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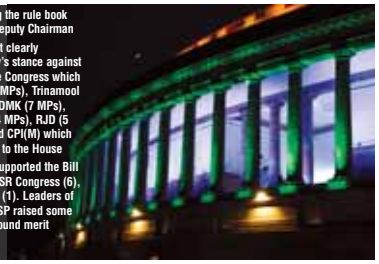
WE NEED ONE FILM INDUSTRY: KANGANA
10 VIVACITY

2 FARM BILLS PUSHED THROUGH RS AMID RUCKUS

Opp MPs tear apart papers, yank mikes from Chairman's desk, throw Parliament rule book at presiding officer

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

- The Government is likely to introduce the third farm Bill in the Upper House of Parliament on Monday
- These Bills will now be sent to President Ram Nath Kovind for his assent
- Four Opposition-sponsored motions to send the two Bills to a House panel for greater scrutiny were negated by voice vote, but the Congress, TMC, CPI(M) and DMK members sought a division of vote on the issue
- As Harivansh over-ruled them saying division of votes can take place only when members are on their seat, TMC leader Derek O'Brien charged towards the podium, thrusting the rule book into the face of the Deputy Chairman
- The other parties that clearly expressed their party's stance against the Bills included the Congress which has 40 (MPs), SP (8 MPs), Trinamool Congress (13 MPs), DMK (7 MPs), AAP (3 MPs), NCP (4 MPs), RJD (5 MPs) and the CPI and CPI(M) which together send 6 MPs to the House
- Parties that clearly supported the Bill included BJP (86), YSR Congress (6), AIADMK (9) and BPF (1). Leaders of Shiv Sena and the BSP raised some objections but also found merit in the Bills



The Rajya Sabha on Sunday passed two key farm Bills amid an unprecedented ruckus as Opposition members rushed in the Well against the Covid-19 protocol, tore off documents, yanked mikes fixed to the Chairman's desk and threw Parliament rule book at the presiding officer, Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narain Singh.

The ruling party managed to push through both the controversial farm Bills — Farmer's Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 — of the three it had proposed and got passed in the Lok Sabha amid uproar from Opposition MPs.

The trouble started when sitting of the Rajya Sabha was extended beyond the scheduled time to allow passage of the Bills. Opposition members, who felt such a move should be resorted to only by consensus, rushed into the Well, shouting slogans against the Government and terming the Bill as death warrants for farmers. While Opposition has now moved a no confidence against Deputy Chairman Harivansh, the Government and Chairman Rajya Sabha M Venkaiah Naidu are mulling what action to be taken against the Members who created a pandemonium in the House.

The Government is likely to introduce the third farm Bill in the Upper House of Parliament on Monday. These Bills will now be sent to President Ram Nath Kovind for his assent. Four Opposition-sponsored motions to send the two Bills to a House panel for greater scrutiny were negated by voice vote, but the Congress, TMC, CPI(M) and DMK members sought a division of vote on the issue.

As Harivansh over-ruled them saying division of votes can take place only when members are on their seat, TMC leader Derek O'Brien charged towards the podium, thrusting the rule book into the face of the Deputy Chairman.

House marshals thwarted the move and blocked a book that was flung towards Harivansh. An attempt was also made to pull microphones away from the chair but the marshals physically stopped that from happening. DMK leader Tiruchi Siva, who along with O'Brien, KC Venugopal of the Congress and KK Ragesh of CPI(M), had moved resolutions for sending the Bills to the Select Committee, tore papers and flung them into the air.

Harivansh, who asked members to go back to their places and not come into the Well due to the Covid-19 protocol requiring physical separation, first muted the audio of the live proceedings but with the ruckus continuing, he adjourned the proceedings for 15 minutes.

Covid absentees help Govt pip Opp to post

PNS ■ NEW DEHI

The total strength of the Rajya Sabha is 243 at present. The half way mark if all are present and voting is 122. But what worried the Government side on Sunday was according to Rajya Sabha Secretariat records, nearly 13 members on the Government side are either Covid-hit or have not been attending the House.

Similarly on the Opposition side, the number of Covid positive and absent due to age factor number is close to 20 with Members like Manmohan Singh, P Chidambaram, Sukhendu Shekhar Roy not coming.

With this status of the floor remained at 210 and the half way mark standing at 106.

The BJP has 86 members and with five members of JDU MPs, along with nominated and Independent members, the BJP calculated support of 105 MPs.

Those against the Bill were the Congress, the NCP, the AAP, the TMC, the BSP, the SP, the Left, the DMK, the RJD, the SAD, the TRS and others with 109 members.

On the numbers with both the Treasury, the Opposition had an edge on the day for the particular farm Bills.

Regional parties like the BJD, the AGP, the TRS, which rescued the Government in the past in similar situation, spoke against the Bill.

The AIADMK and the BJD have nine members each and the YSRCP which supported the Bill has six members.

The Shiv Sena which has three MPs in the Upper House decided not to support the Bill in present format.

❝ I said it earlier and I say it once again: System of MSP will remain. Government procurement will continue…We are here to serve our farmers. We will do everything possible to support them and ensure a better life for their coming generations
NARENDRA MODI

❝ Democracy is not majority oppression but about consultation, conciliation and consensus…All three democratic virtues were ignored in today's proceedings
SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL

❝ The farmers grow gold from land, but the arrogance of the Modi Government is making farmers shed tears of blood
RAHUL GANDHI

❝ Nowhere in the new farm reform Bill, there is any talk of abolishing the crop MSP…The day, under the present system, if a farmer does not get the MSP for his crop, I will quit my post
DUSHYANT CHAUTALA

Opp moves no-trust against Harivansh, alleges prejudice

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Opposition have moved a no-confidence motion against Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh for allegedly violating Parliamentary rules to help the Government pass the two farm sector Bills in the RS on Sunday. The motion, signed by around 100 members, has been submitted in the notice office of Parliament as the Secretary-General was not present. On the other hand, RS Chairperson M Venkaiah Naidu will take a call on action against Opposition MPs who trooped into Well of the House and created massive ruckus while protesting against the farm Bills. Naidu called an urgent meeting with Deputy Chairman Harivansh and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi and discussed the issue along with Union Minister Piyush Goyal and Tomar.

Farmers' rage spills on to road in Haryana

Police use water cannons to stop farmers led by Punjab Youth Cong from entering Haryana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Farmers in Haryana on Sunday protested against the agriculture-related farm Bills, blocking most of the national and State highways across the State.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union's Haryana unit, supported by other farmer outfits, held the Statewide protest against the Centre's farm Bills during which protesters had blocked the roads for three hours from 12 pm to 3 pm.

BKU state president Gurnam Singh Charuni led the protest in Yamunanagar and lashed out at the Central Government for allegedly betraying the farming community.

A large number of farmers had blocked NH 344 also known as Ambala-Roorkee national highway near Milk Majra village of Yamunanagar district in Haryana to oppose the farm reform Bills.

In another part of the State, as farmers from Punjab led by the Youth Congress unit attempted to break the barricades on Ambala-Mohali highway near the Punjab-Haryana border, police resorted to use of force and water cannons in an attempt to disperse them. Punjab Youth Congress had planned a tractor rally from Punjab to Delhi against the Centre's farm-related measures.

In Kaithal, the farmers blocked the Ambala-Hisar highway near Titram Mor of Kaithal.

In Hisar, farmers blocked the toll plaza near Mayyar village on the National Highway. The Jind-Delhi road was blocked in Julana while in Charkhi Dadri district, Dadri Kanina road was blocked by the farmers.

During the statewide protest, the farmers shouted slogans against the Centre and demanded withdrawal of three farm bills. On September 10 also, the BKU along with some other farmer outfits had held a protest in Kurukshetra's Pipli against the bills.

Haryana BKU chief Gurnam Singh Chaduni while talking to The Pioneer said that the protest will continue and a nationwide farmers' protest would be held now against the bills passed in the Parliament. We will hold discussions with farmers' associations across the country to devise a strategy for a nationwide protest, he said.

Condemning the Central Government, Gurnam Singh said the BJP has betrayed the farmers.

Two farm bills were passed in an unconstitutional way in the Rajya Sabha. These bills have been opposed by the opposition parties also. The bills are anti-farmer as the agriculture sector will be left to the fate of corporate interests, he alleged.

Earlier, the Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had on Saturday appealed for deferring the stir and invited the farmers for talks. He had asserted that the farm reforms were in the interest of farmers and claimed opposition was misleading them.

Notably, elaborate security arrangements were made across Haryana in view of the famers' protest and executive magistrates remained stationed along with their police counterparts at all such places where congregation of protestors were anticipated.

Haryana Police had conducted patrolling of the national and state highways and important roads in various parts of the state, including Ambala, Kurukshetra, Sonipat, Jind, Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar and Bhiwani.

The Rajya Sabha had on Sunday passed two contentious farm bills by voice vote as the House witnessed chaotic scenes. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020, was passed by the upper House.

The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020, part of the broader farm liberalisation plan, could not be taken up and the House was adjourned for the day.

PM HAILS REFORM BILLS, ASSURES MSP, GOVT BUYING TO CONTINUE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed the passing of two farm reform Bills by Parliament as "historic" even as his top Ministers decried the behaviour of the Opposition party MPs in the Rajya Sabha. Chairman of the Upper House Venkaih Naidu discussed with the Government what action it proposed to take against the MPs who tossed Parliament's rule back at the Deputy Chairman and yanked out his microphone.

Soon after the RS passed two key farm Bills aimed at giving "marketing freedom to farmers", the PM assured the farmers that Minimum support Price and the Government procurement of their produce would continue. "The passing of historic agrarian reform Bills in the Lok Sabha is an important moment for the country' s farmers and the agricultural sector. These Bills will truly free the farmers from middlemen and all obstacles," Modi tweeted.

Modi said it would empower farmers."This agrarian reform will provide new opportunities for farmers to sell their produce, which will increase their profits. With this, our agriculture sector will get the benefit of modern technology, whereas the farmers will be empowered," he said.

Meanwhile, strongly condemning the behaviour of Opposition parties against the Deputy-Chairman of Rajya Sabha Harivansh Narayan Singh, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday described it as "very shameful".

Cong pits Pilot against Scindia in royal bastion in MP bypolls

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The upcoming bypolls in Madhya Pradesh would witness former Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot against Jyotiraditya Scindia at least in 16 Assembly constituencies falling in Gwalior-Chambal region.

Bypolls are scheduled in 28 constituencies of Madhya Pradesh. There are 16 constituency of Scindia influence. There are 14 Ministers in Shivraj Singh Chouhan Cabinet, who are not MLAs. They include 11 Scindia supporters. While the BJP and Scindia have already launched election campaign, the Congress has adopted a multipronged strategy to settle the Pilot question hounding it since the July-August 2020 rebellion.

Party sources said on the initiative of PCC Chief and former Chief Minister Kamal Nath, Pilot has agreed to campaign against his old friend Scindia. After Pilot had defected from the Congress, it would be a new assignment for him to prove his loyalty to the party.

In March this year, Scindia had walked away from the Congress making 22 MLAs resign from their seats, which brought down the Kamal Nath regime barely 15 months after it had come to power in the State. Three more Congress MLAs defected and the death of three sitting MLAs are necessitating the by-polls, which are likely to be held in later half of October.

MPCC Spokesperson Bhupendra Gupta said Pilot's strength in these regions is the presence of Gujjar voters and the former Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister's ability to deliver punchlines.

He certainly has influence in the bordering constituencies, he added.

Bill to tighten FCRA rules tabled, Aadhaar must for registration

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Government on Sunday introduced the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020 in the Lok Sabha to make the law more stringent and make Aadhaar mandatory for registration.

Moving the Bill on behalf of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, his junior and Minister of State of Home Nityanand Rai said this law did s not breach the right of any organisation if they follow the law and do not get distracted from their purpose.

"We only take action against any organisation under the rule when they do not follow the law. Where is the breach of their rights in it?."

TMC MP Saugata Roy said, "This law has been used for the last six years against those who go against the Government, " and maintained that this was another example of "big brother watching",a charge rejected by the Minister who said "the law does not discriminate on the basis of religion".

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 54,57,283
DEATHS: 87,386
RECOVERED: 43,59,899
ACTIVE: 10,09,218

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	11,88,015	32,216	8,57,933
Andhra Pradesh	6,25,514	5,359	5,41,319
Tamil Nadu	5,41,993	8,811	4,86,479
Karnataka	5,19,537	8,023	4,13,452
Uttar Pradesh	3,54,275	5,047	2,83,274
Delhi	2,46,711	**4,982**	2,09,632
West Bengal	2,25,137	4,359	1,95,972
Odisha	1,79,880	754	1,45,675
Telangana	1,71,306	1,033	1,39,700
Bihar	1,68,542	864	1,54,443
Assam	1,56,680	562	1,27,335
Kerala	1,35,723	536	95,698
Gujarat	1,23,337	3,320	1,03,875
Rajasthan	1,14,989	1,336	95,469
Haryana	1,11,257	1,149	88,697
Madhya Pradesh	1,03,065	1,943	79,158

No significant SARS-CoV-2 mutation in India, ICMR exploring saliva-based test: Vardhan

New Delhi: The ICMR is actively exploring saliva-based test for detection of Covid-19, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Sunday and asserted that no significant or drastic mutation in strains of SARS-CoV-2 has been found in India till now.

During an interaction with his social media followers, Vardhan informed them the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has been conducting large-scale sequencing of nationally representative strains of SARS-CoV-2 virus collected for several months over different time-points.

2.39 CRORE COVID TESTS CONDUCTED IN INDIA IN AUGUST

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India conducted 2.39 crore Covid-19 tests in August, of which 1.24 crore were done using rapid antigen kits, the Government said on Sunday.

Till September 18, a total of 6,17,33,533 tests were conducted across the country, Minister of State for Health Ashwini Choubey said in the Rajya Sabha.

CAPSULE

'STUBBLE BURNING CAN EXACERBATE COVID-19'

Chandigarh: The stubble burning which is likely to start later this month ahead of the Rabi crop sowing season can exacerbate the coronavirus crisis, an agricultural-cum-environment expert has cautioned.

TAJ MAHAL, AGRA FORT TO REOPEN FROM MON

Agra: India's star tourist attraction, the 17th-century monument of love, the Taj Mahal, and the Agra Fort, are all set to reopen from Monday, after an unprecedented closure of six months, due to Covid-19 pandemic.

MHA discounts UN report on ISIS in Kerala, K'taka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Sunday told the Lok Sabha that "a United Nations report which suggested presence of "significant numbers" of ISIS terrorists in Kerala and Karnataka are "factually not correct".

Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy was giving a written reply to a question on whether the Government is aware of the United Nations report titled 'The 26th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning ISIS, Al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities' stating that there are "significant numbers" of ISIS terrorists in Kerala and Karnataka.

The Minister refuted the report and gave the statistics of the cases registered by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in this regard.

"The said report claiming presence of "significant numbers" of ISIS terrorists in Kerala and Karnataka, is factually not correct. The Government continuously takes necessary measures to put forth India's correct position through established mechanism in unequivocal and categorical terms at various international, multilateral and bilateral for a and also through diplomatic channels, the Minister said.

Reddy also said 34 cases related to presence of Islamic State (IS) and 20 cases related to presence of Lashkar-e-Toiba across the country were registered by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and 240 people were arrested in this connection. "The Government is aware of the presence of the terrorist outfits in the country including ISIS, Daesh, IS Khorasan, Lashkar-e-Toiba, etc. The NIA has so far registered and investigated 34 cases related to presence of Islamic State (IS) and 20 cases related to presence of Lashkar-e-Toiba across the country and arrested 160 and 80 accused persons respectively," he said.

TUNNEL FOUND IN HOUSE OF ARRESTED QAEDA MOLE IN MURSHIDABAD

Kolkata: One of the Al Qaeda terror moles Abu Sufiyan arrested from Murshidabad had constructed a secret tunnel inside his house at Raninagar, National Investigation Agency sources that busted the network said, adding the tunnel apparently was made to store explosives.

Sufiyan's kin. however, contradicted the claim saying it was not a tunnel but a newly constructed sanitary tank still not in use.

Ram Vilas Paswan critical, in ICU

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) founder and Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan has been admitted to ICU and is in critical condition, said Paswan's son Chirag Paswan.

Following which it is not possible for Chirag to visit Bihar right now, said sources.

In a letter written to party workers, Chirag said his party is yet to talk with National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners over seat sharing for the Bihar Assembly elections scheduled to be held in October-November.

The LJP is a constituent of the Bharatiya Janata party-led NDA. The Janata Dal United is also part of the alliance and in recent months Paswan has been critical of its leader and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

No end to Covid-19 in Chandigarh in sight; expert advice caution

NISHU MAHAJAN ■ CHANDIGARH

The sudden spike in Covid-19 cases in Chandigarh has set alarm bells ringing, not just because of UT Administration's mismanagement to contain the spread of infection but also, due to the significant gaps in the city's existing capacity to accommodate a potential surge in the caseload.

With some studies pointing out that the Covid-19 cases will peak by October end, the medical experts warn that the crisis could get worse in the union territory. Chandigarh, which is a joint capital of Punjab and Haryana, has an estimated population of 12 lakh.

The contingency plan for the management of COVID-19 crisis prepared by the UT Administration had estimated that about 1 percent population of Chandigarh may be tested as positive even in the worst case scenario for the city. Hence, a plan was prepared in case of about 12000 positive cases and for the management of about 3600 active cases of Covid-19 on the worst day of the spread.

The city based health experts however foresee a scenario where the active cases would soon cross 3600-mark on a day, considering a high growth rate of infection in Chandigarh.

At present, the average growth rate of new infections in Chandigarh is recorded at 4.2 percent, double than the national growth rate of 2.1 percent. As far as recoveries are concerned, Chandigarh has reported a recovery rate of 65 percent against the national average of around 78 percent.

The fatality rate in the city was 1.14 percent while the active ratio of cases stood at 33.3 percent which means for every 100 confirmed cases, 33 are currently infected in the city.

The Pioneer spoke to several medical experts regarding their opinion on the measures that the city needs to take to stem the spread of COVID-19

Dr Ramneek Singh Bedi, Advisor, World Medical Association and former national vice-president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA)

We are in the middle of deepening of COVID-19 crisis as the cases are now rising at an alarming rate in Chandigarh. There is a need to impose periodic, stringent or strategic lockdown to break the chain of infection in the community. Currently, a strategic lockdown is the most scientific practice to break the chain and save the economic downturn. India went for a stringent lockdown earlier but that has proven to be an exercise in futility. Since the incubation period of the virus is five-seven days, a complete lockdown of seven-days is required to be imposed in the city. A weekend lockdown as imposed in Punjab earlier does not make any sense or serve any purpose. Despite having tertiary care medical institutions, Chandigarh is now struggling to provide effective and efficient treatment to the patients from the city and facing shortcomings in the infrastructure. So the tricity including Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula should jointly go for a complete lockdown or impose a uniform policy to stop the spread of infection. We cannot afford to avoid taking strict measures and let the infection spread further in the name of saving the economy. It is the time to take a considerate decision in striking a balance between economy and human lives, lest it will be too late in a country of 130 crore population to save either. Israel had also recently announced to re-impose the countrywide lockdown amid a stubborn surge in positive cases.

Dr Yogesh Kumar Chawla, Former PGIMER Director

There is no need to allow the shops to open till 9 PM when the cases are surging at a rapid pace in the city. People have become very casual and are gathering in the markets on a daily basis, violating the COVID-19 safety protocols. As a complete lockdown is not acceptable now, the timings of shops with non-essential items can be restricted to 7-7:30 pm. There was also no need to withdraw the decision of weekend closure of Sukhna Lake, which draws a huge crowd every day. Since people including the vulnerable group of senior citizens are gathering at parks and markets and are also, violating the norms of masking and social distancing, voluntary groups should be formed to report such violations and police should be more vigilant and responsive on any reports of violations. The penalty of Rs 500 for not wearing a mask should also be increased in the city. People need to understand that a vaccine is yet to be introduced for this virus and even if it is introduced, we are not sure for how long it would work as this is a mutating virus. We should never forget that prevention is better than cure.

Dr Neeraj Nagpal, Convenor, Medicos Legal Action Group, Chandigarh

Declaring a few houses as a micro-containment zone will not help to contain the infection. Things are beyond our control and we should now focus on facilitating the infected people who need hospitalization. People have been complaining about not getting a bed in government hospitals here. The UT Administration should put up the current status of beds in government facilities for COVID patients on its website and come out with a mechanism to ensure that at least those who need hospitalization get a bed in a government hospital without any hassle. Also, as the hospitals are now brimming with positive patients, we need to rope in hotels to increase the bed capacity in Chandigarh. The local Administration should also address the issue of black-marketing of Remdesivir, which is being sold for multiple times its retail price now. Prices of masks and gloves have also increased. People are making crores by indulging in black marketing amid the pandemic.

Dr AK Mandal, Director, Intensive Care and Critical Care, Pulmonology, Fortis Hospital, Mohali

We do not know how long the battle with COVID-19 would continue. In such a scenario, what people need to understand is that their actions have consequences not only for them but for their family members also. I understand there is a sense of fear and stigma surrounding COVID-19 but if someone is symptomatic, he or she should go for testing. As most of the medical institutions have reached their capacity in the city, there is also a need to develop an effective mechanism for home isolation of positive patients. Everyone does not need hospitalization for COVID-19. A coordinated policy for hospitals should be put in place for keeping a check on all patients in home isolation.

A dedicated team from hospitals should also reach out to them over a call on a daily basis. Apart from this, as senior citizens and those with co-morbidities have emerged as a vulnerable group in the COVID-19 pandemic, the authorities should efficiently monitor them to reduce the COVID fatality rate. We should understand that the cornerstone of a pandemic response is finding those infected, conducting tests, isolating the infected people and taking care of every case besides following the safety protocols.

Dr Rajesh Dhir, Government Multi Speciality Hospital Sector 16 and former IMA president, Chandigarh

First and foremost, people have to make changes in personal behavior. We expect the government to do everything for us but socially irresponsible behavior by educated people will cost us dear and would also take a heavy toll on our community. An ICMR study has found that a COVID-19 patient can infect 406 people in 30 days if preventive measures such as masking, social distancing are not implemented. The United States (US) is an example of how ignoring safety protocols can lead to serious consequences. We have to follow the simple rules of 'washing hands, wearing a mask and maintain social distancing.' The violators should be dealt with strictly and intensive challaning drives by police and local Administration should be conducted across the city to ensure that the safety measures are followed by the residents.

Punjab launches 3-day polio vaccination drive, to cover high risk areas

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH/MOHALI

Punjab Government on Sunday launched a three-day polio vaccination drive to cover around seven lakh children in the state's high risk areas, amidst COVID-19 outbreak.

Launching the three-day Sub-national immunization day (SNID) drive by administering drops of oral polio vaccine (OPV) to children below five years at nearby Juhar Nagar village in Mohali district, the state Health and Family Welfare Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said that the drive would cover only high risk areas, migratory population, brick kilns, construction sites, and urban slum areas due to the spread of coronavirus pandemic.

He said that the health workers have been directed to ensure compliance of all the necessary guidelines, such as covering their faces and washing their hands frequently during the drive.

VOICE WITHIN: Two Kinds of Value Systems

VIJAY SINGAL

Bhagavad Gita talks about two types of people - those who aspire for spiritual evolution and those who aim only at material enjoyments. It has explained the difference between the behaviour patterns of spiritualists, those who live a regulated life; and materialists, those who act according to their whims. Whereas the spiritualists have the potential of experiencing spontaneous joy; the materialists, blinded by their exaggerated egoism, are prone to suffer innumerable miseries. Distinctive traits of these two categories of people have been described, in chapter sixteen, in detail.

Vigour, fearlessness, truthfulness, uprightness, self-control, simplicity, non-violence, compassion, forgiveness, patience, gentleness, modesty, purity, tranquility, a loving heart ; and steadiness of the mind are some of the endowments of a spiritualist. He is free from greed, anger, envy ; and excessive pride.

He studies the scriptures, gives charity, performs yagyas ; and practices austerities. He endeavours to gain the knowledge of the self.

All these virtues have been called knowledge because they are the means of gaining wisdom about the self. All such attributes of a spiritualist are conducive to liberation of the soul.

On the other hand, a materialist has no moral scruples or spiritual aim. Hypocrisy, arrogance, excessive pride, anger, harshness and ignorance are said to be his traits. Purity, truth and good conduct are not found in him. Ultimate goal of his life is the enjoyment of the senses. A materialist denies the existence of any divine authority or an established order in the universe. According to him, no god has created the universe.

No one supports it. A materialist believes that there is nothing to be believed in.

He holds that life is caused only by sexual desire, and nothing else. He believes that the world is not based on the principle of truth. He maintains that something in itself is not moral or immoral. There is nothing beyond death. Therefore, one should eat, drink and be merry; in this very life.

Believing that sense gratification is the highest aim of life and there is nothing beyond, a materialist remains engrossed only in the fulfilment of sensory desires.

Bound by hundreds of threads of expectations, and absorbed in lust and anger ; he strives to amass wealth, through unjust means, only for the gratification of his senses. Becoming a slave of insatiable desires and full of hypocrisy, excessive pride and arrogance ; he gets tied, through delusion, to the wrong principles. He acts in the world with impure motives. Therefore, he remains filled with anxiety, till the end. Being exceedingly attached to the sensory pleasures, he suffers innumerable miseries.

Intoxicated by his riches and false prestige, he considers himself to be the mightiest of them all. He believes that he is endowed with perfection. He thinks that he is the master of everyone and also the enjoyer of everything. Deluded by his ignorance, he performs yagyas without following any rules and regulations. He gives charity only for the display of his wealth. But all this religious or even philanthropic show off cannot save him from the consequences of his sinful actions.

Firmly holding to the view that the world is without a moral basis, the materialists often indulge in such cruel deeds that can only lead to large scale destruction.

History is replete with instances where excessive pride of some individuals, communities and nations have brought unspeakable distress, devastation and death. It has been stated that the one who discards scriptural injunctions and acts under the impulse of his desires, he neither attains worldly happiness nor spiritual perfection. Therefore, in day to day life, one should be guided by the advice given in the scriptures. It is important to follow the scriptures as they contain the knowledge gathered by the wise men of earlier generations. It is said that each generation should build upon the foundations of the inherited wisdom and then chart the right course for themselves.

The two types of natures described above represent the two extremes of the wide spectrum of human behaviour. In normal life, no one can be a perfect moralist or a perfect materialist.

Both the value systems coexist, in varying degrees, in everyone's heart. One is called a moralist or a materialist depending upon what traits dominate his personality, at any point of time.

Gita exhorts man not to succumb to the temptation of getting easy money and acquiring unbridled power. Instead, he should shake off his vicious traits and move towards a virtuous life. A proper balance between the two value systems can lead to a more successful and purposeful life.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICE

We, Manmohan Bhardwaj S/o Late Sh. Krishan Lal and Mrs. Virmohani W/o Sh. Manmohan Bhardwaj #612 Sector 2, Panchkula, Haryana, declare that my son Mr. Nitish Bhardwaj are out of our control. We disown him from our moveable/ immoveable property. Anybody dealing with him at their own risk and responsibility.

I, Kamlesh Devi W/o Late Shri Balbir Singh R/o H.No.1332 Sector 23-B Chandigarh declare that my son Sahil Chahar and his wife Neelam are out of my control. I disown them from my all movable and immovable properties. Any body dealing with them at their own risk.

We Balbir Dass Khing S/o Late Tilak Raj and Darshana Kumari W/o Balbir Dass Khing R/o Sai Colony Manwal Bagh Pathankot. My daughter Pooja is not in my control. so I disinherit her from our moveable / immoveable properties. Anybody deals with her shall be responsible himself. Any other disputes makes by her our family should not be responsible.

I, Banwari S/o Maan Singh R/o Village Brahman Majra P.O Jamba Tehsil Nilokheri Distt Karnal I declared my son Rohul Battan is unmarried he live in Hungary Europe my son will Get married in Hungary. If some one objection Please contact my address otherwise I do marriage my son Rohul Battan and his Passport No. M 1716188

I, No. 15154457W Rank: Hav Tukaram Yashawant Kore Son of Yashwant Resident of Haroli R/o Unit 249, Fild Regt C/O 56 APO declare that name of my wife i.e. Jayashri Narayan Kore is wrongly mentioned in my service record of army. Correct name of my wife is Jayashri Tukaram Kore according to her records.

I, Shalini D/o Raj Kumar R/o H.No. 135, Ward Number 20 Thakar Basti, Tehsil & District Fatehabad, Haryana Pin-125050 have changed my name from Shalini to Shweta Bhatia for all Future Purpose.

I, Paramjeet Kaur W/o Sunil Kumar R/o # 311 Behlana, Chandigarh, have changed, my name to Paramjit Kaur.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Prince S/o Rajesh Kumar R/o Village Kasithal, Sub Tehsil Babain Tehsil Ladwa District Kurukshetra, have changed my name to the Prince Saini.

I, Sunita W/o Rajesh Kumar R/o Village Kasithal, Sub Tehsil Babain Tehsil Ladwa District Kurukshetra, have changed my name to the Sanita Rani.

I, Amanjot Singh S/o Harpal Singh Sidhu, R/o Vpo. Gondwal, Tehsil Raikot, Distt. Ludhiana, have changed my name to Amanjot Singh Sidhu.

I, Poonam W/o Jatinder Singh Sasan R/o W.No. 4 H.No. 117 Mohalla Preet Nagar Darapur Urmar Teh-Dasuya (Hoshiarpur) Punjab, India, changed my name to Poonam Sasan.

I, Sukhbir Kaur W/o JC 428201-H Ex.Sub Maj. (Hony Cap) Balbir Singh R/o Jaura Tarn Taran charged my name Sukhbir Kaur to Sukhwinder Kaur.

I, Ashni Kumar S/O Ram Parkash R/O Dhesian Kalna Tehsil Phillaur District Jalandhar Changed My Name To Kumar Ashni.

I, Harpreet Singh Nijjar S/o Tirath Singh R/O Village Ittan Badhi P.O. Manakrai Tehsil & District Jalandhar Changed My Name From Harpreet Singh Nijjar To Harpreet Singh.

I, Swaranjit Kaur D/O Surjeet Singh R/O Lakkarwala Distt Sri Muktsar Sahib Changed My Name To Swaranjit Kaur Gill.

I, Anmol S/O Jagdish Lal R/O Village Baje Ke Tehsil Guruharsahai Distt Ferozepur Punjab Changed My Name To Anmol Kamboj.

I, Vandana Chawla @ Vandana Wadhwa Wife Of Mr. Neeraj Wadhwa R/O H.No 15/32 Subhash Gate Karnal (Haryana) Is One And Same Person. So That Call Me Vandana Wadhwa In Future.

I, Yogesh Alias Yogesh Mohal S/O Kamal Kishore Mohal R/O 422-A, Near Church, New Shastri Nagar, Teh/Distt Pathankot, Both Are Same Person.

I, Jatinder Kaur W/o Rajinder Singh Bajwa R/o #815-A, Uklana Mandi, Distt- Hisar (Hry) have changed my name Jatinder Kaur to Jitander Kour.

I Paramjeet Kaur W/O Ram Bains R/O Village Denowal Khurd P.O Ibrahimpur Tehsil Garhshankar District Hoshiarpur Punjab Have Changed My Name To Kaur Paramjeet.

I Kuldeep Singh S/O Jora Singh R/O Vpo. Mahesari Distt. Moga Have Changed My Name To Kuldeep Singh Gill.

I Mandeep Kaur W/O Kuldeep Singh Gill R/O Vpo. Mahesari Distt. Moga Have Changed My Name To Mandeep Kaur Gill.

I Har Parkash Kaur Sidhu W/O Gurditt Singh Chahal R/O Village Kokri Kalan Distt. Moga Have Changed My Name To Har Parkash Kaur Chahal.

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The Pioneer does not take responsibility for the contents for the advertisement (Display/ Classified) carried in this newspaper. The paper does not endorse the same. Readers are requested to verify the contents on their own.

Classified Advertisement Contact : 94174-19351

SARVA HARYANA GRAMIN BANK
Regional Office: 102, Huda City Centre, Bhiwani-127021
Phone 01664-253579

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE

Whereas, the Authorized Officer of **Sarva Haryana Gramin Bank** under the SARFAESI Act 2002, has taken possession of the secured assets (detailed hereunder), by exercising the powers conferred to him u/s 13(4) of the said act, as the borrower has failed to repay the amount demanded vide demand notice on date as mentioned in the table, issued to them u/s 13(2) of SARFAESI act. **"Sarva Haryana Gramin Bank"** is now selling the said secured assets by the way of inviting bids on "As is where is, As is what is & whatever there is and without recourse basis".
Borrower/Guarantor is hereby given this notice under rule 8(6) & 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to pay the outstanding amount mentioned in the table in the respective loan account together with interest, costs and expenses thereafter, within 30 days from the date of this notice, failing which the auction of the secured assets shall take place.

Name of the Borrower/ Guarantor	Property for Sale	Amount outstanding	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Physical Possession	Reserve Price	EMD	Last date of submission EMD	Date of Auction & Time
Shri Ashok (Borrower) S/o Shri. Nihal Singh and Ugar Sain S/o Hazari Lal (Guarantor) R/o Village Lilus, Siwani	House Site admeasuring extent area 00K-07M (Approx 200 Sq. Yards) i.e. 4/311 share of land measuring 25 Kanals 18 Marlas comprised in Lari No. 822, Khatoni No. 849/1131, Khasra No. 511 and Old Khewat No. 666/1278 situated in Panna Partamal, ward no.-12, Siwani, Tehsil-Siwani, District-Bhiwani.	1177322/- as on 31.08.2020 with further interest plus other charges plus expenses.	27.05.2019	27.08.2020	1420000/-	142000/-	23.10.2020	28.10.2020 at 11: AM

Other Information:
1. Sale is strictly subject to the terms & conditions given in this advertisement.
2. Interested buyers may inspect the asset on request.
3. Interested bidders shall submit the bids along with KYC documents (PAN Card and Address proof) and EMD in a closed envelope addressing the Authorized Officer and inscribing the name of the Account for which bid is being submitted. Bid form is available with the Bank.
4. The original DD/PO/ of the EMD drawn on a scheduled commercial bank in favour of **"SARVA HARYANA GRAMIN BANK"** payable at Bhiwani shall be attached outside the envelope, without which no bids will be accepted.
5. The successful bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale price, adjusting the EMD already paid, within 24 hours and the balance 75% on or before 15th day of sale. In case of default in payment, the amount already deposited shall be liable to be forfeited.
6. Auction will be conducted by the Authorized Officer by opening the closed bids in the presence of the bidders on **28.10.2020 in Sarva Haryana Gramin Bank, Branch-Siwani at 11 AM.** In case any bidder fails to be available on the date and venue, auction will take place in his/her absence.
7. The Authorized officer reserved the right to accept or reject any/all bids without assigning any reason. During the inter-se-bidding, minimum Bid increase amount is 10000/- for the property.
8. The DD/PO submitted as EMD will be returned to the unsuccessful bidders immediately after the sale proceedings which shall carry no interest.
9. All statutory liabilities/taxes/ maintenance fee /property tax/electricity/ water charges etc. outstanding as on date and yet to fall due would be ascertained by the bidder(s) and would be borne by the successful bidder. Authorized officer/bank does not take any responsibility to provide information on the same or pay any encumbrances post sale.
10. For further information Interested parties may contact undersigned on the above stated address and phone numbers or our authorized representative: Branch Manager, BO-Siwani (M) 8901978020 during working hours.
11. This notice is also 30 days sale notice to the borrower to pay the entire dues before the date of sale. In case you have any bidder, he/she can participate in the sale as per terms.

Place : Bhiwani , Haryana — Authorised Officer

M.D.N. COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Narwana Road, Kalayat, Distt. Kaithal
VACANCIES

Principal-01
Assistant Professor:- Perspective in Education/Foundation courses (2). Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Pedagogic Courses (Hindi (1), English(1), Punjabi(1), S.Sl(1), Economics(1), Political Science(1), History(1), Sociology(1), Computer Sci (1), Commerce(1), Music(1), Home Sci. (1), Physical Sci. (1), Biology(1), Math(1)).
Assistant Professor in Physical Education
Assistant Professor in Fine Arts, Dance, Music and Theater.
Librarian
Qualification and pay as per NCTE/K.U. Kurukshetra / Haryana Govt. Norms
Sent complete Bio - Data at E-mail **mdn.institute2gmail.com** and hardcopy along with attested copy of all document, photograph, PAN and Aadhar card by post within a week and a copy of application to Dean of colleges, K.U. Kurukshetra.
Chairman, R.K. Advocate

PUBLIC NOTICE
FORM NO. INC-25A
Before the Regional Director (Northern Region)
Ministry of Corporate Affairs New Delhi
In the matter for the Companies Act, 2013, section 14 of Companies Act, 2013 and rule 41 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014
And
In the matter of M/s New Generation Infrastructures Limited having its registered office at SCO 373-374, Sector 35-B, Chandigarh - Applicant
Notice is hereby given to the general public that the company intending to make an application to the Central Government under sector 14 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with aforesaid rules and is desirous of converting into a private limited company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on 04th September, 2020 at 11:00 A.M. at SCO 373-374 Sector 35-B Chandigarh to enable the company to give effect for such conversion.
Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change/statusof the company may deliver or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his interest and grounds of opposition to the concerned Regional Director (B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi, 110003), within fourteen days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company at its registered office at the address mentioned below:
For and on behalf of the New Generation Infrastructures Limited
Ram Murti Singla
DIN : 00566934
Address of registered office: SCO 373-374 Sector 35-B Chandigarh
Date : 04/09/2020
Place: Chandigarh

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd First Floor, Nehru Sidhant Kender Trust Building, Feroze Gandhi Market Ludhiana 141001

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET
[See proviso to rule 8(6)]
Notice for sale of immovable assets
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s) /Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price / Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mr. Ved Parkash Dhawan (LBLUD00003292884/ LBLUD00003292885) Mr. Sandeep Kumar Dhawan (Co-Borrowers)	Plot No 24, Wakia Baranhara, Aabadi Gitb Homes Near, Golden Avenue, Ludhiana 141007. Ad measuring an area of 100 Sq Yard.	Rs. 35,35,588/- (as on Sep 15,2020.)	Rs. 18,00, 000/- / Rs. 1,80, 000/-	Oct 09, 2020 from 11 AM to 1 PM	Oct 21, 2020 from 11 AM

The online auction will be conducted on website (**URL Link-https://disposalhub.com**) of our auction agency **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited**. The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **OCT 20, 2020** before **5 PM** else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.
The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at **ICICI Bank ltd, First floor Feroz Gandhi market, Ludhiana**. and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before **OCT 20, 2020** before **5 PM** along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at **ICICI Bank ltd, First floor Feroz Gandhi market, Ludhiana** on or before **OCT 20, 2020** before **5 PM**. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of **"ICICI Bank Limited"** payable at **Ludhiana.**
For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact **ICICI Bank Limited** on **9780139915\734020115** or **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited** on **9710029933/9810029926/01244233933**. Please note that Marketing agencies **1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited 2. Shriram Automall India Ltd.** have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.
The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit **www.icicibank.com/n4p4s**

Date: September 21, 2020
Place: Ludhiana
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

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'UNCONSTITUTIONAL', 'ANTI- FARMER' LAWS PUNJAB GOVT TO TAKE BJP, ITS ALLIES TO COURT

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Congress workers and farmers protesting against the Farm Bills on the outskirts of Chandigarh on Sunday
Akhilesh Kumar | The Pioneer

Vowing to fight till his last breath to protect the interests of the State's farmers, Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Sunday said that the State Government will take the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies, including the Akalis, to the court over the new "unconstitutional, undemocratic and anti-farmer" laws of the Central Government.

"We will move the courts and fight the draconian legislations as soon as they get the presidential nod and become the law of the land," he said, expressing shock at the way the BJP-led Union Government brute-forced the Agriculture Bills through the Rajya Sabha on Sunday.

The Chief Minister questioned the rationale behind putting the controversial and vicious Bills, which were a blatant encroachment of the State's powers and control of the Agriculture sector, to voice vote, despite strong reservations by the Opposition and inadequate numbers in the House.

Why did the House not go for division of votes on this critical issue, which has even divided the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), he asked.

Capt Amarinder said that his Government will not allow the Central Government, of which the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) continues shamelessly to be a part, to trample the rights and interests of the farmers through these cruel legislations designed to destroy the farmers, and Punjab state for which agriculture is its lifeline. "We stand with the farmers and will do whatever it takes to protect their interests," he declared.

"They (BJP and its allies) clearly don't care for what these laws will do to the farmers," he said, flaying the BJP-led Government for selling the interests of the farmers to big corporates.

BJP's so-called 'watershed' moment will be the death of agriculture and will endanger the nation's food security, warned the Chief Minister.

"By pushing the Bills through without consultation with the key stakeholders and even without taking the Government of Punjab, a major contributor to India's agricultural sector growth, into confidence, the Central Government has shown that it has no concern whatsoever for the farmers or the farm sector," he said.

Pointing out that the Bills nowhere make any mention of retaining the MSP (minimum support price), Capt Amarinder said that this clearly exposes the "ill intent" of the Central Government, which has a poor trust record as far as states go.

"If they could not adhere to the clearly defined provisions on GST, how can one trust them to uphold their verbal assurances on MSP," he questioned. The CM asked 'if these legislations are actually revolutionary and in the interests of farmers, why are the farmers out on the roads in protest?' The farmers are not fools and would not be marching to Delhi, braving a pandemic, if they did not find the Bills damaging and detrimental to their interests, he said.

Pointing out that these farmers were nowhere near getting the Government-mandated MSP on their foodgrains in the open market that exists even today to a limited extent, the Chief Minister said that it was unfortunate that instead of strengthening the State-led marketing system, as the Congress had promised in its manifesto, the Central Government had chosen to end it completely.

He also lashed out at the Opposition for continuing to mislead the farmers by spread misinformation on the Congress manifesto of 2019 Lok Sabha polls, which spoke of repeal of existing APMC Act in order to bring a new, improved legislation that would provide for more markets and more facilities for procurement of the farmers' produce.

What is more, the Congress manifesto clearly and categorically promised to retain the MSP regime, which the BJP Government is refusing to do, he added.

Punjab Cong, Akalis enter verbal duel on farm bills

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

WHY MUM ON PASSING OF FARM ORDINANCES WITH HARSIMRAT BEING PART OF UNION CABINET: RANDHAWA ASKS BADAL

Punjab Cabinet Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa on Sunday questioned former Chief Minister and Akali veteran Parkash Singh Badal as to why he kept mum when the farm ordinances were passed in the presence of his daughter-in-law Harsimrat Badal as the Union Minister before applauding her "resignation drama" as sacrifice. "Also explain when the close allies SAD and BJP would part ways because Akali Dal is still a part of BJP-led NDA which brought anti-farmer ordinances.

Randhawa said that it would have been better if the SAD Patron could clarify before patting his party on the back as to which one of his statements given within a span of fortnight is to be believed. "The senior Badal, who sang peans to the ordinances 15 days before, has taken a u-turn like his son and daughter-in-law and started opposing the ordinances," added Randhawa.

JAKHAR SLAMS SAD FOR ACTING AS BJP AGENTS TO MISLEAD FARMERS

Punjab Congress president Sunil Jakhar on Sunday that that SAD, which has transformed itself into "Sukhbir Akali Dal", was now acting in the State as 'BJP agent' in a bid to mislead the farmers. "Their aim is to weaken the parties which have united against the genocidal policies of the Modi government," he said.

"Earlier acting as BJP agents, Akali leaders tried to mislead the farmers about 'black laws'. They campaigned for the last three months in every forum, they also arranged a letter of the Union Agriculture Minister, supporting the 'black laws' describing the same in the interest of the farmers," he said.

Jakhar said that two facts prove that SAD was still not interested in safeguarding the farmers' interests but was actually working for the fulfillment of aspirations of its leaders sitting in Delhi.

"Firstly, Harsimrat resigned from the Union Ministry but said that SAD would remain a partner in the Central Government. Secondly, she still says that she herself doesn't feel that the agriculture amendment laws were anti-farmer but farmers were terming these as anti-farmers," he added.

SAD DARES CM TO FACE FARMERS, ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS

SAD on Sunday asked Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh to first tell why he had supported the framing of agricultural ordinances before asking any questions from the opposition. SAD's Kisan wing president and former Minister Sikandar Singh Maluka said that Capt Amarinder did not have any answers to the questions and that was why he was trying to shoot and scoot as always. You should stand your ground and answer the questions to the face of the farmers instead of hiding out in Siswan farmhouse," he said.

Punjab Minister asks Arhtiyas to protest 'draconian' farm bills

PNS ■ SANGRUR/CHANDIGARH

Punjab Minister asks Arhtiyas to protest "draconian" farm bills; 'Hold protest rally in Parliament street, call chakka jam in North India'

Punjab Cabinet Minister Vijay Inder Singla on Sunday gave a call to the arhtiya (commission agents) community to protest the new draconian farm bills that the Central Government is trying to force down their throat.

"I proudly say that I belong to the Arhtiya community that is the strongest link between the government and the farmers. Arhtiyas are the custodians of anaj mandis (grain markets) which are like places of worship in modern agrarian states. We will be forced to hit the roads if the Central Government does not withdraw these drastic legislations," said Singla while addressing a meeting of Punjab-wide arhtiyas who had called upon him at his residence in Sangrur.

Singla made an appeal to the Arhtiya community to hold a protest rally in the Parliament street apart from calling a "chakka jam" in the north India in solidarity with the farmers in their protests against the farm bills.

He also appealed them to precisely follow the directions and advisory of Health Department to avert threat of COVID-19 contraction. Singla, the state's School Education and Public Works Minister, expressed apprehensions that seven lakh people in Punjab will be rendered unemployed and jobless as the new legislations will deliver a deadly blow to the traditional Anaj Mandi system.

He added that Punjab Government would do everything possible to prevent the implementation of these bills as APMC, guarded by arhtiyas, contribute Rs 3700 crore annually to the exchequer.

ARHTIYA ASSOCIATION PASSES RESOLUTION CONDEMNING FARM BILLS, TO LAUNCH MASSIVE PROTESTS

Arhtiya Associations of Punjab on Sunday passed a resolution condemning the drastic farm bills being pushed by the Union Government, while announcing to launch massive protests to vehemently oppose these legislations.

Terming the new farm bills as 'death warrant' of the arhtiyas, the community leaders called upon Punjab Cabinet Minister Vijay Inder Singla and reposed their faith in his leadership. The Association declared that it will launch massive protests under Singla's leadership.

The Arhtiya community appealed the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, through the resolution, to revoke the new bills as they have changed definition of "trade area", "traders" and "dispute resolution" which will be a death knell to the traditional Anaj Mandi system.

The resolution has also expressed apprehensions that seven lakh people including 28,000 licensed arhtiyas, their clerks, labour spread across 1860 Anaj Mandis in Punjab will be rendered jobless if the Bill is pushed in its current form.

Haryana Deputy CM reassures farmers that bills will not harm their interests

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Deputy Chief Minister made it clear that farmers would have the right of MSP and asked them to not get misled

Under pressure to follow in the footsteps of BJP's ally-SAD- on the issue of three-farm bills, Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Sunday reassured farmers that the bills will not harm the interests of the farming community.

"There is not a single line of eliminating minimum support price (MSP) in three farm ordinances. The crops of the farmers would be procured on the MSP and they would have right to sell the crop in the market openly in case they receive high rates," Dushyant said while talking to the mediapersons here.

Dushyant said he will step down from his portfolio if any attempt to discontinue MSP system surfaces.

The resignation of Shiromani Akali Dal's lone Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet over three farm bills has raised pressure on BJP's Haryana ally- Dushyant Chautala, whose Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) is part of the state's coalition government.

A day before, a hashtag demanding the withdrawal of JJP's support to BJP was trending on Twitter.

Dushyant's latest assurance to the farmers came on the day when the upper House passed two of the three controversial farm bills.

The Deputy Chief Minister made it clear that farmers would have the right of MSP and asked them to not get misled.

He also accused former Chief Minister and Leader of opposition, Bhupinder Singh Hooda of trying to misguide the farmers for furthering his own political interests.

Not only did Hooda himself advocated open market for farmers but also signed on such recommendations of a committee set up by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during the regime of UPA as its head, he claimed. Lashing out at Hooda, Dushyant asked, why the former CM is adopting double standards on this and what is the reason behind misleading the farmers? Dushyant said that the Congress party supported contract farming in its vision document during its first tenure of UPA and now Congress is opposing the bills for political gains.

The Deputy CM further said that in the coming paddy procurement season, each grain would be procured on MSP and further maize would also be procured on MSP.

The farmers are his family and he would do anything to ensure their welfare, Dushyant added.

Notably, the lathi-charge on farmers on September 10 during a protest rally in Haryana's Kurukshetra district had intensified problems for the JJP.

Many farmers were badly injured and the opposition had accused the government of suppressing the farmers' voice. Following this, the JJP had condemned the incident and demanded an inquiry into the matter.

29 deaths, 2,305 fresh Covid cases reported in Haryana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The worst-affected districts in the state-Faridabad has till now reported 17761 positive cases and 205 deaths while Gurugram has reported 17842 cases and 160 fatalities due to Covid-19

Haryana on Sunday reported 29 Covid-19 related fatalities as 2305 fresh cases surfaced in the state. With this, the state's tally of positive cases reached 111257 and the total toll stood at 1149.

Three deaths each were reported from Kurukshetra, Sirsa, Karnal, Ambala, two deaths each were reported in Yamunanagar, Faridabad, Panchkula, Hisar, Sonepat, one death each was reported in Rohtak, Gurugram, Mahendragarh, Nuh, Bhiwani, Fatehabad and Kaithal, the Haryana Health Department's evening bulletin stated.

"Out of 2035 fresh cases reported on Sunday, a maximum of 405 were reported from Gurugram, 257 from Hisar, 234 from Sonepat, 203 from Faridabad, 180 from Ambala, 141 from Panipat, 133 from Panchkula and 110 from Sirsa among other cases. Out of 378 critical patients admitted in the hospitals, 318 patients were on oxygen support while 60 were on ventilator," the health bulletin stated. 88697 patients including 2547 in the last 24 hours have recovered and have been discharged from hospitals in the state. There were a total of 21411 active cases in Haryana till the evening, the bulletin said.

The worst-affected districts in the state-Faridabad has till now reported 17761 positive cases and 205 deaths while Gurugram has reported 17842 cases and 160 fatalities due to COVID-19.

SAD urges President not to sign farm Bills, seeks personal audience

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

SUKHBIR'S ATTACK ON BJP

- "The hasty decisions taken in a fleeting moment of overzealous stubbornness do not leave permanent scars on the nation's psyche nor inflict a deep wound on the long-term vital interests of the farmers, the Farm and Mandi labour and Dalits"
- "Democracy is not about majoritarian oppression but about consultation, conciliation, and consensus. All three democratic virtues were ignored in today's proceedings"

Making another effort to stop the implementation of agriculture legislations by the BJP-led NDA Government at the Centre, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), NDA's prime ally, on Sunday urged the President Ram Nath Kovind not to put his seal of approval on the Bills passed by the Parliament on the farmers' produce marketing.

"I beseech you to please stand by the beleaguered and toiling farmers, farm labour (khet mazdoors), Mandi labour, and Dalits in their hour of need. They are facing exploitation and look up to you to exercise your discretion as the highest executive in the country and come to their rescue by not signing these bills so that they do not acquire the finality of an Act," said SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal in a passionate plea to the President.

He added, "Failing this, the poor and the beleaguered classes and their future generations will never forgive us."

Sukhbir has requested the President to grant a personal audience to a delegation of senior leaders of his party all of whom are themselves farmers. As a result of this, Sukhbir's proposed visit to Darbar Sahib is being rescheduled.

SAD chief has also appealed to the President to return the Bills to the Parliament for reconsideration so that "the hasty decisions taken in a fleeting moment of overzealous stubbornness do not leave permanent scars on the nation's psyche nor inflict a deep wound on the long-term vital interests of the farmers, the Farm and Mandi labour and Dalits". "There is still time to reconsider this decision and undo the damage it threatens to cause to our overall national interests, especially at this critical juncture when the country's economy requires social stability, peace, and harmony to recover from the traumatic after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic," he said.

Punjab BJP not to sever ties with Akali Dal despite differences on farm bills

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

The panel also decided that the BJP workers would meet the farmer leaders to apprise them of the benefits of these farm bills

Facing opposition from its own ally, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has decided not to prune its decades old relationship with its partner in Punjab. In its core committee meeting, Punjab BJP on Sunday made it clear that the growing discontentment with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) over the farm bills would not compel it to axe its ties with the Punjab's regional party.

In fact, the party has left the decision — of continuing the alliance or not — on the Akali Dal. Notably, a day before, the Akali Dal's core group has also decided that it would not withdraw its support to the NDA Government at the Centre.

Even as the voices, demanding separation of ties with the Akali Dal, has been growing within the state party unit since the past few years, the core committee's decision has raised many eyebrows. It has been learnt that by doing so, the saffron party has adopted the 'wait and watch policy' to see the Akali Dal's next move.

Moreover, by putting the ball in the Akali Dal's court, the party has tried to give an indication of how much importance the NDA's oldest ally enjoys.

"The agriculture bills would protect the interests of farmers. BJP has come up with these bills to bring a better change in the farmers' lives," said Punjab BJP chief Ashwani Sharma while supporting the new laws.

Sharma added, "Harsimrat Kaur Badal's resignation from the Union Cabinet is sad. But the BJP could not do anything, as it SAD's internal matter. We have decided not to pull out from the alliance. Now, it is up to the Akali Dal to decide whether it wanted to stay in the alliance or not."

During the Core Committee meeting, attended by eight (out of total 10) members including former Minister Madan Mohan Mittal, former state BJP chief Rajinder Bhandari, former Minister Manoranjan Kalia, BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh, among others, detailed discussions were held over the farm bills.

Describing the move as "a start of new era for the farmers", the core panel decided to launch a massive awareness campaign to apprise the farmers about the new legislations.

A party leader told The Pioneer that during the meeting, the members observed that earlier Akali leaders were supporting the bills but later, due to the farmers' protest, they came under pressure and started opposing the new laws as "anti-farmers".

The core panel also discussed the resignation by SAD MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal from the Union Cabinet saying that it was the result of farmers' protest against the bills. "Harsimrat's resignation would not affect the alliance of BJP and SAD and we would continue for the welfare of the people of Punjab," said the BJP leader, who did not wish to be named.

The panel also decided that the BJP workers would meet the farmer leaders to apprise them of the benefits of these farm bills. "BJP would also approach the farmers at the village level to make them aware of the bills. We would tell them that the MSP would continue in future and there was nothing to fear," added the BJP leader.

Punjab allows Classes IX to XII students to visit schools with parents' written consent

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

From Monday (September 21), the students of Classes IX to XII in Punjab can visit their schools on a voluntary basis to seek guidance from their teachers, but with written permission of their parents, notwithstanding the mounting cases of the novel coronavirus.

Punjab Government, on Sunday, announced the relaxation for the students living "outside high-risk containment zones", making a partial modification of the Centre's Unlock 4.0 guidelines.

As per Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on September 8, 2020, the students will have to secure written consent of their parents or guardians.

The decision came a day after the State Government on Saturday allowed the opening of colleges for research scholars and postgraduate students pursuing technical and professional courses requiring experimental work.

Notably, the schools and colleges have been closed since March 22, when the Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a nationwide lockdown to arrest the growth of the coronavirus. Over the months, most of the economic activities have been allowed by the Centre but educational institutions remained shut to prevent transmission of the virus among students.

The Central Government, earlier this month, allowed opening of schools for senior students from September 21. It had allowed the states to take an independent call regarding this.

An official spokesperson said that the State Home Department has issued detailed instructions to also permit Skill or Entrepreneurship Training in National Skill Training Institutes, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), Short term training centers registered with the National Skill Development Corporation or State Skill Development Missions or other ministries of Government of India or State Governments.

Likewise, the activities of National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Developments (NIESBUD), Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) and their training providers have also been allowed from September 21, 2020, subject to strict adherence of the said SOPs.

The orders of MHA issued on August 29, 2020, and the subsequent guidelines issued by the State Government on September 9, 2020, imposing additional restrictions in urban areas including curfew on Sundays would continue to be in operation, added the spokesperson.

Modi calls passage of farm reform Bills 'historic'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday described the passing of the farm reform Bills by Parliament as "historic" and said it would provide "new opportunities" to farmers to sell their produce on higher prices and "free farmers from middlemen".

Soon after Rajya Sabha passed the two key farm Bills aimed at giving 'marketing freedom to farmers', the Prime Minister assured the farmers that Minimum support Price (MSP) and Government procurement of their produce would continue.

The Bill has been described by Opposition and even RSS-affiliated Bhartiya Kisan Sangh as "tilted in favour of the corporates" and against small and marginal farmers.

The BKS had demanded that bills must be sent to the parliamentary standing committee on agriculture for wider consultations and suitable amendments.

Those opposing the 'reform bills' apprehend that with the marketing reforms, government may do away with the MSP and in the new contract system leave around 87 per cent small farmers to a lesser fate vis-à-vis the farmers with big land hoardings.

The Government did not concede the demand and 'successfully pushed' the bills in the upper house after having passed it in the Lok Sabha.

"The passing of historic agrarian reform bills in the Lok Sabha is an important moment for the country`s farmers and the agricultural sector. These bills will truly free the farmers from middlemen and all obstacles," Modi tweeted.

Asserting that it would open a new window for the farmers, Modi said it would empower farmers.

"This agrarian reform will provide new opportunities for farmers to sell their produce, which will increase their profits. With this, our agriculture sector will get the benefit of modern technology, whereas the farmers will be empowered," he said.

"I assure my farmer brothers and sisters that the system of MSP and Government procurement will remain. These bills are really going to empower the farmers by giving them many more options," the PM said in his tweets.

"I request the farmers and all those associated with the agriculture sector to listen to the speech given by the Agriculture Minister, Narendra Singh Tomar, during the discussion on the agricultural reform bills in the Lok Sabha," he said.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who had navigated the bills in both the houses, said the day has opened new vista for agriculture community and charged opposition with "politicising" the issue.

Tomar said that despite recommendations of various commissions & experts, Congress never did justice to farmers who found themselves helpless for years. He added, "'Today, when Congress realised they don't have support in Rajya Sabha, they resorted to 'gundagardi'."

BJP President J P Nadda said that the Government under the leadership of Prime Minister has "liberated the farmers from injustice" they were facing for the last 70 years.

Nadda also called the opposition irresponsible for their behaviour in Rajya Sabha while the bill was tabled.

"The irresponsible act of opposition is unfortunate. They violated the protocols, Chairman will take note of it and take action.

The democratic system should function smoothly, we'll request Chairman to take steps for the same," said Nadda who is also a member of the Rajya Sabha.

Defence Minister Rajath Singh lauded the bill and congratulated Agriculture Minister for explaining all aspects of the Bills with clarity and conviction in both the Houses of Parliament.

Taking to Twitter, Rajnath, also a former agriculture minister, said, "With the passing of two landmark agriculture Bills in Rajya Sabha today, India has cemented the strong foundation for 'Atmanirbhar Agriculture'. This is the result of endless dedication and determination of the Govt under the leadership of PM Shri @narendramodi," he sought to say.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 were passed in Rajya Sabha on Sunday (September 20) by voice vote despite stiff protest by Opposition lawmakers.

The bills were cleared amid mayhem in Rajya Sabha with several MPs taking to the well of the House and raising anti-government slogans.

Earlier, during a discussion on the farm bills, Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal, an ally of the BJP, announced in Lok Sabha that his party opposes the bills.

The lone SAD minster in the Modi-Government Harshimrat Kaur has resigned.

Rajnath allays farmers' fear, says MSP, APMC will continue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Sunday fielded Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who pitched himself as a 'farmer' and showcased his credentials as a former Agriculture Minister, to allay the fears of the farmers over the farm Bills passed by the Parliament. Singh said he wanted to send a clear message to the farmers that the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) would continue for their benefit.

Strongly condemning the behaviour of the Opposition parties against Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha Harivansh Narayan Singh, the Defence Minister described it as "very shameful".

He, however, left the question of no confidence motion proposed by the Opposition against the Deputy Chairman to the discretion of the Chairman of the Rajya sabha M Venkaiah Naidu.

On the question as to why the Government does not remove the misgivings on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) by guaranteeing it in the Bill as was suggested by the RSS-affiliated Swadeshi Jagran Manch, Rajanth, who was addressing a press conference along with five other Union Ministers, said such was never done in the Act .

He said the Government has increased the MSP and been successful "to a large extent" towards "doubling the income of the farmers" and "we are moving further in the direction".

Condemning the ruckus in the RS, he said he was " deeply pained" by the misbehaviour by Opposition members with 'Harivashji' who, he said, always practiced high values. The Minister said it was unprecedented in the history of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for members to tear the rule-book and stand on the chair of the Deputy-Chairman.

The Minister said the opposition actions in the upper house, which is described as "house of elders", were very sad. Its "mere condemnation is not enough". " This has deeply hurt and lowered the parliamentary dignity," he said

On the question of opposition contemplating no-confidence motion against Harivansh, Rajnath said it was the "prerogative of the Chairman of the RS to decide on the issue."

When asked why the Deputy-Chairman did not accept the demand of a division in the house, Union Minister of state for Minority Affairs Mikhtar Abbas Naqvi responded by saying that the Deputy Chairman asked opposition MPs to go back to their seats but instead he was encircled and were "slogan-shouting".

Besides Rajnath and Naqvi, other union ministers included Prakash Javadekar, Prahlad Joshi, Thawarchand Gehlot and Piyush Goyal.

Farm reform Bills anti-farmers, says Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Soon after Union Minister Rajnath Singh briefed the media over the controversial farm Bills, Congress said the legislations, which were passed in Rajya Sabha amid a din, are against the interest of farmers and the day will be remembered as a black day for democracy.

The party announced to move a no confidence motion against Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh who, according to Congress and other Opposition parties, did not pay heed to the demands of the Opposition benches and by action completely favoured and worked for the Government.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, who is abroad, tweeted that the farmers grow gold from land, but the arrogance of the Modi government is making farmers shed tears of blood.

"I saw the press conference by Rajnath Singh and five other Ministers. They are justifying Deputy Chairman's action and attitude. That was very unfortunate. We expected decent reaction from senior Ministers. They should have at least condemned the practice by Deputy Chairman," said Congress leader KC Venugopal during press briefing. He was joined by party leaders Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Randeep Surjewala, Rajeev Satav and Pratap Singh Bajwa.

"The members become upset. Everyone went in the well of the House. BJP leader Bhupinder Yadav was also seen whispering in Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman's ear. What conspiracy is happening? Today's entire episode was a conspiracy by BJP leaders. We are not going to leave this issue," Venugopal said addressing late event press conference.

Opp blames Govt for lapses in curbing Covid pandemic

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha on Sunday debated the Covid-19 scenario across the country with the initiator of the debate RSP MP NK Premachandran, ironically, unable to attend as he tested positive on Saturday.

Opposition MPs highlighted many lapses in the administration for the past six months to tackle the pandemic and blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for declaring lockdown within four hours, leading to chaos and miseries in public and migrant labourers fleeing back to their home towns from their work places.

BJP MPs countered the Opposition charges and highlighted the faults in administration in the Opposition-ruled states like Maharashtra. Opening up the debate, Speaker Om Birla assured that he will give chance to all MPs and urged them to bring out the problems faced in their constituencies. "This debate should be specific. Come with your experiences," he said, opening the floor for the more than four hour long debate.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor highlighted the lacunas in the health administration of the country in tackling the pandemic and blamed the Government for having no data on this regard. He charged the Government with creating disasters in economy, administration and employment losses during the pandemic due to non-consultative nature with the Opposition parties. "The creation of a Government-made disaster laid the foundations for the widespread distress and anguish that followed a series of events that should haunt each of us and has tarnished this Government's moral standing.

"Across the country, we know about the long lines that immediately sprung up outside our kirana shops as shocked citizens queued up to purchase critical rations to see this period through. Thousands took to our bus depots and railway stations. People made desperate attempts to make it back to their respective homes. Businessmen and women who had travelled to other cities for meetings were stranded by the PM's high-handed actions and those overseas suddenly were left with no way to return back to the country," said Tharoor inviting counters from BJP.

Opposition MPs including Karti Chidambaram critcised Prime Minister for "unscientific" measures like lighting and hitting on plates from balconies.

BJP MPs, including Kirit Premjibhai Solanki, highlighted the slew of measures implemented by the Centre to tackle the pandemicand accused the Opposition of "involving in just blame games."

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey said Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan were always in touch with all opposition leaders and Chief Ministers across the country and improvising measures on a regular basis. "Everybody was united.

In Hyderabad, Owaisi and RSS were united in the field to serve people.

It is unfair that you criticizing us unnecessarily," said Dubey urging the Opposition MPs to consult their Chief Ministers before leveling allegations.

Mandatory for PG med students to serve in designated district hosps for 3 mths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a move aimed to ensure trained health human resources across the districts, postgraduate (PG) medical students, from both private and Government medical colleges, will have to compulsorily serve in a designated district hospital (100 bedded or more) for three months.

Besides meeting the human resource shortage at the district level, the measure would also help expose the future physicians/specialists of wide-ranging clinical material and enables them to learn care of such patients in ecosystems with varied resources and teams.

Paving way for such move, the Board of Governors at the Medical Council of India (MCI) has launched a District Residency Program from the current academic session 2020 and a gazette notification has been issued in this regard. Such rotation shall take place in the 3rd or 4th or 5th semester of the Postgraduate program and postgraduate medical students undergoing training shall be termed as a 'District Resident'.

The Programme will be implemented with the PG (broad specialty) batch joining in 2020, stated gazette notification, which also laid down the details of the program. Following the amendment of the Post-graduate Medical Education Regulations, 2000, a new clause has been added to incorporate the District Residency Programme.

The programme is for all PG medical students in government and private medical colleges including those affiliated to deemed universities and students who fail to complete the course will not be allowed to take their final exams.

District hospitals represent the backbone of the country's secondary-level health care providing specialty treatment. These hospitals are closer to people and an overwhelming source of services in rural and urban areas.

The student will be drawing full stipend/salary from their medical colleges during this duration and would also be getting a certificate at the end of their training.

ICMR mulls saliva-based test for Covid-19 detection: Vardhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ICMR is actively exploring saliva-based test for detection of COVID-19, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Sunday and asserted that no significant or drastic mutation in strains of SARS-CoV-2 has been found in India till now.

During an interaction with his social media followers on 'Sunday Samvad' platform , Dr Harsh Vardhan informed them the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has been conducting large-scale sequencing of nationally representative strains of SARS-CoV-2 virus collected for several months over different time-points.

Detailed results on mutations and evolution of the virus will be available in early October, he said.

Meanwhile, India's first CRISPR Covid-19 test 'Feluda' that claims to match accuracy levels of traditional RT-PCR tests, with quicker turnaround time has been given nod by the Drug Controller General of India.

"Feluda met the high-quality benchmarks with 96 per cent sensitivity and 98 per cent specificity for detecting the novel coronavirus," said the joint statement by Tata Group and CSIR-IGIB (Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology which have jointly developed the test.

CRISPR is a genome-editing technology to diagnosing diseases.

"The Tata CRISPR test is the world's first diagnostic test to deploy a specially adapted Cas9 protein to successfully detect the virus causing Covid-19. This marks a significant achievement for the Indian scientific community, moving from R&D to a high-accuracy, scalable and reliable test in less than 100 days. The Tata CRISPR test achieves accuracy levels of traditional RT-PCR tests, with quicker turnaround time, less expensive equipment, and better ease of use. Moreover, CRISPR is a futuristic technology that can also be configured for detection of multiple other pathogens in the future," the statement added.

Tata described it as a 'Made in India' product that is "safe, reliable, affordable, and accessible"

Home Ministry stresses on border management

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has stressed that border management along frontiers with Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar should be emphasized as seriously as those along the borders with China and Pakistan.

Border guarding forces like Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and Assam Rifles have been asked to hold meetings with Union Home Secretary Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Bharat Electronic Limited (BEL) to identify technological solutions for improved border management. The decision was taken by Union Home Ministry Amit Shah on April 2 to review the progress of the recommendations made during his meeting with the border guarding forces late last year, officials said.

The move assumes significance as the frontiers along Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar are considered friendly. Strengthening border management on the alignment with these countries could be seen in the backdrop of either China's footprint in these countries or Beijing's likely intent to provoke them in order to reduce Indian influence in the region.

In the backdrop of Doklam faceoff and Chinese designs, Shah was alerted and in a farsighted move sought prompt strengthening of border guarding mechanism, officials added.

Pak has been eliminating its Sikh population for decades: Author

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan has been eliminating its Sikh population for decades through killings, abductions and forced marriages of young women, yet is funding and fueling Khalistani terrorism and separatist movement globally to achieve it sinister plans to break up India, a Canadian expert, who authored a recently released report on the subject, has said.

Terry Milewski, who wrote the September 9 report "Khalistan: A Project of Pakistan" published by the Canadian think-tank MacDonald-Laurier Institute, said the Khalistani terrorist had sworn their allegiance to Pakistan, which in turn has pledged to play the tunes of China.

He made these observations at a webinar "Khalistani Terrorism and Canada" organised by Delhi-headquartered think-tank Law and Society Alliance and strategic affairs publication Defence.Capital through video conferencing over the weekend.

The MacDonald-Laurier Institute report has triggered an intense global debate on Khalistani terrorism, and exposing Pakistan's major hand in it. Milewski said his report had exposed the Khalistan extremists and Pakistan, where real Sikhs still suffer from forcible conversion to Islam, attack on Gurudwara, abductions and killings.

He said the trigger for writing the report even after 35 years of the Khalistani terrorists' Air India bombing, the largest mass killing Canada has ever seen and its victims yet to see complete justice delivered, was the ambitious Khalistan map that he saw of the 'Referendum 2020' campaign. The proposed Khalistan map had included several parts of India, including some landmass of Rajasthan, the entire Indian side of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Delhi.

"But this map, put up by Sikhs For Justice as part of the voter enlisting exercise in Canada, did not claim a single inch of Pakistani territory as part of Khalistan. It should have included Lahore, from where Maharaja Ranjit Singh ran an empire, and Nakanana Sahib, where Guru Nanak Dev Ji was born. Why are those parts of land with Sikh history being left out? The answer is that people who are organising the movement for Khalistan cannot afford to run the campaign without Pakistan's monetary and other kinds of support. They do not want to annoy their masters."

Milewski said he had seen the open Pakistan support to the extremist Khalistani during the August 15 protests organised in front of Indian missions in Canada.

220 Covid-19 insurance claims pending with insurance firms till Sept 17, Parliament told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As on September 17, at least 220 Covid-19 insurance claims are pending with the insurance companies. Of these, in 212 cases, complete claim documents are to be submitted by the states and eight claims approved by the insurance company are pending for the nominee details, said the Government in Parliament on Sunday.

The Centre has, through a number of letters, asked states and Union Territories to ensure swift processing of insurance claims under the 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package' to frontline health workers fighting COVID-19, Minister of State for Health Ashwini Choubey said in a written reply in Rajya Sabha. Replying to another question, the Minister said that disposal of biomedical waste including PPE kits worn by healthcare professionals and public became a challenge during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Replying to another query, Choubey said India has 15,403 Covid-19 treatment facilities with 15,54,022 isolation beds, 63,758 ICU beds and 2,32,505 oxygen supported beds while so far, a total of 344.78 lakh N95 masks and 141.46 lakh PPE kits have been supplied to states, Union Territories and central government institutions.

"There is no shortage of PPE kits and ventilators in the dedicated Covid-19 facilities across the country," the minister said.

China agrees for talk to defuse border tension

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After dilly dallying for days, China has agreed to have another round of high level military level talks with India on Monday to resolve the ongoing tension at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. This meeting was agreed upon in the parleys between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on September 10 in Moscow. The two ministers agreed for speedy disengagement and de-escalation at the border.

The military talks comprise Corps Commander level talks between Lt General Harinder Singh and his Chinese counterpart Major General Liu Lin. They have already held five rounds of talks since June 6 to bring down temperatures but these parleys did not yield any result. The last round was held on August 2 and both the sides agreed to withdraw mutually from all the friction points and reduce additional troops and weapons from the depth areas on either sides of the LAC.

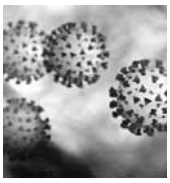
However, China did not honour the commitment and refused to withdraw troops leading to increasing tension in the already volatile situation. In fact, this issue figured prominently during Defence Minister Rajnath Singh talks with China defence minister Wei Fenghe and the foreign ministers of the two nations.

At the moment, more than one lakh troops from both the countries are amassed at the 1,700 km LAC in the Ladakh. The China Study Group headed by National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval two days back finalized the stand to be taken by the Indian commander during the forthcoming talks

The high powered CSG attended by the Defence Minister and the external affairs minister besides the military top brass also reviewed the operational readiness of the armed forces in guarding the 4,000 km long LAC stretching from Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east.

TN shows decline in cases, surge continues in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI/KOCHI



Number of Covid-19 patients in Kerala are increasing gradually while Tamil Nadu is showing a fall in the number of cases.

Sunday saw Kerala diagnosing 4,696 new patients with Covid-19 while the number of new patients in Tamil Nadu stood at 5,516. There were 46, 703 active cases in Tamil Nadu as on Sunday while the number of active Covid-19 patients in Kerala reached 39,415.

The day saw Kerala Government confirming 16 fatalities while Tamil Nadu saw 60 patients succumbing to the pandemic. The number of new patients diagnosed in Kerala are increasing by the day while that of Tamil Nadu is coming down.

The fatalities registered in Tamil Nadu has come down since September 13. While Tamil Nadu saw 73 persons succumbing to the pandemic on September 13, the number has come down to 60 on Sunday (with occasional minute changes).

Kerala Chief Minister Pinaryi Vijayan and health minister K K Shylaja had forecast early this month that the number of new patients as well as death toll are certain to increase manifold.

Tamil Nadu has not relaxed the aggressive testing it has undertaken from day one. On Sunday, the State tested 84,338 persons for Covid 19 while Kerala's figures stood at 41,630.

In Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram registered 892 new patients on Sunday while Ernakulam (537) and Kozhikode (536) finished second and third places respectively.

Chennai diagnosed 996 new persons on Sunday. Coimbatore (568) and Cuddalore (297) remained areas of concern while other districts showed decline in new cases.

Tunnel found in Al-Qaeda mole's house

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

One of the Al Qaeda terror moles Abu Sufiyan arrested from Murshidabad had constructed a secret tunnel inside his house at Raninagar, National Investigation Agency sources that busted the network said adding the tunnel apparently made to store explosives was about 7-8 feet deep.

Sufiyan's kin however contradicted the claim saying it was not a tunnel but a newly constructed sanitary tank still not in use.

"They came and arrested my husband without any proof… you can ask the locals who would vouch for his honesty and straightforwardness. He never killed a crow

. Insofar as the tunnel is concerned it is a new sanitary tank which was covered with a tin and would be put to use soon," Nrunnisa Biwi the wife of Sufiyan said.

A neighbour Manjur Sheikh too said that he had "personally gone into the tunnel after the news became public but it did not look like a tunnel. It is more of a tank chamber than anything else."

Sufiyan is one of the six Qaeda terror moles arrested on Saturday from Murshidabad bordering Bangaldesh. His other three cronies including mastermind Murshid was pocked up from Ernakulam district of Kerala from where he operated the network under the instructions of one Hamza currently being looked for the NIA.

Murshid too is from Murshidabad and was directed by his 'handlers' to recruit people for some bigger plans.

NIA sources also informed having recovered two Kashmir sim cards from the persons of Najmul Sakib and Atiur two other moles who were second year science students. Huge monetary transactions were made from their accounts sources said.

A Kolkata court granted a transit remand for the accused who would be produced at the Patiala House Court in Delhi before September 25, said Shyamal Ghosh NIA advocate.

Meanwhile, Bengal Governor Jagdeep Shankar once again attacked the Trinamool Congress Government for reducing the State into a "home to illegal bomb-making."

Attacking the State Government for the worsening law and order situation he said "State has become home to illegal bomb making that has the potential to unsettle democracy," adding police were "busy in carrying out political errands and taking on the opposition. Those at helm of the WB Police cannot escape their accountability for this alarming decline in law and order"Alleging that the Director General of Police was taking an "ostrich stance" which was "very disturbing," he said "How far distanced is DGP from reality is cause of worry. His 'Ostrich Stance' is very disturbing. … Problem is with those at the helm who are unmindful of conduct and are politically guided."

Elsewhere, in what the ruling Trinamool Congress leadership smelt a "politics of victimisation" the NIA had issued summons to the TMC jangal mahal leader Chhatradhar Mahato who was arrested by the Left Government under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act for his alleged links with the Maoists and was released from jail very recently after spending more than a decade in incarceration.

"It seems that the BJP is nervous about Mahato's joining the TMC and his influence in Jangal Mahal where the party claims to have made some inroads. So they are using NIA," a Trinamool leader said.

Arrest of Al Qaeda terrorist leaves Perumbavoor in shock

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Perumbavoor in Kerala's Ernakulam district is yet to get over the shock of hearing the news that an Al Qaeda terrorist has been arrested by the National Investigation Agency from a town suburb in the early hours of Saturday.

By the time the town woke up on Saturday morning, Iyakub Biswas and Mosaraf Hossen had been nabbed and taken away to the NIA's safe house in Kochi. Even the Kerala Police came to know about the arrests only after the Al Qaeda activists were safely put into the NIA custody.

It has been widely known that Perumbavoor has become a safe haven for Maoists on the run as well as Islamic extremist elements. Former chief of Kerala Police T P Senkumar and former director general of police Jacob Thomas had warned the Kerala Government many times about the influx of terrorists to Kerala, especially to Perumbavoor.

"The town is home to more than 800 plywood companies and hundreds of quarries.

Most of these units depend on migrant workers because it is difficult to get local residents for the low salaries offered by the entrepreneurs. The migrant workers, mostly from Bengal and Assam are willing to work for as little as Rs 800 per day," said S Sasidharan, entrepreneur who owns timber mills and plywood packaging units.

The town shot into national attention in 2016 when a local teenager Jisha was found murdered. "The Police arrested a migrant worker allegedly from Bengal. There were more such murders and the accused were migrant workers," said Sasidharan.

Both Senkumar and Thomas had alerted the Government about the dangers posed by the unprecedented arrival of migrant laborers. "It is difficult to distinguish the Bengali workers from that of Bangladeshi workers because they have the same physique and slang," said T G Mohandas, columnist.

There are no official records about the workers who come to Kerala in search of livelihood. But political intervention led to the shooting down of all moves to introduce an identification system to tag the migrant workers in the town.

Taj Mahal, Agra Fort to reopen from today with social distancing norms

Agra: India's star tourist attraction, the 17th-century monument of love, the Taj Mahal, and the Agra Fort, are all set to reopen from Monday, after an unprecedented closure of six months, due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) officials have made all necessary arrangement for the reopening.

Amar Nath Gupta, caretaker of the Taj Mahal, said: "Sanitisation at the Eastern and the Western gates, thermal screening, painting of circles for social distancing, etc., are in place. Only 2,500 visitors will be permitted inside the mausoleum in one shift and this will only be possible through online booking. Foreigners will need to buy Rs 1,100 entrance tickets and domestic visitors will be able to enter paying Rs 50 per ticket. Rs 200 ticket is additional to enter the main platform for a view of the graves of Emperor Shah Jahan and his beloved consort Mumtaz Mahal.

Meanwhile, the health department reported 105 new coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours. The total number is now 4,706, of which 3,727 have recovered. The number of active cases is 862. So far, there have been 117 deaths.

Meanwhile, the Agra University late on Saturday evening announced postponement of MBBS exams scheduled from Monday after 25 medicos tested positive.

They have been admitted to the isolation ward. University officials said the new dates will be announced after consultation with S.N. Medical College authorities. ***IANS***

BSF foils smuggling bid, recovers arms, narcotics in Jammu

PNS ■ JAMMU

Alert jawans of the Border Security Force foiled a major bid to smuggle arms, ammunition and narcotics along the international border at Arnia in the Ranbir Singh Pura sector of Jammu frontier during the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday.

Interestingly, the trans border smugglers had adopted a unique modus operandi to push a huge consignment of narcotics (suspected heroine). According to the ground reports, the smugglers had tied around 60 packets, weighing almost one kilo each, and had placed a PVC pipe near the barbed wire fence (to be used as a smooth channel) to push these packets inside the Indian territory.

On August 29, the BSF authorities had also detected a trans-border tunnel originating from Pakistan in the Samba sector.

Inspector General of BSF, Jammu frontier NS Jamwal told reporters at a BSF border outpost on Sunday, "The consignment that comprised 62 packets of drugs, two pistols and four magazines was being pushed via a pipe near the Budhwar post around 2 am on Sunday".

He said, "the BSF troops deployed at Budhwar and Bullechak posts had first observed suspicious movement of around four Pakistani nationals near the IB past midnight". "When these people were challenged by the BSF troops they opened fire. When our troops retaliated in self defence the group retreated towards the Pakistan territory", he added.

When asked whether any movement was spotted towards the Indian side to collect these packets, IG BSF said, it appears they may have escaped following small exchange of firing. He said, our troops maintained the cordon of the area during the night and at the first light thorough searches were conducted.

Earlier, on Friday, security forces had arrested three Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) terrorists at Rajouri in the Jammu division after they had picked a consignment of arms and ammunition and Rs 1 lakh in cash that was dropped by a Pakistani drone.

On June 20, security forces had shot down an arms-laden Pakistani drone at Rathua in Kathua district's Hiranagar sector.

Muslim League slams Kerala Govt

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

PK Kunhalikutty MP, all India General Secretary of Muslim League, on Sunday questioned the claims by CPI(M) leaders that there were attempt to denigrate the Quran, considered sacrosanct by believers.

"We all know that undesirable acts have been done by Ministers and the party with active support of the Government. But the Chief Minister and other Ministers instead of discussing and clearing the doubts expressed by the Opposition parties are trying to divert the course of the allegations," said Kunhalikutty while speaking to reporters at Kozhikode on Sunday.

Kunhalikkutty, who has been appointed by the party to lead Muslim League in the upcoming Assembly election said that the situation in the State was highly unfortunate. "There is an attempt by the ruling party to create a smokescreen by spreading information that Quran was being discredited by those questioning the propriety of it being used as an alibi for gold smuggling. The question is why the protocol was violated in importing Quran while there are no laws which prohibit the same," said Kunhalikutty, former minister of Industries in Kerala.

BJP leader K Surendran also questioned the allegation by the CPI(M) that Quran was being used by some political parties to whip up communal hatred. "It is the CPI(M) which wants a communal division in Kerala to fish in troubled waters. We are against the misuse of Quran for nefarious activities like gold smuggling," said Surendran. Addressing a media meeting at the capital city, the BJP president said that his party would intensify the agitation against the Government in days to come. "We want the Pinarayi Vijayan Government to go, go at the earliest," he said.

He also lambasted the Kerala Government for slashing the solatium announced to the victims of the August 6 Munnar landslide from Rs 5 lakh to Rs one lakh. "The Government that is pumping crores to organise the daily media briefing of the chief minister has showed that it was not bothered about the lives of poor tea estate workers," alleged Surendran.

Bhatnagar visits hospital, reviews facilities in J&K

Jammu: A day after the Central team conducted an on the spot inspection and took comprehensive review of the prevailing Covid-19 situation in the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir, the entire Government machinery was activated on ground zero and senior most bureaucrats accompanied by one of the Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar visited Government Medical College hospital and personally took stock of the medical facilities on Sunday.

Strict instructions were passed by the Advisor Bhatnagar to immediately add additional 150 oxygen supported beds besides upgrading other medical facilities in the GMC,Jammu.

The issue of shortage of oxygen supply and patient care facilities were flagged by the faculty members, GMC Principal during the high level meeting with the central team of experts headed by NCDC Director, Dr SK Singh.

Interacting with the media, Advisor Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar maintained that there is no shortage of beds in Govt. Medical College & its Associated Hospitals. He assured the general public of Jammu that the shortage of oxygen has been taken care of and it has been decided that the daily status of vacant beds and other steps taken by the authorities to improve the patients care shall be shared with the public through print & electronic media. He also assured that asymptomatic patients being treated at home shall be provided with Pulse Oximeters for monitoring of Oxygen Saturation besides other medical facilities.

He appealed to the public, not to panic as the number of cases have increased due to increase in number of rapid testing in the Jammu Division and the Govt. is committed to provide best possible medical care to the people requiring such services.

Meanwhile, the total death toll due to Covid-19 crossed 1000 mark in Jammu and Kashmir with 14 deaths reported on Sunday. The total tally of active positive cases also touched 22032 cases while 1457 new positive cases were detected on Sunday.

According to the media bulletin on novel Corona virus (Covid-19), out of 63990 positive cases, 22032 are Active Positive, 40957 have recovered and 1001 have died; 232 in Jammu division and 769 in Kashmir division.

The Bulletin further said that out of 1396729 test results available, 1332739 samples have been tested as negative till September 20, 2020.

Earlier, in the day advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar visited Govt. Medical College to review the status of medical facilities available there in view of ongoing pandemic COVID-19. He also inspected the facilities at recently established Control Room in Government Medical College, Jammu & reviewed its functioning.

The Advisor was accompanied by Financial Commissioner, Health & Medical Education, Atal Dulloo, Principal, GMC Jammu, Managing Director, J&K Medical Supplies Corporation Ltd., Medical Superintendent, Govt. Medical College & Hospital, Epidemiologist, I/C Control Room, XEN Mechanical and other Senior Officers. ***PNS***

Rinku of Aligarh to play in IPL with jersey number 35

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

Star cricketer Rinku Singh will be playing in IPL which will be going to be held in Abu Dhabi Dubai, wearing a jersey of 35 number. Rinku said that his batting number in playing XI not yet finalized but he has got a jersey number 35. Cricketer lovers of the district are expecting a better performance from Rinku who will be going to play IPL fourth time. He has been retained for the third consecutive time in the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) team for Rs 80 lakhs. On Sunday, there is a match between KKR and Royal Challenger Bengaluru (RCB) in which Rinku can play.

For the first time in 2017, Rinku was selected for Preity Zinta's Kings XI Punjab team for Rs 10 lakh. After that, the next year, Shah Rukh Khan's KKR team bid him for Rs 80 lakhs.

After this, the same team has retained the left-handed batsman for the same amount twice again. Rinku went to practice at the IPL camp in Mumbai, about 20 days ago and left for Abu Dhabi from there itself. Rinku failed to score big while playing for KKR. On discussing the flaws with his Aligarh based mentor Masood UZ Zafar Amini, he told that Rinku played the off-stump ball from very far enough. He has got a lot of practice at this point. Rinku told that he has practiced playing close to the ball on the off-site at Mahuakheda ground.

Cousin rapes 4-year-old in Aligarh

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

A four-year-old innocent victim from iglas area has been physically and sexually abused at her aunt's house by a 12-year-old cousin. At the same time, the aunt is accused of harassing the girl by not giving food, beating, and keeping her locked in the room. The police, who came into action on the complaint received through ChildLine and sent the girl to the hospital where she referred to the Higher Center in view of her critical condition.

According to a person, resident of Sadabad area police station, his wife died in January. Three months ago, her sister-in-law, a resident of Iglas area police station, took the children with her on her son's marriage. After 15 days the sister-in-law left both of her sons but kept both daughters with her. According to the father, his four-year-old younger daughter was lying in the toilet of her aunt's house. The children playing outside started shouting at seeing her. The villagers informed the police and child helpline. On receiving the information through the childline, the police reached the spot and took the girl out of the toilet and handed over to the child helpline. The girl was treated at the district hospital. Where the doctors referred her to the higher center seeing her condition. On the instructions of the Child Welfare Committee, the family has taken the girl to a private hospital in Mathura.

The victim's father has mentioned in the written complaint that the younger son of the sister-in-law has done something wrong with his daughter. Sister-in-law has also harassed his daughter. Two videos were also going viral in connection with this incident in which the girl is lying in a semi-nude condition in the toilet and worms are being extracted from her private part by the doctors. It is being told that Aunty has been missing from the house since the incident.

SP Crime Dr. Arvind said that on information, the girl has been sent for treatment and medical examination. The report has been registered on the complaint of the father. Further action will be taken based on the medical report.

Gyanendra Mishra, Director ChildLine said that he had received information about the girl from the village, in which her aunt was accused of harassing the girl and cousin for misbehaves.

Industries suffocating due to shortage of oxygen cylinders in Aligarh

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

During the corona period, the brass statue and hardware business of Aligarh have suffered a major loss. Due to the dwindling demand for hardware and statues and the shortage of oxygen gas has shocked the businessmen. Three plants of the city are not refilling the gas cylinder due to a shortage of liquid due to which 80 percent manufacturing unit of brass sculptures are closed, more than 1000 welding units are also closed including small ones.

Due to the absence of welding, the factories of wright, Polish, etc are also not getting orders. Some profiteer dealers and plant operators are selling 350 rupees oxygen cylinders for up to 1200 rupees. There is tremendous black marketing of oxygen cylinders. Despite having information, the administrative officers are not taking any action.

There is a shortage of oxygen cylinders used in industrial units since 24th August. Oxygen gas is used in Hardware, Brass & Silver idols, Statue, Fridge, AC, and other job works, for this the factories of the city need 3000 cylinders daily. Now the supply is shrunken to only 10% which affects the idol and hardware business.

PAYAL ACCUSES KASHYAP OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Kangana, NCW chief extend support to actress

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bollywood-Kangana Ranaut discourse touched a new low on Sunday, as the film "Queen" fame actress took up cudgels for model-turned actress Payal Ghosh a day after the latter made sexual assault charge against Anurag Kashyap, and washed dirty linen in public by targeting the filmmaker.

The public spat gained currency as National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma threw her weight behind Payal Ghosh and assured the latter the NCW would look into the complaint against Anurag Kashyap over an alleged sexual assault incident that allegedly took place in 2014-15.

Though a video message, the NCW chief extended her support to Payal saying: "I saw the tweet yesterday that Payal Ghosh has alleged that in 2015 Anurag Kashyap had sexually harassed her. This is a shocking revelation....I wrote to her that if you wish to complain, you can send a detailed complaint to me, and we will take action accordingly. We will also write to the police....We stand with her till the probe is on, till it is presented before the court. I want to tell Payal Ghosh that NCW with her."

Much to Anurag's comfort, his first ex-wife Aarti Bajaj rushed to the support of filmmaker who she called a "rock star" and said Payal's was "cheapest stunt I have seen till now". Others like actress Taapsee Pannu and filmmaker Anubhav Sinha threw their lot with Anurag.

After their spat over Rhea Chakraborty (whom the filmmaker had supported her earlier and the actress opposed in the Sushant Singh Rajput death case), the second round of verbal battle between Anurag and Kangana broke out a day after Payal – who made a debut in Bollywood in "Patel Ki Punjabi Shaadi" (2017) after acting in half a dozen south Indian films – went to town through a tweet seeking Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention over an alleged incident that took place in 2014-15.

"@anuragkashyap72 has forced himself on me and extremely badly. @PMOIndia @narendramodi ji, kindly take action and let the country see the demon behind this creative guy. I am aware that it can harm me and my security is at risk. Pls help!," Payal tweeted.

"People who are saying that it's for politics and that I am misusing the situation. Imagine (god forbid) your sister or daughter in my position, it can even be the mother.. and then let's talk. You would go to war against such men. Isn't it ? PERIOD!!," Payal said in another tweet.

Among other things Payal alleged in an interview aired by news channel ABN Telugu that Anurag Kashyap sexually assaulted her in 2014-15 that the latter did an inappropriate gesture while seeking a sexual act from her, after inviting her into another room. Payal also claimed that Anurag had allegedly boasted about other actresses agreeing to his similar demands, and that many were ready to 'sleep with him just to share a frame with Ranbir Kapoor'. Anurag's ambitious film Bombay Velvet had not released then.

The "Manikarnika" fame jumped to Payal's rescue and put out a series of tweets against Anurag Kashyap who, she said, "Anurag self admittedly has never been monogamous" and "Anurag is very much capable of doing what #PayalGhosh suggesting".

"Anurag is very much capable of doing what #PayalGhosh suggesting, he cheated on all his partners, self admittedly has never been monogamous. Phantomwas full of womanisers many #MeToo accused, I supported those victims before also and librals started smear campaigns against me," Kangana tweeted.

"As far as I know Anurag self admittedly has never been monogamous even when he was married to various people, what Anurag did to Payal is a common practice in Bullywood, treating struggling outsider girls like sex workers comes naturally to them #AnuragKashyap #PayalGhosh," she said in another tweet.

"Bullywood is full of sexual predators who have fake and dummy marriages they expect a new hot young girl to make them happy every day, they do the same to young vulnerable men also,I have settled my scores my way I don't need #MeToo but most girls do #PayalGhosh #AnuragKashyap," she tweeted.

Kangana, who has been reckless in speaking her mind out in recent weeks, came with an utterly low-taste tweet, saying: "What #PayalGhosh says many big heroes have done this to me also, suddenly flash their genitals after locking van or room door or in a party during a friendly dance on the dance floor stick his tongue in your mouth, take appointment for work and come home but force himself on you".

On his part, Anurag has denied Paya's charge that he had 'forced himself on (her)' when she met him for professional reasons, some years ago.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

No people's vaccine

As rich nations corner more than half the doses, they must realise that vaccinated pockets don't lead to stable economies

Vaccine nationalism is rearing its ugly head again even as the Coronavirus pandemic rages on. The implications of manipulating access to essential drugs, particularly HIV-AIDS ones in developing countries, due to bulk purchasing power of richer nations and honouring of pharmaceutical patents, are already known. That crisis worsened. Sadly, the trend continues as the race to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 intensifies with five leading candidates currently in phase three clinical trials. Who gets hold of the vaccine and when determines which country stops the caseload from going up exponentially, saves lives, escapes the second and third wave predicted by experts and gets on the path of economic recovery faster. However, with the pharmaceutical industry being largely cartelised, it won't come as a surprise if developing countries are at the far end of the line. Remember the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic? Australia, which was the first country to come up with a vaccine at that time, blocked exports while some of the wealthiest countries entered into pre-purchase agreements with several pharmaceutical companies. The US alone obtained the right to buy 6,00,000 doses. It was only when the H1N1 pandemic began to recede that developed countries offered to donate vaccine doses to poorer economies. However, the damage at that time was not as severe as it will be this time round because the Coronavirus is far more infectious and deadlier than the H1N1 and has almost strangled the have-not nations. If a recent report released by Oxfam is to be believed, wealthy nations, accounting for just 13 per cent of the global population, have cornered a whopping 51 per cent of the promised vaccine doses. It is just what poorer nations and the World Health Organisation (WHO) had feared, that while they would be prime picks for vaccine trials, they would get to use doses the last. The inevitable result would be a deepening of the pandemic. Right now, many world leaders, like US President Donald Trump, who is facing a re-election in November, will not listen to the feeble voice of the poor or the WHO. A vaccine is his ticket to the White House, he needs it for his voters. This "vaccine nationalism" has also emerged at a time when global majors are trying to establish their political prowess while using their scientific superiority to validate the claim. Thus, whoever has the first access to the vaccine will end up on the top of the global pyramid of power, apart from reaping the enormous monetary benefits that come out of it.

One of the developers of the COVID vaccine is Moderna, which has received $2.48 billion in committed taxpayers' money. It intends to profit from its vaccine and has sold supplies to rich nations at prices that range from $12-16 per dose in the US to around $35 per dose for other countries, leaving poorer nations out of the procurement loop entirely. However, according to reports, the company's production capacity is barely enough for 475 million people or six per cent of the world's population. Even if all five vaccine candidates succeed, which is rather unlikely, it is only by 2022 that two-thirds of the world's population will have access to them. Also, even if one country does get vaccinated, how will its policy on travelling restrictions change? Will the restriction be limited to those who are yet to get access to the vaccine or will they have vaccines for those entering their land? Remember it's a global pandemic and just like the WHO warned, creating vaccinated pockets will not be beneficial for long if one is aiming for a stable economy. This is why various organisations are calling for a "people's vaccine", free of the monopolistic control of the pharmaceutical companies over its sale and urging nations to share the needed information with others so that it is available to every single human being at affordable rates and can be distributed on a need-based rather than a paid-for basis.

If all the five vaccines work, Oxfam says that would amount to a combined production capacity at 5.94 billion doses, enough for 2.97 billion people, keeping in mind that the vaccines will most likely require two doses. The supply deals already agreed upon are for 5.303 billion doses, out of which 2.728 billion (51 per cent) have already been procured by developed countries including the UK, US, Australia, Hong Kong and Macau, Japan, Switzerland and Israel, as well as the European Union. The remaining 2.575 billion doses have either been bought by or promised to emerging countries, including India, Bangladesh, China, Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico among others. This also includes the 300 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine pledged to the Covax Advanced Market Commitment (AMC), the vaccine pooling mechanism, promised to developing countries. It is essential for global powers to understand the gravity of the situation and on ethical grounds work in favour of public health and the global economy.

The IPL is back

The entire experience will be very different without crowds cheering on the teams

The Indian Premier League (IPL) has come back to our screens and by the time you read this, the first set of matches would have been played. Early favourites would have been determined, new heroes would be on the tips of everyone's tongues, old stars would find themselves rejuvenated and superstars could be down in the dumps. It is taking place six months after it was supposed to start and the entire tournament is taking place in the United Arab Emirates with matches being played in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. The return of the IPL will give many of us an indication that things are returning to normal. The additional consumption that the event will drive ahead of the festive season might give a major boost to the economy over the next six weeks and provide the much-needed succour for television viewers from hate-filled and spiteful content that masquerades as news on most channels.

Yet, part of the excitement of the IPL, and this is despite previous tournaments which have been played on foreign soil, are the crowds. Purists of regional and national identity-based cricket may not like the idea of franchise cricket, let alone the T20 format, but it does make for compelling entertainment and some strange bedfellows. Whoever thought that a boy from Ranchi could become the biggest superstar in Tamil Nadu or that a Delhiite could become a hero in Bengaluru and be adored by the crowds? Of course, cricketers are used to playing Test and domestic cricket, where scant crowds are the order of the day, but not having crowds in the IPL defeats the purpose of such a spectacle for some. Then again, other professional leagues such as those in the US and professional football leagues in Europe have also restarted without crowds, although the former is now allowing in limited spectators. The Wuhan contagion has changed many aspects of modern life but it appears that professional sport has been the hardest hit of all. The return of the IPL might not take away from the fact that the number of cases continues to rise sharply but it could prove that things might return to normal sooner rather than later. And you know what, that is not a bad thing.

Pawns in his game

The sordid reality of the 21st century's portrayal of Indian female celebrities is that it defeats all that feminism has tried to achieve so far

RINKU **GHOSH**

As women have come into their own, do they realise that they continue to be objectified even in changed contexts for purposes of mass consumption? And are projected for the wrong reasons than the right ones? That they legitimise the male gaze as a uniform societal response by falling into a trap of imaging they believe empowers and acknowledges them? Further, if they happen to be celebrities with a fair sweep of popular culture, then they are prone to be more "sextualised" as it were as talking heads. So much so that they are now being itemised for politics instead of the big screen, used for advocacy rather than reason, prized for their appearance than their intelligence, made icons of causes that thousands of faceless women are struggling with and drawing accolades and likes that may not be earned or deserved. And should such unevolved but rapidly recognisable faces happen to represent binaries, then you have a catfight that has become the new prime-time fix. In the end, fighting women make a mockery of all that feminism has tried to achieve so far.

What else would explain the obsessive coverage of Kangana Ranaut, Rhea Chakraborty, Urmila Matondkar and their ping-pong exchanges by the media or their appropriation by political parties of the day to amplify their respective narratives? Let's begin with Kangana Ranaut. An actor par excellence, she has lived through sordid exploitation and displayed a rare grit to carve her space and more importantly, own it. There have been many outsiders in the film industry, co-opted or rebels, but she was neither. Instead, she challenged a system that was based on nepotism and dynastic privileges and insisted on a democracy that would enrich the creative space. She even did her bit, though not the only one, to push the envelope, choosing flesh and blood roles that made real women protagonists as much a revenue-earner for the film industry as its male stars. And there was a straight-forward honesty and boldness about her approach that endeared her to everybody. Most of all she appeared independently sensible and not just fashionably articulate. And much before #MeToo, she called out her male exploiters in the industry, not denying what she had been subjected to but was frank enough to admit that she spoke when she had equal power and respect.

She did carve out a new constituency among the chatterati and was conscious enough to use it to magnify her own appeal. She became a regular at media summits and talks, thereby developing another facet outside films that would lengthen her shelf life. The media, in turn, used her to grab eyeballs. As she became sure-footed, she sailed with the prevailing political winds, beginning with nationalism and then professing her Right wing loyalties. Every citizen, including actors, is entitled to his/her ideological preferences but Kangana, who took years to craft her own disruptive brand, has been waylaid and absorbed this time around. Using her troll-worthy capacities and no holds barred verbal ammunition, the BJP has just made her a pawn in its grand design, whether it is lampooning the Nehru-Gandhis, taking on its arch enemy, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, or stoking fires in the mysterious death of Sushant Singh Rajput. And it is here that Kangana has faltered and given into the prevailing rant and sentiments of the day than calibrating them to her advantage. Undoubtedly, the Shiv Sena leaders are not known for their standards when they decide to shred somebody apart but for Kangana to liken Mumbai to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was not only politically immature but more hurtful to her own self than the Sena. Of course, the BJP benefitted from the scream fest without dirtying its fingers. And compared to the troublesome Anurag Thakur and Kapil Mishra, it has found a palatable public lobbyist of some repute. The fact that she is from the film industry would work both ways for it, as an asset if she got traction, maybe a liability at times and a salacious aberration at worst if she failed.

But it is in the process of cleansing the drug taint from the film industry that she has gone overboard, attacking women colleagues in the industry, unarmed with logic and defeating the very women's cause that she loves to represent. She locked horns with Jaya Bachchan, actor and Rajya Sabha MP of the Samajwadi Party, an industry veteran and an active parliamentarian who has spoken out on societal issues. Rightfully, she decided to argue for an industry that was being vilified over a few bad apples and drug abuse, generalised as a sin city than the enormous talent it nurtures and made to look like a villain of all societal ills when fact is, it supported jobs and created opportunities. This, she said, despite the "non-support of the Government." Kangana's rebuttal for the sake of one not only lacked refinement, it undid the work of several women actors who made it possible for her to make her current space and be heard. Taking a potshot at Jaya's remark that actors were ungrateful to the industry that fed them, Kangana retorted, "Got one *thaali* which included two minutes of fame in item numbers and one romantic scene with the hero, that too after sleeping with him. I have taught feminism to the film industry." Reality check? Jaya Bachchan has been a bigger path-breaker than her because she etched powerful women characters despite a hostile climate set by the movie mafia, the single-hero domination and a less than encouraging commercial logic where strong women onscreen were considered artsy and NFDC material. Jaya tried to mainstream that discourse. Kangana perhaps also forgot her own sensuous numbers on screen before she called actor and now Congress member Urmila Matondkar a "soft porn" star. Apart from a pervert television audience that sees news as entertainment, this discourse did nothing but perpetuate the stereotype that "women are their own worst enemy." Something that Jaya's peer and BJP MP Hema Malini realised as she supported Jaya's speech instead of mindlessly toeing what her party propagandists would have wanted her to do.

Kangana may get a BJP ticket to contest elections in the future but she would again not earn it by her own rules but by conforming to the misogynistic mindset that sees women stars as a whiff of fresh air in the dry world of politics. She should have taken lessons from the late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha, whom she is portraying onscreen. Jayalalitha became the respected leader she was by mastering all rules of the political game, working the ground, breaking out of the shadows of her mentor MGR and battling the authoritarianism that had already been established by her male counterparts on equal terms. Kangana, sadly, is in danger of looking like a stooge. Does she realise that for all her headline grabbing acts on social and visual media, she is being used to divert attention from the nation's more pressing problems like the pandemic mismanagement, the Ladakh incursions or the tanking economy? That she is fuelling exactly what the ruling dispensation wants her to do, namely create a cloud of inconsequential nothingness?

At the other end is starlet Rhea Chakraborty, who is on everybody's search engine, not because of her films or work but as an exploitative girlfriend of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput. No doubt he was a talent snuffed out too early, but the mysterious circumstances of his death, his troubled history with drugs and mental health, his Bihari identity and his "outsider" status in the film industry have far too many elements to be exploited by politicians and their new handmaiden, the broadcast media. The conspiracy theory that she might have pushed him to addiction, swindled him, could have diverted funds and in the process pushed him over the edge by entrapping him in a world of debt and drug cartels, has become a credible story that the nation is devouring hungrily. Simply because legal evidence and cold facts of the actor's death are too dry to be juiced out for news cycles. Simply because a good-looking starlet allows the masses to project their sinful obsessions, aspirations and high crimes to her kind and claim moral righteousness by exclusion. So Rhea's going to jail becomes a visual that is more satisfying as a portrait of instant justice. Many film personalities have been involved in the drug racket. Yet Rhea's arrest, for possessing just 59 grams of weed, makes a seething urban sub-culture a sensational discovery. She, too, is aware of the fame that the unfortunate death of her boyfriend has given her. Flashing a victory sign and sporting T-shirts emblazoned with "down with patriarchy" slogans, she, too, could emerge out of this mess as a prime pick for advocacy of women's rights against the lynch mob trial she was subjected to. She may or may not be a success in films going forward but, like Sushant, has been appropriated as a political tool. If the BJP is fuelling the "justice for Sushant" campaign, the Congress has taken up the "justice for Rhea" crusade. Self-appointed activists shouted slogans opposing the "vilification campaign" against the "daughter of Bengal" and held up placards that said, "We will not stop till she gets justice." Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury even invested her with casteist respectability, calling her a "Bengali Brahmin." What Rhea wouldn't appreciate, if she walks into this trap, is that she is hated mostly by women with a patriarchal mindset over tea and conversations, seen as a woman who made capital out of what is called "easy virtue." In this sense, both the newsmaker and the news recipient are defeated, simply because neither gets respect nor understanding. But they certainly perpetuate a male construct of how women are.

Sadly, women newsmakers from popular culture around the globe are being chased for their representational rather than their authentic selves. Their activism, therefore, appears to be more and more fake. And as they use social media to build intimate partnerships with their communities and followers, they are shaping a market economy of medievalism, where women are dependable worker bees but are actually living in a shell believing they are the queen bees.

(The writer is Associate Editor, The Pioneer)

SOUNDBITE

Peru cannot come to a halt due to the content of some audios without any validity; the management of the pandemic and economic reactivation cannot be suspended.

Peruvian President
—Martin Vizcarra

All three ordinances of agriculture shall encourage middlemen and will promote the big industrialists. Also, black marketing will shoot up.

Rajasthan PCC Chief
—Govind Singh Dotasar

We will talk with Washington on all issues of interest solely on the basis of equality mutual benefit, and the search for a balance of interest.

Russia's Foreign Minister
—Sergey Lavrov

Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings are the two franchises that are most loved by the fans and that's how IPL has become special.

Cricketer
—Hardik Pandya

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

New farm Bills

Sir — The Lok Sabha passed three contentious agriculture Bills in the ongoing monsoon session amid strong protests by Opposition parties. The outcome of the proposed legislations can only be the corporatisation of the farming sector, leading to commercial exploitation of agricultural lands.

These reforms will re-introduce the *zamindari* system in a new insidious form. Forced to take to the streets due to the pandemic, the farmers need more than the ritual obeisance paid to them for being the backbone of society.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Protect the farmers

The Centre may have rushed through farm reform legislations without confabulating with all parties and stakeholders concerned or creating a defined architecture for farmers to follow the new template on the ground. The Bills intend to create a viable alternative to Agricultural Market Produce Committees (APMCs) and facilitate contract farming to help small farmers discover fair prices for their farm produce. Truth be told, APMCs haven't lived up to their promise due to cartelisation and small farmers continue to have problems transporting their produce to APMC market yards.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made a weighty promise to farmers, 86 per cent of whom are small and marginal farmers, to double their income by 2022. The status quo, including minimum support price (MSP), isn't helping enough farmers, unlike direct benefit transfers, besides distorting markets and cropping patterns.

The Centre has clarified that it isn't undermining APMCs or MSPs but merely increasing competition by allowing agri-businesses, food processors, wholesalers, exporters and big retailers to source directly from farmers. Even though the Opposition parties are joining the protests to reap political mileage, the Government must immediately ensure that the corporatisation implicit in these steps doesn't rob the farmer of his autonomy or replace one clique with another.

N Sadhasiva Reddy
Bengaluru

Ban cryptocurrencies

Sir — Reports of the Government pondering over a ban on cryptocurrencies is doing the rounds on social media. Earlier in April 2018, the Reserve Bank of India issued a circular, thwarting any exchange which facilitated the use of cryptocurrencies. However, later on, the Supreme Court quashed the RBI's circular. Now, the Government must take a call on how to regulate cryptocurrencies but only after thoroughly analysing its long-term effects.

Rahul Chouhan
Ujjain

Section 144 re-imposed

Sir — Section 144 was already imposed in Mumbai but its re-imposition has caused panic among many. The section prohibits the gathering of four or more people in an area, effectively not changing anything. This extension will be applicable till September 30 as Mumbai is one of the worst pandemic-affected cities and the numbers of infected people continue to rise. It is high time for people to understand the gravity of the situation and remain indoors as the Government has assured that the supply of essential goods, services and medical emergencies will remain unaffected.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Fined for nothing

Sir — Advocate Saurabh Sharma was issued a fine of ₹500 for not wearing a facemask while driving alone in his car. During the hearing, KC Mittal, appearing for Sharma, argued that the guidelines issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority merely stated that masks were to be worn in a public place or workplace, and not inside an empty vehicle.

Sharma's *challan* must be quashed and the fined amount refunded. The advocate also deserves to be compensated for time wasted besides mental agony caused.

KV Seetharamaiah
Hassan

Time to act

Sir — After Nepal's Parliament approved a new political map, showing three Indian territories (Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani) as part of Nepal, it has now introduced the same map in the school curriculum. It is high time India breaks its silence as it stands to lose its territory to both Nepal and China.

Devendra Khurana
Bhopal

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRSTCOLUMN

Not such a big deal after all

The only thing that actually happened in DC was that the UAE and Bahrain went public on their previously covert ties with Israel, especially in the arms trade

GWYNNE **DYER**

US President Donald Trump declared "the dawn of a new Middle East" in Washington recently as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain signed public agreements with Israel for the first time. Not "peace agreements", as President Trump claimed, since neither country has ever been at war with Israel. Just documents involving an exchange of ambassadors, trade deals and the like. And it was significant that while Trump and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were there in person, the UAE and Bahraini rulers just sent their foreign ministers for the signing of the papers. The only thing that actually happened at the White House was that two of the Gulf's most progressive States went public on their ties with Israel, especially in the arms trade. This had previously not been a secret, but at least their ties with Jerusalem had been discreet. Apart from that, it's still the same old Middle East, as corrupt, violent, dysfunctional and ironically as ambitious, glittering and fashionable as ever. The last time Israel fought an actual war against any of its Arab neighbours was in 1982, a full-scale invasion of Lebanon that ended in a prolonged Israeli military occupation of the southern part of the country. That's long over now, although Lebanon remains a ghastly mess, but all the region's other wars trundle on uninterrupted. The second Libyan civil war continues into its sixth year, with a cast of foreign participants and supporters that now includes Russia, Turkey, France, Egypt and the UAE. The atrocious foreign military intervention in Yemen, led by Saudi Arabia but involving most of the autocratic Arab States and their Western arms suppliers, is only one year younger and still killing around 5,000 a month.

The Syrian civil war is in its ninth year. It has killed at least half a million people and driven almost half the population from their homes. It may be creeping towards an end now, with only one province still in rebel hands, but the rebels have Turkish military support and the Russian air force fights for the Assad regime.

Iraq is enjoying only its second year of relative peace since the US invasion of 2003, but the signs are multiplying that Islamic State is going to launch a major comeback bid there. The collapse of the oil price has left much of the population destitute. Urban youth are in open revolt, with hundreds shot by the police this year. And when something genuinely new does crop up in the endless churn that distinguishes the region's politics, it is often unwelcome. Saudi Arabia, once the stable, conservative linchpin of inter-Arab politics, has turned into a loose cannon, starting unwinnable wars (like Yemen), funnelling money and arms to jihadi extremists (in Syria), and commissioning the cold-blooded killing of critics of the regime (as in the murder and dismemberment of journalist Jamal Khashoggi).

Overshadowing all these wars, and actually driving some of them, is the religious and strategic confrontation between revolutionary Shia Iran and the conservative Sunni monarchies and dictatorships of the eastern Arab world. That's what those huge Arab arms purchases are for, not for fighting Israel. Indeed, Jerusalem is a silent partner in this region-wide Cold War between the Sunni Arab States and Iran; that's what made the little ceremony at the White House possible. There is no Arab-Israeli conflict. The major Arab players are already undeclared Israeli allies, and the Israeli army refers to its sporadic punitive strikes against the Palestinians as "mowing the lawn."

Real change in this region happens with glacial slowness, if at all, but that does not mean that it is stable. On the contrary, it could tip suddenly into a radically different state. It almost did so in 2010-12, the years of the aborted 'Arab spring', and the forces that drove that uprising are even stronger now. Half the population in Middle Eastern and North African countries is under 25. As populations have soared (Iraq's has doubled to 40 million since the first Gulf War in 1990), economies have not kept pace and living standards have fallen almost everywhere. A huge, mostly jobless young population living close to despair is now the Arab norm.

The oil-rich Gulf States used to be the exception to this rule, but no longer. The oil-price crash this time is not temporary: Demand is falling and will continue to fall as the climate crisis and cheaper new "clean energy" sources eat into oil's traditional markets. The recent pantomime at the White House was about tidying up a few of the loose ends of an old conflict. It would have a certain relevance if the future was going to be just more of the present, but that is not the case. The timing is uncertain but the destination is clear: Big changes are coming that will sweep away many of the existing regimes and reshape the politics of the region. Happy endings are not inevitable, but different endings are practically guaranteed.

(*Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work.'*)

POINT**COUNTER**POINT

THE CENTRE'S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION TO UTTAR PRADESH FOR MINORITY WELFARE WAS REDUCED BY 50 PER CENT OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS.
—BSP MP
KUNWAR DANISH ALI

ATTEMPTS ARE MADE TO DISCREDIT THE BJP BY CITING STATISTICS. EVERYONE KNOWS HOW MUSLIMS HAD BEEN REDUCED TO A MERE VOTE BANK IN THE PAST.
—UP BJP SECRETARY
CHANDRAMOHAN

The flaws of feedback

Competition in education and research brought through the evaluation system may drive all in the same direction at the cost of diversity

INDRANIL **DE**

SUSHANTA **SARMA**

Feedback is a very important tool to nudge people and organisations to adopt desirable behaviour. Nobel laureate Richard H Thaler and his co-author Cass R Sunstein, in their international bestseller *Nudge*, suggest feedback as one of the strategies to motivate agents to adopt responsive behaviour. It is against the idea of command and control policies of governments or paternalism of any institution. Nudging human behaviour in a desirable direction without any command and control is what they call "libertarian paternalism." A nudge in the right direction may be as simple as the laptop warning the users to plug in the charger when the battery is about to die out, or the display screen of a car suggesting that the driver change gears when the gear applied and the speed of the car mismatch. These feedback mechanisms are alarms which nudge people to take corrective measures.

Education, being delivered by organisations, Government or private, benefits from feedback to spearhead in the intended direction. It may be feedback on the course, faculty or educational institute. It helps enhance performance and improve the delivery of education service through the voluntary adoption of corrective measures. In higher academics, the ranking of journals, again based on the feedback on the quality of research work published, is an important mechanism to improve research and publication. Feedback, when made public, increases competition among peers. Then comment works as a mechanism to remove the asymmetry of information in the market. The potential customers or beneficiaries become aware of the quality of goods or services offered. Different agents or stakeholders give comments for all elements of education and research. On the course and faculty, it is students who provide the feedback. It is meant to improve the course content and delivery of the faculty. Educational institutes are given ratings by different agencies, including the Government, national and international bodies and media about their infrastructure, processes and quality of education. The assessment of research journals is obtained by the number of citations of research articles published in them over a stipulated period. In all this, the moot question is how far does the feedback mechanism serve the purpose of delivery of education services in the desired direction?

If we consider that the feedback on the course and faculty is given by the students, then it may be counterproductive. The desired pattern of delivery may not be best determined by students as they are not competent enough to assess. Nevertheless, many renowned educational institutes use their feedback to evaluate faculty performance. It is even considered for promotions. However, there are exceptions. Harvard Business School does not take student response on any course or faculty. When asked about it, one tenured professor replied that "we do not take feedback from amateurs." If they have to assess a course or faculty, some experts of the area attend the class and appraise the course delivery.

Research is an extremely complicated output which is determined by the methodology, results and overall interest on a particular topic. The citation of the articles may depend on all these factors. The journals in the area of social sciences and management at times may prefer publishing certain types of results. Journals may aim at increasing citation and hence prefer the articles which deal with subjects that are likely to have enough research funding in future. New ideas or results which contradict some existing dominant idea may not receive enough funding and attention. Thus, it creates an endogenous system which encourages a dominant idea and is detrimental to newer, provocative ideas.

> EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES ARE GIVEN RATINGS BY DIFFERENT AGENCIES, INCLUDING THE GOVERNMENT, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND MEDIA ABOUT THEIR INFRASTRUCTURE, PROCESSES AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION. THE FEEDBACK FOR RESEARCH JOURNALS IS OBTAINED BY THE NUMBER OF CITATIONS OF RESEARCH ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THEM OVER A STIPULATED PERIOD. IN ALL THIS, THE MOOT QUESTION IS HOW FAR DOES THE FEEDBACK MECHANISM SERVE THE PURPOSE OF DELIVERY OF EDUCATION SERVICES IN THE DESIRED DIRECTION?

This problem is more severe for lesser-known institutes from developing countries. Each research article goes through a peer-review process conducted by the journals. The editors take a decision on publication after taking into account the reviewers' comments. Nevertheless, the reviewers' performance is not predictable. In a 2007 study on 306 experienced reviewers, published in *PLOS Medicine*, researchers found that there is no scientifically-established predictor of reviewer performance. Hence it is not possible to systematically improve the selection of reviewers and implement a routine review rating system.

Sadly, journals do take reviewer ratings from the editors. Furthermore, journal editors may find articles with a very new or provocative idea or result contrary to dominant ideas unacceptable, more so when the researchers are affiliated to renowned institutes, or they themselves are well-known. Hence, the feedback process in research may not always encourage path-breaking discoveries, especially for developing nations.

Ranking or rating of educational institutions is considered as a way of giving feedback on the performance of the institute on certain predetermined indicators. Over the years, ranking and accreditation have gained strength and momentum globally, including in India. Ranking is perceived as an indicator of quality of services offered by educational institutions. There seems to a be growing consensus that ranking influences the perception of stakeholders (students, recruiters and investors) about the prospect of educational institutions. While there is no denying that ranking has made institutes look at the quality of services, it also introduced new practices within the sector. From the viewpoint of organisational research, ranking has offered a new template to educational institutions and codified them in different categories. Post the ranking announcement of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), it has been observed that many of the educational institutes have showcased their positions on their websites to demonstrate their skills, achievements and desirability to stakeholders.

The organisational template propagated through ranking carries its own characteristics. For example, under the NIRF, the template is assessed through five parameters focussing on teaching, publications, consultancy, employability and overall perception. Institutes are measured along these parameters to identify the "best" ones scoring the highest marks/points across these parameters. Going forward, these institutes would become a role model and irrespective of their individual values, purpose and origin, all would be in a race to adopt a codified organisational template. This would have a detrimental impact on institutions striving to pursue a niche domain. The codified organisational template would often fail to recognise the unique features of educational institutions by virtue of their values and origin. As a result, such institutes would often fall behind in the so-called performance indicators, creating a poor impression about the quality of education imparted by them. This, in turn, would have a detrimental impact on their ability to attract resources and eventually lead to quivering of the very existence of individuality among organisations.

As the ranking is made public, this feedback mechanism ignites fierce competition among the educational institutes. The urgency to perform well in the ranking exercise has resulted in many adopting the recommended organisational template in a hurried manner. The high-speed diffusion of the template is often facilitated by a new breed of "institutional intermediaries" i.e. entities helping organisations to build capacity so as to adopt the new template. In recent years, the ranking industry in higher education has been populated by intermediaries certifying institutions through their own ranking exercises. Their role was primarily limited to assessment of quality on indicators. We should now expect to see more intermediaries who would be helping the educational institutions to build their capacity to perform well in rankings and adopt a standardised template.

The feedback mechanism should nudge desirable behaviour, but it may be counterproductive to education and research when that feedback is made public. Then it becomes a means of increasing competition in a particular direction. Two major problems in the evaluation mechanism in education have been identified. One, when feedback is taken from those whose expertise, capability or eligibility to provide an assessment is questionable. A difficult subject would be eventually dropped from the curriculum or a strict instructor would be penalised. Bias in the assessment of a new idea or contradictory results in research may throttle publication in journals. Second, when assessment is based on a standard set of criteria and is made public, then it nullifies the emergence and growth of educational organisations with diverse ideas and objectives. Competition brought through the feedback system may drive all in the same direction at the cost of diversity.

(*De is Associate Professor and Sarma is Assistant Professor, Institute of Rural Management, Anand. Views expressed here are personal*)

Face the bitter truth of the past, not bury it

A repressed history that is not fully understood eventually re-emerges as an unresolved entity

NADEEM **PARACHA**

In his book *Blood and Rage*, British historian Michael Burleigh writes that as soon as Nazi Germany lost World War-II in 1945, there was a concentrated effort by the new German Government and polity to completely erase the country's Nazi past. On May 9, 1945, at 11.01 pm, the Allied Forces ceased their attacks on the already destroyed Berlin and this, to Germans, came to be known as "*Stunde Null*" or Hour Zero.

From this point in time, Germany was to begin anew. Burleigh writes that this also meant a collective effort by "new Germany" to repress all memory of anything that had to do with the dramatic rise of Nazism in Germany, the collective euphoria that had accompanied its consolidation and the many atrocities that Nazism had encouraged and justified as an ideology. Indeed, there were thousands of Germans who had directly participated in the many physical and psychological acts of violence in the name of racial superiority. But millions of Germans who were not necessarily members of the Nazi party and its affiliates, had stood aside, choosing to ignore increasing evidence of their State's violent conduct against those it believed were racially inferior or enemies of the "national body."

The German State and governments that replaced the fallen Nazis, and German society as a whole, began to vigorously exorcise memories related to Germany's Nazi past. The British documentary filmmaker, Adam Curtis, in his 1995 documentary *The Living Dead*, demonstrates that this exorcism was encouraged by the US and Britain once Germany became an ally and rebounded as an economic powerhouse within a decade after the war. Because, even though a number of former Nazis who had survived the defeat were tried and executed or given long jail sentences, many, who were bureaucrats and scientists, were eventually allowed to integrate into the new German State and society to aid the country's revival.

In the first few years after Germany's defeat, Nazism was rightly demonised but, according to Curtis, the cause of its rise was never fully investigated. The memory of it was then completely repressed. German professors, teachers, politicians and parents simply stopped talking about it, as if there was never a Nazi Germany.

According to both Burleigh and Curtis, an inconvenient past, when repressed without being fully understood, eventually re-emerges as an unresolved entity. In the late 1960s, German youth, who were born just before the war or immediately afterwards, began to question their leaders, teachers and parents, not only about their country's unspoken Nazi past but also about their role in it. Violence soon followed as German youth outfits accused their elders and State of being former Nazis. This commotion did produce some studies investigating the reasons behind the rise of a hateful ideology, and the support it had received from millions of Germans. But according to Curtis, such efforts were hampered by the ideological tendencies and violence of the youth, many of who became as myopic and totalitarian in their acts and beliefs as the past that they were now raging against. By 1977, the lid was once again placed on it.

It blew off again after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War in 1991. The unresolved, repressed fascist past, not only in Germany but in the rest of Europe too, returned. A brutal civil war between ethnic groups in what was once Yugoslavia, and the rise of violent expressions of ethno-nationalism in Europe and the former Soviet states proved that the "victory of democratic nations" during World War II did not treat the conditions that trigger fascist/nationalist hatred and chauvinism. Instead, this victory had simply placed a lid on these conditions. It keeps blowing off. Dread and violence has been spewing out from this hole ever since.

As a student of history, I spent almost a decade studying the silence that one comes across Pakistan's various segments of the intelligentsia, educational and cultural products between 1971 and the early 1990s, on what is often referred to as the 1971 "East Pakistan debacle." In 2018, I was able to further this study by accessing Washington DC's Library of Congress, the largest library in the world. I went through 177 newspapers, magazines, journals (both English and Urdu) published in Pakistan between 1972 and 1992, plus 27 Urdu films released during this period. After 1974, there was almost no mention of the 1971 civil war in the former East Pakistan which had dismembered the country. Articles and editorials did emerge across 1972, but only a handful tried to explore the reasons behind the "debacle."

An investigation was launched (The Humoodur Rahman Inquiry Commission) by the Government, but its findings were never made public until 29 years later. Instead, and especially from 1973 onwards, the emphasis was put on demonising ethno-nationalist politics and then on explaining what remained of the country as its "natural" state (along the River Indus). There was then a systematic effort to forgo a past before 1971, by first admonishing it for failing to make Islam central to Pakistan's national body and then treating this past as an almost alien occurrence, whose memory had no place in the "new Pakistan."

There is hardly any mention of a region that was once called East Pakistan in Pakistani films and TV plays made after 1972. By the mid-1980s, its memory and the memory of a Pakistan before the "debacle" had been successfully repressed. Even parents wouldn't talk about it as such. But it was an unresolved memory that kept re-emerging, sometimes violently, in the shape of ethnic riots.

In the mid-1990s, some journalists began to once again speak of the Humoodur Rahman Report. I was a senior reporter and saw rookie journalists having no idea what that was. Finally, parts of the report began to emerge from 2000 onwards. In 2003, while watching a TV talk show on the report, an elderly relative of mine exhibited a most painful expression and sighed, "what's the use of talking about this?" A painful memory that had been repressed (but never resolved) had returned to haunt him. He was in East Pakistan during the civil war as a Government employee.

Conditions that lead to painful episodes cannot be made to go away by just repressing the memories of the episodes. On a collective level, these keep coming back in various shapes, because the conditions that led to the pain were not treated. After watching Nazi atrocities, a Scottish psychiatrist, Donald Ewen Cameron, theorised that if "bad memories" could be wiped away from a person's mind, s/he can avoid mental illnesses and also the impulse to commit atrocious acts.

Dr Cameron devised a method he called "psychic driving" that used a combination of electric shock therapy and powerful sleep-inducing drugs on mentally disturbed patients, to eliminate painful memories. He was largely successful. But what resulted were individuals with no memories, beyond basic instincts. And some regressed into a vegetative state. Not the ideally blissful state to be in.

(Courtesy: *Dawn*)

Trump supports deal to allow TikTok to continue

Washington/New York: US President Donald Trump said he supports a deal that will allow TikTok to continue to operate in the United States, after threatening to ban the Chinese-owned app in August.

He told reporters at the White House he backs the deal with TikTok owner ByteDance, Oracle and Walmart to create a new company that will assume TikTok's U.S. operations called TikTok Global.

The U.S. Treasury said in a statement "Oracle will be responsible for key technology and security responsibilities to protect all U.S. user data. Approval of the transaction is subject to a closing with Oracle and Walmart and necessary documentation and conditions to be approved by" the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

The Commerce Department said on Saturday it will delay by one week an order that had been set to take effect late Sunday that would stop Alphabet Inc's Google

and Apple Inc from offering TikTok in their U.S. app stores.

A person briefed on the matter said the administration had given the parties a week to close the deal.

US shareholders are expected to control 53% of TikTok Global, a person briefed on the matter said, while Chinese investors will hold 36%.

Trump said the new company will be "totally controlled by Oracle and Walmart ... All of the control is Oracle and Walmart."

Oracle said it will take a 12.5% stake in TikTok Global.

TikTok said under the deal, Oracle and Walmart will take part in a TikTok Global pre-IPO financing round in which they can take up to a 20% cumulative stake in the company.

The remaining 80% will be held by ByteDance but is not clear if the ByteDance shares in TikTok Global will be distributed to ByteDance's investors when TikTok Global is incorporated, according to the source.

U.S. investors currently own about 40% of ByteDance.

TikTok said it was "pleased that the proposal by TikTok, Oracle, and Walmart will resolve the security concerns of the U.S. Administration and settle questions around TikTok's future in the U.S."

TikTok said Oracle will become the company's "trusted technology provider, responsible for hosting all U.S. user data and securing associated computer systems to ensure U.S. national security requirements are fully satisfied."

Trump offered strong support for the deal he said would create 25,000 U.S. jobs. "I have given the deal my blessing," Trump said. "I approve the deal in concept." ***AFP***

Sikh girl missing in Pakistan's Punjab province

Police file case against 'unknown abductor'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A 22-year-old Sikh girl is missing in Pakistan's Punjab province and police have launched a case against an "unknown abductor", according to a media report on Sunday.

The incident occurred recently in Attock district's Hassanabdal city, which is home to the famous Gurdwara Panja Sahib — one of the most sacred sites in Sikhism.

According to a report published in Dawn newspaper, the girl stepped out of her house to throw away trash, but never returned. Her father runs a shop in Hassanabdal.

The report, however, did not mention the date of the incident.

A case had been registered by Hassanabdal police against an "unknown abductor" on the complaint of the girl's father under Section 365-B of the Pakistan Penal Code for kidnapping, abducting or inducing a woman to marry, the report said, quoting Raja Fayyaz-ul-Hassan, the sub-divisional police officer.

Police have launched a hunt for the missing girl, the officer said.

Sub-Inspector Tahir Iqbal, the spokesman for district police, also said that a case was registered against an "unknown abductor" immediately after the girl's father filed a complaint.

The day after she went missing she reportedly sent a WhatsApp message to her father telling him that she had contracted a marriage of her own will and converted to Islam, said sub-divisional police officer Hassan.

He said several police teams were looking for the girl so that she could be produced before a court of law and her statement recorded.

Afghan airstrikes kill 24 civilians: Witnesses

Kabul: Government airstrikes in the north of Afghanistan killed 24 civilians, including children, and wounded six others, witnesses told The Associated Press on Sunday.

The two witnesses contacted by the AP said that most of those killed in Saturday's airstrikes, which struck the village of Sayed Ramazan in northern Kunduz province, were civilians. The Khanabad district in the province where the village is located is Taliban controlled.

The Afghan Defence Ministry, however, said the airstrikes killed 30 Taliban fighters, but added an investigation was being held into claims that civilians were among those killed.

The airstrikes come as Taliban and government-appointed negotiators are meeting for the first time in Qatar to discuss the future of Afghanistan and an end to decades of war and conflict.

Villagers said an initial airstrike targeted a house belonging to a Taliban fighter, whose home doubled as a check post that stops and frisks people to ensure they are not connected to the government. The explosion set fire to a nearby home, trapping a family inside, said Latif Rahmani who witnessed the airstrikes.

Speaking to the AP by phone, Rahmani said farmers and villagers ran to douse the fire and rescue trapped family members inside when a second airstrike hit, killing many of them.

Rahmani, who said he was working on his house at the time of the airstrike, warned his neighbors against running toward the burning buildings for fear of a second airstrike.

"I yelled at people and told them not to go because maybe there would be another bombing, but they ran to help and to put out the fire," Rahmani said.

A second witness in the area, Kalamuddin, who like many Afghans uses just one name, said the lone Taliban fighter living in the house that was initially hit had been killed.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid condemned the airstrikes and said the Taliban had no military operations in the area at the time of the airstrike.

The United Nations has harshly criticised both sides in the conflict for the relentless killing of civilians in Afghanistan's protracted war.

The peace talks in Qatar are part of a US brokered deal with the Taliban that will eventually lead to US withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan.

In early July, Afghan national army personnel fired mortars into a busy market in southern Helmand, killing 23 people. The Defence Ministry is still investigating the incident.

Also Saturday, at least six rockets were fired at NATO's Resolute Support base in southern Kandahar. No casualties were reported and no one claimed responsibility.

NATO said in a statement that if the Taliban were behind the rocket fire, it could jeopardise the US peace deal in which the Taliban have promised not to attack US and NATO forces. ***AP***

US judge approves injunction to delay WeChat restrictions

New York: A federal judge has approved a request from a group of WeChat users to delay looming US government restrictions that could effectively make the popular app nearly impossible to use.

In a ruling dated Saturday, Magistrate Judge Laurel Beeler in California said the government's actions would affect users' First Amendment rights as an effective ban on the app removes their platform for communication.

WeChat is a messaging-focused app popular with many Chinese-speaking Americans that serves as a lifeline to friends, family, customers and business contacts in China. It's owned by Chinese tech giant Tencent.

A group of WeChat users had made the request after the U.S. Commerce Department said Friday it would bar WeChat from U.S. App stores and keep it from accessing essential internet services in the country, beginning Sunday night at 11:59 p.M.

The government cited national security and data-privacy concerns in taking action against WeChat and imposing similar restrictions on TikTok, another popular Chinese-owned app.

The restrictions on TikTok were pushed back by a week Saturday after President Donald Trump said he supported a proposed deal that would make TikTok a U.S. Company.

WeChat users had argued the moves targeting the all-in-one app with instant-messaging, social media and other communication tools would restrict free speech.

In the ruling, the court said that a WeChat ban "eliminates all meaningful access to communication in the plaintiffs' community," and that an injunction would be in public interest.

The US government had earlier argued that it is not restricting free speech because WeChat users still "are free to speak on alternative platforms that do not pose a national security threat." Specific evidence about WeChat posing a national security threat was also "modest," according to Judge Beeler. ***AP***

$13,000 fine for breaking Covid rules in England

London: People in England who refuse to self-isolate to stop the spread of coronavirus could face fines of up to 10,000 pounds ($13,000, 11,000 euros) under tough new regulations announced Saturday to tackle a surge in cases.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said this week that Britain was seeing a second wave of Covid-19, and introduced new restrictions for millions of people across northwest, northern and central England.

In a further measure announced late Saturday, he said that from September 28 people will be legally obliged to self-isolate if they test positive or are told to by the National Health Service (NHS) tracing programme.

"The best way we can fight this virus is by everyone following the rules and self-isolating if they're at risk of passing on coronavirus," Johnson said in a statement.

"And so nobody underestimates just how important this is, new regulations will mean you are legally obliged to do so if you have the virus or have been asked to do so by NHS Test and Trace."

Currently people who have symptoms or test positive are asked to self-isolate for 10 days. Those who live with someone who either has symptoms or tests positive must self-isolate for 14 days.

The new fines will start at 1,000 pounds — in line with breaking quarantine after international travel — and rise to 10,000 pounds for repeat offences and the worst breaches, including businesses that threaten self-isolating staff with redundancy, officials said.

In an incentive to get people to comply, those on low incomes will be able to claim an extra lump sum of 500 pounds if they are unable to work from home during their isolation. ***AFP***

Iran says US 'isolated' as world powers dismiss sanctions

Tehran: Iran said on Sunday its arch-foe the United States was "isolated" after a US unilateral declaration that UN sanctions are back in force against the Islamic republic was dismissed by other major powers.

The Trump administration said the so-called "snapback" of the sanctions was in effect and threatened to "impose consequences" on any UN member state that fails to comply.

"The United States is very, very isolated in its claims," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said. "The whole world is saying nothing has changed."

The sanctions in question were lifted in 2015 when Iran and six world powers -- Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the US -- reached a landmark nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

But US President Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, saying the deal — negotiated by his predecessor Barack Obama — was

insufficient. He also renewed and even strengthened Washington's own sanctions.

The US insists it is still a participant in the agreement that it walked out of, but only so it can activate the snapback option, which it announced on August 20.

Virtually every other Security Council member disputes Washington's ability to execute this legal pirouette, and the UN body has not taken the measure any further.

On Sunday, two permanent council members — France and Britain — issued a joint statement along with non-permanent member Germany saying the US's "purported notification" was "incapable of having any legal effect".

Russia also said the US lacked legal authority.

"The illegitimate initiatives and actions of the United States by definition cannot have international legal consequences for other countries," said its foreign ministry.

Iran brushed off the move and called on the rest of the world to unite against what it called the US's "reckless actions". ***AFP***

March of 100,000 marks week 7 of Belarus protests

Kyiv: Tens of thousands of Belarusians calling for the authoritarian president to resign marched through the capital Sunday as the country's wave of protests entered its seventh week.

Hundreds of soldiers blocked off the center of Minsk, deploying water cannons and armored personnel carriers and erecting barbed wire barriers. Protests also took place in several other cities, including Brest and Grodno.

The crowd in Minsk included about 100,000 people, said Ales Bialiatski, head of the Viasna human rights organization. He said dozens of demonstrators were arrested in Minsk and Grodno.

Protests began Aug. 9 after an election that official results say gave President Alexander Lukashenko a sixth term in office; opponents and some poll workers say the results were manipulated. Lukashenko, who has repressed opposition and independent news media during 26 years in power, has rejected suggestions of dialogue with the protesters. ***AP***

Thousands march in Berlin in support of refugees in Greece

AP ■ BERLIN

Thousands of people marched in Berlin on Sunday demanding that the government do more to help migrants stuck in Greece, many of whom have been made homeless since fires ravaged the country's largest refugee camp.

The crowd marched through the capital to the landmark Victory Column carrying signs with slogans like "we have space" and "Seehofer, be a Christian" — a reference to Interior Minister Horst Seehofer.

A little girl held a sign saying "let the people in" while a woman waved a placard saying "People are suffering, Fortress Europe looks on — and cuddles up to the right."

More than 12,000 migrants and refugees fled the fires, which the Greek government says were deliberately set by a small group of Afghan migrants to protest a virus lockdown at the Moria camp.

Thousands have slept outdoors on a nearby roadside in the nights since the blazes.

Germany's government said last week it would take in 1,553 migrants — 408 families with children — from various Greek islands who already have been granted protected status in Greece. The move came on top of a decision to take in up to 150 unaccompanied children as part of a European effort.

The weekend demonstrators demanded that Germany do more, and that the government not block independent state or municipal efforts to take in refugees themselves.

About 3,000 people had registered to take part in the march, but police told the dpa news agency the crowd numbered in the "mid four-digit range."

Participants in a demonstration of an alliance for the immediate evacuation of all Greek camps hold protest signs in Berlin, Germany on Sunday AP

GOP hopeful Supreme Court battle will help shift election

Washington: Four years ago, the allure of conservative Supreme Court appointments helped persuade skeptical Republicans to support Donald Trump for president. Two years ago, a contentious clash over Trump's choice of Brett Kavanaugh for the court was credited with bolstering GOP gains in the Senate in an otherwise bad midterm election.

And now, just 44 days before Trump's reelection will be decided, Republicans are again looking to a Supreme Court nomination fight to unite a deeply fractured party as it faces the very real possibility of losing the White House and control of the Senate this fall.

GOP leaders are optimistic they can pull it off. In the turbulent Trump era, nothing has motivated the Republican Party's disparate factions to come home quite like the prospect of a lifetime appointment to the nation's highest court.

"This can be an important galvanizing force for President Trump," said Leonard Leo, co-chairman of the conservative Federalist Society who has advised the Trump administration on its first two confirmations — for Neil Gorsuch and Kavanaugh.

The emerging nomination debate that follows the death Friday of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg threatens to reshuffle voter priorities in the closing weeks of an election that had been squarely focused on another set of generational issues: the pandemic, economic devastation and deep civil unrest.

Trump, backed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, is pledging to replace the liberal Ginsburg with a conservative jurist, promising on Saturday evening that he will announce his nominee "very soon." Plans are in motion for a swift nomination and confirmation.

Lest there be any questions about the political implications, Trump is expected to make his choice in a matter of days. Those close to the president are encouraging him to announce his pick before the first presidential debate against Democratic challenger Joe Biden on September 29.

Biden said the winner of the Nov. 3 election should choose the next justice. Biden's team is skeptical that the Supreme Court clash will fundamentally change the contours of a race Trump was trailing so close to Election Day. Indeed, five states are already voting. ***AP***

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male namely **Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown was found at 17.09.2020 on unconscious condition at Marina Bus Stand, Chelms Ford Road, Pahar Ganj, Delhi. He was admitted in LHMC during the treatment doctor declared him dead**. Dead Body preserved for 72 hrs in LHMC Hospital Mortuary ward. In this regard **DD No. 36A, dated: 17.09.2020** has been lodged at Police Station, Paharganj, Delhi. Identification of unidentified dead body of male is as under:

Name: Unknown, Age: about 70 Years, Height: 5', Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Build: Thin, Beard: Black and White, Hair: White, Wearing: White Shirt, Checkdar Lungi and Nacked Footed.

If anyone have any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

SHO
Police Station, Paharganj, New Delhi
DP/378/CD/2020 **Ph.: 011-23520787, 23524746**

Nawaz Sharif makes political comeback

Launches scathing attack on Army, Imran Khan Govt

Islamabad: Pakistan's deposed premier Nawaz Sharif on Sunday staged a political comeback by criticising the powerful Army and said the Opposition was not against Prime Minister Imran Khan but against those who brought an "inefficient" man to power.

Addressing the All-Parties Conference (APC) hosted by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) via a video link aimed at launching a protest movement against the Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, the three-time premier launched a scathing attack on the ruling party for its "failure to address the basic problems of the people".

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.

On Friday, PPP chairman Zardari talked to him over phone and invited him to virtually attend the Opposition-led All Parties Conference (APC) scheduled to be held on Sunday.

Addressing the conference, Sharif criticised the country's powerful establishment for allegedly supporting Khan.

"Our struggle is not against Imran Khan. Today, our struggle is against those who installed Imran Khan and who manipulated elections (of 2018) to bring an inefficient man like him into power and thus destroyed the country," he said.

Sharif said that the foremost priority should be to remove "this selected government and this system", adding that "if the change is not brought, it will bring irreversible loss to this country."

He asked the powerful Army to stay away from politics and follow the Constitution and vision of the country's father 'Quaid-e-Azam' Muhammad Ali Jinnah. "It is very important that our armed forces stay away from our governmental system according to our Constitution and the Quaid's speech, and not interfere with the people's choice. We have made this country a joke in our own eyes and internationally as well," he said.

Sharif pointed out that former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani once said that there was "a state within a state" in Pakistan.

"It is saddening that the situation has escalated to a state above the state. This parallel government illness is the root-cause of our problems," he said.

He asked the leaders attending the conference to make important decisions to change the system of the country, alleging that the current government has enforced "martial law" in the country. "This conference should bring forth a concrete plan of action for saving democracy, a concrete policy should be made for solving the problem of a parallel state… I again urge this all-party conference to go beyond its traditional ways and form a plan of action," he said.

Sharif reiterated that the vote of people should be honoured which was the only way to save democracy and the country.

"Pakistan has been constantly deprived from a democratic system. When the vote is dishonored, the entire democratic system becomes meaningless. When it is decided before the election process as to who will win and who will lose, then it can be guessed how the public is betrayed and how the public's mandate is stolen," he said. He said that military dictators ruled for multiple years but none of the elected prime ministers had been allowed to complete the allotted five years. ***PTI***

GST SHORTFALL

21 States accept ₹97,000 cr borrowing proposal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 21 States, mostly ruled by BJP or parties which have supported it on various issues, have opted to borrow ₹97,000 crore to meet the GST revenue shortfall in the current fiscal, sources said on Sunday.

The states and union territories (UTs) which have intimated their decision to the Centre are Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

Finance Ministry sources said Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal are yet to respond to the GST Council proposal to decide their options.

The states which do not submit their borrowing options before the due GST Council meet on October 5, 2020 will have to wait till June 2022 to get their compensation dues, subject to the condition that the GST Council extends the cess collection period beyond 2022, the sources said.

GST Council with full presence of states and UTs needs, as per the GST Act, only 20 states to pass any resolution, in case voting is required on any issue, the sources added.

In the current fiscal, the states are staring at a staggering ₹2.35 lakh crore Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue shortfall.

Of this, as per Centre's calculation, shortfall of about ₹ 97,000 crore is on account of GST implementation and rest ₹1.38 lakh crore is due to the impact of COVID-19 on states' revenues.

The Centre late last month gave two options to the states to borrow either ₹97,000 crore from a special window facilitated by the RBI or ₹2.35 lakh crore from market, and has also proposed extending the compensation cess levied on luxury, demerit and sin goods beyond 2022 to repay the borrowing.

The sources said few more states are also to intimate their borrowing option in a day or two.

They added that Manipur, which had earlier opted to borrow ₹2.35 lakh crore, later changed its preference to the ₹97,000 crore option.

The non-BJP ruled states are at loggerheads with the Centre over the issue of funding shortfall.

The chief ministers of six non-BJP ruled states -- West Bengal, Kerala, Delhi, Telangana, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu -- have written to Centre opposing the options which require states to borrow to meet the shortfall.

While these states want Centre to borrow to meet the shortfall, Centre has argued that the revenue accruing from GST compensation cess goes to the states and the Centre cannot borrow on the security of the tax it does not own.

Under the GST structure, taxes are levied under 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent slabs. On top of the highest tax slab, a cess is levied on luxury, sin and demerit goods, and the proceeds from the same are used to compensate states for any revenue loss.

The Attorney General for India K K Venugopal had given his legal view on the compensation cess issue where he has opined that there is no obligation on the Centre under the GST laws to compensate for loss of revenue.

He had opined that the GST Council has to find ways to meet any revenue shortfall arising out of GST implementation.

The payment of GST compensation to states became an issue after revenue from imposition of cess started dwindling since August 2019.

Banks not asked by RBI to raise capital to brace for possible NPAs: MoS Finance

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The RBI has not asked banks and non-banking financial institutions to raise capital to brace for a possible pile up in bad debt in the coming months, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur informed the Rajya Sabha.

However, he said, "banks and non-banking financial institutions are required to maintain capital as per prudential capital adequacy norms on an ongoing basis."

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das at an event in July had advised that banks need to raise capital on anticipatory basis to build up adequate capital buffers to mitigate risks arising out of coronavirus outbreak.

"In such a situation, it has become a lot more important that the banks have to improve their governance, sharpen their risk management skills and banks have to raise capital on an anticipatory basis instead of waiting for a situation to arise. Proactively, it is necessary for both public and private sector banks to build up adequate capital buffers," Das had said.

The economic impact of the pandemic - due to lockdown and anticipated post lock-down compression in economic growth - may result in higher non-performing assets and capital erosion of banks, he had said.

A recapitalisation plan for public sector and private banks has, therefore, become necessary, Das added.

The government in the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants has sought Parliament nod for Rs 20,000 crore towards recapitalisation of public sector banks during the current fiscal.

With the intent to ease financial stress caused by COVID-19 disruptions and meet the challenges of bad loans, the RBI in August permitted lending institutions to grant concession to eligible borrowers for COVID-19 related stress in personal, Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and corporate loans by implementing individual resolution plans in respect of eligible loans.

Resolution plan would include alteration in the rate of interest, sacrifice by lending institution on the amount payable to interest, waiver of penal interest and conversion of accumulated interest into a fresh loan with a deferred payment schedule, Thakur said.

Replying to another question, the minister said the government has implemented a judicious mix of fiscal and monetary policies to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 on the economy.

On May 12, 2020, the government announced the Aatmanirbhar Package, a special economic and comprehensive package of more than Rs 20 lakh crore equivalent to 10 per cent of India's GDP with an aim to encourage business, attract investments and strengthen the resolve for 'Make in India'.

On the monetary front, Thakur said, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) responded with a mix of conventional and unconventional monetary and liquidity measures to mitigate the negative economic fallout of COVID-19.

The policy rates have been significantly reduced and around Rs 9.57 lakh crore or 4.7 per cent of GDP have been injected since February 2020 to enhance the credit flow in the economy, he said.

The RBI has taken several developmental and regulatory policy measures to enhance liquidity support for financial markets and other stakeholders, ease financial stress caused by COVID-19 disruptions while strengthening credit discipline, improve the flow of credit, deepen digital payment systems and facilitate innovations across the financial sector by leveraging on technology, he said.

"It has announced certain regulatory measures wherein, in respect of all term loans (including agricultural term loans, retail and crop loans) outstanding as on March 1, 2020, all regulated lending institutions were permitted to grant a moratorium of six months on payment of all instalments falling due between March 1, 2020 and August 31, 2020." he said.

Google forced Paytm to roll back cashback campaign which is legal in India'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Global internet giant Google's Play store rules forced Paytm to roll back a UPI cashback campaign which is legal in India, digital payments company Paytm claimed on Sunday.

The company in a blog alleged that it was arm-twisted to take down its campaign while Google Pay has been running similar cricket-based promotions. Google had blocked Paytm on its Play store following a policy update on September 18, ahead of the IPL cricket tournament, to disallow apps that support any unregulated gambling but restored the mobile app after a few hours after it rolled back the campaign.

The homegrown financial services firm Paytm said that it was forced to comply with Google's mandate to remove the UPI cashback and scratch cards campaign to get re-listed on the Android Play Store.

"Offering both is legal in India, and cashback was being given following all rules and regulations set by the government," Paytm said.

The digital payments firm alleged that it was "arm-twisted" by the search engine major to comply with its biased app Play Store policies "that are meant to artificially create Google's market dominance."

Paytm in the blog said that Google Pay has started its Tez Shots Campaign which clearly says, "Score Runs to earn assured rewards worth up to Rs 1 lakh" at the beginning of this cricket season itself. No immediate comments were received from Google on the subject. Paytm in its blog said in the Tez Shots game a user can play as many times as they want and earn vouchers that they can unlock at each milestone.

Finally, they qualify for a lucky draw through which they get assured tickets up to Rs 1 lakh with any qualifying payment. For different scores starting from 50 to all the way to 1000 plus they also earn rewards and discounts on different services that they avail via the Google Pay app, Paytm said in the blog.

Diesel prices fall again on easing global crude prices

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Diesel prices continued to decline for the fourth consecutive day on Sunday on the back of falling global crude prices.

In the national capital, diesel was priced at ₹71.58 per litre, down from ₹71.82 on Saturday.

Similarly in the other metros of Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, the fuel was sold for ₹78.02, ₹76.99 and ₹75.09 on Sunday, respectively, against the previous levels of ₹78.27, ₹ 77.21 and ₹75.32 per litre. The recent fall in transport fuel prices comes in the wake of softening of global oil prices as an extended run of Covid-19 has depressed demand and created a glut in the market.

Prices of petrol, however, remained unchanged for the second straight day at ₹81.14, ₹87.82, ₹84.21 and ₹82.67 per litre across Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, respectively.

₹4.29 L cr cost overrun reported in 432 infra projects

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 432 infrastructure projects, each worth at least Rs 150 crore, have reported total cost overruns of over ₹4.29 lakh crore, according to data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

According to the data, as of August 1, 2020, out of the 1,670 central sector infrastructure projects costing ₹150 crore and above, 8 projects are ahead of schedule, 212 are on schedule, 505 are delayed, 432 have reported cost overrun and 202 projects reported both time and cost overrun with respect to their original project implementation schedules.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,670 projects was ₹20,58,193.26 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹24,87,361.54 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,29,168.28 crore (20.85 per cent of original cost)," the report said.

The expenditure incurred on these projects till July 2020 is over ₹11.51 lakh crore, which is 46.28 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects. The 'Flash Report On Central Sector Projects' noted that the number of delayed projects however, decreases to 418 if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion. Further, for 945 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported, it said.

Out of 505 delayed projects, 120 projects have overall delay in the range of 1 to 12 months, 118 projects have delay in the range of 13 to 24 months, 157 projects have delay in the range of 25 to 60 months and 110 projects have delay of 61 months and above

Out of 505 delayed projects, 120 projects have overall delay in the range of 1 to 12 months, 118 projects have delay in the range of 13 to 24 months, 157 projects have delay in the range of 25 to 60 months and 110 projects have delay of 61 months and above. The average time overrun in these 505 delayed projects is 43.49 months.

Oracle, Walmart rescue TikTok in US with Trump's 'blessing'

IANS ■ SAN FRANCISCO

In a surprise move, Oracle and Walmart have come together to save TikTok from the ban, forming a new company called TikTok Global which will be headquartered in the US. President Donald Trump said he has given the deal his blessing.

Trump on Saturday announced that China-based ByteDance which is the parent company of TikTok has received tentative approval for an agreement with the US government to resolve the outstanding issues, which will now include Oracle and Walmart together investing to acquire 20 per cent of the newly-formed TikTok Global business. Oracle announced it was chosen as TikTok's secure cloud provider and will become a minority investor with a 12.5 per cent stake.

Walmart said it has tentatively agreed to a purchase 7.5 per cent stake in TikTok and its CEO Doug McMillon would serve as one of the five board members of the newly-created company.

The parent company ByteDance will own the remaining 80 per cent of TikTok.

"TikTok Global will be majority owned by American investors, including Oracle and Walmart. TikTok Global will be an independent American company, headquartered in the US, with four Americans out of the five member Board of Directors," Walmart and Oracle said in a joint statement.

Talking to reporters, Trump said: "I have given the deal my blessing. I approve the deal in concept".

"It will have nothing to do with China, it'll be totally secure, that'll be part of the deal. The security will be 100 per cent. They'll be using separate clouds and a lot of very, very powerful security". All the TikTok technology will be in possession of TikTok Global, and comply with US laws and privacy regulations.

Amid 'ease of business' claims, going remains tough for MNCs

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Modi Government has left no stone unturned in inviting foreign investors with claims of an improved business environment backed by unprecedented reforms in the past six years, but what many industry players face is a different story altogether.

From high tax levies to retrospective applicability of taxation, companies including multinational corporations (MNC) face a number of obstacles in running and expanding their businesses in India, nonetheless they continue to operate in the country, given the large market it offers to them. There are a host of global giants including Vodafone Group, Cairn Energy and Walmart which had to face regulatory issues in the country.

Noting that for foreign investments to come in, it is essential that appropriate incentives, single window clearance among other incentives are provided, Sumit Batra, Partner at India Law Alliance, says that India has not been able to provide such comfort to foreign investors. "Issues such as retrospective applicability of tax laws, change in overall business sentiments, tedious compliances and an era ushered by ordinances, has made things difficult," Batra told IANS.

Several bigwigs have from time to time raised their concerns regarding the issues faced in the one of the largest consumer markets in the world, the latest being Shekar Viswanathan, Vice Chairman of Toyota Kirloskar Motor, the Indian unit of Toyota. In a recent interview Viswanathan said that Toyota Motor Corp will not expand further in India due to the high tax regime in the country, adding that apart from impacting expansion plans, high levies also impact demand and eventually halt job creation.

Later, in a statement, Toyota Kirloskar Motor said that it continues to be committed to the Indian market and operations here are an "integral part" of its global strategy. It, however, added: "In wake of the slowdown that has been exaggerated by the COVID-19 impact, the auto industry has been requesting the government for support to sustain the industry through a viable tax structure. We remain confident that the government will do everything possible to support industry and employment."

According to Suman Chowdhury, Chief Analytical Officer at Acuite Ratings and Research, while the GST applicable for vehicles is pegged at 28 per cent, the purchase taxes on cars in India have been historically high and given the fiscal compulsions, the government may not be in a position to reduce the taxation rates in the current scenario.

"With regards to policies, what can possibly help the sector is the introduction of the scrappage policy to ensure removal of polluting vehicles on the road and its replacement by new BS-VI models," Chowdhury told IANS.

According to Sridhar V, Partner with Grant Thornton Bharat LLP: "Some of the policies like End Of Life for vehicles they believe could trigger a fresh demand across but more so in the truck segment.

Blockchain policy ensures access to Govt services 'anywhere, anytime'

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The Blockchain policy, unveiled by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami, would benefit the public at large by ensuring that government departments connect and design efficient workflows for users in various sectors.

The platform 'Nambikkai Inaiyam' (Blockchain Backbone) would help establish a single trusted source that would be used to create an efficient and manipulation resilient system for government services, the IT department said in a policy note.

"The initiative will directly benefit the public of Tamil Nadu," it said.

"The Nambikai Inaiyam is the state's blockchain backbone. It will be a state-of-the-art blockchain platform that will allow government departments, public, start-ups, private sector to connect, transact, build secure applications and design efficient workflows upon it", it added.

The blockchain facility would be a single platform that can be used for developing and deploying block chain applications for all departments and public sector enterprises within the state.

Some of the key features of the policy include seamless access to government services 'anywhere, anytime'.

THE INITIATIVE WILL DIRECTLY BENEFIT THE PUBLIC OF TAMIL NADU

"It is one of the largest blockchain roll out in the country," the government said.

The facility would provide a secure, scalable and signature-based authentication for electronic data, machines and personal information.

Enterprise-grade government to government and government to citizens products and services would be implemented using this infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the safe and ethical artificial intelligence policy also launched by the Palaniswami government aims to address the challenges faced in the use of AI technology. The policy recommends -- six dimensional framework, transparency and audit, accountability and legal challenges, misuse protection, digital divide and data deficit among others, the note said.

Coal India output may fall below 600 MT in FY21 on sluggish demand: Analysts

PTI ■ KOLKATA

State-run Coal India Ltd may witness de-growth in production during the current fiscal as its output is likely to fall below 600 million tonnes amid subdued demand, analysts said.

The miner could end the current year with the production of around 580 million tonnes of coal as against its revised target of 650-660 million tonnes, they said.

Analysts of brokerage firm Motilal Oswal projected production of 582 million tonne for Coal India and off-take of 565 million tonnes in FY2021 while ICICI Securities had estimated an output of 580 million tonne and sales of 550 million tonne this year.

However, the miner is hopeful of achieving a 10 per cent growth in 2020-21 over 602 million tonne of coal produced last year, notwithstanding the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a Coal India official said.

The coal behemoth had earlier set a production target of 710 million tonne for the current fiscal.

"Coal India has to match with the demand and can't keep on producing even if it has the capacity. Demand for coal remains subdued.

In FY20, production was at 602 million tonne but offtake remained at 581 million tonne," an analyst said on condition of anonymity.

THE MINER IS HOPEFUL OF ACHIEVING A 10 PER CENT GROWTH IN 2020-21 OVER 602 MILLION TONNE OF COAL PRODUCED LAST YEAR

The brokerage firms also projected a lower EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) of 17-18 per cent for Coal India in the current fiscal.

The analysts are not optimistic on sales demand even though the miner has introduced a new category of spot e-auction for importers only and aimed at replacing 150 million tonne of the fuel sourced from abroad with domestic supply.

The coal procured under the "special spot e-auction scheme 2020 for import substitution" will be for use within the country.

Govt garners ₹9,538 crore from direct tax dispute resolution scheme so far

New Delhi: The Government has collected Rs 9,538 crore revenue from the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas scheme, Parliament was informed on Sunday.

Minister of State for Finance Anurag Singh Thakur said as many as 35,074 declarations have been filed under the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas scheme till September 8, 2020. "The revenue generated till date through the (Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas) Act is Rs 9,538 crore. This figure does not include the payments made by the taxpayers who are yet to file their declarations under the scheme," Thakur said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had proposed the direct tax dispute resolution scheme, which provides opportunity to taxpayers to pay outstanding taxes and get waiver of interest and penalty, in her Union Budget speech on February 1.In March, Parliament passed the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Act. The dispute resolution scheme is valid till December 31, 2020. Under the scheme, taxpayers willing to settle disputes shall be allowed a complete waiver of interest and penalty if they pay the entire amount of tax in dispute by December 31, 2020.

Over 19,800 cases pending before NCLT till July 31

New Delhi: As many as 19,844 cases were pending before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) as on July 31 this year and majority of them were under the insolvency law, according to the corporate affairs ministry. Minister of State for Corporate Affairs Anurag Singh Thakur said a total 320 posts of officers/staff have been created in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). *PTI*

Garg takes over charge as director/Business Development of DMRC

New Delhi: An officer of the 1992 batch of Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE), Garg was earlier working as Executive Director/Consultancy Business in DMRC. He is a Civil Engineering Graduate from the University of Roorkee (now IIT) and Post Graduate from IIT (Delhi). Garg has a vast experience of 27 years and has served with distinction in various capacities in Indian Railways as well as DMRC.

Garg received the 'Project Leader of the Year' award in 2019 from Project Management Association, India for the efficient completion of the NOIDA-Greater NOIDA Metro line.

Greater Noida becomes first city in NCR to use Ground Penetrating Machine (GPR) for sewer and water line mapping

Trend Blazer

We need one film industry: Kangana

Actor **KANGANA RANAUT** says she wants film industries of different states to have a collective identity.

This comes after UP CM Yogi Adityanath said he plans to build the "biggest film city" in UP.

"I applaud this announcement by @myogiadityanath *ji*. We need many reforms in the film industry, first, we need one big film industry called Indian film industry. We are divided based on many factors, Hollywood films get advantage of this. One industry, but many film cities," she tweeted.

She added that the best of dubbed regional films don't get pan-India release but dubbed Hollywood films get mainstream release, adding that the trend was "alarming."

'Most boys have mothers, don't they? So they do interact with the opposite gender. Maybe what we need are anti-marital rape laws? Perhaps, if you grew up seeing your mother has a choice, her consent matters, you might value that for other women too?'
—Reema Kagti

Actor **SHWETA TRIPATHI** says the claim that an overwhelming majority of Bollywood is on drugs is an incorrect generalisation, adding that such an assertion is a half-truth.

She said, "I think narratives doing the rounds that half the people of the film industry are drug addicts, female actresses are sleeping around to get work, and outsiders can make their space in the 'big bad world of cinema' only after compromising make for great and interesting scripts. But no, that's not how Bollywood works. Trust me when I say this, no one is forcefully putting drugs in our mouths! If a youngster wants to get into drugs, they will do it anyway — whether in Mumbai or anywhere."

Dwayne breaks gate manually

Actor and former wrestling champion **DWAYNE JOHNSON** flaunted his physical strength off screen by ripping the gate off with his bare hands because he did not want to be late to work.

Taking to social media, Dwayne shared a photo of a gate that lay on the ground.

He captioned it: "Not my finest hour, but a man's gotta go to work. We experienced a power outage due to severe storms, causing my front gate not to open. I tried to override the hydraulic system to open the gates, which usually works when power goes out but this time it wouldn't."

IT HUNTS US, STAY ALERT!

British researcher, author and medical historian Dr MARK HONIGSBAUM, in his book, *The Pandemic Century: A History of Global Contagion from the Spanish Flu to Covid-19*, explains why viral disasters like the Coronavirus continue to attack humanity and take the healthcare community by surprise. By CHAHAK MITTAL

Deadly viruses stay beneath the surface and need just one moment of triggering to emerge in the atmosphere and take the world by storm. One would never realise when that virus sneaks into the lives of callous human beings and creates havoc like the novel Coronavirus has.

British researcher, author and medical historian Dr Mark Honigsbaum feels that our global interconnectedness has resulted in our cities becoming disease reservoirs and our greed for territorial conquest has brought us closer to the animal species that allows the virus to "jump." Scientists and microbiologists are aware of the permanence of such threats. However, the medical community's hubris and a fixed approach to treatment often blind them to the unknown threats that still lurk in the dark.

Mark's book, *The Pandemic Century: A History of Global Contagion from the Spanish Flu to Covid-19,* traces a century-long history of recurring pandemics, with a new chapter on the Coronavirus. He highlights how after the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic, scientists dreamt of preventing catastrophic outbreaks of an infectious disease. But despite research and years of progress, our medical protocols have not been aligned to them, resulting in the severity of the current pandemic. Excerpts:

❑ Your previous book, *The Pandemic Century: One Hundred Years of Panic, Hysteria and Hubris* (2019), was re-edited to include the current pandemic of COVID-19. What was your approach while comparing the pandemic to the previous ones?

Early on in the pandemic, the Imperial College and other disease modelling groups had forecast that, based on the case fatality rate figures from China and in the absence of suppressive measures, there could be as many as 500,000 deaths from COVID-19 in the UK and many millions worldwide. These models, which were based on influenza, immediately brought to mind the 1918-19 Spanish influenza pandemic, the most devastating pandemic of modern times, which I have described in the Chapter 1 of my book.

However, it was also obvious that although both flu and the Coronavirus are respiratory pathogens that spread as droplets and aerosols, the Coronavirus transmits much more slowly than influenza and has a longer incubation period. This suggested that it would be a mistake to model our response too closely on influenza and a better comparison might be to look at the measures that were used against SARS-1 in 2002-03 — test and trace combined with isolation and quarantine measures.

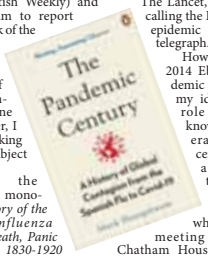
❑ Since the pandemic is not at a very advanced level of research, was it challenging to find the right facts and figures?

Yes, when I was writing the chapter on COVID-19 in March, it was unclear whether the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) was closer to 10 per cent or one per cent, and what percentage of the population was being infected with the SARS-CoV-2 without developing the obvious symptoms. We still don't have a definitive answer to those questions, though most experts now seem to agree that about two in five people (40 per cent) infected with the virus will be asymptomatic or experience very mild symptoms and that the true CFR is between 0.7 and one per cent.

The bigger fact unknown still is the extent to which people may enjoy a degree of immunity to SARS-Cov-2, either because of previous exposure to a related Coronavirus, or because their immune systems have some in-built genetic advantage.

❑ What was your first point of reference while doing the research? How long did it take for you to complete it?

I first became interested in epidemics and pandemics in 2005 when I was working for *The Observer* (British Weekly) and visited Vietnam to report on the outbreak of the H5N1 Bird Flu. This led to a PhD on the history of influenza pandemics. So one way or another, I have been thinking about this subject for 15 years.



One of the themes of my monograph, *A History of the Great Influenza Pandemics: Death, Panic and Hysteria, 1830-1920* (Bloomsbury, 2020), was the way in which the epidemiological risk models and the media amplify anxiety about infectious diseases. For instance, during the 1889-92 Russian influenza pandemic, telegraphic communications provoked a popular dread of the flu. The medical journal, The Lancet, went as far as calling the Russian Flu "an epidemic started by the telegraph."

However, it was the 2014 Ebola virus epidemic that crystalised my ideas about the role of scientific knowledge in generating complacency as well as anxiety about threats. The key moment came in May 2014 when I attended a meeting on Ebola at Chatham House and all the experts essentially said about the outbreak in Southeastern Guinea, "We've seen this before in other parts of Africa; there's nothing to worry about." Three months later Ebola arrived in Monrovia and Freetown and everyone started blaming the WHO for failing to appreciate the danger.

Then, in 2015, while we were still fighting the Ebola in West Africa, the world was confronted with another outbreak that no one had anticipated — the Zika. This led me to reconsider the previous epidemics and pandemics and the extent to which such blind spots were the product of particular laboratory technologies and "ways of knowing" infectious diseases.

❑ Your research has time and again tried to highlight how such viruses just live beneath the surface and are awakened due to human consequences and actions. How can we ensure a co-living and sustainable functioning between humans and the environment? What's the way forward?

The Coronavirus and other viruses like Ebola have always been 'out there' in nature. But it's only when we disrupt the natural habitats of the wild animals, where they harbour such viruses, the risks of an emerging infectious disease becoming a large epidemic or pandemic increase. Building roads and faster rail links to such areas make it more likely that a virus that spills over into a remote farming community will reach a large urban area.

So we have to reduce the pressure on these natural habitats by building protected zones for wildlife and discourage farming on the edges of rainforests. And we have to encourage more sustainable livestock practices and do a better job of regulating the trade in wild animals.

❑ There have been many advances in technology and medicine over the last few decades and yet such viruses pose a great threat and an unprecedented damage to humankind. Why is that?

The point is we cannot prevent all spillover events or predict precisely when or where the next one will happen. What we can do — and should do often — is invest in local laboratories and diagnostic services so that we can spot unusual outbreaks early and close them down quickly.

We should invest much more in public hospitals and local community care centres so that when people fall ill, they have access to the best medical care close to where they need the facilities.

❑ You had earlier said, "Our understanding of infectious disease and our attempt to control it through rational scientific means and technologies are constantly being disrupted." What did you mean?

One of the heroes of my book is French-born Rockefeller researcher, Rene Dubos. He was a brilliant medical researcher, who developed the first commerical antibiotic in 1939. But he also realised that the narrow focus on microbial causation risked missing the wider ecological and environmental picture. Indeed, by the 1970s, he was advising his colleagues to guard against the hubristic assumption that science could solve all our medical problems.

Instead, he believed medical researchers should "develop an alertness to the unexpected" and advised scientists to "avoid pride of intellect and guard against any illusion or pretence as to the extent and depth of what he knows."

However, today we also have another problem — growing societal hubris or complacency about the infectious diseases of the past. This is what I was referring to when I talked about the rational scientific means and technologies being disrupted. We have vaccines against a host of childhood diseases but because of how social media spreads misinformation about vaccines, trust in science is declining. According to a recent poll, as many as a third of Americans say that they would refuse a vaccine for COVID-19 if one was offered to them.

From Broadway to Amazon

HEIDI SCHRECK's play about women's rights and domestic abuse, *What the Constitution Means to Me*, is set to release on the OTT platform in more than 240 countries

A filmed version of the critically-acclaimed, award-winning play *What the Constitution Means to Me,* created by and starring Heidi Schreck, is set to premiere on Amazon Prime Video, in more than 240 countries and territories worldwide. In the final, record-breaking week of its Broadway run, director Marielle Heller captured the play at the Helen Hayes Theatre.

Through the play, that premiered on Broadway on March 31, 2019, Schreck addresses themes such as women's rights, immigration, and domestic abuse.

Fifteen-year-old Schreck earned her college tuition by winning Constitutional debate competitions across the United States. In this hilarious, hopeful, and achingly human show, Heidi resurrects her teenage self in order to trace the profound relationship between four generations of women and the founding document that shaped their lives.

"I'm delighted with how beautifully Mari Heller has translated the Constitution to the screen and I am thankful to Big Beach and Amazon Studios for making it possible to share the show with more people — especially right now when we can't gather together in theatres," said Schreck.

She added, "In light of the moment we are living through, I am donating part of my proceeds from this film to the Broadway Cares COVID Relief Fund and to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund's voting rights initiative."

Albert Cheng, COO and Co-Head of Television, Amazon Studios, said, "Heidi Schreck is one of today's most relevant and original voices, and *What the Constitution Means to Me* delivers a point of view that is equal parts hilarious, heart-breaking and hopeful. We are proud to bring the award-winning Broadway show to the screen for Prime Video and we know that Schreck's next projects will embody the same intelligence and humanity."

The *Los Angeles Times*' Ashley Lee called *What the Constitution Means to Me* "a deeply personal tour de force." Jesse Green of *The New York Times* proclaimed it "not just the best play to open on Broadway so far this season, but also the most important."

After an extended run on Broadway, the play got a sold-out, limited run at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC as well as at the Mark Taper Forum in LA. It hopes to continue its national tour in 2021.

(The play premieres on Amazon Prime Video on October 16.)

WEBBED

THE TRANSPARENT MUSICALE FINALE

The award-winning series *Transparent* comes to an end in raucous fashion with a two-hour musical episode. After the death of Maura, the Pfeffermans must deal with their grief — and the horror of learning that Shelly plans to stage a musical play based on the family.

Starring Judith Light, the musical releases on Amazon Prime Video on September 27.

COUNTRY-ISH

Country artist Coffey Anderson and his wife, hip-hop dancer Criscilla, juggle family life, career goals and tests of faith in this reality show.

The season 1 releases on Netflix on September 25.

FANDANGO AT THE WALL

Directed by Varda Bar-Kar, the documentary follows the journey of Grammy-winning musician Arturo O'Farrill and producer Kabir Sehgal in Veracruz, Mexico, where they recruit musicians for a live album recording at the US-Mexico border wall.

The film releases on HBO on September 25.

Ear to the ground

The interest of farmers should always be kept at the centre of any ordinance, scheme, policy or programme at all levels. There is a need to listen to their unheard voices so that they're benefitted for their contribution to the nation's economy, says PANKAJ SINGH BISHT

Farmers across several states are opposing the Centre's agriculture-related ordinances. In Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana, protests have been staged against the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, and an amendment in the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, which have been tabled as bills for discussion during the Parliament's Monsoon Session. The protesting farmers fear that these ordinances will allow corporates to dominate the field that is largely owned by them and the government. The struggle of the farmer community is only intensifying with each passing day.

Farmers are responsible for running a crucial sector that contributes about 17 to 18 per cent to the country's GDP, provides employment to over 60 per cent of the population and over 70 per cent of the rural households depend on agriculture. The recognition of the farmers — their achievements, struggles and demands never make it to the list of government's priorities. Every now and then, farmers have to shout at top of their voices to be heard while many, with no one to listen, choose death to register their protest.

During lockdown, farmers were among the worst affected communities. Preliminary findings of a survey conducted by the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health and the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA, Hyderabad) confirms the same. The survey which was conducted with more than 1,000 agricultural households across 12 Indian states show that "60 per cent of those who did harvest reported a yield loss, and 1/10th of them could not harvest their crop in the past month. More than half (56 per cent) of the farmers said that the lockdown has impacted their ability to prepare for the forthcoming sowing season."

The hilly state of Uttarakhand is no exception. Here, too, the several challenges that farmers have been facing for quite some time now, have only intensified during the lockdown period that was imposed because of the pandemic. During monsoon, different types of fruits and vegetables are produced here which provide income to farmers for their yearly sustenance. In local vegetable

markets (Mandis), the impact of lockdown has been such that farmers have stopped getting the right price for the produce. With meagre earnings, it has become difficult for them to meet their daily expenses. The frustration among them is evident as they have been forced to take loans with no hope of future income.

Ramgarh, Dhari, Mukteshwar, Satbunga, Dhanachuli, Nathuvakhan and may other regions of Nainital district are famous for apple production. 8550 metric tons of apple is produced on a huge expanse of 1244.67 hectares. Farmers dedicate their sweat and blood to these orchards with hopes of promising returns. But when this produce is presented in market, they are faced by several challenges — no buyers for the price they deserve, they are told that the quality isn't good enough for the quoted price which pushes them to sell their hard work at unfairly low prices.

Government officials and local representatives consider the old variety of apples, and traditional methods of horticulture to be the main reason behind the challenges faced by these farmers in these areas. The popular opinion is that Uttarakhand should follow the footsteps of the leading fruit producing state of Himachal Pradesh but when it comes to formulating and implementing policies supporting farmers, the void is huge. Plans are conceptualised and implemented mostly without any scientific and technical knowledge.

According to farmers of the Mukteshwar region, who wish to stay anonymous, the government had launched a scheme to encourage intensive apple horticulture in the state. The horticulture department was given the responsibility to identify beneficiaries and implement the scheme. Although, the department was quick enough to implement the scheme but when requests for arranging quality planting material to establish orchards were raised, the department took a backstep putting the entire responsibility on farmers. They asked farmers to make arrangement on their own leaving them helpless.

In this regard, Dr Narayan Singh, an expert working on horticulture development in Mukteshwar region, says that "Another major drawback of this scheme is that farmers have to establish orchard on a minimum of one-acre land. This excludes several small farmers from participating in the scheme. If the state government really wants to provide benefits to the farmers, then it will have to formulate plans keeping in mind small holding farmers as well. This step will not only help in expansion of the scheme but has the potential of turning the state into a horticulture-intensive region."

With minus 23.9 per cent GDP, we have officially entered a recessionary phase this year, data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) shows. Amid such grim situation, it is only the agriculture sector that gives hope for future as it registered a 3.4 per cent GDP growth. There is a need to uphold this hope by strengthening the farmers, specially the smaller ones. The current way of formulating policies clearly misses out on the concerns of the farmers who face several, complicated challenges on field. The good intentions of policy makers fall short in addressing these challenges. There is a need to listen to these unheard voices before introducing changes that farmers are unable to understand and benefit from. The direct interest of farmers should always be kept at the centre of any ordinance, scheme, policy or programme at all levels. It is about time that farmers receive fair benefits for contributing significantly to our nation's economy.

—Charkha Features

SAY NO TO DRUGS

Meditation is an effective addiction recovery technique as it rewires critical pathways in the brain, thereby increasing self-awareness in a person, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Recently, the horrific news of a young boy who under the influence of 'ice drug' (methamphetamines) gouged out his own eyeballs and ate them in a hospital's emergency department shooked the whole world. This makes us think deep as to what makes one get into such a temptation which is so fatal?

A recent survey by Govt of India Health and Family Welfare Ministry shows that among the boys aged between 15-19, 28.6 per cent reported tobacco use and 15 per cent were addicted to alcohol. 5.5 per cent girls under the same age group used tobacco while 4 per cent were addicted to alcohol. Isn't it shocking? Well, what is even more shocking is that when we as a society ostracise kids instead of helping and reforming them. We need to understand that any kind of addiction usually does not happen overnight. Rather, people who become addicted to any substance such as tobacco, alcohol, cocaine etc. are gradually introduced and desensitised to them over a period of time. They may initially enjoy the use of drugs in a recreational way, but it soon turns into a hard habit which takes them to a dangerous route. As their consumption of drugs rises, they become physically dependent on it to an extent that its absence makes them sick. Most of the drugs are illegal, so in order to have them continually, people get involved in criminal activities. Ultimately, they die a painful death with nobody besides them, remaining sad all along.

According to psychologists, most of the drug addicts are quite immature in nature and suffer from insecure personality. They lack confidence due to various psychogenic problems, especially those from their immediate family. Another surprising fact about such people is that most of them are aware that substance abuse would bring them intellectual impairment and substantive, cognitive and memory disturbances resulting in deterioration of their social and family relations. But unfortunately, their habit and dependency on these substances does not let them easily give up on its use.

A body of research proves meditation as an effective addiction recovery technique. Researchers who examined incarcerated substance abusers found that those who were taught how to meditate had lower levels of relapse and more positive outcomes after release than those who received only conventional recovery treatments. Hence, it would not be difficult to recognise the value of meditation for elimination of drug habits. It will also be beneficial to introduce this theory and practise as a subject in education so that the youth and children can be saved from dependence on drugs at a primitive level.

Many people may pose a question: why meditation? Well, the answer is that it has been proved that it rewires critical pathways in the brain thereby increasing self-awareness in a person which allows him/her to focus on things that demand their attention. Remember, calming the mind for a few minutes may provide the distance needed to make a reasonable and healthy decision about whether to light a cigarette or find a meditation centre. So, all the young people, make the right choice of a healthy future by saying no to drugs and yes to meditation.

Answer my question

A student, NEIL BINOY talks about the curtailment and dilution of Question and Zero Hours in Parliament and the cascading effect on children

The children of India face an array of problems that haven't seen the limelight in long aeons. Some of these should be carefully cross-examined and dissected by our Parliament. It must be freed from its shackles if we are ever to hope that our issues may be addressed one day. What can we call a Parliament that shies away from questioning? We need a system, which can effectively surveil and look into all new decisions and plans. For this, we require no system other than the one we already have in place; it only calls for it's complete and absolute freedom. Upon seeing news reports regarding the removal of the Question and Zero Hour, I was much concerned and decided to write this piece.

So the question is — why does this curtailment lead to so much controversy? The government has moved to restrict democratic voices and hide from probing questions about its policies and actions. This is yet another act that edges this government closer to the brink of centralising power. In this case, they have tried to avoid the checks and balances that Parliament provides. What this means is that it provides the government with an opportunity to execute a number of corrupt or damning decisions, hidden from the common man's eye and the Parliament's scrutiny. However, in this blatant attempt to blind the people of this country, it is not just the Parliament that is subject to such actions. The media, too, has been blindsided by the destruction of their freedom, resulting in a world filled with fake news and soothsayers.

But these decisions against freedom of speech also threaten to cause a vast amount of damage to the environment through two specific decisions: One, the brand new plan to widen the roads into highways in the Himalayas, a decision which has already led to widespread muck dumping and damage the sensitive essence of the mountains. In a sickening report, it has been revealed that the project has been the root cause of an increase in landslides and putrid clumps of waste in the surrounding areas. Second, the government has plans in place to change the definition of illegal mining, opening up new loopholes to be exploited. This requires the questioning that is currently being silenced. Why is the environment the least concern? Why is it not being given the importance it should? It is inevitably our mismanagement of the environment that has given rise to the devastating natural disasters that have come raining down on our heads. There is yet still one more aspect which is rarely considered. This environment is something that we are to inherit, but in the current state, it will be hard to repair it. Eventually, our country will

become uninhabitable with the increasing number of natural disasters. If the Parliament will not be allowed to protect the vast biodiversity and ecosystems of our country, then what or who, is left to stay the destructive nature of many of the policies that come flying down the tubes?

Poor decisions combined with the lack of any prior announcement can be deadly as we have already seen in the pandemic-induced lockdown. It has had its share of adverse effects. When the lockdown came flying literally out of the blue in March, with just a few hours of notice, nobody knew what hit them. People who had come to the big cities to work, now found themselves in a terrifying predicament. They were stranded in a foreign environment with steadily rising bills. Cross that with the massive layoffs that have been a staple of the pandemic so far and they are left with no means to pay those bills. In an act of desperation, a 15-year-old student was forced to cycle 1,200 kilometres with her ailing father, subsisting on a meagre ration of biscuits.

What are millions of tons of grains doing rotting in Indian silos, while men, women and children die of hunger on the streets? These, in and of themselves, are problems enough but the mismanagement of the pandemic has spawned yet more. As demands for crops go down, farmers' crops are no longer profitable and many are unable to pay back their debts, leading up to a widespread increase in the number of farmer suicides. Where is the necessary parliamentary criticism that can bring an end to their pain? Aren't they citizens of this country as well, just as deserving of the rights and privileges we enjoy today?

During this lockdown, another prominent feature is that of online education. However, not many children can find the means to access it. The government can at least have provided small tablet devices. Why is a divide between haves and have-nots being allowed to develop? Why is this issue, one which matters to millions of children, not being questioned?

Recently, I have been reading articles lauding the new National Education Policy but none of them talks about the content of education. Most of us today aspire to be successful businessmen and philanthropists like that of Bill Gates and Azim Premji. However, our current education system doesn't teach us how to start a business or how to run a charity. If money-making is vital for economic development, why are we not taught this highly important subject? This is an issue not solely restricted to business and philanthropy but also something essential to our society which is, regrettably, missing from our schooling systems: Empathy, Sympathy and Ethics. Why are our students not taught about the very holding line of a community? We have reached a stage where we can no longer swear by textbook education and hope for the best. To create a massive, nationwide change, we require a change in our curriculum and the way children are taught in India. We require a system with a more hands-on, example-based and grounded approach to education. As our world evolves, so should mould our education systems to tailor itself to fit the new world.

I would like to be the voice of those millions of children in our country. We are the future of India. Respected Chairman of Rajya Sabha and Speaker of Lok Sabha, you are holding positions of great importance, which can easily make or break our potential future. Without the supporting role that our Parliament's questionings provide, the weakened framework will inevitably come blazing down. I suggest you open the Parliament for children for one day in a year to listen to our voices. We, the children can come out with better questions, better suggestions and raise issues that matter to us. Parliament is a great institution to question the system. If questions are not allowed, many wrongs can happen that could destroy the future of our country.

(The writer is a 12-year-old student and a gold medalist at the International English Olympiad.)

"Everything comes to him who hustles while he waits."
—Thomas Edison

10 MINUTES OF MASSAGE WILL RELAX YOU

If you had a tiring week, just 10 minutes of simple massage at home can do wonders to rejuvenate your mind and body, suggests a new research. All you need to do is find someone to do that for you.

This study indicates that massage is an easy-to-apply intervention that can boost the body's principal engine for relaxation — the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) — and also lead to a reduction in perceived mental stress.

The discovery that massage is effective on the level of both psychology and physiology via the PNS may pave the way for future studies on understanding the role of relaxation on stress.

"We are very encouraged by the findings that short periods of dis-engagement are enough to relax not just the mind but also the body," said study first author Maria Meier from the University of Konstanz in Germany.

CHILDHOOD NEGLECT LEADS TO TEEN PREGNANCY

Researchers have found that children who experience neglect are seven times more likely than other abuse victims to have a teen pregnancy.

The researchers found neglected children have the highest rates of teen pregnancy, and were at a three- to five-fold increased risk of failing school, anxiety, depression, psychosis and cannabis abuse problems.

"Although most children in our study experienced multiple types of maltreatment, child neglect and emotional abuse were specifically linked to the worst outcomes," said study author Jake Najman from the University of Queensland in Australia.

For the findings, the researchers looked at data from 8,000 women and children beginning in pregnancy and continuing into early adulthood. "These problems are extremely serious and difficult to treat in adulthood. We need to do all that we can to prevent them from happening in the first place," Najman added.

COVID-19 PATIENTS ARE FACING CARDIAC ISSUES

The original thought was that the novel Coronavirus is a respiratory disease but as the number of patients who have contracted the virus are increasing, it has become clear that COVID-19 has several other implications.

The impact of the virus goes beyond the respiratory system and the lungs. It has tremendous impact on the cardiovascular system of the human body as well. Reports have suggested that heart failure has been one of the main causes of death in COVID-19 patients, even in the ones who do not have severe breathing problems.

Dr Vaibhav Mishra, Director-CTVS, Fortis Hospital Noida, says that myocarditis (inflammation of the heart), cytokine storm, lack of oxygen and stress cardiomyopathy are some of the reasons as to why COVID-19 causes heart damage.

SMOKING LINKED TO BLEEDING IN THE BRAIN

Smoking most likely has a significant share in all cases of subarachnoid haemorrhage, the most fatal type of cerebrovascular disturbances in the brain, warn researchers.

The study, published in the journal Stroke, reaffirmed a link between smoking and subarachnoid haemorrhage (SAH), a type of bleeding stroke that occurs under the membrane that covers the brain and is frequently fatal.

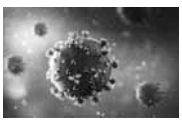
"Our study provides evidence about the link between smoking and bleeding in the brain," said study researcher Ilari Rautalin from the University of Helsinki in Finland.

This study utilized health care data from the Finnish Twin Cohort, a national database of 32,564 individuals (16,282 same-sex, twin pairs in Finland) who were born before 1958 and alive in 1974, and followed for over 42 years between 1976 and 2018.

WHAT IS AIDING INDIA'S LOW MORTALITY RATE

A study conducted by top genetic experts has revealed that Indians should be thankful to their genes for riding over the COVID pandemic with a relatively lesser mortality rate as compared to the US and European nations.

A team comprising distinguished genetic experts from six institutions, led by Prof Gyaneshwer Chaubey of the Banaras Hindu University, analysed complete DNA data of the Angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) gene of X chromosome from various continental populations and found that it is the Indian genes that have protected the population and helped battle the deadly virus.



This explains why the mortality rate of COVID-19 has been much higher in European countries and in the US, as compared to India and Southeast Asian countries.

TODAY

Live from 7:30pm
STAR SPORTS 1 & 3

IPL 2020

Ambati Rayudu | 71 runs

Mohd Shami | 3 wickets

The pitch was doing a bit with the new ball but it came a bit easier once the dew came on. We just wanted to get stuck in there and get through

None of our batsmen carried on for us, like du Plessis and Rayudu did for CSK. Credit to the CSK bowlers, they bowled well at the end to pull back things

Every team has a perfect mix of world-class overseas players and quality Indian players. Ours is a pretty good balanced side in all departments

I concentrate on bowling dot balls and putting pressure on the batsman so he can take risks. My focus is the team's requirement, what helps the team is important to me

Stoinis blitz drags DC to 157/8

Aussie all-rounder smashes 21-ball 53; Delhi hit 57 off last 18 balls

PTI ■ DUBAI

Australian batsman Marcus Stoinis stole the thunder from Mohammed Shami with a belligerent 21-ball-53 which lifted the Delhi Capitals to 157 for eight against Kings XI Punjab in their IPL match on Sunday.

The Capitals scored 57 runs in the last 18 balls with Stoinis producing a whirlwind knock that had seven fours and three sixes.

The pitch had a tinge of grass, the ball was swinging and pacer Shami relished the bowling on a helpful track.

His wicket-taking and run-choking act seemed to have made the difference before Stoinis' outstanding hitting changed the complexion of the game in matter of minutes.

It was a pitch that required patience from the batsmen but reckless shots was how Delhi Capitals began after being invited to bat, with Prithvi Shaw (5) paying the price for his extravagance and Shimron Hetmyer (7) failing to check his shot.

Shikhar Dhawan (0) was run out to a horrible mix-up and the scoreboard was not a pleasant sight for the Delhi side at 13 for 3.

However skipper Shreyas Iyer (39) and Rishabh Pant (31) respected the conditions to raise 73-run stand for the fourth wicket while Stoinis' knock towards the end put Capitals in a psychologically advantageous position.

Iyer and Pant largely relied on singles to keep the scoreboard moving. Iyer took Gowtham to the cleaners in the 13th over, creaming off 15 runs with two well-measured straight sixes.

Suddenly, Iyer seem to be snatching the momentum and it forced Punjab captain KL Rahul to bring back his best bowler — Shami, who did not disappoint and got rid of Iyer. Delhi seem to be limping but Stonis rescued them.

Felt like a senior walking into the team: Ashwin

DUBAI: Ravichandran Ashwin made his debut for Delhi Capitals against his former team Kings XI Punjab on Sunday but the spinner said that he already felt like one of the seniors when he first came to the team. Ashwin captained KXIP last season and this year he will be joining Indian team mates Shikhar Dhawan, Ajinkya Rahane, Rishabh Pant, Prithvi Shaw and captain Shreyas Iyer, among others. "Playing the game is close to my heart. Six months is a lot of time. There's a bit of nervous energy, feels like I'm starting all over again," said Ashwin on Star Sports on Sunday. "It's been great because most of these are boys I've played with in the Indian team. They've been nice to me. I've felt very nice, I've felt like the senior walking into the team." **IANS**

Staying indoors was difficult but gave time to strategise: Rahul

DUBAI: Kings XI Punjab skipper KL Rahul chose to bowl first after winning the toss against Delhi Capitals on Sunday and said that he doesn't really know what to expect from the pitch at the Dubai International Stadium. "Fresh wicket, don't really know what to expect. I'm confident and so is the entire team, great opportunity to go out and play some cricket," said Rahul after the toss. "Staying indoors was difficult, but it also gave us time to think about our strategy, Maxwell, Pooran, Jordan and Cottrell are our four overseas players.'Delhi Capitals captain Shreyas Iyer said that they would have bowled first as well."I have learnt to take some responsibility, with the likes of (Ricky) Ponting and (Sourav) Ganguly, it makes my task a bit easier. Looking forward to a great season. We have plenty of options and it was difficult settling for the best XI," he said. **IANS**

DUGOUT

MOTION PICTURE

BRAVO TO MISS COUPLE OF GAMES

Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming has confirmed that their star all-rounder Dwayne Bravo will miss another couple of matches of the 13th IPL. "Dwayne Bravo is out for a couple of games," Fleming said. Bravo picked a niggle during the recently-concluded Caribbean Premier League and didn't bowl in the final due to a knee injury.

CURRAN SURPRISED BY DHONI'S MOVE

Sam Curran says he was left "surprised" by "genius" Mahendra Singh Dhoni's move to send the England all-rounder ahead of himself during the IPL opener against Mumbai Indians. The 22-year-old all-rounder played an instrumental role in CSK's win. After an economical spell with the ball, he scored a quick-fire 18 off just six balls to help his side start the campaign on a positive note. "To be honest, I was very surprised that I went in. He (Dhoni) is a genius and obviously thought something (about sending me before himself)," Curran said. "We targeted that over (18th) and I went in with a six or out mentality... Sometimes it comes off and sometimes it doesn't," he added.

ISHANT SUFFERS BACK INJURY

Senior pacer Ishant Sharma suffered an injury during training on the eve of Delhi Capitals' IPL opener against KXIP on Sunday. A report in Cricbuzz said the 32-year-old Sharma injured his back during practice session and is set to be sidelined for a considerable period of time.

BUTTLER TO MISS RR OPENING GAME

England wicket-keeper batsman Jos Buttler will miss Rajasthan Royals' opening IPL game against Chennai Super Kings on Tuesday as he is in the middle of his mandatory quarantine period, having arrived here with his family. "I'm unfortunately going to miss the first match for Rajasthan because I'm going to be doing my quarantine period because I'm here with my family — which is great that the Royals have allowed me to have my family out here," he said in an Instagram Live from the official Royals' handle.

RASHID FOCUS TO BOWL ECONOMICALLY

With 55 wickets in three seasons, Rashid Khan is one of the lethal bowlers operating in the IPL but the Afghanistan spinner says his focus is not on taking wickets but bowling economically. The world number one T20 bowler, who plays for Sunrisers Hyderabad, said he "never thought about taking so many wickets." He enjoys the best bowling economy of 6.55 at an average of 21.69 in the IPL. "My focus is always bowling economically well for the team. When I bowl economically it helps the bowlers on the other end to take wickets," Rashid said. "I concentrate on bowling dot balls and putting pressure on the batsman so he can take risks. My focus is the team's requirement, what helps the team is important to me."

CUMMINS REALLY ADMIRE MCCULLUM

KKR pacer Pat Cummins has said he is happy to have head coach Brendon McCullum by his side as the team aims to win a third title. Aussie pacer Cummins, after serving his room-quarantine, will be joining the rest of his teammates at KKR in just a few days' time. "The first thing that I am really excited about is that I don't have to bowl to him (McCullum) anymore," Cummins told kkr.in. "He was one of the best and most feared hitters I have come up against in my career. It can be the first ball of the match and he might be hitting over your head for a six." Cummins said he admires Bazz for his aggression. "So, I am happy that he is in my team as a coach and that I don't have to bowl to him. He is someone I really admire for his fire.

TENDULKAR BACKS MI TO WIN TITLE

Batting great Sachin Tendulkar has no doubts as to which team he is supporting this season in the IPL. Tendulkar, who captained the Mumbai Indians for four years, said that he favours the reigning champions to defend the title while adding that all teams are on equal footing. "Of course, the Men in Blue, are there any doubts? I've always been in blue everywhere.

Kohli begins hunt for elusive title

PTI ■ DUBAI

Virat Kohli will begin his quest for an elusive IPL title when perennial under-achievers Royal Challengers Bangalore take on David Warner's low profile but consistent Sunrisers Hyderabad in their opening IPL encounter here on Monday.

Both teams possess dangerous batsmen who can single-handedly take the game away from the opposition.

Kohli has always led from the front but he knows his search for a maiden title will remain incomplete if the team doesn't perform in all departments.

The addition of Australian limited overs captain Aaron Finch to the squad gives the star-studded batting line up more firepower. Expectations are also high from highly rated young opener Devdutt Padikal.

On the other hand, Warner, whose exploits in the IPL include winning the 'Orange Cap' thrice and leading his side to a maiden title triumph in 2016, will once again pair up with the dangerous Jonny Bairstow.

Sunrisers also have the batting prowess of Kane Williamson, Manish Pandey, Mitchell Marsh and Fabian Allen.

Following a nightmarish 2019 season when they finished last, RCB seem to have much better balance but there ability to hit late in the innings is yet to be tested.

Sunrisers' blind spot also lies in the lack of depth in their batting order. The franchise has invested in youngsters like Virat Singh, Abhishek Sharma, Priyam Garg, and Abdul Samad and the management in the hopes that one of them could become the vital cog in the middle order.

A team that is known for its depth and variation in bowling, Sunrisers'core unit remains unchanged. Bhuvneshwar Kumar will spearhead the pace department with Sandeep Sharma, Siddarth Kaul and Basil Thampi playing secondary roles.

Armed with presence of the top T20 bowler Afghanistan leggie Rashid Khan and No 1 all-rounder in the format Mohammad Nabi.

RCB also boasts of a potent spin unit, leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal will again be the key as he has been over the past seasons with Washington Sundar, Pawan Negi, Adam Zampa and Moeen Ali lending more options.

RCB have also addressed the issue of their weak death bowling that plagued their campaign last season. The franchise has bought South African bowling all-rounder Chris Morris.

Experience of 300 ODIs pays off: Dhoni

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni has said his team's tremendous "experience" proved to be a crucial factor in its five-wicket victory over defending champions Mumbai Indians in the IPL opener.

Ambati Rayudu and Faf Du Plessis set up the win with a 115-run stand for the third wicket, while Piyush Chawla was exceptional with the ball and was aided by likes of Sam Curran, Deepak Chahar and Lungi Ngidi.

"The experience pays off, everyone talks about it. You get it only after you play a lot of games. 300 ODIs is a dream for anybody to play and when you put an XI on the field, you need a good mix of youngsters and experienced players," Dhoni said.

"You need the experienced players to guide the youngsters on and off the field. The young players get 60-70 days with the seniors in the IPL," the veteran added at the post-match presentation ceremony.

Dhoni also spoke about what all things the team learnt from the first game.

"We may practice enough but when you go on the field you need to assess the conditions and give it your best. It took time for the bowlers to find the right length on this pitch. Plenty of positives but still plenty of areas for us to improve

"In the second half there is a bit of movement till the dew sets in. If you don't lose wickets early, you have the upper hand. These are the learnings. Rayudu had a wonderful partnership with Faf. Most of us are retired so luckily no injuries as well."

MI skipper Rohit Sharma was upset that none of his batsmen could carry on the initial momentum that they gained.

"None of our batsmen carried on for us, like du Plessis and Rayudu did for CSK. I think we were 85 in the first 10 overs. Credit to the CSK bowlers, they bowled well at the end to pull back things. Something for us to learn," Rohit said.

Angel Di Maria celebrates with Mbappe after scoring

PSG is back in form

AFP ■ NICE

Kylian Mbappe returned to the starting line-up for Paris Saint-German on Sunday and scored the opener in a 3-0 win at Nice which marks another step on the road to recovery for the French champions.

The 21-year-old, who tested positive for coronavirus on September 7, was on target from the penalty spot in the 38th minute.

Angel di Maria added a second just before half-time and Marquinhos headed the third after 66 minutes. Mbappe thought he had scored a fourth late on but it was ruled out for offside.

It was a second successive Ligue 1 win for PSG who began the season still smarting from defeat in the Champions League final. They lost their opening two games and the second ended in a mass brawl against Marseille which led to the suspension of Brazilian forward Neymar.

Sonday

Heung-min nets four as Spurs batter Saints

AFP ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Son Heung-min destroyed Southampton with a four-goal blitz as Tottenham Hotspur earned their first Premier League win of the season with a 5-2 victory at St Mary's on Sunday.

Just 24 hours after Tottenham signed Gareth Bale, South Korea forward Son delivered a virtuoso display that showed Jose Mourinho's side already have plenty of firepower.

Danny Ings put Southampton ahead in the first half, but Son equalised before the break and scored three more in the second half.

Kane, who hit the back of the net twice in the first half only to have them ruled out for offside, capped a swaggering display with his second goal of the season.

After losing to Everton in their Premier League opener last weekend, Tottenham have lifted the gloom with this vibrant second half performance after the Bale coup.

DEVASTATING SPURS

Ings has been linked with a move to Tottenham after a prolific campaign last term and the qualities that attracted Mourinho were on show as he put Southampton ahead in the 32nd minute.

Running onto Kyle Walker-Peters' long pass, Ings displayed his astute movement as he got in behind Eric Dier, then demonstrated his predatory instincts by guiding his shot across Lloris into the far corner.

With Tottenham looking increasingly bedraggled, it was a surprise when they equalised against the run of play in first half stoppage-time.

Tanguy Ndombele picked out Kane on the left and the striker's cross reached Son, who ignored the acute angle to clip a sublime finish past Alex McCarthy.

Son's goal was a huge boost to Tottenham's morale and they took the lead with a well-crafted goal two minutes after half-time.

Once again it was Kane and Son who prised open the Southampton defence as the England captain fed the South Korean with a delicate pass.

Son surged through on goal and calmly guided a precise strike past McCarthy with his left foot.

Tottenham's star forwards weren't finished yet and they left Southampton for dead in the 64th minute.

Dropping deep to devastating effect, Kane was the provider with a superb lofted pass over the Saints defence and Son finished in emphatic fashion.

Southampton had no answers to Kane and Son and another deft pass from the Tottenham striker in the 73rd minute picked out the South Korean, who was never going to miss from close-range.

Kane and Son have now combined for more Premier League goals (24) than any other duo in the competition since August 2015.

Kane got the goal he deserved with a close-range finish in the 82nd minute before Ings netted again with a 90th minute penalty awarded for handball by Matt Doherty.

Osimhen stars on debut

Naples: Victor Osimhen proved decisive on his Serie A debut inspiring Napoli to a season-opening 2-0 win at Parma on Sunday, the first game in which fans were allowed to return to an Italian stadium.

Italy's Government from Sunday allowed up to 1,000 spectators at open-air sports events.

And Rino Gattuso's Napoli and new Parma coach Fabio Liverani's side faced off on front of a sparse gathering at the Stadio Ennio Tardini.

After a barren first hour in Emilia Romagna, Osimhen came off the bench to provide an electric shock for Gattuso's side.

Dries Mertens and Lorenzo Insigne scored both goals after his arrival which were set up by Mexican Hirving Lozano.

"Oshimen at this moment has an extra gear," said Gattuso of the 21-year-old Napoli paid French club Lille a club record 80 million euros for this summer. "He's a serious lad who does not forget where he comes from, he lost his parents as a child, he is a young man with the head of a 40-year-old." **AFP**

Halep reaches Italian Open final

AFP ■ ROME

Top seed Simona Halep ousted Spaniard Garbine Muguruza in three sets to advance to her third final at the Italian Open on Sunday, played on front of a small number of spectators for the first time.

The Romanian dropped her second set on clay in Rome before seeing off Muguruza 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 in a battle of former French Open champions before Roland Garros in a week's time.

Halep — the 2018 French Open winner — will next play either Czech defending champion Karolina Pliskova, the second seed, or Marketa Vondrousova for a place in the final.

The Wimbledon champion, 28, has finished runner-up in her two previous finals at the Foro Italico in 2017 and 2018.

Ninth seed Muguruza, the 2016 Roland Garros champion, fell to her fourth semi-final defeat in Rome, the furthest she has gone in the tournament.

World No 2 Halep extended her winning streak this season to 13 consecutive victories.