Pandit Ajay Chakraborty, Kolkata was featured in the event.

He performed songs like Chalo Man Ganga-Jamuna Arrow, Hari Ka Charan Kamal Nisidin Sumre and more.

Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhathkande is highly respected in the Indian classical music tradition. Vishnu Narayana Bhathkande, a man

of extraordinary talent, made his incomparable contribution to the legacy of music and its cleansing. The musical consciousness of India and the glorious nature of it are the result of the dedication, loyalty and practice of Bhathkande in a particular time period.

Notably, Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhathkande was an Indian musicologist.

War of words intensifies between Cong, Akalis on farm bills

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A war of words ensued between arch rivals ruling Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal on Saturday on the farm bills which has politically stirred a hornet's nest in Punjab.

Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh asked Akalis to stop "lying and misleading" the people of the state by "picking selective portions" of the Congress manifestos, saying it did not even remotely propose any of the anti-farmer moves that the BJP-led Central Government was trying to push on poor farmers to promote the interests of "their rich corporate friends".

Instead of flashing the copies of manifestos at journalists, the SAD and AAP should have made efforts to read their relevant parts first, said the chief minister, taking on the Opposition parties over their alleged "unsubstantiated and blatantly false allegations" against

the Congress on the issue.

Referring to the Congress manifestos for the Lok Sabha as well as the last Punjab assembly elections, the chief minister said nowhere had the party spoken about bringing any of the changes that the Centre was trying to impose on the nation with its ill-intentioned legislations. In fact, the manifestos had clearly talked about strengthening the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) system to make it even more beneficial to the farmers, he said in a statement here.

The state Congress manifesto of 2017 had stated that the updation of the APMC Act would be done to ensure direct access of farmers to the national and international markets through digital technology without tinkering with the existing MSP system, he said. The LS manifesto, on the other hand, had gone a step forward to talk of further strengthening the marketing system by



repealing the existing Act and bringing in new provisions that would provide for the establishment of thousands of Kisan markets to provide easy access to farmers within 2-3 km range, he said.

"Only liars could interpret this to mean that the Congress had meant to abolish the APMC Act," said the chief

minister. "When and where did the Congress ever talk of replacing APMC with contract farming and private procurement?" the chief minister asked, lashing out at the Akalis and AAP for "blatantly misleading" the people on the issue. The Punjab Congress manifesto had categorically promised that the "State Government will ensure lifting of food grains within 48 hours and payment by procurement agencies within 3 days for the procured food grains," making it amply clear that there was not even a remote possibility of changing the procurement system, as the Centre's new laws are seeking to do, he said. "Picking up sentences and misrepresenting the communication is an art that the BJP has mastered, and the Akalis are now emulating," said Capt Amarinder.

HAPPY TO SEE PARTY'S FLAG FLYING FOR

FARMERS, SAYS 5-TIME CM BADAL

Akali patriarch and five-time Chief Minister of Punjab, Parkash Singh Badal expressed "immense satisfaction and pride over the strong and principled stand taken by the Shiromani Akali Dal to save the beleaguered peasantry in Punjab and the rest of the country."

"I am pleased and proud that when the hour of reckoning arrived, my party, as always, has held aloft the flag of justice for farmers and other exploited sections of society. This flag symbolizes the identity of the Akali culture and movements and it is a great feeling to watch it flying high," said Badal in a statement. He said farmers' issues relate to the overall national interests. "Agriculture is the backbone of our economy. If farmers and agricultural economy suffers, the whole economy, including trade and

industry will suffer too."

Badal described the party's decision to pull out of the Union Government to fight alongside the farmers as "a proud and landmark moment in the party's long history of standing up for principles and of always being on the side of the people whenever a line is drawn." He said the legislation on the marketing of the farmers' produce needed wider consultations, especially with the stakeholders, the farmers, as well as with the parties like Shiromani Akali Dal that have always been the voice of the farmers. He appealed to all Punjabis and all political parties to stand with the farmers, during this struggle for justice.

SAD APPEALS TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES TO JOIN HANDS ON 3 AGRI BILLS

SAD on Saturday appealed to all political parties to join the

'sangharsh' against the three agricultural bills even as it castigated the Congress and the AAP for backstabbing farmers by not opposing the passage of the bills in the Lok Sabha.

Addressing a virtual press conference here, senior leader and former MP Prem Singh Chandumajra appealed to all political parties to form "ek soch aur ek manchi" on the issue, saying Punjab could not afford any division on this issue. "All farmer organizations and political parties should support the SAD in its 'sangharsh' against the Bills," Prof Chandumajra said adding divisions in the past had led to the loss of the State's river waters and its capital". Chandumajra said SAD would come out with a party programme against the Agricultural Bills. "We will not sit quiet. We have always raised the voice of the farmers and 'khet mazdoor' and will continue to do so as per the rich and glorious traditions of the party".

Over ₹183 crore to be spent for roads upgradation in Haryana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To further strengthen road network in Haryana and to further enhance the convenience of commuters, Haryana Chief Minister Haryana Manohar Lal Khattar on Saturday approved spending of Rs. 183.31 crore on the construction and improvement of 60 roads and upgradation of three roads to Pavement roads covering 15 districts.

Thanking the Chief

Minister, Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, who also holds the portfolio of Public Works (Building and Roads) Department for granting administrative approval for these works said that better road connectivity in the State certainly plays a pivotal role in its development. He said that to ensure this the State Government, from time to time has taken various steps and will continue to do so in future as well.

Haryana witnesses 40.44% of total 1,06,261 Covid-19 cases in last 20 days

MANOJ KUMAR ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana witnessed 40.44 per cent of the total 1,06,261 Covid-19 cases in the last twenty days from August 30 to September 18. In addition to this, 37.54 percent of total 1092 Covid-19 deaths were reported during the same period, according to the data received from the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Haryana. Data further reveals that about 85.25 per cent of the total infected persons who died till September 18 in the State due to the virus had comorbidities.

Talking to The Pioneer over the phone Haryana Director General of Health Services Dr Suraj Bhan Kamboj said that the Health department has improved its Covid-19 testing considerably over the months. Covid-19 testing has doubled in September in comparison to August. Around 2,200 Covid-19 cases on an average are being reported every day over the last 20 days. It is a concern for us. One of the reasons behind the rise spike is the flouting of Covid-19 norms. Also, more people are getting themselves tested following Haryana government's decision to allow walk-in for Covid-19 test without prescription.

He said, "We are working hard to contain the spread. People need to follow Covid-19 guidelines and maintain social distancing rules. In view of the rising cases, the State administration suggested infected people home isolation. It has been observed that 80 per cent corona-infected patients recover from it if they follow necessary guidelines of the health department. The Health Department has issued new guidelines, wherein emphasis has been laid on in-person visits by 'District Home Isolation Monitoring Team' on every alternate day."

The DG Health said that around 60 to 70 per cent of the corona infected persons are in home isolation. There is a need to augment the home isolation policy so that the patients are provided appropriate care and treatment. The asymptomatic and symptomatic patients, who are in home isolation, usually are unable to follow the guidelines like staying in a separate room, a separate toilet, a caregiver to look after the needs of the patient. The 'District Home Isolation Monitoring Team' will visit the patient on alternate days to monitor if the guidelines are being followed.

According to data, 63,282 Covid-19 cases were reported

Around 2,200 Covid-19 cases on an average are being reported every day over the last 20 days. It is a concern for us. One of the reasons behind the rise spike is the flouting of Covid-19 norms

on August 30 and after 20 days, the number of cases increased to 106,261 on September 18.

Dr Kamboj said that the State has a fatality rate at 1.03 per cent. Health department continues to focus on three Ts that are testing, tracing and treatment to prevent fatalities. Department has set a target of keeping the fatality rate below one percent.

Figures suggest that about 85.25 per cent of the total infected persons who died till September 18 in the State due to the virus had comorbidities. Diabetes mellitus, a chronic metabolic disorder in which blood sugar levels are abnormally high, has emerged as the single biggest comorbidity factor (an existing medical condition) in the deaths of patients infected with coronavirus in Haryana.

A State Government doctor said that multiple comorbidities means that the patients had more than one existing medical condition such as hypertension and diabetes or renal function impairment which affected their conditions. "Patients with comorbidity are immunocompromised and their organs are also not in a good shape," he said.

About 931 of the total 1092 infected persons who died till September 18 in the state due to the virus had comorbidities. "Our experience is that a number of coronavirus infected patients admitted in hospitals have quite high levels of blood sugar. This is because either they have diabetes or pre-diabetes. Also, the stress of the Covid-19 infection in a patient can result in an adrenaline surge, thus increasing the blood sugar levels. The infection can also lead to fall in insulin level due to the steroids given to patients," said Dr Dhruva Chaudhary, who is also the nodal officer for Covid-19 in Haryana.

Meanwhile, as the cases in Gurugram continue to soar, Amit Khatri, Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram has directed all government and private hospitals in the district to reserve at least 35 per cent beds for Covid-19 patients.

Higher educational institutions allowed to open in Punjab for Phd scholars from Sept 21

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Government on Saturday allowed the opening of higher education institutions for Ph.D scholars and post graduate students of technical and professional programmes requiring laboratories and experimental works from September 21. However, schools, colleges and coaching centres will remain closed.

According to the detailed guidelines issued by Special Chief Secretary (Home), Satish Chandra, open air theatres will be allowed to function with strict adherence to social distancing norms.

Cinema Halls, Swimming Pools, Entertainment Parks,

Theatres and similar places would however, continue to remain closed.

As per the orders online distance learning shall continue to be permitted and encouraged but schools, colleges, educational and coaching institutions will remain closed for students and regular classes.

Chandra said that 50 per cent of the teaching and non-teaching staff would be allowed to attend schools at a time for online teaching/tele counseling and related work in areas outside the containment zones, only as per Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued on September 8, 2020 by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

IndianOil launches Check & Fill campaign

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

To reassure our customers about Quality & Quantity (Q&Q) of Petrol and Diesel being sold at retail outlets (ROs) IndianOil has launched a Check & Fill campaign at its 50 automated ROs in Bhopal. It will be operated initially up to September 26, 2020 and will be further extended based on customer response.

"Test Karo Reward Pao" campaign will make our customers aware of their rights to check Q&Q and reassure them about IndianOil's commitment to always be a trustworthy fuel provider of nation," said V Satish Kumar, Executive Director & State Head & State level coordinator, Madhya Pradesh. During the campaign customers can do following checks with the assistance/demonstration by a designated quality assurance attendant:

1. Filter Paper Test (for Petrol) - Customers will be invited to check the quality of petrol at retail outlet by carrying out filter paper test at RO which is available at RO.
2. Density Check (for petrol and diesel, including branded fuels) - Customers will be informed about density checks themselves if they so desire.
3. Quantity - Customers will be invited to check the quantity dispensed through the dispensing unit by checking with a calibrated 5 litre measure stamped by Weights and Measures department.

Keeping in view of the current Covid-19 situation, customer will have the option to get the checks demonstrated by a designated quality assurance attendant or do it themselves.

In case customer volunteers to do it himself/ herself, a protective kit with sanitizer /mask /disposable hand gloves will be provided. Customers carrying out the checks at the ROs shall be incentivised by offering Q&Q bonus points for existing enrolled customers or complimentary enrolment into our XTRAREWARDS Loyalty program.

Govt to check O2 level of home-isolated patients

PNS ■ RANCHI

The Health Department has constituted dedicated teams that would go door-to-door and measure the oxygen level of Covid-19 patients staying in home isolation across the state, officials said on Saturday. The initiative, officials added, was taken in the wake of reports highlighting sudden drop in oxygen level of some asymptomatic patients across the country.

"The teams were constituted at Panchayat level for rural Jharkhand and ward level in urban areas to keep a tab on the oxygen level of patients staying in home isolation," said State National Health Mission (NHM) Director, Dr. Ravi Shankar Shukla.

Many asymptomatic Covid patients, Shukla said, were experiencing a fall in the oxygen level in their bodies, which could prove fatal if not treated on time.

As per the home isolation norms set by the Government, patients in home isolation should have an oximeter at home to keep a check on the



Volunteers of UNICEF distribute face masks among poor people during an awareness campaign organised by District Administration, in Ranchi on Saturday.

Ratan Lal | Pioneer

oxygen level in their body. However, many patients could not afford an oximeter, officials said. The inspection teams will identify such patients, who do not have an oximeter at home, and measure their oxygen level in the first phase of the drive.

"The teams will take all necessary precautions as per the protocol during the drive. All members of these teams

will wear PPE kits when they visit the homes of Covid patients," said Shukla, adding that oximeters and PPE kits were already provided to the teams in various districts.

An oximeter, available in medicine shops, comprises a monitor which contains the batteries and display, a probe, which consists of light emitting diodes, and a light detector

called a photo-detector. The probe in the machine senses the user's pulse.

The oximeter measures pulse rate and the oxygen saturation of haemoglobin in arterial blood. Normal readings, according to doctors, range from 95 per cent to 100 per cent. Anything less, and the user should get medical assistance from a doctor.

Haryana Govt asks all officials to be alert ahead of farmers protest today

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A head of the Statewide Aarod blockade call given by the Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) and some other organizations to be held between 12 pm to 3 pm on Sunday, Haryana Government on Saturday issued directions to ensure law and order and minimize inconvenience to the people. An official spokesman said that Deputy Commissioners, and Senior Superintendent of Police and Superintendent of Police have been directed to hold talks with the organisers and ensure a peaceful protest. He said that organizers have been advised to register their protest in a peaceful and lawful manner and desist from blocking the National or State highways.

All Executive Magistrates and Police officers have been asked to remain present in the districts and they should not proceed on leave. The Executive Magistrates have been directed to remain stationed along with their police counterparts at all such places where congregation of protestors is anticipated. The spokesman said the protestors should be dealt with tact and patience. However they should not be allowed to take law in their hands. The spokesman said that the Director General of Police, Divisional Commissioners, Inspectors General of Police, Police Ranges, Deputy Commissioners, District Magistrates, Commissioners of Police Panchkula, Faridabad and Gurugram and SSPs/SPs of the districts have been directed to ensure its compliance.

Covid cases cross 11,500 in East Singhbhum

As per latest figures with the health department, there were 13,610 active cases of Covid-19 infection in Jharkhand. More than half of these patients, sources said, were in home isolation. So far, the state has reported 68,638 cases of Covid infection, and nearly 55,000 patients have recovered.

More than 600 Covid patients have died in the state, and a majority of them were suffering from some or the other comorbid condition, officials said.

While nearly 75 per cent of the deceased were older than 50 years, at least 29 Covid victims in the state were younger than 30 years. The government, however, is yet to compile data of patients who died in home isolation.

As per government data, around 16.50 lakh people have been tested for Covid-19 in Jharkhand so far, and most of them were from urban areas. Latest figures show that around 3000 people were battling the virus in Ranchi, while around 2800 were undergoing treatment in Jamshedpur.

Covid cases cross 11,500 in East Singhbhum

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Despite concerted efforts from the administration, coronavirus positive cases continue to rise with figures crossing the 11500 mark in East Singhbhum district. In the last 24 hours alone more than 200 fresh cases were reported. The district health department has focussed on rapid antigen tests for COVID across the district but still the impact of the virus is refusing to slow down.

The recovery rate of COVID-19 patients at Tata Main Hospital has improved from 80.57 per cent to 81.12. The senior management of the hospital there is a marginal improvement in the admissions of the COVID-19 patients too. While last week 258 patients were admitted this week the numbers reduced to 243.

During a telephonic media interaction, Dr Rajan Choudhry, COVID advisor of TMH and former general manager, medical services,

Tata Steel said that there is a marginal improvement in the number of COVID patients being admitted at the hospital. While last week 258 patients were admitted this week the numbers reduced to 243.

"We cannot say that the impact of the virus has reduced but going by the figures of TMH we are hopeful that the impact of coronavirus can be controlled if the number of admissions continue to reduce in coming weeks," said Choudhry.

The advisor further informed that TMH so far has admitted 3135 COVID patients out of which 26159 have recovered. Moreover, 43 patients hailing from 80 years and above have been discharged so far.

In one week alone 14 patients of 80 years and above were released.

He went on to inform that the recovery of COVID-19 patients at one of the largest hospitals in Jharkhand, Tata Main Hospital (TMH) has



improved. Dr Rajan Choudhry said that the hospital is providing the best services to the people of Jharkhand. However, they too can cater to patients to a certain amount.

The hospital has so far

conducted 42851 tests out of which 30 per cent turned out to be positive in RT-PCR tests while in Antigen Tests the positivity rate was 6.9 per cent.

Meanwhile, a team constituted by the Health

Department of Government of Jharkhand visited Tata Main Hospital, Jamshedpur (TMH) on September 18, 2020 to review the COVID-19 facilities and the medical protocols being followed by TMH during the pandemic.

India overtakes US in Covid-19 recoveries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has overtaken the US to register the highest number of Covid-19 recoveries in the world.

It has reported the highest number of recoveries with 42,08,431 infected patients recuperating from the viral disease. About 60 per cent of the new recoveries were reported from five States — Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh. Incidentally, these are the States that have reported high caseload also.

Recovery-wise, Maharashtra accounted for over 22,000 (23 per cent), followed by Andhra Pradesh with more than 11,000 (12.3 per cent) of the new recoveries.

“The country has reported the highest number of recoveries with 42,08,431 COVID-19 patients having recovered from the disease so far, pushing the national recovery rate to nearly 80 per cent, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.61 per cent,” the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday.

“India now accounts for close to 19 per cent of the total global recoveries. This has strongly pushed the national recovery rate to 79.28 per cent,” it underlined.

The Centre-led focussed, calibrated, responsive and effective measures of early identification through high and aggressive testing, a prompt surveillance and tracking, coupled with standardised high-quality clinical care, have together resulted in this glob-



al achievement, the ministry said.

A record 95,880 patients recuperated from COVID-19 in a span of 24 hours, with 90 per cent of the new recoveries reported from 16 States and Union territories, the ministry's data said.

According to the ministry, 90 per cent of the recoveries were reported from 15 States and Union territories.

The five states with the maximum caseload — Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh — have also accounted for a majority of the recoveries, the ministry highlighted.

“India has maintained a sustained path of reporting a very high number of recoveries. This is the result of focussed strategies leading to coordinated effective actions in the states and Union territories,” it said.

India's COVID-19 tally mounted to 53,08,014 on Saturday with 93,337 cases

Homemade masks helpful in checking Covid spread

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Homemade masks help in fighting the spread of viruses like Covid-19 when combined with frequent hand-washing and physical distancing, researchers have said after testing the breathability and droplet-blocking ability of 11 common household fabrics, using a medical mask as a benchmark. The study has been published in the journal Extreme Mechanics Letters.

reported in a day, while the death toll due to the disease climbed to 85,619 with 1,247 more people succumbing to it in a span of 24 hours, the ministry said.

RS passes Epidemic Diseases Amendment Bill to protect health workers

Earlier, the House passed Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Saturday passed two legislations, The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill 2020 and The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill provides for up to five years in jail for those attacking doctors and healthcare workers fighting the COVID-19 outbreak or during any situation akin to the current pandemic.

Speaking on the Bill in the Rajya Sabha, Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said that the bill was required to prevent offences against healthcare professionals.

“Many healthcare workers including doctors, paramedics were insulted in some form or the other, due to stigma attached to COVID-19. Centre government acted on this situation found that there was a need for a law, a prohibitory mechanism against such incidents,” Dr Harsh Vardhan said.

However, Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Derek O'Brien termed the Bill an attempt to encroach states' constitutionally assigned functioning.

Speaking while the discussions on the bill were underway, the TMC MP said that

Bengal already had laws to deal with prevention of violence against doctors and healthcare workers.

“You thought of healthcare workers now? Bengal has Medicare Service Prevention of Violence and Damage to Property Act 2009. What happens to it? Bill is an attempt to encroach states' constitutionally assigned functioning,” O'Brien said.

The Upper House had earlier passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Second Amendment) Bill.

Moving the IBC Bill in Rajya Sabha Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, “IBC is such a critical part of business now. On the NPAs of scheduled commercial banks, I just want to highlight how IBC is actually serving the purpose. The priority is to keep companies to be a going concern rather than liquidate them.”

The Bill mandates that a default on repayments from March 25, the day when a nationwide lockdown began to curb the spread of coronavirus, would not be considered for initiating insolvency proceedings for at least six months.

The upper house which saw minimal disruptions during the last two days passed four Bills together with the controversial Farmers bill and Homeopathy bill in Friday.

NEP tailored to meet 21st century edu needs: Kovind

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Saturday said the new National Education Policy (NEP) aims to reorient the education system towards meeting the needs of the 21st century by achieving the twin objectives of inclusion and excellence and will also restore India's glory as a learning centre.

Speaking at the inaugural address of Visitors' Conference on 'Implementation of NEP in Higher Education', Kovind said the policy sets the vision of developing an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing quality education to all.

Vice Chancellors of all

Central Universities and Directors of IITs, NITs, SPAs etc were present on the occasion besides the Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and top Ministry officials.

He drew inspiration from Bhagvad Gita and the Krishna-Arjun dialogue while reiterating the concept of free communication and discussion between the teacher and the student. “Effective implementation of the NEP 2020 is likely to restore India's glory as a great centre of learning as during the times of Takshashila and Nalanda,” Kovind added.

The President said according to the All India Survey of

Higher Education for 2018-19, GER for females is slightly higher than that for males. However, the share of female students is extremely low in Institutions of National Importance and particularly low in technical education. Emphasising that NEP has focus on equity and inclusion, he said that such gender disparity in higher education should be corrected.

Union Education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said the NEP has given access to foreign universities to open campuses in India and vice-versa which will be instrumental in the process of making India a soft power, the Minister added.

India should talk to Pakistan to defuse border row: Farooq

Former JK CM also demands restoration of 4G services in UT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Saturday sought talks with Pakistan, saying if India can talk to China to defuse their border row, it can also speak to its other neighbour to deal with the situation at the Union Territory's borders. He also



demand a restoration of 4G internet services in the UT.

“Border skirmishes have been rising and people are dying... A way has to be found to deal with this. Except for talks... As you are talking to China to attempt that it withdraws (from Ladakh border), we should also talk to our (other) neighbour to find a way to get out of this situation,” he said in Lok Sabha during the Zero Hour amid shouting from treasury bench-

es. Abullah was speaking in the Parliament for the first time after his release from the detention following the change in the Union Territory status and bifurcation of the erstwhile state in the wake of abrogation of article 370, last year. He was released in March this year.

The MP expressed his happiness at the findings of an Army inquiry into the killings of three men in Shopian in an encounter.

“I am happy that the Army has admitted that three Shopian men were killed mistakenly. I hope the government gives a hefty compensation,” he said.

Flipkart, Amazon, Snapdeal to remove 160 fake Khadi products from platforms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

E-commerce portals like Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal and others have been forced to remove over 160 web links selling products in the brand name of “Khadi” after the Khadi and Village Industries Commission's (KVIC) served legal notices on over 1000 firms for misusing its brand name to sell their products.

After KVIC served legal notice, Khadi Global has also discontinued using its website www.khadi-globalstore.com and also removed its social media pages on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. It has sought 10-day time to remove all such contents and product using the brand name “Khadi”. KVIC action has also resulted in shutting down of a number of stores across the country that were selling fake Khadi products.

These e-commerce portals were selling products like Khadi masks, herbals soaps, sham-poops, cosmetics, herbal mehendi, jackets, kurta and many such products through different sellers using the brand name “Khadi”. This created a false impression among online buyers that these commodities were genuine “Khadi” products. A majority of the products that have been removed were being sold by one Ayush E-Traders. This firm has confirmed to KVIC that it has removed 140

links for various products that were being sold as “Vagad's Khadi Products”.

There has been a steep rise in violation of Khadi trademark as the popularity of Khadi grew manifold in recent years after the Hon'ble Prime Minister's appeal to buy Khadi products. Exploiting this opportunity, a number of online sellers began selling random products in the name of Khadi.

Also hundreds of stores mushroomed in different cities that were selling fake Khadi products. In recent months, particularly during the Covid-19 lockdown, there was a huge proliferation of such fraudulent online sellers. However, to enable online customers to buy genuine Khadi products, KVIC has launched its e-portal selling a range of 300 products online at www.kviconline.gov.in/khadi-mask.

KVIC Chairman Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena said the KVIC has given violators the option of either stop selling products in the name of Khadi or legal action will be initiated for recovery of heavy damages. “Legal notices have been issued to various firms essentially to safeguard the interest of Khadi artisans.

This trademark violation has a direct bearing on the livelihood of our artisans who are making genuine handcrafted products,” Saxena said.

ECI to set up national database to track status of ex-gratia payments



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of the delay in giving compensation, the Election commission (EC) is planning to set up a database to track the status of ex-gratia payments to those who got injured or lost their lives while polling or poll-related duty. In a letter to chief electoral officers of all states and union territories, the EC has asked to track all such claims. At present, the poll watchdog pays ₹10 lakh to the next of kin of those who died in poll duties through cheques.

A stern view has been taken of the institutional failure and lack of sensitivity, bordering on apathy, on part of the administrative machinery, which failed to respect the memory of the departed,” EC said in the letter. The letter asked CEOs to create a digital database to track the settlement of such legacy claims and all

future claims. A national level database will also be created by the commission.

EC is also working out the modalities of how payments will be expedited to reduce any kind of inconvenience to the families.

Last month, Pramila Devi, the wife of late Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan Ramesh Kumar, 31, wrote to chief election commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora, highlighting the delay in such payments. Kumar died in a grenade attack during the 2002 Jammu and Kashmir elections.

In her letter dated August 10, Devi said she had not received the payment; she was entitled to ₹5 lakh as per the allotment 18 years ago. Following her letter, the Commission acted immediately to get the sum remitted to her without any further delay and later also transferred ₹15 lakhs to her account.

Manage oxygen availability effectively, States told



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following reports of shortage of oxygen in some States threatening the management of patients suffering from Covid-19, the Centre has asked the States to focus on analysing district level and health facility level status and effectively plan and manage logistical issues related with oxygen availability.

The suggestion came in the wake of an increasing number of cases across the country which is likely to push up the demand for oxygen as well.

At a high-level meeting held here under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary, Rajiv Gauba, special instructions were issued for oxygen availability to the 12

States/UT including Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Chandigarh, Telangana, Kerala, Delhi, Punjab and West Bengal where about 80 per cent of the Covid caseload in the country is concentrated.

The Cabinet Secretary while complementing the States for significantly ramping up testing, expressed concern that the case fatality rates of several States are still higher than that of the national average.

He urged the States to analyse mortalities district and hospital wise for identification of critical areas of intervention.

A day ago, Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla had

Oxford Covid-19 vaccine: Serum Institute to start final phase of trial from Monday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) is likely to start from Monday the final stage of the clinical trial of University of Oxford and AstraZeneca Plc's experimental vaccine. The latest stage trial will take place at the Sassoon General Hospital in Pune.

In the third phase of the clinical trial, around 150-200 volunteers will administer a dose of Covishield. “Some volunteers have already come forward for the trial,” a senior official from the company said. The Sassoon General Hospital in Pune has started enrolling volunteers from Saturday. “Those who are willing to volunteer for the vaccination should contact the hospital,” he said.

The phase II trial of Covishield was conducted at Bharti Vidyapeeth Medical College and King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital in Pune.

SII has inked a pact with



British-Swedish company AstraZeneca to manufacture COVID-19 vaccine candidate, developed by the University of Oxford.

The vaccine maker earlier shortlisted 17 sites in India for the Phase II clinical trial of Covid-19 vaccine. At least 1,600 candidates aged between 18 to 55, participated in the Phase II clinical trial.

On September 10, the drug maker had paused the clinical trials of the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine candidate in India in the wake of AstraZeneca suspending the clinical trials in other countries. On September 15 the DCGI granted permission to SII to resume trial, while revoking its earlier order of suspending any new recruitment for phase II and III trial.

asked all the States to ensure free movement of vehicles carrying oxygen “as it is an essential public health com-

modity and an important prerequisite for managing moderate and severe Covid-19 cases.”

MNCs responsible for 20% carbon dioxide emission

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid ongoing blame-game between the developed and developing nations on who should pay for increasing carbon footprints, a study has pointed out that a fifth of carbon dioxide emissions come from multinational companies' global supply chains which in effect outsourced to poorer parts of the world.

The study, which is published in Nature Climate Change, mapped the emissions generated by multinationals' assets and suppliers abroad and found that the flow of investment is typically from developed countries to developing ones. “Hence emissions be assigned to countries where the investment comes from, rather than countries where the emissions are generated,” said

the study.

Mapping the global flow of investment, researchers from UCL and Tianjin University found steady increases in investment from developed to developing countries. For instance, between 2011 and 2016 emissions generated through investment from the US to India increased by nearly half (from 48.3 million tons to 70.7 million tons), while in the same years emissions generated through investment from China to south-east Asia increased tenfold (from 0.7 million tons to 8.2 million tons).

In contrast, the study found that carbon emissions from multinationals' foreign investment fell from a peak of 22 per cent of all emissions in 2011 to 18.7 per cent in 2016. Researchers said this was a



result of a trend of “de-globalisation”, with the volume of foreign direct investment shrinking, as well as new technologies and processes making industries more carbon efficient.

The findings by UCL and Tianjin University holds immense importance amid the ongoing blamegame between the developed and developing nations on the increasing climate change threat owing to the green house gas emission.

The research shows the impact that multinationals can have by encouraging greater energy efficiency among suppliers or by choosing suppliers that are more carbon efficient.

Professor Dabo Guan (UCL Bartlett School of Construction & Project Management) said: “Multinational companies have enormous influence stretching far beyond national borders. If the world's leading companies exercised leadership on climate change - for instance, by requiring energy efficiency in their supply chains - they could have a transformative effect on glob-

al efforts to reduce emissions.

“However, companies' climate change policies often have little effect when it comes to big investment decisions such as where to build supply chains.

“Assigning emissions to the investor country means multinationals are more accountable for the emissions they generate as a result of these decisions.”

Lead author Dr Zengkai Zhang, of Tianjin University, said: “Multinationals are increasingly transferring investment from developed to developing countries.

This has the effect of reducing developed countries' emissions while placing a greater emissions burden on poorer countries. At the same time it is likely to create higher emissions overall, as investment is moved to more 'carbon intense' regions.”

Govt plans environment-friendly scrapping of vehicles, RS told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Saturday said a Cabinet note has been formulated for the vehicle scrapping policy.

In reply to a question, Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) VK Singh informed the Rajya Sabha that the Government has formulated a Cabinet note on creation of an ecosystem for voluntary and environment friendly phasing out of unfit and old polluting vehicles.

The proposed policy, once approved, will be applicable on all vehicles, the government had said earlier.

A MoRTH official said

that cabinet note on Vehicle Scrapping Policy- is preparing to implement the vehicle scrap policy for the old four wheelers (car) and two wheelers (scooter bike) from next month.

The policy was sent for a fresh round of consultation with stakeholders on the direction of the PMO.

Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadakri had earlier this year said once the policy is approved, India could emerge as a hub for automobile manufacturing as key raw material available from scrapping steel, aluminium and plastic are bound to be recycled, bringing down automobile prices by “20-30%”.

On July 26, 2019, the Government had proposed amendments to motor vehicle rules to allow scrapping of vehicles older than 15 years in a bid to spur adoption of electrical vehicles.

In a draft notification, the government proposed renewal of fitness certificates for vehicles older than 15 years every six months instead of the current time-frame of one year.

When come into force, the automobile sector will gain momentum as demand for new vehicles increases. As per a report in the MoRTH, customers will get new vehicles up to 30 percent cheaper while older vehicles will reduce air pollution by 25 percent.

RS approves amendments to insolvency law

Decision on extending the suspension of relevant provisions will be taken next week: Fin Min

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha on Saturday passed amendments to the insolvency law for suspension of fresh insolvency proceedings for at least six months starting March 25 amid the coronavirus pandemic, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman saying a decision on extending the suspension of relevant provisions will be taken next week. In the wake of the COVID-19 situation, the government decided to suspend the provisions starting from March 25 for six months by promulgating an ordinance in June. Default on repayments from March 25, the day when the nationwide lockdown began to curb coronavirus infections, would not be considered for initiating insolvency proceedings for at least six months. The six-month period is ending next week. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2020, seeks to replace the ordinance issued in June, was passed by a voice vote after a brief discussion. Replying to the debate, Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the suspension of provisions will end next week. "At the moment, amend-

ment to the Code gives me a provision to only extend till one year. If at all, because it is coming to an end on September 25 this year, September 24 itself we have to make an announcement about what is going to happen. But even if I do, it means by March it should be ending....," the minister said. The minister also clarified that insolvency proceedings against corporates defaulting on loans prior to March 25 will continue and the amendment will not stall those cases. A majority of the opposition parties also supported the bill but urged the government to provide interest waiver on loans to farmers and poor people suffering due to the COVID-19 crisis. During the debate on the bill, many members expressed fears over its possible misuse by corporates even as they hoped that it will help in reviving the economy. On members' queries regarding liability of personal guarantors in the IBC, Sitharaman said the corporate debtor often has guarantors. "So, for comprehensive corporate insolvency resolution and liquidation we felt it was necessary that the insolvency of the corporate debtor as well as its guarantors are considered

together to whatever extent it is possible," Sitharaman said. On queries about the urgency to bring the ordinance in the first place, Sitharaman said that "between sessions if there is a need for ordinance because the ground situation demands it, I would think a responsive government's duty is to at least use the ordinance to show that we are there with the people of India." "So to that extent, I am sure the House will appreciate that as and when the government decides for ordinance it is because of that, and whenever the next session happens we come back," she said. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the minister said, businesses faced trouble. So it was decided "that it was better to suspend Sections 7, 9 and 10 of IBC so that we can prevent corporate persons, which are experiencing distress on account of the unprecedented situation, being pushed into insolvency proceedings." Sections 7, 9 and 10 deal with initiation of corporate insolvency resolution process by financial creditor, operational creditor and corporate debtor, respectively. The minister further said the IBC is a critical part of business now, and cited data to show how the

code had performed. Citing data for NPAs of commercial banks during 2018-19, she informed the House that Lok Adalats recovered 5.3 per cent, Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) recovered 3.5 per cent and SARFAESI recovered 14.5 per cent. On the other hand, IBC ensured 42.5 per cent of recovery. Sitharaman further said that most of the resolutions are happening to make the company to be a going concern only. "Priority is to keep the company to be a going concern rather than to liquidate them at the earliest," she said adding that 258 companies were saved from going bankrupt through the IBC process, while 965 firms went for liquidation. "... 258 companies were rescued which means employment is back again with them. Companies which have been liquidated in total, three-fourths of them were defunct and were also given liquidation solution and therefore at least loss of employment was reduced," she said. According to her, 258 companies rescued had assets of Rs 96,000 crore and the 965 companies sent for liquidation had assets of Rs 38,000 crore.

Govt allows cos with not less than 300 workers to fire staff without its nod

New Delhi: Companies having not less than 300 workers will soon be allowed to hire and fire workers without seeking prior government permission, with the labour ministry proposing changes to rules in a bill introduced in Lok Sabha on Saturday. The proposal, which was the bone of contention between the ministry and trade unions, is part of the Industrial Relation Code Bill 2020. Currently, only those industrial establishments with less than 100 employees are permitted to hire and fire their staff without permission of the government. The bill was introduced by Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar amid opposition from Congress and few other parties. The Industrial Relation Code Bill 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha last year and subsequently sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour. This bill was withdrawn on Saturday. An earlier draft bill circulated by the labour ministry for discussion had also proposed

the criteria that companies having not less than 300 employees can hire and fire without the government's permission. However, this provision faced stiff opposition from trade unions and was not included in the 2019 bill. Earlier this year, the Parliamentary committee also made a case of allowing companies having less than 300 workers to go for retrenchment of staff or closure without government permission. States like Rajasthan have already increased the threshold to 300 workers, which according to the labour ministry has resulted in an increase in employment and a decrease in retrenchment, the committee had pointed out in its report. With regard to the threshold, the government has proposed Section 77(1) in the The Industrial Relation Code 2020. According to the Section, the provisions of "this Chapter (lay-off, retrenchment and closure in certain establishment) shall apply to an industrial establishment (not being an establishment of a seasonal

The proposal, which was the bone of contention between the ministry and trade unions, is part of the Industrial Relation Code Bill 2020

character or in which work is performed only intermittently) in which not less than three hundred workers, or such higher number of workers as may be notified by the appropriate Government, were employed on an average per working day in the preceding twelve months". Apart from this code, two others -- Occupational Safety, Health And Working Conditions Code, 2020 and the Code On Social Security, 2020 -- were also introduced by the minister in Lok Sabha. Among others, Congress leaders -- Manish Tewari and Shashi Tharoor -- opposed the introduction of the three bills. Tewari noted these three bills are fundamentally changed versions of their earlier forms and urged the minister to with-

draw them and hold wider consultations before introducing them. These bills are also a blow to the rights of workers, he added. With respect to the industrial relations code, Tharoor said it severely restricts the right of workers to strike and also allows state or central governments to amend the threshold for applicability relating to layoffs and retrenchment. In Lok Sabha, Gangwar said that over 29 labour laws have been merged into four codes and that one of them has already been passed. The Code on Wages Bill, 2019 was passed by Parliament last year. Gangwar noted that the government engaged in wider consultations over these bills with various stakeholders and that more than 6,000 comments were received online on the bills. These bills were later sent to a standing committee and 174 of its 233 recommendations have been accepted, the minister said. PTI

India's external debt up nearly 3 pc to USD 559 bn at March-end

New Delhi: India's total external debt increased by 2.8 per cent to USD 558.5 billion at the end of March mainly on account of a rise in commercial borrowings, according to a report released by the Finance Ministry. The external debt stood at USD 543 billion at end-March 2019. The ratio of foreign currency reserves to external debt stood at 85.5 per cent as at end-March 2020, as compared to 76.0 per cent a year ago, the report said. External debt as a ratio to GDP rose marginally to 20.6 per cent as at end-March 2020 from 19.8 per cent a year ago, 'India's External Debt: A Status Report: 2019-2020' showed. Compared to end-March 2019, sovereign debt shrank 3 per cent to reach USD 100.9 billion, it said, adding, this decrease was primarily due to a fall in FII investment in G-Sec -- the second largest constituent -- by 23.3 per cent to USD 21.6 billion from USD 28.3 billion a year ago. Loans from multilateral and bilateral sources under external assistance-- the largest constituent of the sovereign debt -- grew 4.9 per cent to USD 87.2 billion, it said. Non-sovereign debt, on the other hand, it said, rose 4.2 per cent to USD 457.7 billion mainly due to an increase in commercial borrowings. PTI

Govt examining next version of PMKVY: Minister

New Delhi: The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2.0 (2016-20) will come to an end on March 31 next year and the government is examining the next version, Parliament was informed on Saturday. Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship R K Singh said there is no proposal under examination for setting up a National Institute of Skill Development. The government launched Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) in 2015 and revamped it in 2016 to impart skills to one crore persons by 2020. "The PMKVY 2.0 (2016-20) is coming to an end on 31st March, 2021, and the government is examining the next version of PMKVY taking into account the lessons learnt during the implementation of PMKVY 2.0," he said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha. PTI

MSME units from Maharashtra availed maximum loans under ECLGS: Minister

New Delhi: The government on Saturday said MSME units from Maharashtra availed maximum loans under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) as on September 16. In a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for MSMEs Pratap Chandra Sarangi said loans worth Rs 14,364.30 crore were disbursed to MSME units in Maharashtra as on September 16. It was followed by Tamil Nadu (Rs 12,445.58 crore), Gujarat (Rs 12,005.92 crore) and Uttar Pradesh (Rs 8,907.38 crore). The scheme is the biggest fiscal component of the Rs 20-lakh crore Self-Reliant India Mission package announced by the government. In a separate reply, he said the Department of Financial Services has reported that as on September 9, an amount of Rs 1,63,103 crore was sanctioned to 42,01,060 borrowers under the scheme. PTI

Net direct tax collection dips 31% in Apr-Aug

New Delhi: The net direct tax collection during April-August was Rs 1.92 lakh crore, down 31 per cent over the same period of the last fiscal. The net indirect tax collection during the five-month period till August fell 11 per cent year-on-year to Rs 3.42 lakh crore. In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Singh Thakur said net direct tax collection was Rs 2,79,711 crore in April-August 2019, compared to Rs 1,92,718 crore in April-August 2020. The net indirect tax collection in April-August 2019 was Rs 3,85,949 crore, as against Rs 3,42,591 crore in April-August 2020. During April-August, the Centre's Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection stood at over Rs 1.81 lakh crore. The Budget had estimated Centre's GST collection for full fiscal at Rs 6,90,500 crore. PTI

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General public is hereby informed that one female namely **Lubna, W/o Abdul Javed, R/o: H.No. 1093, 1st Floor, Sheesh Mahal, Chandni Mahal, Delhi, Age: 25 years, Height: 5'1", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Round, Build: Strong, wearing unknown colour Suit & Salwar and Black colour designer Burkha,** has been missing from the area of P.S. Chandni Mahal, Delhi since 10.09.2020. In this regard a **DD No. 58-A, dated 11.09.2020 has been registered at P.S. Chandni Mahal, Delhi.** Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the female but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about her please inform undersigned. Website : <http://cbi.nic.in> E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in Fax: 011-24368639 Ph. No. : 011-24368638, 24368641 **SHO P.S. Chandni Mahal, Delhi DP/358/CD/2020 Ph. No.: 011-23271751, 23279338**

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one male was found in unconscious condition at Gate No. 6, Pant Hospital, Delhi on 15.09.2020. After checking the doctors vide MLC No. 484228/20 declare him dead. This regard a case vide **DD No. 48A, Dated 15.09.2020** has been Registered at **P.S. I.P. Estate, Delhi.** The Dead body has been preserved in Mortuary of MAMC, Delhi for 72 Hrs for identification. The description of the dead body is given as under:



Name: Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown **R/o:** Unknown **Age:** About 65 Yrs, **Height:** 5'6" Feet, **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Build:** Medium, **Wearing:** Sky Blue Colour Shirt and Brown Colour Pant. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the information about the dead male but no clue has come to light so far. If any one is having any information about this dead male please inform the undersigned. **S.H.O P.S. I.P. Estate, Delhi Ph.: 011-23370928, 23370999 DP/372/CD/2020**

The Project Director, Implementation Unit (PIU), ADB Projects, Office of the Superintending Engineer, 3rd Circle, Public Works Development (R&B), Udaipur-799120, Gomati District, Tripura, India, **Telephone: 03821-222378. Fax No.03821223533. E-mail:- se3rdpwd@gmail.com.** invites sealed bids under single stage two envelope system, from eligible and qualified bidders vide No-02/PD (SE-III)/ADB/ R/2020-21.

For title of the proposal Project:- NORTH EASTERN STATE ROADS INVESTMENT PROGRAM (NESRIP)-TRANCHE-2 ROADS.

Date:- 21st September, 2020.

Contract No. and Title: Procurement of Civil Works:- Country: INDIA, ADB Loan No.3073, Completion of balance work of Improvement and Up gradation of road section of Udaipur to Melaghar (TR02) (Tranche- 2 road in the State of Tripura) (ADB Loan No. 3073) Deadline for Submission of Bid: **20th October, 2020 on IST 1.00 P.M.**

The detailed documents shall be available for sale between IST 10:30 AM on 21st September 2020 to IST 3:30 PM 12th October 2020. The detailed documents may be seen in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, 3rd Circle, Public Works Development (R&B), Udaipur-799120, Gomati District, Tripura, India. The complete set of Bidding Documents can also be obtained by the interested bidders by free downloading on line from the web sites at **<https://tripura.gov.in>.**

For and on behalf of Governor of Tripura (Er. Madhab Lal Banik) Project Director (ADB Project)

ICA/C-1637/2020-21

Lok Sabha OK's ammendments in Taxation Laws

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha on Saturday passed amendments in the Taxation Laws with heated debate on the PM Cares Fund, leading to mudslinging between the Congress and the BJP. The Taxation amendments were aimed to give changes in the tax filing dates including GST filings due to Covid-19 pandemic. It also included the tax concessions to the PM Cares Fund. The face-off started with Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur resuming his Friday's controversial speech attacking the fund flow to Rajiv Gandhi Foundation from PMNRF, where Congress President Sonia Gandhi is also a Trustee. Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi countered it charging the Government with accepting money from Chinese companies and challenged it to give details of the donors. Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury objected to Thakur's allegations

against Sonia Gandhi, and the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and Thakur took potshots on Chowdhury for calling him "Himachal ke Chokra (boy)". "You have the habit of calling names and later apologise. Yesterday you called me Chokra and I took credit for it. I come from Himachal and I am proud of being called as Chokra," said Thakur. Chowdhury said he meant Balak (small boy). "You yesterday adopted an aggressive line. You are just a Balak and should not do that by commenting on great people like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru," he said. Replying to the debate, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also took objection to Chowdhury ridiculing Thakur. "He is young. But he is fourth time MP Adhirji, you are leader of the Opposition party and should not use such words." The Finance Minister also objected to opposition terming the PM Cares Fund as "non-transparent".

No decision to discontinue printing of ₹2000 note: Fin Min

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry on Saturday informed the Lok Sabha that no decision has been taken to discontinue the printing of ₹2,000 denomination currency notes. In a written reply, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur said printing of bank notes of particular denomination is decided by the government in consultation with the RBI to maintain desired denomination mix for facilitating transactional demand

of public. During the year 2019-20 and 2020-21, no indent was placed with the presses for printing of ₹2,000 denomination notes. "However, there is no decision to discontinue the printing of ₹2,000 denomination bank notes by the government," the minister said. Thakur also informed that as on March 31, 2020, there were 27,398 lakh pieces of ₹2,000 notes in circulation compared to 32,910 lakh pieces

from March 23, 2020, to May 3, 2020. Printing of bank notes at BRBNMPL presses resumed with effect May 4, 2020. Thakur further said Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL) has informed that printing of bank notes at their presses was also affected due to COVID-19 pandemic. Both, Bank Note Presses of SPMCIL -- Currency Note Press, Nashik and Bank Note Press, Dewas were closed down

from March 23, 2020, to May 3, 2020. Printing of bank notes at BRBNMPL presses resumed with effect May 4, 2020. Thakur further said Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL) has informed that printing of bank notes at their presses was also affected due to COVID-19 pandemic. Both, Bank Note Presses of SPMCIL -- Currency Note Press, Nashik and Bank Note Press, Dewas were closed down

from March 23, 2020 due to lockdown. Currency Note Press, Nashik and Bank Note Press, Dewas resumed full-fledged production activities from June 8, 2020 and June 1, 2020, respectively. During the period of lockdown, note printing presses have uninterruptedly supplied notes to RBI offices/currency chests from stock of notes available with them through Indian Railway Treasury Wagons, Thakur added. PTI

‘Power PSUs have made India a power surplus nation’

Shri R.K. Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Power, New and Renewable Energy and Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, today, inaugurated various developmental projects and facilities in Bihar. As a responsible corporate, NTPC, country's largest power producer, is fulfilling its corporate social responsibility by creating an infrastructure for the benefit of the people of Bihar. Speaking on the occasion, Shri Singh appreciated NTPC, REC and Power Grid for their contribution to the state of Bihar in its path of progress. He said, "These companies which are among the largest in the world, belonging to Ministry of Power, are one of the most professional and efficient organisations. The companies from the Power PSUs

are well known for their exemplary performances, are also focussed on working towards societal development which extends to villages across the country. These companies have contributed extensively during the pandemic and have taken complete care of their workers. Further, NTPC is developing an ITI and constructing a ward in AIIMS, Bihar which will immensely benefit the people of Bihar. NTPC has played an instrumental role in the development of Bihar with an installed capacity of 6150 MW in the state. In addition, 3800 MW capacity is in pipeline." He further added, "The power PSUs together have connected India in its length and breadth. The endeavour of the power PSUs have made India a power surplus nation with almost 1.25 lakh MW capacity of electricity being added in

the past five years. Under the leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister, we have brought a revolution in the power sector inching towards the target of making electricity available in every Indian household." Speaking during the inauguration function, Shri Asit Kumar Mukherjee, RED (ERI), NTPC said "We are committed towards our social responsibilities and we strive to fulfil our commitment towards the people of Bihar. With six projects in the state, we are extremely happy in contributing to electricity requirement of the state. We are constantly working towards brightening up every citizen's face in Bihar." The projects would benefit the public by providing them access to infrastructure built for family and community functions like celebrating festivals and social occasions.

Dwarka branch of CSB bank inaugurated

New Delhi: VK Shukla, General Manager and Zonal Manager of Northern Zonal Office, New Delhi of CSB Bank Limited formerly known as The Catholic Syrian Bank Limited has Inaugurated Dwarka branch of CSB Bank, Mr. Narendra Chawla, Mayor, South Delhi Municipal Corporation, inaugurated Janakpuri branch of CSB Bank on 18.09.2020. While Inaugurating these branches Mr. VK Shukla has informed that three more branches at Rohini Sector 3, Okhla and Shalimar Bagh will be inaugurated by 12st October 2020. The proposed branches are identified at areas where there is good demand for Gold Loans, MSME, Corporate Loans and to extend support to other needy customers. Gold loan is the unique selling prod-

uct of CSB Bank Limited with its attractive interest rate, higher LTV upto 90%, low turnaround time and easy takeover facility from other financial institutions. CSB Bank Limited is one of the oldest private sector banks and celebrating the centenary year. The Bank has a strong base in Kerala along with significant presence in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra. It offers a wide range of products and services to their overall customer base of 1.35 billion. The Bank has been listed in the year 2019 and launched IPO on 22.11.2019. M/s Fairfax has infused capital of Rs. 1400.00 Cr in the year 2019 and the bank is well set to grow faster. Bank has further expansion plan in Northern & Eastern India.

WESTERN RAILWAY

CORRIGENDUM
To E-Tender Notice No. Dy. CE/C/II/BR/CMG-DB-SMLA/22 (R2). The following particulars of this tender uploaded on website for E-Tender have been changed as under: **E-Tender No.: Dy.CE/C/II/BR/CMG-DB-SMLA/22 (R2)** published in News paper dated **17/09/2020. Name of Work:** Laying and linking of BGIN/G for Main & Loop Lines including points & crossing at various yards, Transportation of P.Way materials, spreading of ballast, tampering of track, dismantling of existing BG track & Points & Crossing, flesh put / SKV welding and other incidental miscellaneous works between Miyagam (including Yard) and Dabhoi (including Yard) in connection with "Gauge Conversion of existing NG track to BG track between Miyagam - Dabhoi-Samlaya section". **Availability of Online Tender for Bidding: As per Published Notice:** From 05/09/2020 at 10.00 Hrs. To 19/10/2020 up to 15.00 hrs. **Now Be Read as: From 25/09/2020 at 10.00 hrs. To 09/10/2020 up to 15.00 hrs.** Other particulars of the tender Notice will remain unchanged.
Like us on: f facebook.com/WesternRly

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to the general public that Ms. Sharda Khanna D/o Late Shri Kulwant Khanna, Member of the Pharmaceutical Employees CGHS Ltd. (Membership No. 521) having address at namely Flat No. B-19/237, Pharma Apartments, Plot No. 88, I.P. Extn., Delhi - 110 092 died on 09.04.2020 without making any nomination. The Society hereby invites claims or objections from her or legal heirs or other claimants/ objectors to transfer of the said shares and interest of the deceased Member in the Capital property, of the Society within a period of 14 days from the publication of this notice. If no claims / objections are received within the prescribed above, the Society shall be free to deal with the Shares and the interest of the deceased member in the Capital/Property of the Society in such manner as is provided under the bye-laws of the Society.
For Pharmaceutical Employees Cooperative Group Housing Society Ltd. President/Secretary

Public Notice
This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of **Bhartiya Panchayati Raj Party (Loktantrik)**. The office of the party is located at **B-7, 3rd Floor, Priyadarshini Vihar, Delhi - 110092**. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as **Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951**. Names/Address of the office bearers of the Party are as follows:
President/ Chairman: Rajeev Kumar Ranjan
General Secretary / Secretary : Satish Parakh
Treasurer: Anilendra Pandey
If any one has any objection to the registration of **Bhartiya Panchayati Raj Party (Loktantrik)** they may send their Objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political Party), Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi - 110001 within 30 days of the publication of their notice.

US-TAIWAN MEET

China sends more warplanes on day 2

AP ■ TAIPEI

China sent more warplanes toward Taiwan for the second day on Saturday as the island's leader, senior Government officials and a high-level US envoy paid tribute to the man who led Taiwan's transition to democracy, former President Lee Teng-hui.

Keith Krach, the US under-secretary for state, kept a low profile at the service.

His presence at the event and on the island has drawn a strong rebuke from China, which sent 18 warplanes across the midline of the Taiwan Strait Friday in an unusually large display of force.

On Saturday, Beijing dispatched 19 more warplanes, two of which were bombers, according to Taiwan's Defense Ministry. The island's air force scrambled their own and deployed an air defense missile system to monitor China's activities, according to a statement.

The service was held at the

Aletheia University in Taipei on a balmy Saturday morning, with President Tsai Ing-wen honouring Lee for bringing a peaceful political transition to the island democracy.

Lee had built a separate Taiwanese political identity, distinct from mainland China, which claims Taiwan as part of its own territory to be reunited by force if necessary.

Lee's carving out of a non-Chinese identity and insistence that the island be treated as an equal country brought him into direct conflict with Beijing. He died on July 30 at age 97.

"We have a responsibility to continue his endeavours, allowing the will of the people to reshape Taiwan, further defining Taiwan's identity and deepening and bolstering democracy and freedom," Tsai said.

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Dalai Lama also paid tribute from afar.

"We Buddhists believe in

life after life, so most probably he will be reborn in Taiwan," the Dalai Lama said in a video message.

"His rebirth will carry his spirit continuously." The guests included another former Japanese prime minister, Yoshiro Mori. They wore masks and sat spaced out in pews.

Lee, an agricultural economist and politician, devoted his career toward building democracy on the island through direct elections and other changes.

He was the first government official to speak out and formally apologise for the so-called 228 incident, named after February 28, 1947, when soldiers under the Kuomintang, or the sole ruling Nationalist Party, shot and killed thousands of civilians in an anti-government uprising.

The bloodshed marked the beginning of a decades-long period known as the White Terror in which the island was ruled by martial law.

TikTok files lawsuit against Trump admin to fight US ban

Washington: TikTok asked a federal judge in Washington to block the Trump administration from enacting a ban on the fast-growing social-media network.

TikTok and its parent company, ByteDance Ltd., filed a complaint late Friday night challenging the Trump administration's recent moves to prevent the app from operating in the U.S. The lawsuit marks the second time TikTok has challenged President Donald Trump's actions in court, bringing a high-stakes geopolitical fight over technology and trade into the U.S. legal system.

Trump exceeded his authority, the company said, and did so for political reasons rather than to stop an "unusual and extraordinary threat" to the U.S., as the law requires. TikTok also said the ban violates its First Amendment free-speech rights.

The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump's actions would "destroy an online community where millions of Americans have come together to express themselves," according to the complaint. The company

claimed that the U.S. government has "ignored evidence" showing Tik Tok's commitment to the privacy and security of its American users.

On August 6, Trump issued an executive order saying he would ban transactions with the app within 45 days, arguing that the social network's Chinese ownership made it a national security threat. TikTok sued to block that order in federal court in California in August. But on Friday, the Commerce Dept, moving to implement Trump's order, said TikTok would be banned in the U.S. starting on Nov. 12 unless it could complete a takeover deal that assuages the government's concerns.

Trump's order followed an investigation by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., which reviews proposed acquisitions of domestic businesses by overseas investors for national security concerns. And it set off a flurry of attempted deal-making, pushing ByteDance to seek a sale of TikTok's American operations to a U.S. company. TikTok is currently in talks with Oracle Corp. about a possible deal. **AFP**

Iran vows 'hit' on all involved in US killing of top general

Tehran: The chief of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard threatened on Saturday to go after everyone who had a role in a top general's January killing during a US drone strike in Iraq.

The guard's website quoted Gen. Hossein Salami as saying, "Mr. Trump! Our revenge for martyrdom of our great general is obvious, serious and real."

US President Donald Trump warned this week that Washington would harshly respond to any Iranian attempts to take revenge for the death of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, tweeting that "if they hit us in any way, any form, written instructions already done we're going to hit them 1000 times harder."

Thai protesters hold ambitious rally for democratic reforms

Bangkok: Protesters gathered on Saturday in Bangkok for the most ambitious rally so far in a pro-democracy campaign that has shaken up the government and Thailand's conservative establishment.

Organisers predicted that as many as 50,000 will march over two days in an area of the capital historically associated with political protests, after an estimated 10,000 people turned out for the last major rally on Aug. 16. But the early turnout was modest Saturday as a steady light rain fell.

Demonstrators wore face masks, but ignored a Thursday night plea from Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha to cancel the event, which he said risked spreading the coronavirus and derailing recovery of Thailand's battered economy.

The core demands declared by the protesters in July were the dissolution of parliament with fresh elections, a new constitution and an end to intimidation of political activists. **AP**

The president's warning came in response to a report that Iran was plotting to assassinate the US ambassador to South Africa in retaliation for Soleimani's killing at Baghdad's airport at the beginning of the year.

"We took out the world's number one terrorist and the mass murderer of American troops and many, many troops and many people all over the world," Trump said. "Qasem Soleimani is dead. He's dead. Bad guy. Bad guy. Very bad guy."

Salami rejected the report of an Iranian plot to assassinate Ambassador Lana Marks, but made clear that Iran intends to avenge the general's death.

"Do you think we hit a female ambassador in return to our martyred brother?" the

general said. "We will hit those who had direct and indirect roles. You should know that everybody who had role in the event will be hit, and this is a serious message. We do prove everything in practice."

In January, Iran launched a ballistic missile attack targeting US soldiers in Iraq in response to the fatal drone strike.

Trump has stepped up economic pressure on Iran with sanctions since he pulled the United States out of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

Tehran has continued to expand its stockpile of enriched uranium and pressured other nations to offset the harm of US sanctions, while insisting it does not want to develop a nuclear weapon. **AP**

Moroccans protest Arab nations normalising ties with Israel

Rabat: Despite a government ban on large gatherings to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, scores of demonstrators protested outside the Moroccan Parliament to denounce Arab countries agreeing to normalise ties with Israel.

Israel on Tuesday signed historic diplomatic pacts with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in a U.S.-brokered deal. Morocco was reported to be among other Arab countries considering a similar move, though the prime minister rejected the idea last month.

Protesters in Morocco's capital of Rabat Friday waved Palestinian flags, decrying the deals as "treason" and chanting "Palestine is not for sale." The Palestinians view the pacts as a stab in the back from their fellow Arabs in the Gulf and a betrayal of their cause for a Palestinian state. Israel and

Bahrain's agreements have been condemned by many across the Arab world.

The protesters in Rabat also burned a mock Israeli flag. Dozens of police officers watched the scene from a distance.

Organisers interrupted the chanting occasionally to urge participants to wear masks and to respect social distancing rules. "The normalisation deals are an attack on the Palestinian people and their cause," human rights activist Abdelhamid Amine told The Associated Press.

"We are calling on the Moroccan government not to follow suit and we urge it not to surrender to the Zionist and imperialist pressure like other Arab countries," said Amine, former president of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights and one of the rally organisers. **AP**

WESTERN RAILWAY			
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE No. S/21/2020 Date 17/09/2020			
S.N.	Short Description of Item	Quantity	T.O.D.
573	Horizontal Cyl. High Pressure Steam Sterilizer for COVID	1 No.	02/10/2020
574	CVTS Instruments	51 Items	02/10/2020
575	X-ray Machine	1 No.	05/10/2020
576	C.R. System	1 No.	05/10/2020
577	Cable Gland	64 Nos.	06/10/2020
578	Thin Walled Electron Beam Single Core Size: 25 Sq.mm.	10800 Mtrs.	07/10/2020
579	Foot Support Insulator for Pantograph	241 Nos.	08/10/2020
580	Power Supply Gate Unit (GUSP)	2 Nos.	08/10/2020
581	16 Teeth Pinion	138 Nos.	09/10/2020
582	Axle Box Housing Finish Machined	344 Nos.	10/10/2020
Regarding detailed notice, EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website www.ireps.gov.in and www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in			
For Principal Chief Materials Manager.			
Like us on: facebook.com/WesternRly · Follow us on: twitter.com/WesternRly			

E TENDER NOTICE			
YEAR 2020/21			
Gandhinagar Smart City Development Ltd.			
GANDHANAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION			
Multi Storied Building, B-Block, First Floor, Sector-11, Gandhainagar			
Gandhinagar Smart City Development Ltd , is inviting tenders for the work given below Bids are invited for the e-tendering rates from the reputable agencies			
Tender No.	Name of Work	Tender Fee	E.M.D.
GSCDL-ICT-14- 2020	"Selection of Service Provider for Supply, Installation, Operation and maintenance of Public Bike Sharing System (PBS) for G-bike in Gandhinagar City "	12,000/-	5,00,000/-
The Re-tender form can be filled online by downloading from website www.nprocure.com from Dt 19/09/2020 to Dt 19/10/2020 up to 17.00 hours Pre Bid Meeting will be Scheduled on date Dt 01/10/2020			
Any documents for the necessary support of tender bid must be scanned in the electronic format and submitted online on www.nprocure.com			
The technical bids and the amount of tender fees and the Demand Draft of EMD shall be submitted in hard copy in name of CEO,			
Gandhinagar Smart City Development Ltd. upto Dt 26/10/2020 by registered post or speed post till 17.00 hours Only those offers will be opened			
Online Technical Bid Opening Dt 27/10/2020 at 15.00 hrs			
Sd/			
Municipal Commissioner, Gandhinagar and			
Chairman Gandhinagar Smart City Development Ltd.			
Plac:-Gandhinagar			
Date:- 20/09/2020			
No/INF/VPN/2020/G/920			

COLLEGE OF ART	
GOVERNMENT OF NCT OF DELHI	
(Affiliated to The University of Delhi)	
20-22, TILAK MARG, NEW DELHI- 110001	
Phone Nos.: 23383612, 23070397 & 23387485	
Website:- http://colart.delhigovt.nic.in E Mail:- prcoa.delhi@nic.in	
ADMISSION NOTICE - MFA	
Academic Session, 2020-21	
The Prospectus data for the admission to Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) and Post Diploma scored in Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree (BFA - Regular Mode) Final year (Total of semester VII and VIII) in the relevant Specialization. The Application Form for admission will be available through a URL on the Website.	
The Application Form for Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) will be available from Monday 21st September, 2020 to Thursday 01st October,2020. The filled-up Application Form for MFA, along with requisite Fees and relevant compulsory documents, duly completed, should be uploaded through the same URL as mentioned/accessible on the College Website - Admission Portal, latest by Thursday 01st October, 2020	
Details regarding Qualifications, Intake of Seats for all specializations, Fees, Courses and Reservations are all included in the MFA Prospectus Data, which is available on the College Website http://colart.delhigovt.nic.in	
Note:- Only for the Academic Session 2020-21 due to the prevailing conditions of COVID-19 and for the safety and security of the applicants:	
1. The admission to post graduate (MFA) courses are merit-based that is, based on marks scored in Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree (BFA - Regular Mode) Final year (Total of semester VII and VIII) in the relevant Specialization.	
No examination (interview/viva) will be conducted in the campus (College Premises) for any specialization.	
2. Post Diploma Courses For (H&S-Hearing & Speech impaired candidates) No examination (interview/viva) will be conducted in the campus (College Premises) for any specialization, Hence in respect of the Post Diploma for Hearing and Speech impaired (PDFA), the duly completed Application Form with documents of OFA (Diploma of Fine Arts for the Hearing and Speech impaired) Final year (Total of Semester VII & VIII) in the relevant specialization has to be uploaded on the dates as mentioned above through a URL on the College Website, http://colart.delhigovt.nic.in The admission to this course will also be merit based in all specialization.	
3. The Applicants are advised to regularly check the College Website - Admissoin Portal for the Academic Year 2020-2021 for details/contents on the online Admission Procedure and uploading of the Application form along with relevant/compulsory documents.	
4. All reservations shall be as per the Delhi Government Policy and will be subject to any change/ amendment made by the Delhi Government (GNCTD).	
Sd/-	
Prof. B.S.Chauhan	
Principal (Officiating)	
DIP/Shabdarth/0280/20-21	

Pak's Sharif mulling political comeback after year-long gap

Islamabad: Pakistan's deposed premier Nawaz Sharif is set to make a comeback in active politics following a year-long absence after PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari invited him to virtually attend the Opposition-led multiparty conference aimed at launching a protest movement against the Imran Khan-led government on Sunday.

Sharif, 70, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supremo, has been living in London since November last year after the Lahore High Court granted him permission

to go abroad for four weeks for treatment.

The three-time premier, his daughter Maryam and son-in-law Muhammad Safdar were convicted in the Avenfield properties case on July 6, 2018.

Sharif, who was deposed in 2017, was also sentenced to seven years in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills case in December 2018. But, he was bailed out in both cases and also allowed to go to London for medical treatment.

He was given eight weeks to return but failed to come back due to health complications, according to his lawyer. **PTI**



Pro-democracy protesters wave a flag and hold up lights during a protest at Sanam Luang in Bangkok on Saturday

AP

China slams Pompeo for 'spreading rumours' during S America trip

AFP ■ PARAMARIBO, SURINAME/GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

China's embassies to Suriname and Guyana on Friday accused U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of "spreading rumors" and "smearing" Beijing, after Washington's top diplomat criticized Chinese companies during a four-stop South America tour.

In a joint appearance with newly elected Surinamese President Chan Santokhi on Thursday, Pompeo said Chinese companies often do not compete on a "fair and equitable basis."

"We've watched the Chinese Communist Party invest in countries, and it all seems great at the front end and then it all comes falling down when the political costs connected to that becomes clear," Pompeo said.

George Floyd protesters 'bunch of thugs' who didn't even spare Mahatma Gandhi, says Trump

Washington: US President Donald Trump has said that the protesters, who went violent in the aftermath of the death of African-American George Floyd, did not even spare the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Washington DC, describing the demonstrators as a "bunch of thugs".

George Floyd died in Minneapolis on May 25 after white police officer Derek Chauvin handcuffed and pinned him to the ground, and knelt on his neck for more than eight minutes while the 46-year-old from Houston gasped for breath.

The footage, which went viral, showed Floyd pleading with the officer, saying he can't breathe. His death sparked nationwide violent protests with some protesters resorting to vandalism, looting and rioting across the country, leaving behind a trail of destruction.

"You know, they started ripping down Abraham Lincoln. When they hit

Lincoln, I said wait a minute. This is the man and you can do - then they hit George Washington, Thomas Jefferson. They had everybody," Trump said at a well-attended election rally in Minnesota, a State that he lost by a little over 44,000 votes in 2016, on Friday.

He also mentioned about the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Washington DC that was vandalised by unknown protesters at the peak of the nationwide protests.

"They even had (Mahatma) Gandhi. All Gandhi wanted was one thing, peace. Right? We have peace. Rip down his statue. We don't like him. I don't think they have any idea what they're doing," President Trump said.

"I think they're just a bunch of thugs, okay, you want to know the truth. I think they're a bunch of thugs," he added.

The US President told his cheering audience that he had signed an executive order that would put such vandals in jail for 10 years. **AFP**

US sends additional military assets to Syria

Washington: The US military said that it has deployed additional assets, including radar systems and armoured vehicles, to northeastern Syria, weeks after a collision incident between the American and Russian army vehicles in the region.

"The US has deployed Sentinel radar, increased the frequency of US fighter patrols over US forces, and deployed Bradley Fighting Vehicles to augment US forces in the Eastern Syria Security Area (ESSA)," US Central Command Spokesman Bill Urban said in a statement on Friday.

"These actions are a clear demonstration of US resolve to defend Coalition forces in the ESSA, and to ensure that they are able to continue their Defeat-ISIS mission without interference," Xinhua news agency quoted Urban as saying.

US media reported that the latest deployment included six Bradley vehicles and fewer than 100 troops.

The deployment was believed as a response to the collision between the vehicles that occurred in northern Syria in late August.

The US and Russia blamed each other for the incident, which left seven American soldiers injured.

Kenneth Ekman, deputy commander of Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve, said in July that US troops in Syria interact with Russians almost daily.

About 500 US troops are deployed in the northeastern part of Syria to fight against the Islamic State terror group and secure the oil fields operated by Kurdish forces. **IANIS**

PUBLIC NOTICE
Information is given to general public at large that my client Mr. Surender Kumar (is purchasing House No. 173, Pocket No. 4-5 Sector-23, Rohini, Delhi. By virtue of Conveyance Deed document No. 885, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 2295 on pages 69 to 71, dated 15.05.2001 executed by DDA in favour of Praveen Kumar. If any person(s) have any objection(s) or claim (s) with respect to the right, title or interest in the said property then contact us within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice and or the same to the undersigned if found by any one
Arun Kumar, Advocate F-24 (Basement & Ground Floor, Sector-3, Vaidhili, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201010, Contact: 7428409748

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mr. Akshay Ghai is owner of Entire Second Floor without roof rights & Left side half portion of Lower Ground Floor of Property No. 36/8, area measuring 200 Sq.Yds., situated at East Patel Nagar, New Delhi by virtue of Sale Deed dated 14.11.2019 having registration No. 13061, but SMC Certificate slating legal heirs of Mr. Chander Pal Kakkar is not available with him. All persons including surviving members & Legal heirs of Late Mr. Chander Pal Kakkar are hereby informed if anyone has any objection with respect of Title / ownership of Mr. Akshay Ghai with respect of the said floor, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants) 200, Ind Flr, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N Delhi-15 Ph. 011-4112257-26 kumarassociatesadvocate@gmail.com

Public Notice
To be known to all that I Krishna Devi W/o Late Sh Ram Kumar Panwar R/ 290C, Block-BG-6 Paschim Vihar, N.D-63, Possession Letter of the above Flat has been lost. FIR against this effect has been lodged. Any person claiming any right, interest, having any objection/found of documents, may contact with above named person at 9911771205 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.The person claiming any objection with respect to this property inform to Dy. Director(LAB-(Res),Vikas Sadan,I NA, N.D



Being a gentleman's game you don't think about revenge (against MI). You think about the mistakes you made
— MS DHONI



2020

Saurabh Tiwary | 42 runs

Lungi Ngidi | 3 wickets

SUPER COMEBACK

MI lose 7 for 64 after a sparkling start in IPL opener

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's astute captaincy backed by some brilliant bowling at the back end saw Chennai Super Kings restrict Mumbai Indians to 162 for 9 despite some good start by their star-studded batting line-up in the opening IPL game here on Saturday.

CSK's new recruits leg-spinner Piyush Chawla (1/21 in 4 overs) and left-arm seamer Sam Curran (1/28 in 4 overs) made fantastic first impression while Lungi Ngidi (3/38 in 4 overs) and Deepak Chahar (2/32 in 4 overs) came back brilliantly during death overs.

For Mumbai Indians, Quinton de Kock (33 off 20 balls, 5x4) and Saurabh Tiwary (42 off 31 balls, 3x4, 1x6) played well but couldn't convert their starts as the defending champions got only 76 runs in their back-10.

De Kock started in a blazing fashion as he launched straight into Chahar and Ngidi as 45 came off the first four overs.

The shrewd Dhoni then introduced Chawla into the attack and he right away dismissed Rohit Sharma (12) who always have had a problem with wrist spinners. It was a straight delivery that Rohit trying to hit inside out couldn't get past Curran stationed at the mid-off circle.

The seamer then was back in action as he got rid of De Kock with a well disguised off-cutter which he straight hit to Shane Watson at mid-wicket.

Suryakumar Yadav (17) and the giant Saurabh Tiwary (42 off 31 balls, 3x4, 1x6) added 44 to steady the ship but some good outfielding



Chennai Super Kings players Lungi Ngidi, skipper MS Dhoni celebrate with other teammates after SA pacer takes wicket

IPLT20.com

in the back-10 from the likes of Curran and Faf du Plessis had MI slump to 124 for 5 from 92 for two.

Tiwary as an anchor proved to be a decent choice as he hit the first six off this year's IPL off Ravindra

Jadeja. Someone who promised a lot was Hardik Pandya (14 off 10 balls) with a couple of lusty sixes



Suresh Raina, who pulled out from the IPL, extended his best wishes to Chennai Super Kings ahead of their tournament opener against Mumbai Indians on Saturday, adding that it was "unimaginable" that he is not with the team

off Jadeja but then Chawla bowled an ideal length to keep him quiet.

The patience went off and Jadeja reaped the reward when Hardik tried to hit a third six instead of rotating the strike and was holed out at the boundary line by Faf du Plessis.

Stadium near empty but not quite enveloped in eerie silence

Abu Dhabi: The IPL is back but the atmosphere isn't.

The 20,000-seater Sheikh Zayed Stadium was nearly empty, apart from the 22 men in the middle, officials, staff, security and a smattering of others, as the IPL unlike any other began here on Saturday.

But, contrary to the expectations, it was not too quiet and not too placid, either. The pre-recorded cheers by the franchises ensured the stadium was not enveloped in eerie silence.

Organised amid the Covid-19 pandemic after several twists and turns, delays and discussions, the start of the 13th Indian Premier League was still definitely out of the ordinary, slightly odd and even a bit weird.

It was different in many ways. Inaudible under normal circumstances because of the roaring cheers and chants raining down from the stands packed to the rafters with pas-



sionate fans, the thud of Rohit Sharma and Quinton de Kock's bats hitting the ball could be heard across the world, breaking through the TV sets of millions of viewers.

In this case, the pre-recorded cheers could quite swallow up the sounds of the bat hitting the ball, like it would happen in the pre-COVID

world.

In the VIP box, top officials of the BCCI, including president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah, as well as the office-bearers of the Emirates Cricket Board, were spaced several seats apart to maintain social distancing.

The celebration was far from being over the top after Chennai Super Kings

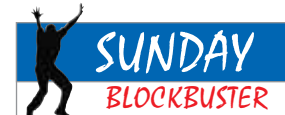
made it 48 for two with the dismissal of De Kock in the sixth over of the innings. And it was the same after they sent back the dangerous Rohit, who started the proceedings with a cracking drive through the offside in the very first ball of the tournament off Deepak Chahar, who recovered in time for the game after contracting the dreaded virus.

Rohit did not look like he was coming off a long break from the sport. Though the Mumbai Indians captain and every other player have been training for days, it is the first match they were playing in months, something they have never experienced in the last many years.

Truly in sync with the extraordinary times, CSK's talismanic skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, in a lighter vein, asked at the toss if he could "have a slip" in place owing to the social distancing guidelines.

PTI

There is 'competition' for middle-order slots: Ponting



PTI ■ DUBAI

Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting believes that senior batsman Ajinkya Rahane's inclusion adds "more depth" to the side but there will be a healthy competition for middle-order slots during this IPL season.

The Capitals, which finished third last year, will start their campaign against Kings XI Punjab on Sunday and both Ponting and skipper Shreyas Iyer agreed that R Ashwin and Rahane have been great additions to the young side with their experience they brought in.

While the coach didn't give away much but there is a possibility that India's Test vice-captain may have to wait for his chance in the playing XI considering the explosive top five (Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant, Shimron Hetmyer) that DC possesses. There is in-form Alex Carey also in the mix.

"We really have a balanced side. There is a lot of competition for middle-order slots. Rahane gives us more depth to our batting," the Australian legend said on Saturday during his team's pre-season virtual media conference sitting, along-side skipper Iyer.

"Shikhar had as good a last season as anybody. Prithvi has been training very well.

Shreyas has had his best 12 months for the Indian team. We have Pant, Hetmyer and Alex Carey (both left-handers), which gives us a good mix of left-right combination. We have our bases covered," Ponting said, giving a subtle hint about Rahane's immediate future.

MATCHES	24
KINGS XI PUNJAB WINS	14
DELHI CAPITALS WINS	10



Iyer, on his part, said that Ashwin and Rahane have mixed well within the group and never gave a sense that they are senior players.

"They give that extra sense of confidence. You don't feel that they are seniors and are willing to help every individual," said Iyer, who believes that Ashwin will be beneficial for the team, given his idea of the KXIP core team (Chris Gayle, KL Rahul and Mayank Agarwal) and the slowish nature of the Dubai track.

Ponting also felt that wicketkeeper batsman Rishabh Pant has been shaping up well since last week and he is expecting another good season from the burly southpaw.

"Pant, during the last week, has really turned the corner well and I would expect him to perform as well as he did last year.

"In DC, we as a coaching group don't put added pressure on the players. We like to take as much as possible pressure off them. We never expect any such thing from them which they don't expect from themselves," the coach said.



Staying in isolation for first six days was very difficult: Dhoni

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

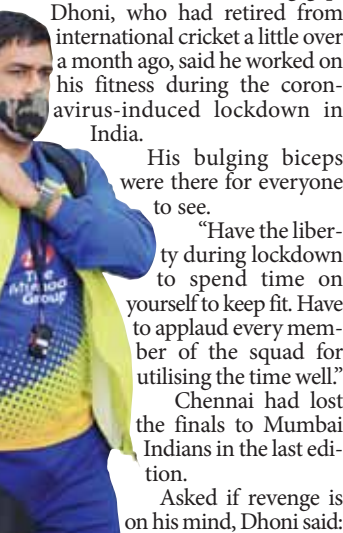
Staying in self isolation for the first six days after spending five months with family was the hardest phase, according to Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who spoke for the first time in months ahead of the IPL opener against Mumbai Indians.

In the run-up to 13th IPL, Chennai Super Kings were rocked by 13 Covid-19 cases, including two players, and pullouts by the senior duo of Suresh Raina and Harbhajan Singh due to personal reasons.

As per the protocols, teams had to quarantine for six days in Dubai and 14-days in Abu Dhabi.

However, CSK had to stretch their self-isolation period to September 1 due to positive cases in the camp including players Deepak Chahar and Ruturaj Gaikwad.

"First six days in quarantine is very difficult. You are with your family and sud-



denly you have to stay in a separate room... Felt each individual used that time well and nobody was disappointed or frustrated," the former India skipper said after winning the toss.

"After the first 14 days it was nice to get out. The practice facilities were very good."

Back in action after a long gap, Dhoni, who had retired from international cricket a little over a month ago, said he worked on his fitness during the coronavirus-induced lockdown in India.

His bulging biceps were there for everyone to see.

"Have the liberty during lockdown to spend time on yourself to keep fit. Have to applaud every member of the squad for utilising the time well."

Chennai had lost the finals to Mumbai Indians in the last edition.

Asked if revenge is on his mind, Dhoni said:

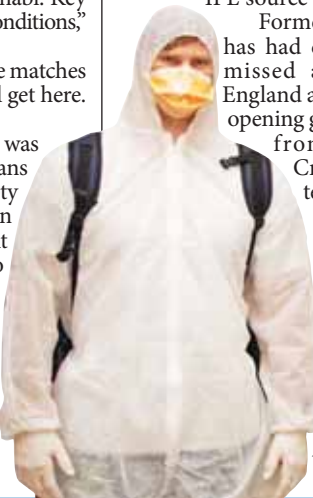
"Being a gentleman's game you don't think about revenge (against MI). You think about the mistakes you made."

Four-time champions Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma said adapting to the conditions in UAE will be the key.

"We have been here for few weeks, so understand conditions better. Before coming here, we had a camp in Mumbai. Also had quality practice out here in Abu Dhabi. Key here will be to understand conditions," he said.

"Pitches for the practice matches will be similar to what we'll get here. So ready to go."

The last time the IPL was held in UAE, Mumbai Indians had returned home empty handed. Asked if it plays on the mind in any way, Rohit said: "We just have two members from that squad, so it is a new set up now. The way we've been playing cricket for the last couple of years, it has been good. All in all we've had good preparation. Now all about execution."



Smith, Archer, Buttler clear Covid-19 tests

Dubai: Captain Steve Smith along with star players Jofra Archer and Jos Buttler have cleared the mandatory Covid-19 test on arrival and are available to play Rajasthan Royal's IPL opener against Chennai Super Kings at the Sharjah Cricket ground on September 22.

The trio were part of the 21-strong contingent of Australia and England players, who arrived in the UAE from UK by a special chartered flight on September 17.

"Smith, Buttler and Archer underwent Covid-19 tests on Friday and results are negative. So they are available for selection with quarantine duration being reduced to 36 hours," an IPL source said.

Former Australia skipper Smith has had concussion problems and missed all three ODIs against England and his participation in the opening game is subject to clearance from both franchise and Cricket Australia's medical team.

If Smith misses the first game, Buttler could lead the side as he is one of the seniormost players in the team.

As of now, the franchise is hopeful that Smith will clear the mandatory concussion tests and be available from the first game itself.

PTI

KL looking to play good brand of cricket

PTI ■ DUBAI

Kings XI Punjab skipper KL Rahul on Saturday said the side is motivated to making this IPL season a memorable one by playing a good brand of cricket.

"The team has been fantastic, we've been getting along great and are looking forward to playing a good brand of cricket and making this season a memorable one," Rahul said.

"We're confident, we're motivated and we are really excited to be a part of this edition of the Indian Premier League," he added.

Rahul, who has been handed the Kings XI Punjab captaincy after two stellar seasons with the bat at the top of the order, said it will be a challenging experience playing in the UAE without the fans but the team is ready for it.

"It is going to be a different experience this year, but we as a team are up to the challenge and are playing for all the fans who continue to support us," Rahul said.

KXIP, who have never won the IPL, are aiming to go all the



way this time with a strong squad at their disposal with the likes of Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Mohammad Shami and overseas recruits Chris Gayle, Glenn Maxwell, Sheldon Cottrell, Jimmy Neesham, the in-form Nicholas Pooran and Mujeeb Zadran.

"The team looks great and we have a top-notch line up this

season. The boys have been working really hard and we have a nice balance of youth and experience in our squad," head Coach Anil Kumble said.

"We are all looking forward to having a good season this year. I truly believe that Kings XI Punjab have the necessary squad to go all the way in this IPL," he added.

Shubman will bat at top order: McCullum

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Kolkata Knight Riders head coach Brendon McCullum on Saturday made it clear that Shubman Gill will open for them throughout the IPL to give the team some solidity at the top in tricky UAE conditions.

The rising top-order batsman was tried out at different positions last season without the desired result and it was considered to be one of the reasons why KKR missed out on a play-off berth.

"They're (wickets) gonna be quite fresh, I think they could be quite helpful for seam bowling. If the wickets are going to be a little bit tricky early on against fast bowling, I think you want your players who have the best techniques and the best batsmanship and craft," said McCullum.

"... He's (Shubman) certainly one of those guys... I see him bat-

ting at the top of the order throughout the campaign," added the newly-appointed KKR coach in a media interaction.

Impressed with the way, the 21-year-old Shubman carries himself, the Kiwi great said he wants to give the Indian youngster his own space and groom the other junior members in the team.

"I think he's got a bit of a presence about him, even at this young age, very respectful as well. I know DK (captain Dinesh Karthik) really respects him as a person as a cricket brain as well. And I think he's going to be another wonderful resource for DK both on and off the field," McCullum said.

"I want to see the most out of him is just to grow on his own time, his own space but also take those around him, who are still reasonably inexperienced and

grow at the same rate that he's growing in his own career.

"If we can do that, then the experience we can get into these guys at a young age, and pressure moments is going to be a very, very good thing for KKR this season. He's got a very big role."

KKR started off well winning four of their first five matches, but they lost six matches on the trot in the business end to miss the qualifiers by a whisker.

The team looked really dependent on Andre Russell, but this time reigning World Cup winning captain Eoin Morgan will lend solidity in the middle-order.

Hailing the Englishman as the best middle-over batsman in limited overs cricket, McCullum said: "He's probably the best middle-order batsman in the shorter-version, over the last couple of years. So we're very lucky to

have him. His relationship with DK throughout this campaign will give us a good opportunity."

The England limited-overs skipper, who had a stint with KKR from 2011-2013, was bought at the auction for ₹5.25 crore.

The 34-year-old Morgan will be joining the side after leading England to their maiden World Cup glory in 2019.

"He was a guy who we were desperate to get batting (at the auction) in the middle order around Russell and Karthik... He provides us with a really, really strong middle-order."

KKR chief mentor David Hussey had earlier said Russell is best suited at No 3 but McCullum was of the opinion that the star Jamaican is an ideal finisher in the T20 format and the team will have a "horses-for-courses" approach.

"I think his game is definite-

ly suited to probably the last 10 overs of a T20 game. But there may be times where the matchups are right we can get in Andre a little bit earlier, up the order.

"That will be a horses for courses type approach but the good thing is we've got lots of resources to be able to choose from."

Clearly indicating that Russell, Morgan, Sunil Narine and Pat Cummins will be the four overseas players that he will mainly depend on during the tournament, McCullum said the team can really shock the oppositions if the wickets aid seamers in the initial few matches.

"Cummins has the ability to take early wickets and if we can do that, we know we've got some quality spinners. When you couple them all together, I'm really content with the unit that we've got, particularly on these wickets

because they might have a little bit more in them than what most people are anticipating," he said.

"If the wickets play as we expect, then I think we could shock a few really with the pace and speeds with which our bowlers can operate," he said.

With the overseas combination already set for KKR, Tom Banton may have to wait for his chances.

"He probably won't start for us in this campaign because we will go with a slightly different balance but what he gives you so many different options. He has already made a bit of a splash in International cricket," he said.

"He's a guy who even against various bowling attacks of the world, can still shock them, and dominate them. And when he gets his opportunity, I'm sure he will entertain the fans all around the world."





A man extraordinaire
An Extraordinary Life stands out because of the main protagonist, Manohar Parrikar

2



4

Living in a giving mode
Once you start living in a giving mode, you will care for each other's concerns and sensibilities

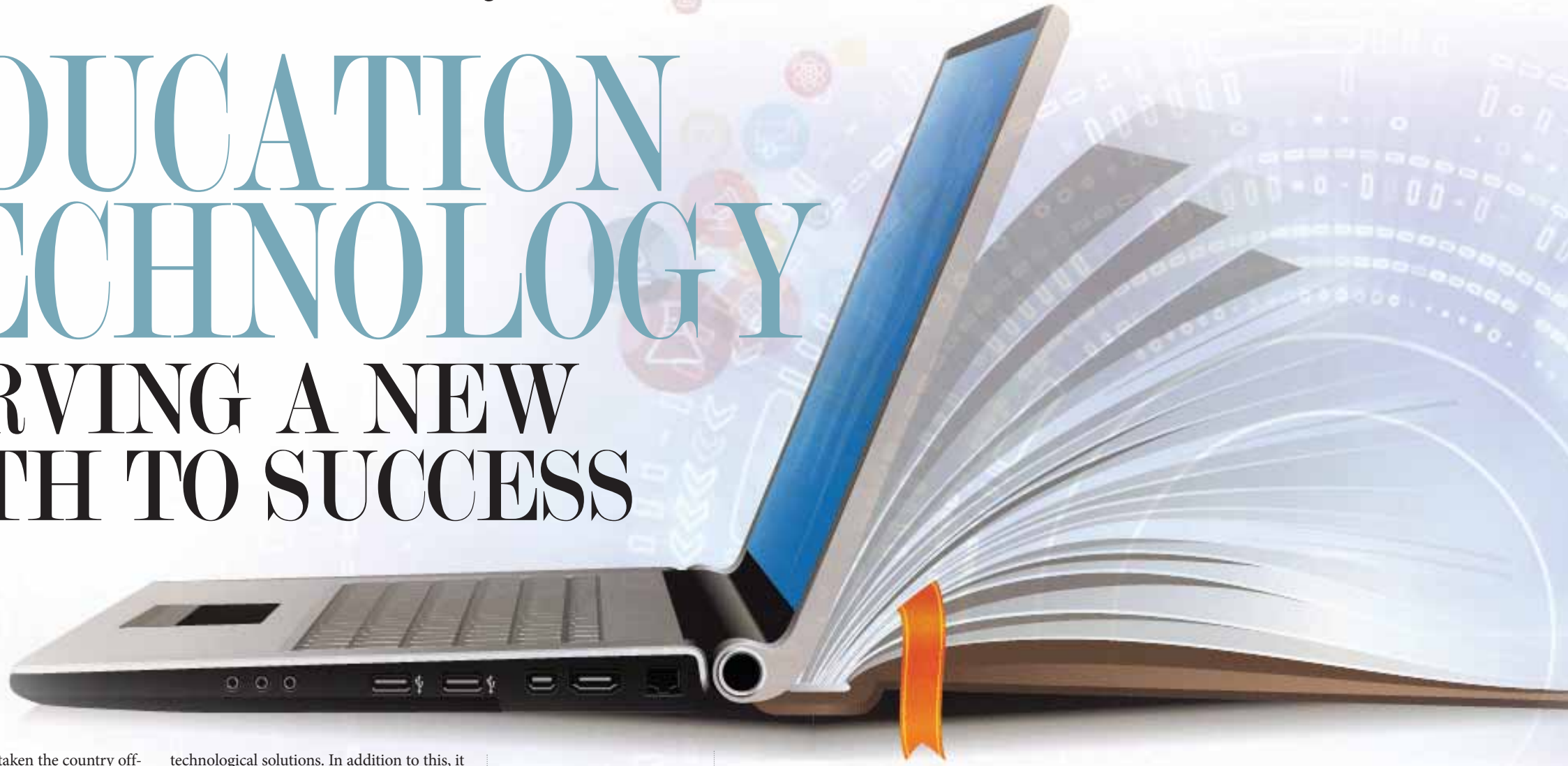
If I look at the message I'm portraying, I think it definitely is be who you are, but be your best you
— Kim Kardashian



The Ed-Tech industry in India has been going through three major push backs including resistance from schools, the lack of trust in online education and the reach of internet and communication devices such as computers, tablets and mobile phones. Covid-19 served as a catalyst in resolving these concerns. The outbreak encouraged schools and other educational institutions to embrace technological solutions, writes PRAVEEN PARAMESWAR

EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY

CARVING A NEW PATH TO SUCCESS



Covid-19 has taken the country off-guard and is seen impacting the Indian economy. As per the Moody's report published in June 2020, India's GDP is expected to shrink by 3.1%. Going one step further, the Dun and Bradstreet Report released in August 2020 predicted that the GDP would contract by 4.5% this fiscal year. Amidst these daunting numbers, one industry that is still reflecting a ray of hope while showing unprecedented growth in India is the Education Technology, that is, the Ed-Tech sector. RS Components, analysing the Crunchbase data, observes that other than the USA, India is the second country that hosts the most number of Ed-Tech companies in the world.

In 2020, Ed-Tech stands as the most funded business sector in India. Only between January and July \$998 Mn has been invested across 31 deals. Furthermore, the ed-tech sector, according to the Omidyar, Redseer report, 2020, is expected to touch a size of \$3.5 Bn by 2022.

To understand the inner working of this sector and map its growth, let us delve deeper and analyse the current scenario along with the latest trends, impact, opportunities, possible pitfalls and the way ahead for the Ed-Tech industry.

INDIAN ED-TECH INDUSTRY: GROWTH AND INVESTMENT

The umbrella term of 'Ed-Tech' largely consists of five segments, which include Online Teaching and Test Preparation; Assessment, Guidance and Mentoring; Skill Development and Certification; Professional Development Programmes, Infrastructural and Administrative Solutions. Amongst these segments, Online Teaching and Test Preparation leads the market with a 64% share and further anticipating size of \$515 Mn by 2021. The sector is lately experiencing a boom as it alchemises with artificial intelligence and neuroscience

The growth of Ed-Tech in India started around 2004-05 when ventures such as Everonn, NIIT and Educomp made their mark through digital course content, smart classrooms and skill development programs. The industry has been reaching new heights with 3000 companies, including Byju's, Unacademy etc. along with various investors like Tiger Global, General Atlantic, Steadview Capital, GGV Capital, Foundation Holding, Aarin Capital, Simplilearn and Blume Ventures venturing into this landscape.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

The Ed-Tech industry in India has been going through three major push backs including resistance from schools, the lack of trust on online education and the reach of internet and communication devices such as computers, tablets and mobile phones. Covid-19 served as a catalyst in resolving these concerns. The outbreak encouraged schools and other educational institutions to embrace

technological solutions. In addition to this, it also influenced offline institutions to collaborate with companies such as Embibe and Simplilearn.

Not just this, parents are also trying to adapt to the new normal and subscribing to educational help platforms such as Byjus or Toppr or Global Shiksha, Khan Academy and others. People are going an extra mile to adapt to the Ed-Tech culture and connecting internet, mobile phones, TV, computers and tablets more to learning.

THE BENEFIT COMMON PEOPLE ENJOY FROM THE GROWTH OF ED-TECH

The growth of technology in the education sector is, in fact, impacting lives of millions majorly in five different ways:

- Many of the top-notch teachers, courses and institutions were only accessible for people who live in the city. But technology dilutes the geographical borders. Today, a person sitting 200 kilometres away from a city like Bangalore or Mumbai or Thiruvananthapuram or Lucknow would get easy access to high-class lectures and tutorials.
- Platforms such as Unacademy and Upgrad are helping people to learn/get certified/professionally qualified even along with the job they do. This helps more people to up-skill them without moving out of jobs.
- Technology in the coming years shall make education accessible for more people who are not able to afford fees at schools or colleges. This would also help the government to provide education to children and adults without much capital investment in high rise buildings and infrastructure, leading to the real democratisation of education in India.
- Assessments, guidance and mentoring are some of the areas that have to consider multiple data points at the same point. Most of the time these aspects go wrong in education as it is humanly impossible to consider multiple variables together. High profile technology is, in fact, solving this problem to a large extent. This would make assessments, guidance and mentoring people easier and more accurate, thus the right people would reach the right places in life.
- Another major impact of Ed-Tech in the life of common people is that education becomes more effective through visual aids, augmented reality, virtual reality and videos with meaningful graphics. This will help children and adults to comprehend the conceptual level of knowledge rather than mugging up as used to happen during the early days.

CURRENT TRENDS IN THE ED-TECH INDUSTRY

The current trends in the Ed-Tech industry in Indian can be presented through the following four points:

- The growth of Ed-Tech in India is not a linear or organised graph. It becomes extremely dynamic in nature. Thus only companies who are really agile, open to change and vibrant can sustain in the market.
- Early entrants to the market who could



WE SHOULD AIM AT MAKING INDIA THE HUB OF EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY, WITH THE MOST NUMBER OF COMPANIES, MAXIMUM INVESTMENT AND HIGH MARKET SIZE. THIS NOT ONLY ENHANCES BUSINESS IN THE COUNTRY BUT ALSO TAKES INDIA TO THE NEXT TRAJECTORY OF GROWTH. THIS WOULD BE THE RIGHT TIME TO DEVELOP 'MAKE IN INDIA' AS THE MOST POWERFUL BRAND IN THE GLOBAL ED-TECH SPACE



raise considerable capital, such as Byjus, increased the quality of content, visual treatment and sophistication of technology to a very high level. This demands any new entrant to match the high standards of their products, in order to satisfy the customers.

- Ed-Tech being a very large and broad industry with too many areas to address, a collaboration between non-competing players is becoming a new norm. Assessment companies joining hands with content providers or infrastructure agencies partnering with skill development companies are a few endeavours taking place all across the globe. Organisations have understood the power of co-creation of success.
- The New Education Policy (NEP-2020) sets the tone perfectly for the intervention of technology in education. This would enable the Ed-Tech industry to make India globally competitive.

FUTURE AVENUES FOR START-UPS

The significant areas where new startups can work on and create new horizons of growth will include the following:

- **Vernacular Languages:** 80% of India speaks vernacular languages. The New Education Policy, 2020 (NEP), also emphasises on education through regional languages. In every vertical, ranging right from online tutoring to skills development to assessments, vernacular content is yet to be well addressed. To understand its nature, it is important to note that even a unicorn such as Byjus has not started venturing into the vernacular market yet. Addressing the education requirements through all 22 officials in India would be a great space for start-ups to play.
- **Technological reforms of the 21st century:** Even though many companies claim that they use the technologies of the 4th industrial revolution such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, big data analytics etc., very few companies use them productively, that too on a very small scale. Majority of the brands attempting to amalgamate artificial intelligence in their modules/ approach are yet to tap into its true potential. On the other hand, some companies use augmented and virtual realities mostly to enhance marketability than to manifest its real power. This is where the start-ups can work on and develop cutting edge technology solutions that can power any or all of the 5 segments in the ed-tech industry.
- **Research to blend Technology and Behavior Science:** This is an area where research-based startups can pitch their ideas. Currently, a gap that the

Ed-Tech industry is coming across includes not having alchemists who can blend technology and behavioural sciences seamlessly. Insightful research is one factor that could help in bridging this gap. Multifunctional teams consisting of technologists, psychologists, sociologists and neurobiologists can identify hundreds of areas that require in-depth attention in the ed-tech domain.

- **Assessments, Guidance and Mentoring:** Right people reaching the wrong places causes huge loss. In addition to this, financial loss, lack of happiness, fulfilment, purpose are some vital elements that people largely lack. This can be resolved through addressing assessment, guidance and mentoring techniques in the most appropriate manner. Startups who tap this nerve of the market can become the game changers of the sector while rightly using the modern-day technology and immersive solutions to one's benefit.
- **Skill Development:** National Skill Development Council (NSDC), various Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) and different State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs) are on a mission to bridge India's skill gap. The speed of change in technology is expected to make more than 48% of jobs obsolete in the next ten years, as observed by the Oxford Martin School study. This makes it inevitable to train every student with the best skillset, thus requiring more players to step forward and up-skill a large proportion of our workforce.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS FOR STARTUPS

- Considering that the Ed-Tech industry is hardly 14 to 15 years old in India, its infancy stage does not enable the newcomers to learn from a plethora of successful cases. Thus, there are a lot of chances that lack of understanding of the market or misjudgment might make startups err. Some of the possible mistakes are listed below.
- Online tutoring and test preparation through video content would be a business with fewer obstacles here and there. Thus many people may just take a deep dive, considering the growth of ed-tech experiences. It is a fact that the market still has space for newcomers. But the incumbents have raised the bar of quality very high. Therefore any person who gets into the market with a couple of lakhs investment on a camera, microphone, a bunch of amateur teachers and a website created out of a template in Envato would not be growing further. If the newcomers overcome the current quality players in the market, it will get easier for the sector to grow.
- Many of the start-ups see a captive market inside schools and with gov-

ernments. Even though the cost of acquiring customers would be lesser, compared with the direct to customer strategy, time to close a deal would be very long in the B2B or B2G segment. Time and money would be lost if the newcomers wait to close large businesses with governments or large school chains. Thus it is ideal to start with direct access to students and keep B2B or B2G as a parallel track.- Education is a vertical where human behaviour and mindset carries a lot of significance. Only if technology solutions can consider the behavioural aspects as well, companies can sustain the market. Many players only develop a team consisting of technical experts or some content developers, but miss out on collaborating with behaviour experts. This could serve as one of the common mistakes and should be avoided.
- The pandemic might be serving as a catalyst but it is imperative for us to remember that this scenario would last forever. Education will not travel backwards from the current affinity that it's built with technology. It's essential for one to have a plan when thinking about the road ahead for their venture.

THE WAY FORWARD

In India, the education sector is considered as one of the most stable, robust fields with low-income elasticity. According to the Economic Survey (2018), the income elasticity towards the healthcare sector was 1.95, whereas it was 0.93 for products in the education sector.

This scenario, along with the wide acceptance of ed-tech during Covid-19 would certainly lure more investments in this industry. In this case, the intervention of policymakers, influencers, launchpads and mentoring bodies should be focusing on channelising this growth to the right direction by ensuring entry of companies to the appropriate areas, channelising investment to the organisations attending the right requirement and helping ventures with proper hand-holding. We should aim at making India the hub of Education Technology, with the most number of companies, maximum investment and high market size. This not only enhances business in the country but also takes India to the next trajectory of growth. This would be the right time to develop 'Make in India' as the most powerful brand in the global ed-tech space.

The writer is CEO, Lifology. Lifology is India's first career eco-system for parents

It's just before the Mumbai monsoon when the Don and her gang chance upon a mysterious package on the beach. It pops open, and a little puppy wriggles out. The Don's annoyed, her gang is upset. A new puppy spells trouble. For the dogs on the beach, life can be tough. And the new arrival has broken their rhythm. But soon they discover Shingmo the Seventh is actually a sliver of sunshine on the beach. The pack weaves a circle of friendship and love that shelters them all through sun and storm. These unforgettable dogs and their world come to life with Sagar Kolwankar's beautiful black-and-white illustrations. An adventure with a heart, *Woof!* is a must-read for anyone who's exchanged a knowing look with a dog.

India a harbinger of hope for Green World Order

There has been much talk about the wishful shifting of power from the West to the East. The rise of China, along with India and Japan, was showcased as a precursor that the 21st Century is destined to be an Asian century. But there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. The moot point is whether China can become a superpower like the erstwhile Colonial Britain and the present day America to control the international system. And if Beijing can't, who can be. According to Richard Haass, one of the thinkers of world politics, a superpower needs to have, besides economic and military prowess, an ability to intervene politically in any part of the world and prove its unparalleled strength. Another qualification is to use nuclear weapons and its access to any entity across the globe. China flatly fails on both the parameters to become a superpower. The second problem for the rising China theory is that there are more than two powers emerging on the landscape of international system. The middle powers like India, Germany, Japan, South Africa are inching up to shape the world system together. Chinese aggressions in many parts of Asia have exposed Beijing's desperation to become the unparalleled power in the region.

In these situation if there is a world order which could be developed beyond the conventional theory of world system, it can be a Green World Order that creates a pitch for non-fossil free energy system which can preclude catastrophic situations. This looks more promising for a sustainable world order. The world is sitting on the brink of catastrophe. Neither the US nor China is keen to safeguard the world through its roadmap for the Green World Order. We have heard of a Panchtantra story: In the

extreme exigencies of flood, a tree becomes a shelter for a tiger, a human, a serpent and a peacock. None of them harm each other; they hang on calmly. The reason for this unthinkable habitation in the peculiar condition is the existential threat for each. The disruptions in climate have pushed countries in the same situation: to shelter on the same tree. The corona pandemic is a harsh reminder of the undergoing change. The beginning of industrial revolutions in the early nineteenth century in Europe, along with the political ideology of an unchallenged charter of individualism, created a world order which was based on more consumption, better development and highly racial and geographical superiority. One after another geopolitical theorists from Henry Mackinder to TH Mahan, Heartland theory to Rim Land postulated to justify the western interventions and shaping the world system that keeps the western interests intact. This is how the two hundred years of history of the world is with us which has created a threat of existence not merely for Asians and Africans but for Europeans and Americans as well.

Now the larger question is which country has the ability to shelter like a tree in the universal flood. America is absolutely odd man out. It has been the biggest disrupter of the Green World. It did not sign the Kyoto Protocol and withdrew from the Paris Climate. China is developing huge infrastructure of green energy, especially wind and solar. China produced almost 170 GW of solar energy in 2018, but China has a dubious character. Dragon wants to keep its house clean but litters other parts of the world with fossil fuels. The Chinese system does not think magnanimously to safeguard the planet with an inclusive approach.



The Covid-19 pandemic has completely eclipsed the Chinese credentials in the international system. The way China manipulated the World Health Organization which led to an exponential spread of pandemic in the globe, its anti-green and anti-humanitarian face has been unmasked. The Climate Action Tracker gives China a very poor grade because of its continued reliance on coal. China has failed to stop the building of the new coal-based plants. China is financing coal-fired power plants outside the country, and increasing emissions elsewhere. China remains the world's largest producer of carbon emissions. It is planning to finance and build roads, railways, bridges, ports, and industrial parks abroad, beginning with China's neighbours in Central, South, and Southeast Asia and eventually reaching Western Europe and across the Pacific to Latin America. While China has imposed a cap

on coal consumption at home, its coal and energy companies are on a building spree overseas. Chinese companies are involved in at least 240 coal projects in 25 of the Belt and Road countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, Serbia, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. It has a particular eye on the coal resources of South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the West Asia, and the Russian Far East. Secondly, Chinese political system is not transparent. Its next move is unpredictable. Third, China is very keen to settle the historical scores after becoming the largest economy. Therefore, its intentions are based on self-interests which would generate more conflicts in the international system. So far world politics was driven by the greed for oil and gas. Churchill after the end of the First World War ventured to use imported oil in place of coal for British fleets, since then

the oil became the driving force of world politics. Geopolitics of oil embargos are common. Oil and gas have not only been used as sticks to hurt or deter foes, but also as carrots to reward allies and ensure their allegiance. The climate conferences of the UN have been consistently reminding the world to switch over from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy. But things are not moving. American President Donald Trump, in meeting with CEOs of the companies during the pandemic, assured them of carbon-led economic development in future. The impact of fossil-fuel economy is visible. The trade war between America and China is pitching for carbon-led energy system. The climate disruption has reached the tipping point. The whole world is severely under its grip. But certain parts of the world are more prone to climatic change. Like Southeast Asia and South Asia will face more severe consequences of

climate change than other parts of the world. The only country which shines out in the crisis is India. It will have the largest world population of the world by 2024. It has tested democratic credentials and strong constitutional framework. The ancient Indian wisdom is based on "Vashudhaiv Kutumbakam" which encapsulates each country in its fold. India has displayed its commitment for the resolutions of Paris Commitment. The 8 folds jump in solar energy in the last six years proved a point. India is going to generate more than 450 GW of energy through renewable sources by 2030. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded the "Champion of Earth" by the UN Secretary General in 2018. He started to lead the International Solar Alliance. India has made important progress towards meeting the United Nations Sustainable Developmental Goals, notably Goal-7 on deliv-

ering energy access. India's per capita emissions today are 1.6 tonnes of CO₂, well below the global average of 4.4 tonnes. Inequality and climate change are parts of the same coin. Therefore, climate change is also related to lifestyle. Western economist Thorstein Veblen, who coined the terms "invidious consumption" pointed out how individuals use luxury goods to show off their status. The US top ten per cent emits six times more than 50 per cent of the bottom at the household level. Adam Smith, the father of economics, explained in his path-breaking book "the Wealth of Nations": It is the industry which is going to make the country rich. But ancient Indian wisdom is contrary to the views of Adam Smith. Mahatma Gandhi once said that India cannot afford to follow the British economic policy of greed. If two-thirds of planet failed to satisfy the greed of Britain, India had four times the population of Britain, so it would need four planets like earth to fulfil the greed. Unfortunately during the early decades after Independence, India became a copy cat of western pattern of development. That is why the Modi Government is working on to reintroduce the ancient wisdom. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has also said that Climate Change is not merely a fuel issue but it has a larger context. Unsustainable consumption is the fundamental cause of pollution and ecological destruction. India has increased its solar-energy capacity more than twelve fold since 2014. The Indian stand is not contradictory. It says what it does. The democratic credentials are well respected. This Government has prepared a blue print of Green World Order. According to PM Modi it is secure, sure and pure.

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SATISH KUMAR

PERSPECTIVE

Killing minorities in name of blasphemy in Pak

In Pakistan, the majority community has licence to kill anyone, particularly persons from minority communities, in the name of blasphemy without waiting for court trials. The ugliest part is that the murderer is hailed as a "ghazi" or "martyr" to the nation. It's time the world wakes up to the medieval treatment of religious minorities in Pakistan. The blasphemy law was first introduced in 1860 by the colonial administration. The law stipulated ten years of imprisonment or fine or both. Later the law was amended in 1927. In 1953, when anti-Ahmadiyya riots erupted, Jamaat-e-Islami demanded amendments to the law but the Government of Pakistan did not entertain its requests. However, when anti-Ahmadiyya riots erupted again in 1974, the second Amendment was introduced in the Constitution of Pakistan and all Islamist parties came together under the banner of Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Khatam-e-Nabuwwat (movement for the protection of the finality of the Prophethood). Later in 1984, the Zia-ul-Haq regime passed an anti-Ahmadiyya ordinance, which decreed that "Ahmadis cannot call themselves Muslims" or "pose as Muslim", and those who defied the law faced three years in prison. Cases of extortion from minorities in Pakistan are frequent but rarely reported to authorities for the fear of reprisals. Victims pay huge ransoms as protection money to mosques and madrassas to save their lives. Otherwise they have to leave their business and properties. A Hindu friend of mine narrated one such incident to me: "Due to coronavirus, our

temple is closed so I am performing my early morning prayers (bhajans) at home only. One day my neighbour knocked at my door and threatened our family. 'You Hindus should go to India and sing your bhajans there. If you want to live in Pakistan, live quietly, don't chant Krishna nonsense early morning.'" He added, "Believe me I was not chanting loudly. My neighbour always look for an opportunity to browbeat us so that under pressure we should sell our apartment to them and leave this place, while they always listen Indian music loudly all the time. Even there is a mosque-madrassa in our apartments where loudspeakers keep on blaring out." In 2009, Aasya Noreen, better known as Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian, was accused of blasphemy. "Why you used my cup for drinking water? You are non-Muslim, a 'kafir'." Argument over this led to Noreen's arrest in 2010. She was convicted of blasphemy by a Pakistani court and sentenced to death. Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti and Punjab Governor Salman Taseer both were assassinated for advocating on behalf of Asia Bibi and opposing the blasphemy laws. Under global pressure, in 2018, the Supreme Court of Pakistan acquitted Asia Bibi on grounds that there was insufficient evidence. But she was not released from custody because of safety concerns. A Muslim cleric Maulana Yousaf Qureshi announced a bounty of 500,000 Pakistani Rupees to anyone who would kill Asia Bibi. In 2019, she finally got a safe passage and arrived in Canada, but she continues to receive threat to her life. Mishal Khan, a student of



mass communication of Abdul Wali Khan University, was killed in 2017 on the premises of the university by a mob on allegation of posting blasphemous content online. He was in the hostel of the university when he was stripped naked and severely beaten up by a group of students and then shot. He succumbed to his injuries. The mob was kicking his lifeless body and beating it with wooden planks. His body was then thrown from the second floor of the building. The mob even tried to burn his body while chanting "Allah-o-Akbar". At least 25 law enforcement officers were present

there, but no action was taken. Later investigations found that the content Mishal posted had only secular views and references to books on democracy and equality of humanity. But before this realisation came out, Pakistan had already lost a beautiful soul. Recently, on July 29, Tahir Naseem, an American, was shot dead inside a Pakistani courtroom where he had gone for a trial for alleged blasphemy. He was an Ahmadiyya but one of my sources told me that he was having mental issues. His murderer justified the killing. "A light appeared in my dream last night and

ordered me to kill this enemy of Allah so that I can be awarded with gift of heaven." The murderer was praised by a majority of people in Pakistan and even Government officials and politicians used his picture as their display picture (DP) on their social media profiles. When I reported this case and announced a campaign on social media against the blasphemy laws, forced conversions and enforced disappearances in Pakistan and organised a protest at the Consulate General of Pakistan in Houston, I received many life threats and was targeted by unknown pro-

files on the social media. Blasphemy Law (Clause , 295C) of Pakistan panel court reads: "Whoever by words, either spoken or written or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) shall be punished with death or imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine." The law prescribes the death penalty for those who are found guilty of blasphemy. The option of life imprisonment has been defunct since a 1991 Federal Shariat Court judg-

ment. Blasphemy laws in Pakistan are derived from the Holy Quran and Hadiths, but there are differences between different Islamic schools of jurisprudence in this regard. Several Islamic scholars believe that Quranic verses are misinterpreted by dominant Muslim groups in Pakistan with the support of establishment that allows them to use blasphemy laws as a tool to achieve their narrow sectarian interests and agendas. A Quranic verse, which directly mentions blasphemy, calls on Muslims to not blaspheme deities of other religions, lest people of those religions retaliate by blaspheming against Allah. "And do not insult (wa la tasabbu) those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult (fa-yasabbu) Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus, we have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return and He will inform them about what they used to do." — Qur'an, 6:108 However, a few Hadiths justify severe punishments for blasphemy. But not everyone agrees. Secular Muslims in Pakistan have always demanded abolition of the blasphemy laws but didn't succeed because of the interest groups. Whipping up religious sentiments is a powerful tool in Pakistan that has always been used by rulers to control people, and create pressure groups of religious parties to perpetuate fear. Minorities, especially wealthy Hindus, are easy prey in Pakistan.

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ZAFAR SAHITO

