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Covaxin efficacy 81%: Biotech

Ph 3 study involved 25,800; it can neutralise UK variant strains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech on Wednesday said its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin has demonstrated an interim vaccine efficacy of 81 per cent in phase 3 clinical trials. "Analysis from the National Institute of Virology also indicates that vaccine-induced antibodies can neutralise the UK variant strains and other heterogeneous strains," Bharat Biotech said in a statement.

The trial process involved 25,800 subjects, the largest ever conducted in India, in partnership with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the pharma firm said adding that the phase 3 study enrolled participants between 18-98 years of age, including 2,433 over the age of 60 and 4,500 with comorbidities.

The first interim analysis is based on 43 cases, of which 36 cases of Covid-19 were observed in the placebo group versus 7 cases observed in the Covaxin group, resulting in a point estimate of vaccine efficacy of 80.6 per cent, Bharat Biotech explained.

"Today is an important milestone in vaccine discovery, for science and our fight against coronavirus. With today's results from our Phase 3 clinical trials, we have now reported data on our Covid-19 vaccine from Phase 1, 2, and 3 trials involving around 27,000 participants," Bharat Biotech



People register their names to receive the Covid-19 vaccine at Sola Civil hospital in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. AP

Chairman and Managing Director Krishna Ella said.

Covaxin demonstrates a high clinical efficacy trend against Covid-19 but also significant immunogenicity against the rapidly emerging variants, he added.

In January, drug regulator DCGI had approved Oxford Covid-19 vaccine Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute, and indigenously developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use in the country, paving the way for a massive inoculation drive.

Covishield had shown an efficacy rate of 70 per cent after two full doses. However, one of the regimen with a half dose and a full dose showed 90 per cent efficacy against the virus.

Bharat Biotech said the interim analysis of its vaccine included a preliminary review of the safety database, which showed that severe, serious, and medically attended adverse events occurred at low levels

and were balanced between vaccine and placebo groups, the company said.

The trials' conduct and monitoring are as per good clinical practice guidelines and have been outsourced to IQVIA, it added.

The company expects to share further details of the trial results as additional data becomes available, it noted.

Additional interim analysis is planned for 130 cases, the company said.

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Eligible citizens can take Covid jabs 24x7, says Health Ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eligible citizens can take Covid-19 vaccine round the clock as per their convenience, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday. The Ministry also permitted all private hospitals to give Covid vaccine if they adhere to the laid down norms.

The Government has ended the time constraint to increase the speed of vaccination. Citizens of the country can now get vaccinated 24x7 at their convenience," Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said on Twitter.

A senior official from the Union Health Ministry in a meeting chaired by Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and other officials said it was decided that "all Government health facilities, including all private hospitals empaneled under Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS), Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PM-JAY) and similar State Health Insurance Schemes can function as Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs), subject to them mandatorily adhering to some specific norms."

However, the AAP suffered a defeat in Chauhani Bangar ward, where Chaudhary Zubair Ahmad of the Congress defeated the party's candidate Mohammad Ishtaq Khan by a whopping margin of 10,642 votes.

The people of Delhi have once again voted in the name of work. Congratulations to all.

AAP wins 4 of 5 wards in Capital, Congress 1

BJP fails to retain seat

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday won four of the five municipal wards in Delhi in the bypolls. The Congress managed to win one seat by defeating the AAP candidate from the minority-dominated Chauhan Bangar ward.

The AAP retained three wards—Rohini-C, Triokpur and Kalyanpur—and also snatched the Shalimar Bagh ward from the BJP which failed to open its account.

AAP's Dhirender Kumar won the Kalyanpur ward by 7,043 votes, Vijay Kumar from Triokpur by defeating the BJP's Om Prakash by a margin of 9,940 votes. Sunita Mishra defeated Surbhi Jais of the BJP in Shalimar Bagh ward by 2,705 votes, Ram Chander defeated BJP candidate Rakesh Goyal by 2,985 votes in Rohini C ward.

However, the AAP suffered a defeat in Chauhani Bangar ward, where Chaudhary Zubair Ahmad of the Congress defeated the party's candidate Mohammad Ishtaq Khan by a whopping margin of 10,642 votes.

The people of Delhi have once again voted in the name of work. Congratulations to all.



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy CM Manish Sisodia with AAP candidates after results of bypolls to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi in New Delhi on Wednesday. Ranjan Dinnil / Pioneer

The people are fed up with misrule of the BJP at MCD for 15 years. People are desperate to bring the AAP to rule the MCD," Kejriwal tweeted after the party's victory.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said, "Today's result shows that the people of Delhi have immense faith in party and the Government led by Arvind Kejriwal. The BJP had termed these by-elections as 'semi-finals' to the 2022 MCD elections, the people have shown them the results of the 2022 elections will be a unanimous verdict in favour of the AAP."

However, Delhi BJP general secretary Harsh Malhotra said, "No doubt that the results of municipal by-elections are

not up to our expectations but we respect the verdict of the people. We will deeply study the election results, identify the reasons for defeat and will surely win the 2022 municipal elections of Delhi."

"We honour the mandate given by people. Losing Shalimar Bagh North is a matter of introspection. The shortcomings will be removed and I am sure the BJP will win the 2022 elections for three municipal corporations," said Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta.

AAP national spokesperson and MLA Raghav Chadha said, "The AAP wins semi-final decisively with roughly one year to go for MCD finals in 2022."

CAPSULE

RSS IS BIGGEST SCHOOL OF PATRIOTISM: BJP

New Delhi: The BJP on Wednesday lauded the Rashtriya Swamisevak Sangh (RSS) as the "world's biggest school of patriotism" as it slammed Rahul Gandhi for likening the Hindutva organisation to radical Islamist outfits in Pakistan.

MAHA REPORTS MORE THAN 9K COVID CASES

Mumbai: Maharashtra reported 9,855 new Covid-19 cases on Wednesday, taking the tally of infections in the State to 21,79,185, a health department official said. The State recorded more than 9,000 cases after a long time, the death toll rose to 52,280 with 42 fresh fatalities, he said.

MIN: 38,115 MONKEYS STERILISED IN U'KHAND

Gairisain: Over 38,000 monkeys have been sterilised in Uttarakhand and released into the wild, the State Assembly was informed on Wednesday. Giving the information in reply to a question by BJP MLA Chandan Ramdas, Forest and Wildlife Minister Harak Singh Rawat said there is an estimated population of 1.5 lakh monkeys in the State out of which 38,115 have been sterilised and released back into the forests.

SSB to raise 12 more battalions

New formations to fortify Sikkim tri-junction bordering Bhutan, Tibet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has sanctioned raising of a dozen new battalions (about 13,000 personnel) for the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) over the next four years.

The SSB guards the frontiers along Nepal and Bhutan. The new battalions will mostly be deployed to fortify the defences at the tri-junction area in Sikkim that adjoins Bhutan and Tibet and other such vulnerable posts along the two open borders.

The SSB with a present strength of about 90,000 personnel is the lead intelligence agency along 1,751 km open border with Nepal and 699 km boundary with Bhutan.

The 12 new battalions will be raised in phases. Three battalions each will be raised over the next four years.

"The Government has sanctioned to raise new battalions and related establishments

for the SSB. The additional manpower will boost border security," a senior Union Home Ministry official said.

The Centre has also sanctioned 548 posts to the force for deployment at four ICPLs (Integrated check posts) along the Nepal frontier out of which two are already operational at Joghani and Razaul (in Bihar).

The new battalions will be used to reduce inter-border trade and transit routes along Nepal and Bhutan and fortify the paramilitary deployments at the tri-junction area in Sikkim. The tri-junction area is the plateau between India, Bhutan and Tibet and the SSB is deployed just below it on the southern side, being the designated border force for Bhutan frontier.

In 2017, the Armies of India and China had engaged in an over 70-day standoff in Doklam at this tri-junction.

IT raids Kashyap, Taapsee's assets, questions 2 later

TRI RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

The Income Tax (IT) department officials on Wednesday carried out searches at 30-odd properties and locations linked to Anurag Kashyap and Taapsee Pannu in Mumbai and Pune for alleged tax evasion, while the filmmaker and actress were questioned by the IT officials in Pune.

In a development that is being seen as an act of vendetta against Kashyap and Taapsee who have been vociferous critics of the Narendra Modi Government, the IT officials simultaneously zeroed in on several premises in Mumbai and Pune which are linked to erstwhile Phantom Films that was co-promoted by Anurag Kashyap, producers Vikas Bahl and Madhu Mantena, an event management company and a talent management company.

Kashyap and Taapsee were questioned by the IT department officials in Pune in connection with the searches conducted at various places.

Official sources attributed searches to the available information that the IT department



had received that the movies made by the production were showing disproportionately low income, in spite of the fact that their films were hits at the box office.

The premises of Exceed Entertainment, which is managed by actor Saif Ali Khan, were searched, while some executives of Kwan Talent Management that manages actor Deepika Padukone and other actors were questioned.

When asked about the IT raids conducted on premises linked to Kashyap and Taapsee, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said at a news briefing in New Delhi: "The Income Tax



department probes someone based on whatever information they get. The issue goes to court later."

On allegations that the searches' premises belonging to Kashyap and Taapsee were an off-shoot of criticism of the Government, Javadekar said: "This is too much."

Known for his anti-establishment views, Kashyap has long been a critic of the Narendra Modi Government, while Taapsee has minced no words when it came to the criticism of the Centre on social media platforms. Both of them have supported the farmers' agitation which has been going on the outskirts of the national Capital since November 26.



A Stag and Sambar cool themselves in a pond at Van Vihar National Park in Bhopal on Wednesday. The World Wildlife Day is being celebrated under the theme 'Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet' Pioneer photo

Dissent from Govt decision can't be termed seditious, rules SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Obsevering that expression of a view which is dissent from a decision taken by the Central Government itself cannot be said to be seditious, the Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a PIL seeking action against National Conference president Farooq Abdullah over his comments on abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

A Bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hemant Gupta rejecting the plea and also imposed a fine of ₹50,000 on the petitioners for making such claims and directed them to deposit the amount with the Supreme Court Advocates Welfare Fund within four weeks.

"The expression of a view which is dissent from a decision taken by the Central Government itself cannot be said to be seditious. There is



nothing in the statement which we find so offensive as to give a cause of action for a court to initiate proceedings.

"Not only that, the petitioners have nothing to do with the subject matter and this is clearly a case of publicity interest litigation for the petitioners only to get their names in press. We must discourage such endeavours," the bench said.

The top court was hearing a plea which referred to his statement on restoring Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu & Kashmir, and contended it clearly amounts to a seditious act and therefore he is liable to be punished under section 124-A of the IPC.



Disciples of renowned Bharatnatyam exponent Late Shri Munshi perform at a cultural event at Bharat Bhawan in Bhopal on Wednesday. Pioneer photo

Nandkumar Chouhan's last rites performed

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan attended the last rites of MP Late Nandkumar Singh Chauhan at Shahpur near Burhanpur. Chief Minister Chouhan laid a wreath on the mortal remains of Late Shri Chauhan. Late Nandkumar Singh Chauhan was accorded full honour at funeral site.

Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Social Justice Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot, Union Minister of State Prahlad Patel, Fagga Singh Kulaste, MP Jyotiraditya Scindia, members of Madhya Pradesh Cabinet, MLAs, other peoples representatives and citizens in a large number were present. Chouhan said that Nandkumar Singh Chauhan was a simple-hearted and humble person and a much loved public representative who had no enemies. A public representative with such humility, compassion, benevolence and dedication to public welfare is hard to find. It

is impossible to fill the gap that has been left by his demise.

Chouhan said that Nandu Bhalya had a strong desire to establish a medical college in Khandwa so that the people of this place have not to go elsewhere for treatment. He made tireless efforts in this direction. In honour of his sentiments and efforts, Khandwa

Government Medical College will be named after Late Nandkumar Singh Chauhan. Burhanpur District Hospital, Nagar Palika Bhawan in Shahpur will also be named after the late leader. Chief Minister Chouhan met the family members of Late Nandkumar Singh Chauhan and consoled them.

Sugarcane Research Center to be named after late Nandu Bhalya: CM

Bhopal: Chief Minister Chouhan said that considering the abundant banana production in Burhanpur district, the export of banana has been planned under Ek Zila, Ek Upad. Efforts in this direction were being made by Late Nandkumar Singh ji also. Along with this, the Sugarcane Research Center spread across 100 acre area in the district will also be named after Late Chauhan.

Chief Minister Chouhan

said that as late Shri Nandkumar Singh was an officer-bearer in Shahpur urban body, his statue will be established here. Apart from this, the Municipality building will also be named after him. The Chief Minister said that tributes to Shri Nandkumar Singh will not be confined to words alone, but efforts will be made to realize his unfulfilled dreams. His efforts for the development of Nimar Zone will continue.

MP Govt to shut 3 Govt printing presses in State

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Government printing press at Indore, Gwalior and Rewa will be closed. A decision to this effect was taken by the Cabinet. In compliance with this decision, an order has been issued by the State Government for the closure of these presses. Except Government assets (immovable properties), a committee will be set up under the chairmanship of the divisional commissioner to take decisions regarding Government employees.

To take decision regarding posting of employees of printing presses, the Division Level Committee will have Collector, District Registrar, Executive Engineer Public Works besides a maximum of three officers nominated by the Controller Government Press. The officer nominated by the controller press will be the Member Secretary of the committee.

On the basis of the recommendation of the divisional committee, the movable property of the government presses will be transferred to other government offices if possible. The remaining assets will be sold through tender. Besides, the ownership of the land of the printing press will be under the Department of Revenue.

THE ORDER STATES THAT THE PRESENT 114 CATEGORY POSTS OF PRINTING PRESSES HAVE BEEN ADJUSTED IN 13 CATEGORIES, OF WHICH 8 ARE TECHNICAL AND 5 ARE NON-TECHNICAL CATEGORY

According to the decision taken by the state government, out of 1286 posts in Gwalior, Indore and Rewa, 495 vacant posts will be abolished. Government employees working in 67 filled positions in the printing presses will be sent on deputation to other offices under Revenue Department. A total of 185 posts have been numbered, including a total of another 118 posts besides the above 67 posts.

The order states that the present 114 category posts of printing presses have been adjusted in 13 categories, of which 8 are technical and 5 are non-technical category. In future, vacancies will be filled only in 7 categories of technical staff.



BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Jyoti Radhiya Scindia along with Union Ministers Thawar Chand Gehlot and Prahlad Patel (L) pays tributes to the mortal remains of BJP MP Nand Kumar Singh Chouhan during his funeral at his native place at Shahpur town, Bhatnagar district Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday

Man held for raping his 14-year-old daughter

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Police have arrested a man for sexually assaulting his 14-year-old daughter at Kailash Nagar under Govindpura police station area; accused father was arrested after victim and her mother approached police and lodged a complaint.

According to police, victim in her complaint stated that she was alone at home when her father sexually assaulted her and threatened her of life.

The order states that the present 114 category posts of printing presses have been adjusted in 13 categories, of which 8 are technical and 5 are non-technical category. In future, vacancies will be filled only in 7 categories of technical staff.

approached police.

The police have registered a case under section 376(2) of the IPC and section 5 POCSO Act-2012. After the case was registered the accused went absconding and was arrested later. The crime record of the accused would be searched in the further investigation.

Meanwhile, Misrod police have booked a 33-year-old man for sexually exploiting his junior employee for the past one and a half year; accused escaped to Morena after complaint was lodged by the victim.

Police said that the accused identified as Rahul was booked after the victim lodged complaint against the accused of sexual assault and exploitation for the past one year and

half year by threatening her of removing from job.

The victim in her complaint stated that she used to work at an online shopping store where the accused was her senior and in the month of August, 2019, accused offered to drop her to bus stand but took her to her house and sexually assaulted her.

Based on the complaint police registered a case and started search for the accused who escaped Morena and is still at large. The police registered a case under section 376 and 506 of the IPC and started search for the accused. The details of the accused and crime records have to be investigated in the further investigation.

Indore admin steps up vigil on illegal mining, instructs regular checks

PNS ■ INDORE

On the instruction of Indore collector Manish Singh, a regular checking is going on in different parts of Indore district including Mhow, Deplapur and Sanwer tehsil. District mining officer Indore Juban Singh Bhidde has formed different teams to check the illegal mining and transportation of minerals.

On Tuesday the mining inspector Alok Agrawal confiscated around 7 dumpers carrying illegal crushed stone and murram

On Tuesday the mining inspector Alok Agrawal confiscated around 7 dumpers carrying illegal crushed stone and murram. District mining officer J S Bhidde told The Pioneer that 6 dumpers were confiscated in Sanwer tehsil in which 4 dumpers were carrying illegal murram and 2 dumpers were carrying illegal crushed stone in the same way 1 dumper carrying murram and 1 JCB machine was confiscated at village Awalay of Mhow tehsil.

All the 7 trucks were carrying murram and crushed stones are of illegal mining and were done from restricted places. The case of illegal mining has been registered against all the 7 trucks and 1 JCB and now will be produced in the court of Indore ADM for further action and penalty.

Museum of Natural History organises online lecture on World Wildlife Day

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal (A Regional Centre of National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi) organised an online lecture on the occasion of World Wildlife Day held on Wednesday under "Green Talk" an Online Series of Popular Lectures on Nature and Environment Conservation.

Shri Rajnish Kumar Singh, Deputy Conservator of Forest at Office of the PCF (Wildlife) and CWI, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh delivered the lecture on "Wildlife Heritage of Madhya Pradesh" on this occasion.

During the lecture, Shri Singh shared few images and informed that various species of wildlife has been accepted as wildlife of Madhya Pradesh. He also told that the citizen of

Madhya Pradesh is associated with wildlife since prehistoric period, which reflects in many rock paintings of Madhya Pradesh. He also emphasized that we have been conserving wildlife through our life style and tradition and the same should be continued in future to conserve wolf, hyena, wild dog, jackal, fox, sloth bear, tortoise, dolphin, sambar, swamp deer, spotted deer, barking deer, black buck, gazelle, four horned antelope, giant squirrel, tiger, gharial, leopard etc.

Manoj Kumar Sharma, Scientist-in-Charge, Beenish Rafat, Scientist-C of the museum and online audiences from throughout India were present during this online lecture, the lecture concluded with vote of thanks proposed by Scientist-in-Charge and programme co-ordinator Manik Lal Gupta.



Madhya Pradesh Minister for Urban Administration & Development and Housing Bhupendra Singh gets a shot of COVID-19 vaccine during an inculcation drive at Government JP Hospital in Bhopal on Wednesday

New TV show Humkadam demolishes women stereotyping

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

From conspiracies to lies, television storytellers have exploited the dynamics between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law by stereotyping it extensively, breaking these walls with a fresh storyline, IN10 Media Networks Hindi General Entertainment Channel Ishara brings a new show titled Humkadam. The show follows the story of two women who build each other in an extraordinary, unprecedented situation.

Well-known actors Gurdeep Kohli and Bhumiika Gurung are seen playing titular characters as they demolish the clichés of the typical saas-bahu relationship. The duo visited Bhopal taking the much-needed



conversation about changing the perception about the saas-bahu bond to the public. As they performed an extremely impactful act, they enthralled the audiences and left them speechless.

Gurdeep Kohli commented on the launch of her new show, Humkadam is a story that we all will relate to in the current changing

dynamics of women vs women relationship. The characters of Shanti and Tara don't allow a traumatic experience to destroy them; rather they stand together and face the world as a team. Breaking out of the shackles of social expression of the saas-bahu relationship, Humkadam will make you reflect on how to nurture it with love."

Bhumiika Gurung added, "Ishara has given me the opportunity of a lifetime and also showed that its not always necessary to follow the footsteps of others. Humkadam is fresh, dynamic, emotional, exciting, and heart-warming all at the same time. It is a show which will force you to invest yourself in it as you walk with Tara and Shanti in their journey."

The two were on the different bike. The deceased used to work as truck driver and had gone for some work when his bike was hit by other bike.

Body was sent for the post mortem after the preliminary investigation. The police have registered a case under section 304 A of the

1 die, 1 severely injured in head-on bike collision

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 50-year-old man died while one biker suffered severe injuries after their bikes collided near Rajiv petrol pump under Ayodhya Nagar police station area on Tuesday.

Police said that locals rushed two injured to nearby hospital after their bikes collided, where one was declared death when checked by doctors while second escaped with injuries. The deceased was identified as Devidas Kaamle of Indrapuri.

The two were on the different bike. The deceased used to work as truck driver and had gone for some work when his bike was hit by other bike.

Body was sent for the post mortem after the preliminary investigation. The police have registered a case under section 304 A of the

IPC and started further investigation. Police have seized the vehicles.

Meanwhile, a 24-year-old youth committed suicide by hanging with the ceiling at Ratibad on Tuesday.

The police said that the deceased Suraj Prjapati was found hanging with the ceiling and declared dead when rushed to a nearby hospital.

During the investigation police found that the deceased was alone at his house. The deceased used to remain depressed for the past few days but the reason remained unknown.

After the preliminary investigation the police have registered a case under section 174 of the CrPc and started further investigation. The reason would be investigated and the statements of the family members would be recorded.

3 planning burglary arrested; 2 stolen vehicles recovered

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Dhagsewani police have nabbed three miscreants planning burglary and recovered two stolen vehicles and one sharp edged weapon from their possession at D-sector Rameshwaram in the night on Tuesday.

Police said that acting on a tip off three miscreants were nabbed who were planning burglary in a car and when they were quizzed they confessed that they were planning burglary.

From the car police recovered sharp edged weapon and tools for breaking locks.

On the receipt of the information a police team rushed to the spot and raided the spot where the three were planning. After spotting police the four tried to escape but were chased and nabbed by the police.

In the initial investigation the nabbed accused were identified as Yogesh Tiwari (19), Indus Town. Sarvesh Vishwakarma (24) and Veeru alias Jari (19) of Indira Nagar Lucknow.

Sarvesh hails from UP and is involved in criminal activities in the state capital. The accused confessed that they were planning to target a house in near by colony and were nabbed before committing burglary.

During the investigation police have also recovered one bike stolen from Shahpura. After the preliminary investigation the police have registered a case under sections 408 and 379 of the IPC and section 25 of the Arms Act.

Police said that during the interrogation more crimes would be confessed by the nabbed accused. The accused use iron rods to break the locks to enter the house. Lucknow police would be contacted to check the crime record.

MP Urdu Academy holds Urdu poetry talent hunt

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

To give a sturdy platform to the upcoming talent in Urdu poetry a talent hunt "Talishe Johar" is organised by Madhya Pradesh State Urdu Academy.

The registrations for the talent hunt are open for the upcoming writers and poets. "Talishe Johar" is an important effort to give a platform to the emerging talents of the state and encourage them in the field of literature and poetry. Under this, selected participants from the State are invited to Bhopal and the best presentations are selected from among them. The best work will be felicitated by the academy.

Earlier, as many as 83 new poets of the State were selected by this process. This year, selected participants from various mediums will come to Bhopal to present their prose and fiction in this campaign. The best selected works will be felicitated with awards and certificates.

For this, the process of registration has already started from February 21. Participants can register online by applying in the format available on the Facebook page of Madhya Pradesh Urdu Academy. The aspirants can also register via sending letter till March 12 at the address of Madhya Pradesh Urdu Academy, Sakruti Bhawan, Banganga Bhopal.

वन विहार रात्रि सफारी

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MILITARY COMMANDERS' MEET

In a first, jawans to share views with PM

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

In a major step to involve jawans in military matters including operational doctrine, some of them, for the first time ever, will share their views with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the forthcoming Combined Commanders' conference.

The top level meeting held annually will take place in Kevadia in Gujarat later this week where Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and three Services chiefs besides other senior officers will share their views with the Prime Minister. The meeting will discuss the entire gamut of issues pertaining to defence forces. They will stay in tents for the two-day meet to be held near Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's statue.

Incidentally, this move to involve jawans in the conclave comes in the backdrop of Modi holding such high-profile meetings outside the national capital since he assumed charge in 2014. One such conference was held some years back in the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya. Another combined commanders' conference was held at the Indian Military



Academy (IMA), Dehradun.

As regards the first ever participation of the common soldiers, sources said here on Wednesday the idea came from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

They said a group of Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO) and non-commissioned officers (NCO) from the IAF, Army and Navy will give their suggestions on topics including operations and functioning of the forces.

This is the first time personnel below officer rank (PBOR) will take part in such a top level brainstorming session, they said. Moreover, bureaucrats heading several departments in the sensitive defence ministry are also likely to update the Prime Minister about issues relating to their wings, sources said.

The conference will see briefings by top officials on the ongoing projects of their respective departments along with future projects they would be undertaking.

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, who also holds the post of Secretary, Department of Military Affairs, will give a presentation about status of various reforms initiated to achieve synergy amongst the three Services. He will also update the top echelon regarding formation of new tri-services commands and the progress made in the existing structures.

Focusing on creation of theatre commands to fight modern day warfare, senior officers are likely to brief the Prime Minister about the ongoing process, sources said.

The Combined Commanders' Conference will be attended by the commander-in-chief rank officers of the three services. This includes 20 officers from different commands and formations from across the country.

Modi: Need to overcome language barriers to allowing talent to flourish

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that the new National Education Policy (NEP) encourages the use of local languages, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday stressed the need for working in this regard on a mission mode to overcome linguistic barriers in the education system so that the talent of those from rural areas and the poor is allowed to flourish.

Addressing a webinar on the effective implementation of the provisions in the Union Budget for the education sector, Modi said it is the responsibility of the academics and experts of every language to make available the best content in the country and the world in Indian languages.

"Limiting knowledge and research is a big injustice to the country's potential. With this thinking, the doors of several sectors such as space, atomic energy, DRDO, agriculture, and being opened for our talented youngsters," the prime minister said.

Modi said education, skill, research and innovation were the sectors that would drive the budget after health. "The Union

Budget has broadened our efforts to link education with employability and entrepreneurial capability," he said. As a result of these efforts, he said, India is now among the top three countries in the world in terms of scientific publications, the number of PhD scholars and the start-up ecosystem.

Modi said India has joined the top 50 countries in the Global Innovation Index and is continuously improving. To build a self-reliant India, it is important that youngsters have confidence in themselves, he said, asserting that it comes only when they have complete faith in their education and knowledge.

Stressing the importance of local languages in the education system, Modi said experts know that language plays an important role in understanding a subject. "From primary to higher education, we have to ensure that the content is available to the youngsters of the country in Indian languages," Modi said. It is necessary to produce content in Indian languages for every area of expertise, be it medical, engineering, technology or management, he added.

All private hospitals can give Covid shots with riders: Min

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to speed up the pace of the coronavirus vaccination drive as well as ensure that all the vaccinees are left unutilized, the Union Health Ministry on Tuesday permitted all private hospitals to give Covid vaccine if they adhere to the laid down norms while allowing citizens to take vaccine round the clock as per their convenience.

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan shared this information on Twitter, stating that: "The government has ended the time constraint to increase the speed of vaccination. Citizens of the country can now get vaccinated 24x7 at their convenience."

The move aims to ensure the maximum number of people who are eligible under the second phase of the vaccination drive are vaccinated.

Those above 60 years and above 45 years having comorbidities are being inoculated under the second phase of the vaccination which was kicked off from March 1.

The Ministry has also given permission to private hospitals to administer the Covid-19 vaccine to those who are eligible. A senior official from the Union Health Ministry that in a meeting chaired by Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and other officials, it was decided that "all government health facilities, including all private hospitals empaneled under Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS), Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and similar State Health Insurance Schemes can function as Covid

Vaccination Centers (CVCs), subject to them mandatorily adhering to some specific norms."

The Ministry urged the states and union territories (UTs) to utilise 100 per cent capacities of all private hospitals under the said category to enable them to effectively function as vaccination centres. They were also asked the states to regularly collaborate with the private hospitals to ensure that their optimum capacities for vaccination are fully utilised.

"The Ministry also allowed private hospitals not empaneled with the Government to operate as CVCs "if they have adequate number of vaccination beds, adequate space for observation of the vaccinated, adequate cold chain arrangement and adequate arrangement for management of AEFI."

Congress leaders target UP Govt over law and order

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra hit out at the Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh Government on Wednesday over the law and order situation in the State. "Under the BJP rule, Uttar Pradesh is becoming worse day by day. Such disorder in law and order spurs none," it is a curse for every community," Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi with the hashtags #Hathras #Bulandshahr.

He also tagged a photo of the funeral procession of a 50-year-old man who was allegedly shot dead in Hathras district by a person out on bail in a case of molesting the victim's daughter. Priyanka Gandhi alleged one family or the other can be heard "screaming for justice" every day in Uttar Pradesh, contrary to Yogi Adityanath government's "propaganda".

Their attacks on the BJP dispensation came in the backdrop of the Hathras shooting as well as an incident in Bulandshahr where the body of a 12-year-old girl was exhumed from a pit days after she went missing. The father of a girl who did not take back a case

of molestation was murdered in Hathras. The body of a girl, who was missing for several days in Bulandshahr, was found buried in a house," Priyanka said in a tweet in Hindi.

Contrary to the UP government's false propaganda on crime, every day one family or the other is screaming for justice," she said. Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and other Congress leaders have been attacking the Adityanath government over law and order situation in the state, alleging that criminal activities were on the rise. A case denied by the state government.

BJP VICTORY IN GUJ LOCAL POLLS

Voters' confidence rising each year: Javadekar

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Prakash Javadekar on Wednesday described the sweeping BJP victory in Gujarat local polls as peoples' vote of confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development and reform policies including the new farm laws.

"If we convert massive victory into 182 Vidhan Sabha segments in Gujarat it comes to 155 assembly seats," said the senior BJP leader adding "confidence of voters" is rising each year even after BJP's "uninterrupted 38 years rule" in the State.

Addressing a press conference here after the win in local polls, Javadekar said rural farmers have voted for "Modi's Vikas mode, his leadership and reforms including in the farm sector. This is the message," he said.

The Minister said Congress had made farmers and governance an issue as their main poll planks and "even spoke from LPG shaped platforms and stages".

The BJP won all 31 Zila Parishads and Congress drew a zero. "Out of the 879 seats, the BJP which had last time won 368 has now won 800 seats," said Javadekar pointing to massive surge in numbers.

He said the Congress defeat is stark as even their MLAs and their sons and relatives standing for municipal elections but distast and lost polls. He cited the example of MLA Niranjani Patel contesting from two seats and losing both of them.

Javadekar said at Taluka level, the BJP won 196 seats out of 231 seats while the Congress won only 18 seats.

In the municipalities, the BJP won



72 out of the 81 seats with Congress winning only one.

Congress drew zero seats in 18 municipalities and even Congress MLA lost poll," said BJP leader.

He said BJP's sweep in tribal areas was also quite marked. He pointed out that the son of Bhartiya Tribal Party also lost his seat.

Asked about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's comment that the BJP was attacking institutions which Congress did not fill even in Emergency, BJP leader said it was laughable as the Congress had hit all institutions including the media.

On Rahul comparing RSS with madrasas, Javadekar said, "Rahul will take time to understand RSS. RSS is the biggest school of patriotism and inspiring nationalism is its task."

On the question of Income Tax department raiding film stars 'not coming up' to the BJP, the Minister said "investigating agencies take up cases on merit and investigate".

BJP to finalise first list of candidates for 5 Assembly polls today

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Election Committee (CEC) of the BJP will meet on Thursday to finalise its first list of candidates for the upcoming five assembly polls.

The party is likely to clear its candidates for the first phase of the polls, scheduled for March 27, in Assam and West Bengal.

The Party President headed meet is also expected to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who is to begin his poll campaign, post the announcement of election dates, from Kolkata's Parade ground on March seven.

The BJP core groups of West Bengal and Assam will deliberate with the central leadership, including party president JP Nadda, to what the list of probable candidates. Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and state party chief Ranjeet Kumar Dass will be part of deliberations for their state, while key organisational leaders from West Bengal, including state party chief Dilip Ghosh, will attend the meeting to discuss the names of candidates for their state.

Elections in Assam will be conducted in three phases on March 27, April 1 and April 6, while polling in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry will take place in a single phase on April 6.

Elections for the West Bengal assembly will be held in eight phases, up from seven last time, beginning with polling for 30 seats on March 27.

IAF chief visits Colombo to mark Sri Lankan Air Force's 70th anniv



PNB ■ NEW DELHI

IAF chief RKS Bhaduria arrived in Colombo on Wednesday on an invitation from Sri Lanka Air Force chief Sudarshana Pathirana. The Lankan air force is celebrating its 70th anniversary on March 2 and presentation of the President's colours to two of its Units on March 5.

Giving details of Bhaduria's schedule, officials said here on Wednesday he attended the inaugural ceremony of the Sri Lanka Air Force on Wednesday during which a Flypast and Aerobatic Display was scheduled.

The air show at Galle Face Colombo saw the participation of an IAF contingent comprising Suryakiran and Sarang Aerobatic Display Teams and Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA). The IAF contingent arrived in Colombo on February 27. The flypast was magnificent and reminiscent of the IAF's Suryakiran Display Team performance at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of SLAF, two decades ago.

The ED had initiated investigation on the basis of two FIRs registered by Mahila Police Station, Muzaffarpur, and one FIR lodged by CBI, SCB, Patna against Brajesh Thakur and others for misappropriating the funds/ grant-in-aid received from government and other agencies in the name of NGO Sewa Sankalp Ewam Vikas Samiti and its sister NGOs.

Thakur was the de facto owner and he in connivance with others misappropriated the fund/ grant-in-aid to the tune of ₹7.57 crore and invested the same in his own name as well as in the name of his family members including, Kumari Asha, Rahul

ED takes possession of accused Brajesh Thakur's property worth ₹1.45 crore



PNB ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), Patna, took possession of immovable property worth ₹1.45 crore, situated at New Delhi, in connection with a money laundering case relating to NGO Sewa Sankalp Ewam Vikas Samiti and its sister NGOs, embroiled in the physical and sexual abuse of women inmates.

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Anand, Manorama Devi and others for acquiring huge movable and immovable properties including payment of fees for his younger son Mehul Anand's medical education.

"During money laundering investigation, it was revealed that the girls' shelter home in Muzaffarpur run by NGO Sewa Sankalp Ewam Vikas Samiti was found to be running in a highly questionable manner and several girls reported about violence and being abused sexually. Thakur and others diverted/siphoned off the fund/grants-in-aid received for the welfare of children and others and used the funds for his personal gain by acquiring huge movable and immovable properties in his name and in the name of his family members," the ED said in a statement.

Earlier, two provisional attachment orders were issued on March 13, 2019 and August 7, 2020 whereby properties worth ₹7.3 crore and ₹1.47 crore respectively were provisionally attached and the same confirmed by the PMLA Adjudicating Authority.

Is it fair to kick the ladder you climbed to reach in life: Khurshid asks G-23

New Delhi: The disquiet within the Congress continues to grow with senior party leader Salman Khurshid asking 'Group of 23' leaders in an 'open letter' if they were changing their goal posts and whether it was fair on their part to kick the ladder that they climbed to reach the top storey of life.

Khurshid, a former Union minister, asked them to worry about how they would be judged in history than to seek a better place in the present.

He said they along with other Congress leaders must show the ordinary party workers across the country the path of the present darkness towards sunshine instead of raising concerns about what they received, while noting that sacrifice cannot come with pre-conditions of success.

He also quoted former US President John Kennedy's words "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country (read party)", to say that the thousands of unnamed Congress cadres, who gave to the Congress, but unavoidably received little or nothing in return, too believe in democracy unlike the G-23 leaders who have an impressive history of achievements.

"We thought the G-23 made their point and were suitably informed that party elections will be held when appropriate (something they agreed to in their interaction with the Congress president and later at the CWC). But are they changing the goal posts once again with the public display of disquiet (or reservations) in Janmu and as we are being told, very soon in Haryana," he asked in the open letter.

"Gunnman of Congress too care about democracy", Khurshid said in the letter.

The senior Congress leader said the growing dark footprint of communal forces has pushed the party into "forced orders" of becoming self-conscious.

"As a result, we are shy away from speaking about minorities and put on a public display of identifying with the cultural symbols of the majority which have largely been appropriated by the BJP. We have been forced to accept 'mistakes' made by our heroes because public mood appears to require it. Obviously this calls for careful balancing of reality and perception, strategy and ideology," he noted.



A Chin refugee from Myanmar tries to tear apart Chinese flag during a protest against military coup in Myanmar in New Delhi on Wednesday

ECI organises briefing meeting for poll observers

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday organised a briefing meeting for Observers who would be deployed for the upcoming assembly polls in five States—West Bengal, Kerala, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

The meeting was a virtual cum physical gathering which saw the participation of more than 1650 General, Police and Expenditure Observers joining virtually from 120 locations across the country. Officers from IAS,

IPS, IRS and other Central Services have been included to be deployed as General, Police and Expenditure Observers.

Addressing the Observers, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said observers will have additional role in randomization of forces and its deployment. Arora asked the observers to visit the Polling Booths to check due facilitation to senior citizens, Persons with Disabilities and women voters to ensure the Commission's commitment to the principle of inclusive elections.

SC to hear anticipatory bail plea of Amazon Prime Video's India head today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court would hear on Thursday the plea of Amazon Prime Video's India head Aparna Purohit challenging the Allahabad High Court order rejecting her anticipatory bail in connection with the FIR lodged against her over web series 'Tandav'.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and R Subhash Reddy, which was to hear Purohit's plea on Wednesday, listed it for consideration on Thursday as the bench was sitting till 1

PM only.

She has been accused of inappropriate depiction of Uttar Pradesh police personnel, Hindu deities and an adverse portrayal of a character playing the prime minister in the web series.

Earlier, the apex court, on January 27, had declined to grant interim protection from any coercive action to Ali Abbas Zafar, Director of the web series, Purohit, producer Himanshu Mehra, the show's writer Gaurav Solanki and actor Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub.

SC seeks response of NIA on Gautam Navlakha's bail plea in Bhima Koregaon case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the National Investigation Agency on the bail plea of activist Gautam Navlakha in the alleged Elgar Parishad Maoist links case.

A bench comprising Justices UU Lalit and KM Joseph issued notice to the probe agency on the plea of the activist against the Bombay High Court order of February 8 dismissing his bail plea.

Initially, the bench, which was hearing some other matter even after 4.30 pm, was of the view that the hearing on Navlakha's plea be fixed for consideration on Thursday.

However, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the activist, said that he has been waiting for the case for few hours. In the brief hearing conducted through video conferencing, the bench issued notice to NIA and sought its response by March 15.

DMK-Cong ties on verge of collapse

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The time-tested ties between the DMK and the Congress is on the verge of collapse and there are strong indications from the Grand Old Party of dumping the Dravidian major and launching a Third Front. "The Congress High Command is thoroughly unhappy with the intransigent attitude of the DMK. It has so far offered as 20 seats while we have sought at least 25 seats," a senior Congress leader told *The Pioneer*. The leader said on condition of anonymity that one cannot rule out the possibilities of the Congress parting ways with the DMK. "For us self-respect is important than a few seats. We know well that the DMK is out to throttle us," said the leader. He disclosed that Rahul Gandhi MP, who campaigned in southern Tamil Nadu for the last three days returned to Delhi disappointed with the approach of the DMK.

Meanwhile sources close to chief minister Edappadi Palanisamy told

The Pioneer that there was no exchange of V K Sasikala, TTV Dinakaran and the AMMK getting accommodated in the AIADMK front. "Our alliance partners are the BJP, the PMK, the Tamil Maanila Congress and Puthiya Tamilakam. We have kept the doors opened for Vijayakanth too," said the source. Rahul Gandhi drew unprecedented crowd during his three-day visit to southern Tamil Nadu which concluded late Monday evening at Kanyakumari. Thousands participated in all the public meetings he addressed in these districts. "What stood out this time was his mingling with the common man and this prompted fear and more people to gather in all the public meetings he stood in these districts. "What stood out this time was his mingling with the common man and this prompted fear and more people to gather in all the public meetings he stood in these districts. "What stood out this time was his mingling with the common man and this prompted fear and more people to gather in all the public meetings he stood in these districts.

"We did not organise any crowd for Rahul Gandhi. The crowd turn out in all these places were spontaneous. It was a morale booster to the Congress cadre in the State. We ourselves were surprised with the ease

with which he communicated and exchanged ideas with grassroots level workers and cadre. If the party could sustain this tempo, I am sure we will register impressive wins," said C. D. Meeypaan, AICC secretary who accompanied Rahul Gandhi in his tour.

There is general agreement that the crowd turn-out for his meetings has surprised even the DMK leadership. But the DMK-Congress share sharing talks remained inconclusive as the Dravidian major was not willing to make any compromise than what it had offered to the Grand Old Party, 21 seats. That all is not well within the two alliance partners was known for some time. As the time for filing the nomination is drawing closer, there are talks of a Third Front featuring actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan, AISMK of another actor R. Sarath Kumar and the Indian National Congress. Sarath Kumar and his wife Radhika called on Kamal Haasan and expressed their solidarity with

the latter who has declared himself as the future chief minister of the State.

Wednesday saw V. Ponraj, former technical assistant to late President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam joining Haasan's MNM. Ponraj, a former scientific officer at one of the DRDO laboratories was a technical assistant to the former president. He describes himself as scientific advisor to the President.

There were reports that another film actor-turned-politician Vijayakanth is likely to join either the DMK-led front or Haasan's MNM. "The AIADMK has not responded to Vijayakanth's demand for more seats," said Minister Palanisamy and his deputy Panneerselvam were upset over the parallel discussions being held between Vijayakanth's DMK and the DMK. Vijayakanth is known for his simultaneous secret parties with political rivals even as he holds secret sharing discussions with others," said a senior AIADMK leader.

Maha hostel girls forced to dance naked by cops, probe ordered

IAS ■ MUMBAI

In a shocker, girls in a Jhalgaon hostel were allegedly forced to strip naked and dance before some police personnel, the Maharashtra legislature was informed here on Wednesday.

Taking cognizance of the issue raised by the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Maha Vikas Adhadi government announced a time-bound probe into the incident. BJP legislator from Chikhli Shweta Mahale who raised the matter, said the women inmates who did not cooperate with the police were told to remove their clothes and dance naked.

"The women in the hostel now live in sheer fear. They must be made to feel secure. The incident came to the face of the state. The police who are supposed to protect have become aggressors," Mahale said.

"This is a shameful incident. A video clip shows police making the girls nude. This must be thoroughly investigated. We must deal with this matter sensitively," said Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis, as some members demanded sacking of the MVA government and others shouted shame, shame in the House.

They urged Home Minister Anil Deshmukh to order an inquiry and immediately suspend the police officials involved in the incident.

"This is a very unfortunate incident. We have appointed a four-member committee to probe the incident and submit its report within 48 hours. Necessary action will be taken as per the rules after the probe report is received," Deshmukh informed the House.

Minister for Women & Child Development (Mrs) Yashomati Thakur said that all the evidence would be collected and probe and

those found guilty would not be spared.

The incident allegedly took place on March 1 at the government-run Ashadeep Women's Hostel in Ganeshnagar area of Jalgaon and a video of the dance party went viral.

A local NGO, Jananayak Foundation, complained to Collector Abhijit Raut and demanded a probe into the matter, as the hostel falls under the Women & Child Welfare Department.

According to the complaint, some local police personnel and others reportedly entered the hostel premises to investigate certain things and coerced the women inmates to undress and dance before them.

"When the girls refused to do so, they were threatened with dire consequences like murder. The inmates later narrated their plight from the hostel windows.

Didi may file nomination from Nandigram on Mar 11

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The once hotbed of Mamata Banerjee's land movement that helped her overthrow the world's longest surviving democratically elected Marxist Government in 2011 Nandigram is once again ready to hog the national limelight with two of State's tallest leaders preparing to face each other in the coming Assembly elections.

Come March 11, the Bengal Chief Minister is likely to return to file her nomination from the Nandigram Assembly seat. And according to inside reports she will face none other than her blue-eyed boy and former Bengal Minister Suwendu Adhikari who left Congress TMC last November to join the BJP.

The TMC sources said the Chief Minister would file her

nomination from the Nandigram seat either at Haldia or Tamruk. Nandigram in East Midnapore will go to polls in the second phase.

Banerjee is currently an MLA from Bhowanipore Assembly seat in South Kolkata from where her party trailed by a few thousand votes in the 2019 parliamentary elections. The Chief Minister had during a mass rally at Nandigram offered to contest from the seat saying "Nandigram has always been lucky for me... it gave me overwhelming support in my land movement... and so I will like to contest this time from this seat. For me Nandigram and Bhowanipore are like two sisters."

Apart from being a son of a former Union Minister and TMC MP Sisir Adhikari, Suwendu is the elder brother

Dibyendu Adhikari also an MP. Suwendu Adhikari had openly dared Banerjee to contest from the seat and face defeat. "I challenge Didi to fight from Nandigram... Of my party gives me a shot from this seat I will take her on... even if someone else contests from here I vouch for that possible BJP candidate that if I cannot defeat the Chief Minister by at least half-a-lakh votes then I will leave politics," Adhikari said.

Nandigram has a healthy share of minority votes pegged at about 23.5 percent. Though the TMC is confident of polling the entire minority vote from this area, local sources say the Indian Secular Front --- founded by Muslim cleric Abbas Siddiqui --- which has tied up with the Left Front and the Congress may queer the pitch for her.

On the other hand the Adhikari whose family has a long political history from the area looks more comfortable in the current polarized atmosphere in Bengal politics.

Adhikari's name had been finalized for Nandigram seat adding other TMC leaders who had quit that party join the saffron outfit would also be given tickets.

Accordingly former Minister Rajib Banerjee will be fielded from Domjur in Howrah district whereas Chandramani Shukla the father of slain BJP leader Chandramani Shukla will be fielded from Bhatpara or Nahai, sources said.

Former TMC MLA, and Asansol Mayor Jitendra Tiwari who on Tuesday joining the BJP will also be fielded from his old constituency Pandaveswar,

sources said. The central election committee of BJP is likely to finalise its candidate list for the first phase on March 5.

TMC wants PM posters removed

Kolkata: The ruling Trinamool Congress has raised objections to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pictures being used for advertisements of various Central schemes.

A delegation of TMC leaders on Wednesday met Election Commission officials and alleged that the use of the Prime Minister's pictures on advertisements of central schemes including the vaccination certificates --- distributed by the Union Health Ministry --- went against the model code of conduct.

Seeking the intervention of the EC to get the posters and

sources said adding each district committee has been asked to send 4-5 probable names for the purpose.

Police announce ₹1L reward on prime accused in Hathras farmer murder case

PRADIP SAXENA ■ HATHRAS

Police has announced a reward of Rs 1 lakh on Rakesh Gaurav Sangra, who shot and killed a farmer in broad daylight in village Naujapur of Sasni area of Hathras district. The police has also announced a reward of Rs 25 thousand each on the other two accused. One accused has been arrested in the case so far. It may be recalled that on Monday a farmer who was digging potatoes in the field was shot dead in broad daylight. About two and a half years ago, the farmer filed a lawsuit that Gaurav entered his house and molested his daughter. None Gaurav was pressing to withdraw the suit and marry his younger daughter. The

deceased's daughter lodged a police complaint against six people, including four nominees, on the basis of which a case was registered and the police arrested one of the accused. The remaining accused are being searched. The dead body was handed over to the family members after immediate postmortem by the police administration. On Tuesday, the nephew offered fire to the body. The atmosphere of the village and family is inconceivable. On the other hand, the police has arrested one of the accused. On receiving information, the elder brother of the deceased also came to the village. He lives in Mumbai. He and other relatives got angry after seeing the dead body. He refused to cre-

Commissioner; Chairman, Bihar State Electricity Board.

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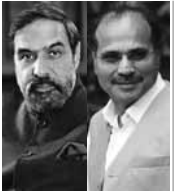
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Split house

The Congress rift, already out in the open, is only widening ahead of the crucial Assembly polls

At a time when leaders belonging to other political parties are upping the ante against their opponents in a bid to be successful at the hustings and form the Government in the five States/Union Territory going to polls soon, the Congress biggies are busy sparring among themselves. The fault lines run deep and, in all likelihood if one goes by its current state of inertia, the 'Grand Old Party' is heading towards yet another poll drubbing. The G23 (Group of dissenters) is clearly pitted against the 'loyalists' on the issue of the Congress tying up with the Indian Secular Front (ISF) of Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui for the battle royal in politically-sensitive West Bengal. Deputy leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma, who is part of the G23, objected to the party aligning with the Islamic outfit and asserted that the tie-up "militates against the core ideology" of the Congress and that the alliance needed to be endorsed by the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's highest decision-making body. Recently, Ghulam Nabi Azad — who is a prominent leader of the dissenting group — heaped praises on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. These senior leaders are making all-out efforts to stay relevant and they don't want to lose their hold on the party. On the other hand, the Congress joining hands with a fundamentalist group in West Bengal ought to raise the question whether the party has compromised on its secular credentials?



The "soft Hindutva" card played by Congress leaders, including the Gandhi scion, has failed to elicit the desired outcome in a series of elections. Further, the Congress has been selectively applying the policy of minority appeasement but, apart from a few stray successes, it has failed to make any major breakthrough. The BJP has proved to be too formidable for the Congress and the regional parties have expanded their base at the cost of the 'Grand Old Party'. This time, too, the Congress seems to have selectively played the appeasement card by aligning with Pirzada, who wields considerable influence among Muslims in South Bengal. Despite the fact that Pirzada has a dubious record of making controversial remarks, the Congress leaders shared the stage with him at a joint rally on Sunday. The Congress aligning with a fundamentalist party will either increase its vote percentage or it will prove counterproductive to its image in the long run; we'll know in due course. Moreover, Rahul Gandhi's foot-in-mouth disease has only added to the party's miseries. The differences within the party point to the fact that Rahul's leadership is not strong enough to bind the members together and settle their disputes. West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has accused Sharma and Azad of playing to the BJP's gallery, saying that they are serving the polarising agenda of the saffron party. Well, whether these 'dissenters' are pushing for reforms or only serving the BJP's agenda, the Congress' internal fight only weakens it and further damages its prospects in the forthcoming Assembly elections. It is time for the Congress leaders to resolve the internal feud and steer the party out of the ongoing crisis.

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Workers at the Bhagawanwala dumpsite in Amritsar clear out waste on Wednesday

PI

Mea culpa

Rahul is not responsible for the actions of his forebears, but he cannot escape his legacy for better or for worse

Political legacies and succession are not a uniquely Indian thing. The success of leaders like Justin Trudeau, Shinzo Abe and even Xi Jinping for that matter are demonstrable proof that even today, family political legacies are a giant step up the political ladder. A name, a family name in politics and the subsequent recognition is a powerful tool. But it can also be a huge burden, a cross to carry. And the prime example of someone who carries both the blessing and the curse of political recognition is Rahul Gandhi. The past and, in all likelihood, future president of the Indian National Congress, India's only national Opposition party of relevance, is led by this scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family whose history every Indian knows. No matter where he goes, Rahul's rallies and road shows are well-attended. But it is the curse, that means that many of the millions who might attend his rallies in a year, will not vote for the Congress in elections; such is the legacy of that party and its dominant family.



There is no insinuation here that Rahul is responsible for the actions of his great-grandfather, grandmother or father. Jawaharlal Nehru, a convenient whipping boy for some these days, died even before Rahul was born. He was five years old when his grandfather, Indira Gandhi, declared the Emergency and a teenager when his father, Rajiv Gandhi, was caught up in the Bofors scandal. He has also suffered more than most, to suffer two violent deaths in the family in full public gaze is not something any of us will endure. The scale of that suffering is something we will never comprehend and, thus, never truly empathise with. Yet, because he, and even his sister Priyanka, ask for votes in the name of the positive aspects of that legacy, they cannot escape the ills and mistakes. Yes, Rahul should attack the Narendra Modi Government on the engagements with China in Ladakh, but he must acknowledge the mistakes of 1962 as well. He cannot proclaim that democracy is under threat without admitting that he senses this because of the Emergency his grandfather declared. Acknowledging this fact now is a huge step by the Congress leader. He was not responsible for the mistakes of the past and admitting that fact is something that should mark an improvement in the way he is perceived among the electoral public.

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The missing culture of strategic thinking

India's restive relationships in the neighbourhood and its own internal governance parameters remain worryingly underleveraged and skittish



BHOPIINDER SINGH

In the early 1990s, American thinker George Tanham had set the cat among the pigeons by mentioning "India's relative lack of strategic thinking". His observations suggested minimal preparedness in terms of an "active" vision or pre-emptive doctrines, as opposed to an inherently "reactive" instinct, that rattled Indian apologists who pointed to the civilisational literature on statecraft, strategy and philosophy of governance.

However, "nonalignment" (not "neutrality", as commonly misinterpreted) was a definitive and unique aspect of Independent India's foreign, commercial and military thinking. The admixture of "morality" into its strategic decision-making process differentiated India from the co-timed trajectory and outcomes of China, which also played a similar game of balance of power, albeit with hard-nosed realpolitik. The metamorphoses of a bipolar world to a polycentric order further blurred India's strategic choices, as it continued sounding preachy, platitudinous and verbose. On the other hand, the conjoined nature of the "military-industrial" establishment under a single-party rule in China afforded it to chisel a seamless national vision and an uninterrupted strategic process to fructify the same.

Further, India's obsessive passion for electoral politics, combined with structural ills of bureaucracy, diplomacy and the military ensured a sub-optimal and fractured approach towards possible self-realisation. Ironically, India's restless democracy, regional parties with narrow agendas and increasingly disinterested politicians who mistook "India's arrival on the world stage" to equal strategic thinking, continued to let it down. Even now, political brouhaha and grandstanding aside, India's restive relationships in the neighbourhood and its own internal governance parameters remain worryingly underleveraged, incoherent and skittish.

The Indian system has failed to allow nonpartisan and "headed-to" platforms of specialists who could formulate and advo-



cate strategic outcomes beyond petty partisan comeuppance. The recent Indo-Sino dissonances on the Line of Actual Control have yet again exposed the "reactive" nature of Indian governance and politics, irrespective of the dispensation in power. Recent insistence of Chinese "deceit", while true, should not have been unexpected. "Getting tripped by the Chinese is an inadvertent admission of the absence of strategic foresight that cannot be contextualised to the past only. An unbudgeted \$20,775 crore was spent to buy emergency hardware in the recent standoff!

Strategic thinking necessitates lateral thinking and specialist angularities but the recent events suggest the clear under-appreciation of the security sensitivities. Unlike other participative democracies like the US, the UK and so on, the direct "voice" of Indian security must navigate through the labyrinth of filters, priorities and disinterested politico-bureaucrats. Though countries like Pakistan, where the military is considered a "State within a State", are reflective of the other side of extremity, which has even more debilitating consequences, simplistic arguments of the "guns over

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butter" nature have led to the misplaced notion that socio-economic progress, national development and stability can be managed only at the cost of optimum investments in security. Not so, because all national considerations should go together in an "and" approach, and not as a facile "either-or" choice. With China breathing down its neck and Pakistan persisting with the "bleed with a thousand cuts" thinking — protecting territorial integrity with a budget allocation of 1.63 per cent of the GDP is reflective of the poor failures to put the dangers to security in over-charging context.

Recent pooh-poohing of independent opinions that call the bluff of the powers-that-be does not help build a culture of intellectual deliberation. This tendency is particularly severe on divergent opinions on the matters of security. However, the media circus following the recent induction of five Rafale fighters typifies the poor failures to the more serious task of strategic discussions. India has an executive agency in the National Security Council (NSC) to oversee the political, economic, energy and security issues but its contrition towards the sensitive decision-making

process remains unknown. There is no direct participation of the Armed Forces in its decision-making process. Routine media reporting of the "hand" of the National Security Advisor in resolving security situations notwithstanding, it belies the moot question as to why such a question evolved in the first place?

The national "shaper" of strategic thinking is usually the political leadership of the day — today, the assertive and challenging voices within the ruling party, like a Jaswant, Shourie or Yashwant (who were given a free rein in the earlier NDA Governments), are clearly missing. The impact of domestic politics is supreme even in our international relations: Trump-backing, for example, exposed the predominance of partisan spirit. Institutions need to be strengthened, not diluted; specialists need to be empowered and not controlled, and only then will the latent potential of India truly fructify. The know-all attitude does incalculable harm to the culture of strategic thinking. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BRACE FOR A GRIEVLING SUMMER

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Scorcher ahead' (March 3). Going by the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) forecast, we have to brace for temperatures several notches higher than usual this summer. It is really disheartening as many people, including the homeless, don't have the resources to beat the heat. Gadgets like electric fans, coolers, fridges, air-conditioners (ACs) and water coolers, besides power generators or inverters are not available to the poor.

Further, power cuts will add to the woes of the common man. We have not been able to generate electricity from solar and wind power for large-scale public distribution. Ironically, climate change and atmospheric imbalance have caused natural calamities like drought, floods, storms and inclement weather causing huge loss to flora, fauna and human lives. It is incumbent upon us to fight climate change so that we may have a greener and cleaner planet for future generations.

However, the Government must take adequate measures to provide relief to the homeless in the summer. Shelter homes should be provided with water coolers, if not ACs, and fridge for cold drinking water. It is also the responsibility of all of us to make arrangements for drinking water for birds and stray animals. An earthen pot or utensil full of water outside the door or window will help the avian and animal species in quenching their thirst. We must also not forget to water the plants regularly.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

WE CANNOT LOSE BATTLE AGAINST COVID

Sir — We should be really thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for taking the job as it will inspire millions of others to get themselves inoculated. It is important that more private hospitals and even small private dispensaries be allowed to vaccinate, as these will be closer to homes and allow the elders to get vaccinated without the trouble of covering long distances.

In the next phase, vaccination should be carried out in remote villages and tribal areas inside forests. Further, it has come to light that the provisional certificates

Plight of mohajirs in Pakistan

STOP VICTIMIZATION OF MOHAJIRS MQM (PAKISTAN)



The plight of mohajirs in Pakistan is hard to explain in words. The mohajirs are Muslim immigrants of multi-ethnic origin and their descendants, who migrated from various regions of India to settle in Pakistan following the Partition. However, Pt. Lal Bahadur Shastri's lucid article 'Beware of Pak's softening stand' (March 2) mentions their plight and states that they "find themselves not only unwelcome but also targets of eth-

nic hostility in the newly-created country". Successive Pakistan Governments have remained indifferent to the woes of the mohajirs and even the courts in Pakistan are of no help. The author has lamented that he was personally witness to this discrimination when he visited Pakistan to conduct a two-week international course on short-wave radio broadcasting for countries of the sub-Asian region, extending from China to Iran. The enthusiasm for the creation of Pakistan in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar was noted by the then Viceroy Lord Wavell in 1945 and communicated to the Secretary of State for India in England, saying: "The idea of Pakistan was stronger in the Muslim minority provinces than in the mohajir provinces". The fate of the mohajirs is, therefore, a lesson for all those who wish to divide any country on religious or any other basis. Further, the Governments of both the countries and the United Nations must take steps to change the situation on the ground and help those who are discriminated.

BP Srivastava | Noida

correctly, sounded the same as English swear words, so roll call could be challenging. Some were just too long or contained too many consonants for me to pronounce easily and I always prefaced any roll call with the statement that I would do my best.

I know that a mispronounced name can be annoying although not offensive if they try to do their best, but many students found 'Fitzgerald' difficult to pronounce. Apparently the 'tz' sound is difficult in many languages. Some of the mispronunciations were actually funny but I tried not to laugh at my own name. The main consideration is that people should do their best and that we should be willing to accept these efforts. Teachers already find the job challenging and most find that the parent feedback/complaints only add to the stress. The world as a whole needs to relax in these times of difficulty.

Dennis Fitzgerald | Melbourne

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Nirmala Sitharaman is leading from the front and using her officials for political needs. What's happening is a clear violation of the election norms.

Kerala Finance Minister — Thomas Issac

Active vigilance is pivotal to thwart any attempt to disrupt the efforts by the armed forces in rooting out terrorism from the troubled tribal regions of North and South Westaziristan.

Pakistan Army chief — Qamar Javed Bajwa

Sholay is a cult movie but I must add that it was one of the toughest roles I have done because of various conditions. I was shooting barefoot, and that too in Bangalore, in the month of May.

I don't understand why a cricket ball or cricket pitch is brought into focus. Why don't we just focus on the fact that the batsman was just not skilled enough to play on the pitch.

India cricket captain — Virat Kohli

A new tradition of 'Hackathons' for start-ups has been created in the country, which is becoming a huge force for both the youth and industry of the country.

Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

Actor — Hema Malini

Actor — Hema Malini

Actor — Hema Malini

Actor — Hema Malini

Actor — Hema Malini

Actor — Hema Malini

Actor — Hema Malini



FIRST COLUMN

THE CROWN PRINCE OF AMATEURS

MBS is frightening but a Saudi leader that the US President won't even talk to does not have a great future



GWYNNE DYER

If Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the *de facto* ruler of Saudi Arabia, were a burglar, he wouldn't be George Clooney in 'Ocean's Eleven'. He'd be a cartoon burglar in a carnival mask and a top with black-and-white horizontal stripes, carrying a sack labelled 'SWAG'. He's not a burglar, of course. And 'MBS', as he is universally known, was back in the news when the US Government released a declassified assessment by US Intelligence agencies confirming his responsibility for the murder of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. Donald Trump sat on the report, defended MBS, and said his own experts were wrong. "I saved his ass!" Trump boasted to *Fox News*. But Khashoggi was working for the *Washington Post* when he was killed and Joe Biden takes a dim view of foreign leaders murdering American journalists even if they aren't citizens. It must be bewildering for MBS as two months ago the US President was his best buddy, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was his second-best buddy and Russia's President Vladimir Putin had honorary buddy status too. Now Biden has replaced Trump, Netanyahu may also be out after this month's elections and Putin isn't answering his texts.



Biden didn't just publish the report on Khashoggi's murder. He ended US support for MBS' foolish, futile war in Yemen, put US arms sales on hold and refused to speak to MBS. Biden finally called Saudi Arabia, but would only talk to MBS' 85-year-old father, King Salman. So there's been much speculation about what Biden can or should do next about the Mad Killer of Riyadh, and the answer is—nothing at all. Just give him enough rope and he'll hang himself. He's ruthless but he is also ignorant about how the rest of the world works and certainly not smart.

If my pipes burst, I call the plumber. If my car breaks down, I take it to the garage. If I'm very rich and I want somebody killed, I find a hit-man and have the job done professionally. I don't get a few of my mates to do it; I hire an expert. MBS sent a team of 15 men—15—to Turkey on a private plane, bringing the tools to kill and dismember Khashoggi with them. It was one of Istanbul's smaller airports, but the Turks were certainly going to record when they landed and when they left. Then they lured Khashoggi to the Saudi consulate to pick up some papers so he could marry his Turkish fiancée. Wait a minute. MBS thought it would be a cool idea to kill Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in a country that is hostile to the Saudi regime? He sent seven members of his own personal security force as part of the team. And they didn't even sweep the consulate for Turkish bugs in the room where they killed and dismembered Khashoggi? It was an amateur night for slow learners. The hit team even sent a Khashoggi body double dressed in his clothes out the back door to be seen leaving the consulate by the security cameras. The Turks had the whole story in 24 hours, with the Saudi regime retreating from one lie to another before blaming it on 'rogue operators' three weeks later. By then you'd think MBS would have seen the error of his ways. But not our boy. Two weeks later, MBS sends another Saudi hit team to Canada to kill another self-exiled critic of the regime, Saad al-Jabri. Amateur night again. The novice assassins deny knowing one another and are refused entry to Canada by immigration officials. This attempted hit has never been officially confirmed but a document published by *Public Safety Canada* in August 2020 comes very close indeed. The fact that Prime Minister Trudeau was the first leader who received the Turkish recordings of the Khashoggi murder to go public with them just around that time adds weight to the allegation. MBS is frightening but he's really not very bright. And a Saudi leader that the US President won't even talk to does not have a brilliant future.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work.' The views expressed are personal.)

India badly needs a uniform law on bail

The country cannot continue to rely on the conscience of its judges without going into the root of the problem

Disha Ravi, an Indian youth climate change activist, was granted bail recently by a Delhi court in connection with a case where it was alleged that she was involved in the making of an online toolkit related to the ongoing farmers' protest last month. Additional Sessions Judge Dharmendra Rana granted her bail, holding that "citizens are conscience keepers of a Government in any democratic nation and they cannot be put behind bars simply because they chose to disagree with the State's policies." In a landmark order on bail, Judge Rana went on to state that "the offence of sedition cannot be invoked to minister to the wounded vanity of the Government" and that "difference of opinion, disagreement, divergence and dissent are signs of a healthy democracy." He added, "An aware and assertive citizenry, in contradiction to an indifferent or docile citizenry, is indisputably a sign of a healthy and vibrant democracy."

This is, without doubt, a brave verdict. Little did anyone expect that a judge from the lower judiciary in Delhi would red flag the police and stand up to the State, thereby upholding basic constitutional values of liberty and freedom.

But, here's the catch! Not everyone in the judiciary is Judge Rana and neither is everyone as lucky as Disha. Munawar Faruqi, a stand-up comedian, was arrested on January 1 this year in a case where he was alleged to have insulted and outraged the religious feelings of a particular community. The Supreme Court granted him bail after more than five weeks of imprisonment noting that the evidence against him was "vague". The court also said that none of the procedural requirements of arrest, as laid down by the Supreme Court in the 2014 landmark judgment of *Armesh Kumar vs the State of Bihar* case, was followed by the police.

These are, however, only a few examples. The likes of Safoura Zargar, Siddique Kappan, Meeran Haider, Shifa U Rehman, Gautam Navlakha, Stan Swamy, Akhil Gogoi and many other common citizens have suffered the uncertainties that involve bail petitions. They were either denied bail for months (in some cases years) or were not granted one at all. This is a big problem! If citizens in this country can be easily put behind bars without a trial, only to be released months later with the help of a delayed intervention by the courts, then constitutional principles will easily turn to dust. Such a situation is even more dangerous when the courts have, in a majority of these cases, eventually ruled that the arrests were either illegal, unwarranted or not necessary. It is, therefore, significant for us to understand that the law on bail in India is highly oppressive. In fact, so much so that it manifests itself in the form of three-tier layered oppression.

Advocate Abhinav Sekhri who happened to argue Disha's bail plea states that the age-old saying "Bail, not jail" is in fact a myth. Let us see how. At the bottom of this layer is the State or the executive that has the power to categorise and classify crimes as bailable and non-bailable. So, if tomorrow the State decides that begging is a non-bailable offence—resultantly, all beggars on the streets will be immediately arrested with-

ONCE WE HAVE REVIEWED OUR LAWS INTO BAILABLE AND NON-BAILABLE OFFENCES, FIXED THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF INDIVIDUAL POLICE OFFICERS, LET THE COURTS BE GUIDED BY OBJECTIVE STATUTORY CRITERIA AND NOT BY THEIR SUBJECTIVE CONSCIENCE

Tiwary and Singh are from the National Law University, Visakhapatnam. The views expressed are personal.



out a warrant and put behind bars. The trial will go on at its own pace and the accused will spend years in prison without being proven guilty. It isn't shocking, therefore, that India is the only country where 70 per cent of prisoners are undertrials, most of whom are poor and are languishing in jails for years.

In the middle of this layer is the police that has the power to invoke a non-bailable offence against an accused. Even though the law grants certain procedural safeguards, the police has to work at the whims and fancies of its political masters.

Lastly, at the top of the layer is the judiciary which, in bail petitions, is completely guided by the conscience of the respective judges. There are no statutory objective criteria and individual judges are required to judge each case on its own merits. Such a situation poses itself as an irony as well as a set of contradictions. On the one hand where the Constitution grants essential rights such as "equality before the law" and "equal protection of the law", procedural due process and substantive due process, liberty and right to life to every citizen of this country, bail petitions, on the other hand, are heard with no objectivity or set criteria. Cases of identical nature are dealt with differently by different courts and different judges.

Therefore, a solution lies in

getting to the root of the problem.

If we have to reduce the arbitrary power of the State, we need to review our antiquated laws on arrest and custody that were enacted by an oppressive British regime to control Indians and curb dissent during the freedom movement. An 1861 Criminal Procedure Code (CrPc) cannot continue to decide the fate of millions of Indians in Independent India. Laws of sedition that give unbridled rights to the executive to act arbitrarily need to be done away with. At his sedition trial, even Mahatma Gandhi had unequivocally pointed out that Section 124-A was a "prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code. During the war crimes trials designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen." Countries like New Zealand, the UK and Australia have already gotten rid of their sedition laws and it is time India follows suit.

At the second level, we need to fix individual responsibility of police officers who, under the CrPc have been given the powers of arrest and detention. An analogy can be drawn with International Humanitarian Law. During the war crimes trials that took place after World War-II, many defendants invoked superior orders as a defence, claiming that they could not be held accountable for the crimes committed because they were only following the orders of their superi-

ors. The case law of these trials eventually resulted in the development of a customary rule applicable in all armed conflicts, whereby obeying a superior order does not relieve a subordinate of criminal responsibility. If the subordinate knew that the act ordered was unlawful, or if he should have known so because of its manifestly unlawful nature. Where an order is manifestly unlawful, all combatants have a customary duty to disobey. Similarly, in domestic laws, the police officer carrying out an illegal arrest without following due process of law needs to be held accountable even if he was following the orders.

Once we have reviewed and reclassified our laws into bailable and non-bailable offences, fixed the accountability of individual police officers, let the courts be guided by objective statutory criteria and not by their subjective conscience. The reason why we have to thank the conscience of judges like Rana is because of the subjectivity that pervades our bail laws.

The optimism that our judiciary has and will continue to have the likes of Judge Rana is a hope and hope alone cannot be our saviour in times of extreme distress. We have to act. As Benjamin Franklin rightly said, "Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are."

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

DEMOCRACIES FUNCTION BECAUSE INSTITUTIONS OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY. THAT IS BEING ATTACKED IN INDIA (BY) ONE BIG INSTITUTION CALLED THE RSS.—CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



IT WILL TAKE RAHUL GANDHI A LOT OF TIME TO UNDERSTAND THE RSS. THE RSS IS THE BIGGEST SCHOOL OF PATRIOTISM IN THE WORLD.—UNION MINISTER PRAKASH JAVADEKAR



A move towards self-reliance in the education system

Integrated academic programmes are needed to provide supplemental support to teaching and learning in various disciplines, making it relevant in current circumstances

Globally, the post-modernisation phase has been marked by a period of substantial change in the contents and nature of education and examination processes. Therefore, it is required that the focus should be on demonstrating how new models of reform and education can be used in real life experiments with democracy, the environment, globalisation and governance. There's a need to show how new ways of higher education will drive change and instill confidence among the masses and explain how latest research and happenings in the field of education across the globe can be disseminated so as to upgrade research and teaching accordingly.

Plus, we have to find ways to do away with manipulation and nepotism; ensure policy brings good changes and ways to reform the examination



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The writer is a professor and expert on strategic affairs. The views expressed are personal.

system to ensure that only talent gets selected.

The higher education system's recent attempt to ensure a high level of partnership among institutions through equity and access to all, shows the level of insight in empowering and motivating students and faculty members across the board. Besides, the pursuit of the National Education Policy (NEP) to cover school, adult, higher education and efforts towards promotion of Indian languages and online education exhibit tremendous effort towards enhancement of the overall educational scenario. The sum and substance of the argument is to ensure that the new educational changes have brought in clean governance and accountability in education through a fresh perspective and a framework for key demands of higher education, while maintaining a synergy

among various stakeholders, particularly the youth. The provision to lay norms for designing new required structures is to ensure affordability to social justice. It goes without saying that many positive changes have been ensured through positive perspectives.

Another welcome regulation is to monitor institutes mainly on the basis of research, academic excellence, its linkages and employability. There appears to be a clear framework of defining how the process of segregation of monitoring and financial powers in opening and shutting down of an institute would ensure transparency in the decision-making process. There have been lots of arguments among academicians about selection in higher education; and in this regard per se the main challenge is the pattern of selection in the contemporary context of increasing



international, inter-dependence and global change.

Recent developments have established a new basis for understanding the changing nature of polity and community. Perhaps there may be some modification in the examination system without which the process of reform may only remain a chimera. We ought to bring in changes to test the potential of students by testing the ability not only on academic excellence but also on judging their ability and knowledge about new information and

comprehending their level of social responsibility. The strength of the higher education system lies in creating its internal dynamism by ensuring inclusive growth. Even an excellent system is influenced by the people who make a difference. Human and financial relations and dealings are not as simple as they appear to be and require constant monitoring by competent authorities.

The provisions of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) on par with the IITs, IIMs, the National Research Foundation, the National Educational Technology Forum and Indian Institutes of Translation and Interpretation would create an environment for students to reach their potential by encouraging academic excellence of a global level, embracing new information on the one hand and

opening new areas of job-oriented courses on the other.

Besides, it would help in understanding social responsibility. In addition to this, a new approach can also provide a clear way forward for students in multidisciplinary studies. Tremendous efforts have been made for making the entire apparatus of higher education foolproof, yet there are always a few takeaways to new vistas of aggrandisement and making the entire process low cost and more people-intensive.

There is always scope to improve course contents through academic discourse by bringing about changes through cognitive discourse, plus seeking multiple options and viewpoints in order to help in forming an integrated team consisting of only meritorious members for holistic development of social sciences. Plus, there is a need for

introducing new innovative mechanisms in social sciences designed to help students identify career goals available in the field of social sciences.

More integrated academic programmes and services are needed that provide supplemental support to both teaching and learning in numerous and diverse disciplines making it more relevant in the current circumstances.

Growth and enrichment of students and the community, both inside and outside of the classroom through community development exercise; more research centres to ensure academic excellence in many disciplines; exclusive intellectual skills designed to prepare students to engage in nuances of socio-economic and political issues related to the global order are the way forward to help our students carve out a niche for themselves.

TREAT FOR THE EYES

Catering to the changing consumer psyche of spending over experiences, hotels now focus on enhancing their aesthetics and opt for theme-based decor. SONIA SOOD shares a few looks

The hospitality business is one of the thriving businesses in India. Despite experiencing a sluggish period with the occurrence of the pandemic, the industry is focusing on revival now. They are coming with state-of-the-art solutions to boost their business and increase the footfall.

In an attempt to adopt innovative ways out, they increasingly focus on hotel art and decor. The industry and decor have an inseparable connection. Hotels across categories are recognised for their ambience and decor. They are preferred for their visually appealing interiors. Catering to the changing consumer psyche who now prefer spending their finances over experiences, hotels now focus on enhancing the aesthetics of their property and opt for theme-based decor.

They not only enhance the beauty of the rooms but also adorn the walls, the public spaces, in-house eateries, and other guest visiting zones with traditional interiors, modern decor and artsy masterpieces.

Here are 10 hotel decor themes to look forward to this year.

VOCAL FOR LOCAL

The vocal for local strategy has been adopted in the hotel business as well. There has been a shift from modern art decoration to local artistic designs. The properties will now stress on highlighting the local art and architecture and will exhibit the same in their interiors.

This will not only enhance the brand image but hotels will also be able to adorn their interiors with the expertise of the local artisans. From the customer's perspective, they will be in for a treat as for them stay in such hotels will be value for money. Additionally, the local flavor in the hotel's interiors will also boost the industries of the region.

GLAMPING

It is a refined term for glamorous camping. This refers to the plush tent or yurt stays that offer high-end furnishing,



superior restroom facilities and plush interiors. The hotels will be focusing to offer glamping experiences to their guests as these will offer stylish decor at its prime.

SIMPLICITY IS THE KEY

Gone are the days when hotels used to stress on eye-popping and attention-seeking interiors. The hoteliers now focus on adorning their property with simplistic designs. Minimalism is the new fad. Hence, they prefer less patterned designs and vibrant colours and opt for soft hues and pastel shades along with textures.

They have realised that creating a cosy environment with minimal designs radiate elegance and hence the customers are able to gather a memorable experience.

THE HOMEY TOUCH

With the work from home and workation trends picking up pace, the hotels are focussing on creating a homey environment, especially in their rooms. Guests prefer staying for long and have to work during their stay. Having a homey environment is their criteria while they book any property.

Hence, the hotels are extending a plush yet home away from experience. Wood furnishing, carpets, curtains, fireplace, TV unit set up, music playing technology are imbued to ensure that the customers get

a homely environment.

GO GREEN AND NATURAL

In order to support the go green initiatives, hotels are now giving a natural look and feel to their interiors with nature-themed decor. Opting for green walls and roofs along with the planting of green grass, stone-based decorations, indoor waterfalls, and wood-themed decor is something that they are inclined towards now.

SUSTAINABLE ART AND INTERIORS

Sustainability is a prime area for hotels and they wish to minimise their short-term expenditure. There is indeed a cut throat competition and hence they aim to have unique interiors that will demarcate them from the other competitors.

Over-sized windows to allow natural light and sun rays to enter, construction with natural building materials, setting up recycling processes of the natural resources for guests, coming with smart and tech-savvy electronic faucets, providing organic locally grown food are a few of the tactics that they are adopting.

PERSONALISED SPACES

Customers have been long awaiting their stay in the hotels. Now with unlock-



ing and working with the new normal, they are opting to stay for a long stretch at the hotel properties. Hence, hoteliers are now leaning towards personalising the spaces as per the guests' requirements.

They are coming up with strategies like theme-based guestrooms, customisation and personalisation features with the help of the relevant decor.

TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN DECOR

Being technologically advanced is the need of the hour in the present modern times. There are certain categories of guests that desire to be connected with technology despite being on a vacation. They desire to have tech-savvy rooms and hence the hotels also design and decorate certain rooms the techie way.

Adjustable lighting, air conditioning, window blinds, electronic door lock and key system, smartphone or tablet-driven features in the rooms along with tablet check-in and check-out processes extend the requisite tech experience.

RECYCLING ART

Keeping in consideration to minimise the wastage of natural resources, the hotels are now focusing on incultation of recyclable art in their decor. This trend has recently picked up and will continue to grow in the coming months.

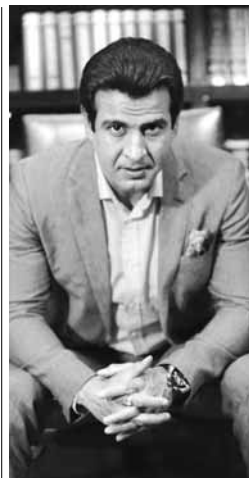
Reusing and recycling the materials and transforming them into decor is indeed unique. Glass bottles used for lighting, vintage windows, and doors used as decor, transforming paper tubes into tables, chairs, wall decorations, mosaic marble art, are some of the ways how hotels are reusing and recycling materials.

STORY-BASED THEMES

Hoteliers have incorporated the storytelling format in the art and decor of their properties as well. Understanding that stories attract customers and also touch their emotional and sensitive side, they lean towards incorporating story theme-based decor. Not only does it exhibit their creativity and innovation but also provides the guests a vibrant and intriguing environment.

Realising the value of hospitality art, the hoteliers are collaborating with museums, boutique art firms, designers, and painters, and are also roping in art and decor experts to extend a luxurious stay with grand interiors and aesthetic decor. While there are various themes in 2021, it is anticipated that local art, tech-based decor and minimalism will rule. This makes the future of hospitality art and decor promising.

(The writer is founder and director, Karabi Art Community.)



Owe my career to TV: Ronit

Ronit shot to fame with his portrayal as the suave Krishabh Bajaj in the show *Kasauti Zindagi Kay*. He was later seen in shows such as *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, *Banini* and *Adaalat* among many others. Over the years, he has also made his space in Bollywood with roles in films such as *Udaan*, *Boss*, *Sarkaar 3*, *Kaabil*, *2 States*, *Student Of The Year*, and *Shootout At Wadala*, among others.

Ronit, however, says he never left television. "I never left television and this is not a full length role, I am a host. I always love to work on television and the way people react to it. I owe my career to television," he said.

The actor is currently busy with his forthcoming crime show *Jurm Aur Jazbaat* for Shemaroo TV. "I am shooting for *Jurm Aur Jazbaat* and a project called *Candy*, and there are quite a few projects in the pipeline," he said.

—JMS

TREND TOOL



VINTAGE VIBE

Make your contemporary spaces chic and warm with these end tables

A mix of styles and textures, here are a few end tables launched by Ashley Furniture Home Store that might create a visual interest in your interior set up. Brought to India by Dash Square, these vintage-inspired pieces never go out of trend. With their weathered, rustic look, the new accent tables, made of wood, allow you to add that much-needed extra richness and warmth to

your contemporary space.

LUVONI TABLE

The Luvoni round coffee table set ups your style game. Faux Carrara marble tabletops bring an upscale look to the scene. Finished in a sleek matte black, the sculptural bases with canted legs are cool from every angle. This set includes one coffee table and two

accent tables. The tables' base is made of veneers, wood and engineered wood and the tabletops are made of faux Carrara marble.

BOLANBROOK TABLE

Round up country chic style for your living room repertoire with the Bolanbrook occasional table set. Its round coffee table and two round end tables are in a popular two-tone finish that works great with the set's casual farmhouse design. Antique white metal lower shelves and turned legs, while a weathered oak colour covers the top with planked look. The lower shelves can be used for displaying accents or open storage. The tables are made of white oak veneers, wood and

engineered wood.

FERLIN TABLE

With a two-toned approach to style that's both earthy and elegant, the Ferlin coffee table set rounds out your living space. Rich and rustic wood-colour tops with grooved accents are a lovely complement to the metal framing with crossbar design. The Ferlin Table set instantly enhances the interior or decor of any space. The set includes one coffee table and two end tables. These accent tables are made of veneers, engineered wood and metal.

ROYBECK TABLE

Similar to mixed media art, the Roybeck accent table set combines the modern appeal of metal with the rustic qualities of wood for a striking meld of earthy elements. Beautiful butterfly-patterned veneer transforms the everyday in an extraordinary way. The Roybeck Table set includes one coffee table and two end tables. The tables are made of veneers, wood and engineered wood and have a dark bronze-tone metal frame and a natural acacia finish.

BELLENTEN TABLE

Tin is in. Bring it home in a farmhouse fresh way with the Bellement coffee table set. This trio pairs a classic trestle design with a mottled faux tin top for a striking contrast. The Bellement Table set includes one coffee table and two end tables. These exquisite tables are made of veneers, wood and engineered wood and feature a faux metal top. Each table in this set includes an undermount shelf with plank styling.

AIRDON TABLE

The Airdon coffee table set goes off centre in a beautiful way with an eye-catching cantilevered design. A sleek metal base in an aged bronze tone seamlessly merges with the wire-brushed veneer tabletop. This hand-finished table set includes one coffee table and two end tables. These minimalist tables are made of veneers, wood, engineered wood and metal.

Tribute to the legends

Actors AJAY KESWANI and URVASHI RAUTELA feel blessed for remaking the song *Ek Ladki Bheegi Bhaagi Si*



Well-timed in the middle of the spring season, Cool Lip Music in association with White Billionaire X Beyond Music brings the remake of *Ek Ladki Bheegi Bhaagi Si*. The original song that was helmed by legends Kishore Kumar and Madhubala has a special place in our hearts. Celebrating both the evergreen artists, producers Viral Motani, Pakkhi Hegde and Manoj Lakhiani present a reimaged version of the song. Written and directed by Varun Prabhudatta Gupta and with music by Vir-Hardik, the newly released song has been sung by renowned singer, Ajay Keswani and it features him along with actress, Urvashi Rautela. The remake has been

shot in the scenic Al Quadra Desert. The music video captures sunlit sand dunes, a vibrant festival party, a bathtub in the desert, and an underwater sequence. Singer, actor and multi-instrumentalist, Ajay Keswani says, "This song is iconic and has withstood the test of time. It feels fresh every time I hear it. I'm paying my respect to my most favourite Kishore D through this recreation. I think the efforts that the entire team has pooled to give a memorable tribute is evident in its music and video."

Urvashi says, "The chance to be Madhubala ji for a song is a dream come true. I'm excited that the song is out now and I

can't wait to know the response to it. I thank producers Viral Motani, Pakkhi Hegde and Manoj Lakhiani for having me on board this extremely special song."

Viral Motani, Producer, Beyond Music says, "We offer the remake of the song to viewers and listeners and now it belongs to them. It has been an absolute pleasure recreating the song with Ajay, Vicky-Hardik and Urvashi. As a trio, Pakkhi Hegde, Manoj Lakhiani and I have been fortunate to witness the love of the music buffs with our earlier remakes. We hope the streak continues with the release of our new song." The song is available on the YouTube channel of Saregama.

TRENDBLAZER

KARTIK'S DHAMAKA SET FOR AN OTT RELEASE



Actor **KARTIK AARYAN**'s forthcoming thriller *Dhamaka* will drop directly on OTT platform, bypassing theatrical release. Kartik confirmed the news to fans with an Instagram post, although the date of release is yet to be officially declared.

"Jo bhi Kahunga Sach Kahunga. *Dhamaka* coming soon, only on Netflix," wrote Kartik, with a clip of the film.

fairtalk

GAUHAAR KHAN



"I pat my back for making it in the industry with absolutely non-film background and no godfathers and people to guide me. The only person who gave me advice right at the beginning of my career was *(Rocket Singh)* writer Jaideep Sahani, who is one of the finest writers I do have. He told me that 'you need to know that your potential is vast.'"

dailytalk

BADSHAH



"Everyone has their own thoughts and views. For instance, I am happy being in Chandigarh, Punjab and would never want to leave. That is my choice. Eventually, it is an individual's perspective. If anyone wants to go abroad, it's their choice and I respect that. I do have an option to settle in Canada, but I don't want to."

HARD YEAR FOR MOMS: JENNIFER

Last year's lockdown stretch wasn't easy, especially for mothers, asserts Oscar-winning actress **JENNIFER GARNER**, who is a mother to three kids.

"This has been such a hard year for moms. We had to watch our kids be home, miss out on things," said she.



CELEBRATE LADAKH

The arts and crafts fair at Dilli Haat give a glimpse into the rich culture of the UT

At the second edition of *Enchanting Ladakh*, the annual art and craft fair organised by the Union territory's Department of Industries and Commerce, saw several people from the Dard Aryan tribe of Ladakh. There were stalls displaying Rajasthani *churran*, Madhubani paintings and Lucknowi *chikan* kurtas.

The event was inaugurated by Ladakh L-G Radha Krishna Mathur in the presence of MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, Feror Ahmed Khan of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Kargil, Tashi Gyalsan of LAHDC, Leh, and senior officials from the Union Ministry of Textiles.

Visitors were offered a chance to dress up in the colourful costumes of the Dard Aryans for ₹50 or get pictured with them. Around 76 artists from their *karigars* from the UT will stay put in Delhi over the next two weeks selling their uniquely crafted handloom and handicraft products such as *pashmi-*



na shawls (called *Lena*), clay models, dry fruits, hand-knitted items and seabuckthorn products.

The deputy secretary of Ladakh's Department of Culture,

Tsewang Paljor, who is a part of the organising committee, said, "We have got artisans from all corners of Leh and Kargil, making sure no unique product or art form is left behind."

He shared that the preference was given to rural artisans and craftsmen. All the proceeds will go directly to the artisans. At the inaugural event, Gyalsan said that this is the second

edition. "We didn't record good sales in the first edition of the festival. We wanted to make sure that the artisans from Ladakh gets sufficient exposure on a national level," said he.

IN BRIEF

Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) has been at the forefront of leading conversation around health, safety and growth of tourism sector amid the on-going pandemic. ITDC has been instrumental in charting precautionary directives, revival for hospitality sector and generating revenues during these unforeseen circumstances of lockdown and social distancing. Post the ease in travel guidelines and resumption of domestic tourism, ITDC along with other industry leaders participated in a webinar organised by Indo Sri Lanka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ISCCI) to discuss the overview of tourism industry in Sri Lanka. G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, Chairman and Managing Director, ITDC, joined the discussion along with other eminent dignitaries including Dr. Krishna Kumar, Former Union Minister, Government of India, Lt Gen Rakesh Kumar Loomba, PVS, AVSM, Engineer Nasser Ahmed, Member, Parliament in Sri Lanka Parliament, Dushan Wickramasuriya, Director Marketing of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau and Aamir Ali, ED, Sri Lanka Airlines.



The Regional Office of Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) celebrated the 65th Foundation Day of the corporation with full enthusiasm. The Regional Manager Rajeev Kumar Bansal and General Manager Rajeev Vinnai congratulated the officials and motivated them to give their best to meet the corporate goals.



Delhi recently witnessed an evening of mystical Sufi music — *Sham-e-Sulayana* — hosted by Vandana and Praveen Gupta. The event was graced by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Science and Technology Dr. Harsh Vardhan, S. N. Srivastava, Commissioner Police Delhi; Rajesh Aggarwal, Add. Secretary to GOI; Rajesh Aggarwal; DCP, Sanjay Bhalla among many others. Soulful performances by Padma Shri Kallash Khori along with Tanura and Sufi dancers kept the audience glued throughout.



If everything goes well, the colour of Hindon river will be changed soon. Regarding this, the DM of Gaziabad, Dr. Ajay Shankar Pandey, held a review meeting with officials of the Municipal Corporation and other related departments regarding cleanliness and other arrangements of the Hindon River. In this meeting, the District Magistrate gave tips from rejuvenation of Hindon River to permanent beautification. He said that now a long-term action plan is being made for permanent beautification of the Hindon River so that the river can remain clean.

—Ashok Nirwan

Maharashtra Governor felicitates LIC

The Governor of Maharashtra, Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, felicitated LIC of India at Raj Bhavan for the commendable work done during the pandemic.

Vipin Anand, Managing Director, LIC, received the honour. During the pandemic, LIC rendered exceptional services to its policyholders and the society as a whole. Death claims arising due to COVID-19 were treated at par with other causes of death and settled on priority. The insurance company has also ensured that other policy payments like Survival Benefit, Policy Maturity, Annuities and Loans were made to policyholders promptly by crediting the amount into the bank



account registered with LIC. For collection of premium, all digital channels were available 24x7 during the lockdown period to ensure that the policies do not lapse.

For combating the pandemic, the insurance company contributed to the PM Cares Fund and CM Relief Fund in different states. The organisation also contributed to the Tata Memorial Hospital and funded the purchase of ambulance with life saving equipment like ventilator, multi channel patient moni-

toring system and more.

The employees and agents of LIC also rose to the occasion and stepped in to combat the challenges posed by the pandemic. To encourage continuation of Risk Cover in the current circumstances of high risk, the company has provided another opportunity to policy holders to revive their lapsed policies by launching Special Revival Campaign. Till date more than 20 lakhs policies have been revived under this campaign.



Delhi Govt GST revenue for Feb is 1,982 crore

The total revenue (GST+VAT) collected by Delhi Government for the month of February 2021 is ₹1,982 crore. Out of which SGST is ₹892.48 crore, IGST settlement is ₹606.23 crore and DVAT is ₹483.29 crore. In the previous month i.e. January 2021, SGST collection was ₹922.18 crore, IGST settlement was ₹562.67 crore and DVAT collection was ₹529.72 crore.

The total tax (GST+VAT) revenue of February is the second highest for the FY 2020-21. The combined monthly revenue has been around ₹2,000 crore consecutively for two months. This is approximately 30 per cent increase over the average monthly tax collection including last month (January). Further quarterly average monthly tax collection has shown increase and is around ₹2,000 crore in 4th quarter till now. This is about 12.6 per cent higher than the 3rd quarter (Oct-Dec 2020). This is excluding the compensation amount.

The department has taken various initiatives of sending alert SMS to the registered taxpayers for filing timely returns, issuing GSTR-3A notices to return defaulters by 25th of every month. With these initiatives, there is an improvement in the filing of returns over past five months and Delhi SGST revenues has been above ₹800 crore.

MV Rao joins as MD & CEO of Central Bank Of India

Mamata Venkata Rao has taken over the charge as Managing Director and CEO of Central Bank of India with effect from March 1, 2021. Prior to joining the current assignment, Rao was the Executive Director of Canara Bank for more than three years, where he played a pivotal role in the bank's progress. He is a Post Graduate in Agriculture from Sri Venkateswara Agriculture College, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. He is a certified Associate of Indian Institute of Bankers.

He joined Allahabad Bank as Agricultural Field Officer in 1988 and worked in various capacities in different geographical areas of the country. As General Manager of Allahabad Bank, he headed bank's important verticals like



Wholesale and Retail Banking. He was also instrumental in launching a transformative project to bring focus on asset-centric banking.

HUDCO organises DoPT training

Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, inaugurated a week-long in-service training programme *Financing Urban Infrastructure and Services in India* for All India Service Officers. The Department of Personnel & Training, Government of India, sponsored the programme, which is organised by HUDCO's Research & Training Institute (HRTI). The training is designed to address key issues in financing urban infrastructure and impart necessary skills for successful execution of such projects.



Speaking at the inaugural function, he outlined the contours of urban infrastructure financing and explained how

the Government of India is leveraging its resources to generate more funds from other sources, including private investment in projects. Addressing the participants,



Empowering tribals

Under the village connect initiative of TRIFED, the officials have been visiting villages with a significant tribal population across the country. Being present on ground level has made TRIFED officials aware of some remarkable success stories.

The programmes and initiatives have been implemented by TRIFED for making India self-reliant under the *Atmanirbhar Abhiyan*, with the motto *Go Vocal for Local Go Tribal* — *Mera Van Mera Dhan Mera Udyam*.

One such success story that has come to the fore is in Jawadhi Hills, Tiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu. The *Van Dhan* tribal start-up programme, a component of the *The Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP)* through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP Scheme, has emerged as a major source of employment for the local tribals.

The Malayali tribal people constitute 92.60 per cent of the total population in this block and their mainstay is through the non-timber forest produce and a variety of trees grown on this patta land such as tamarind, jackfruit, coconut, lemon and plantain and gooseberry.

To help these tribals empower themselves and gain better opportunities, the Jawadhi Hills Tribal Farmer Producer Company was formed in 2020. It falls under the State Balanced Growth Fund for value addition of non-timber forest product and agricultural products. The Company has been formed under the Companies Act 2013 (18 of 2013) and is limited by shares. It consists of members of farmers interest groups, producer groups and self-help groups that have been formed at community level.

In less than a year, four manufacturing units have already been set up for the processing and packaging of tamarind, minor millet, and honey and pepper. The units, which are being run by the tribals, have started the production in November 2020. The daily production capacity is one tonne. Up until now, in less than four months, the producer company has sold processed products up to ₹12 lakh. The FPO has already been registered as a seller in the Tribes India marketplace and has been selling nine of its processed produce through the platform, thus, gaining a wider market for its goods.

The Jawadhi Hills producer company has been formed with an aim to improve the quality life of tribals. This is an example of how the *Van Dhan* tribal start-up has been successful in improving the livelihoods of the tribals.

Tata Power-DDL organises power theft awareness session

Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (Tata Power-DDL) in collaboration with Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DLSA) organised an interactive awareness session on the consequences of electricity theft and its penal impact for the consumers.

More than 100 Tata Power-DDL consumers participated in the awareness programme. A



number of topics such as power theft scenarios like tapping the electricity network, cable, service wires; tampering with the meter to abstract energy; damaging or destroying electricity meter; using tampered meter, and using electricity for unauthorised purpose were discussed at length.

The consumers who attended the session were also informed

that electricity theft is a cognizable and non-bailable offense with serious consequences under the Section 135 of the Electricity Act, 2003. The convict shall be liable to pay theft/penalty bill twice the applicable tariff for a period of 12 months preceding the date of detection of offense and could also face imprisonment for up to three years.

PFC extends financial support

Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC) has extended its financial support for the construction of two-storied School Building at Dr KB Hegdegar School premises in Bambolim, Goa, as part of its CSR activities. The organisation has provided CSR fund of ₹3 crores for the construction of school, which was inaugurated by Dr Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister of Goa along with Ravinder Singh Dhillon, CMD, PFC.

The building block comprises of classrooms, laboratories, a multi-purpose hall, faculty rooms and washrooms. PFC hopes that this school building will encourage more parents from marginal sections of the local community to come forward and enroll their children into schools. During the last six years, as part of its CSR responsibility, PFC has also supported many unemployed youth of Goa by training them and helping them gain employment.

The signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the VIT-AP School of Business (VSB), VIT-AP University, Alphabeta Inc and Topixight Research Labs was held at VIT-AP University on March 3.

Dr SV Kota Reddy, Vice-chancellor of VIT-AP University said that Alphabeta Inc is a US-based company offering products and services to banks and financial services organisations. He told that FinTech is changing the business models and financial models in a never-seen-before avatar.

VIT-AP signs MoU



Expert, Blockchain App Developer, Financial Analyst, Data Scientist - Finance, Business Analyst, Process Analyst, Compliance Manager, Product Manager and Business Development Manager. The areas where FinTech qualification is in

School of Business shared the business school is offering BBA with specialisations in Business Analytics, Digital Marketing and FinTech. "Each specialisation has a partner who will provide real life practice and industry approved certification. These certifications will enhance the job opportunities of our students. We also have tie-ups with University of Michigan, Dearborn and Arizona State University, where students can study for two years in India and two years in the USA, and get a degree from our partner universities in the USA," he said.

Siva Visveswaran, Co-founder & CTO, Alphabeta Inc, stated that the growth in the FinTech sector will be primarily driven, not by cost or labour arbitrage, but by innovation using new technologies such as AI, Blockchain, 5G and Big Data Analytics.

"It will require an understanding of the financial ecosystem, analytic and quantitative programming skills, and the ability to solve problems using a design thinking approach," said he.

Match of high-stakes

With WTC final place yet to be confirmed, India ready to cook England's goose

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A ruthless India will not take their foot off the pedal while taking England for another "spin ride" in the high-stakes Test series finale starting Thursday, aiming to not just complete another dominant home performance but also realise their World Test Championship dreams.

Virat Kohli's men need at least a draw to maintain the current 2-1 scoreline to qualify for the Lord's final against New Zealand while England at best can heal Tim Paine's January scars by letting Australia a lucky passage to the summit clash with a win.

While a draw always seems a safe option in a game like this but Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri, with their attacking instincts, wouldn't like to play a defensive game which at times can be counter-productive. India laid a venomous trap on the refurbished Motera and with the pink ball, demolished England inside two days, messing more than their minds than getting any tangible help from the track.

Axar Patel bowled ramrod straight and England had their heads 'spinning' from the start. The play has worked well for the hosts since the second Test in Chennai.

Both Ajinkya Rahane and Zak Crawley felt that the track for the fourth Test looks "similar" to what they got in the previous two matches but the red ball which skids less off the surface compared to the pink one promises to make it a better contest between the two teams.

This is a Test match where England have little to gain save salvaging a bit of pride in a drawn series while India have everything to lose.

Despite being India's most prolific Test captain in terms of numbers, Kohli would be the first one to admit that he hasn't had the kind of success his illustrious predecessors



will pan out in the final Test at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

Kohli wouldn't have any complaints with his spinners, who have delivered what was expected of them, but the batting has left a lot to be desired in the entire series. It's just that England have been worse in their last four innings.

But that is no sound explanation for India batsmen's failure to dominate the proceedings in their own backyard.

Rohit Sharma's 296 runs in three games is 120 runs more than second best Ashwin (176 runs), who got a hundred on a difficult Chepauck track.

Save Rohit, none of the Indian batsmen have felt too comfortable till now on the turners on offer. Kohli, despite two fifties, hasn't had the best of times while Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara and Shubman Gill have all had only one innings of note over three Test matches.

All Kohli would want is a steady, if not exceptional performance, in games such as these where a failure can leave many a slip between the cup and the lip.

While there won't be any Jasprit Bumrah for the final Test, one of the finest exponents of bowling on sub-continental tracks, Umesh Yadav, is expected to be back in action.

It remains to be seen whether Ishant Sharma or Mohammed Siraj partner him.

For England, poor team selection has also contributed to their shoddy batting where Joe Root (333 runs), with his first Test double hundred, managed to maintain a fair gap (187 runs) between him and the second highest scorer Ben Stokes (146).

Not having a second specialist spinner in Motera, didn't exactly make the team management look too smart, especially after Joe Root scalped a career-best 5 for 8.

Jack Leach (16 wickets) has done his bit but he does have his

4th Test, Day 1
Live from 9:30am IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

own set of limitations and with his pace, which is on an average 10km less than Patel, he is unlikely to always trouble the batsman.

But he would again play a significant role on a similar sort of track and may expect Dom Bess for company. Bess was impressive in the opening Test in Chennai but since then, has cooled his heels.

BATS FOR ROTATION

India skipper Virat Kohli feels rotation policy is the way forward in the age of bio-bubbles as mental fatigue caused by restrictive quarantines will make it extremely difficult for players to stay hungry.

England have been following a rotation policy in their ongoing tour of India, something that has drawn criticism from legends such as Kevin Pietersen.

Kohli, though, is convinced that as long as players are staying in bio-secure environments, taking intermittent breaks is not a bad idea.

"The kind of systems you have to follow in the bubble, it can get very monotonous and it is very difficult to keep yourself excited about small things," Kohli said.

"I feel any format of the game is right place for rotation. No human being can possibly go on for that many number of games throughout of the year. Everyone needs to find windows of having some time off.

These are the things that need to be considered for as long as you play in the bubble, outside of that it depends on where you stand physically more than mentally. But till the bubble exists, we need to keep the mental factor in the picture as well, because mental fatigue would be a huge, huge factor," he

Too much noise about spin-friendly tracks: Kohli

Ahmedabad: Stop the noise, tighten up that defence and get on with the game — a combative Indian skipper Virat Kohli said on Wednesday ahead of the fourth Test as he navigated persistent queries on the spin-friendly tracks in the country.

"There is always too much noise and too much conversation about spin tracks," Kohli said at the pre-match press conference.

"I am sure if our media is in a space to contradict those views or present views which say that it is unfair to criticise only spin tracks, then it will be a balanced conversation."

Kohli, at the end of the third Test, had blamed the batsmen's technique for their failure on the Motera track. "But the unfortunate bit is everyone plays along with that narrative (spinning tracks) and keeps making it news till the time it is relevant. And then a Test match happens, if you win on Day 4 or 5, no one says anything but if it finishes in two days, everyone pounces on the same issue," he said.

Kohli cited one of India's losses in New Zealand when the team struggled on a seaming pitch. He recalled how it was the batsmen's technique, and not the track, that came in for scrutiny.

"We lost in New Zealand on day three in 36 overs. I am sure none of our people wrote about the pitch. It was how India played badly in New Zealand," he said.

Kohli was also asked if it is good for the game, from a global fans' perspective, to take undue advantage of home conditions.

"I would love if you ask this question to England, New Zealand and Australia. This question is irrelevant to me at this point of time."

Another question thrown at him was what he thought of a Test match finishing inside two days.

"We play to win. People should cherish India's win. Not every Test is finishing in two days. If team is playing bad only then it happens, we need to look at things objectively," PTI

zealand. "None of the pitches were criticised, no one came and saw how the pitch was doing, how much the ball was moving and how much grass was there on the pitch," he said. Kohli said his team has been successful over a period of time for adapting to conditions instead of complaining about them.

The reason for our success is that we have not cribbed about any pitch we have played on and we will continue to play like that.

"We all need to be honest with ourselves what is the idea behind continuing this narrative and what purpose it serves people who keep continuing the conversation which is one-sided," he said.

Now that the contest will be played with the red ball, he was asked if the pink ball made it tough for the batsmen. Kohli retorted with a firm no.

"I don't understand why a ball or a pitch, all these things are brought into focus why don't we focus on the fact that batsmen were not skilled enough to play on that pitch properly. It was bizarre display of batting by both the teams."

"It's not (because) of change in ball-colour. If you make just a ball or a pitch helping the bowler, the focus, then you are not really reading the game properly in my opinion. I don't think the red ball is going to change that whatsoever."

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कोविड-19 टीका सुरक्षित है

कोविड-19 टीकाकरण

- कोविड-19 का टीका, शासकीय स्वास्थ्य संस्थाओं में नि:शुल्क तथा निजी अस्पतालों में प्रति डोज रुपये 250/- में उपलब्ध रहेगा।
- कोविड-19 टीकाकरण के पंजीयन हेतु यू.आर.एल. - <https://selfregistration.cowin.gov.in/> अथवा आरोग्य सेतु मोबाइल एप का उपयोग करें।
- निजी चिकित्सालयों में केवल प्री-रजिस्टर्ड पात्र हितग्राहियों का ही टीकाकरण किया जायेगा। सभी चिकित्सालयों में On Site Registration केवल अपराह्न 2:00 के बाद ही हो सकेगा।
- शासकीय चिकित्सालयों में कुछ रलॉट ऑनलाइन बुकिंग के लिये उपलब्ध हैं। शेष स्थानों पर स्थानीय प्रशासन पुलिस स्टेशन के आधार पर टाइम टेबल तैयार कर, वैकसीन उपलब्ध करायेगा। आपके लिये टीकाकरण तिथि एवं स्थान की जानकारी समाचार पत्र, जिले के कोविड कमान्ड कन्ट्रोल सेंटर से दूरभाष पर एवं जिला प्रशासन की वेबसाइट पर उपलब्ध होगी।
- 60 वर्ष से अधिक उम्र के हितग्राहियों को टीकाकरण हेतु एक फोटोयुक्त पहचान पत्र, मोबाइल फोन नं. तथा 45 वर्ष से 59 वर्ष के को-मोर्बिड हितग्राहियों को इसके अतिरिक्त मेडिकल कॉउंसिल ऑफ इंडिया में रजिस्टर्ड मेडिकल प्रैक्टिशनर द्वारा जारी चिन्हित बीमारी का को-मोर्बिडिटी प्रमाण-पत्र लाना अनिवार्य होगा।

प्री-रजिस्ट्रेशन करवायें → कोविड-19 वैकसीन लगवायें → असुविधा से बचें



लोक स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग, मध्यप्रदेश

Srikanth, Satwik-Ashwini start Swiss Open with win

PTI ■ BASEL

Top Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth staged off a spirited challenge from compatriot Sameer Verma to make a winning start to his campaign at the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament here on Wednesday.

The fourth seeded Indian, who had claimed the title in 2015, took little over an hour to see off 2018 winner Sameer 18-21, 21-18, 21-11 in a hard-fought men's singles opening round match.

Sourabh Verma also won his first round match against Switzerland's Christian Kirchmayr 21-19, 21-18. He faces eight seed Kunavut Vitidsarn next. However, H S Prannoy made an early exit after losing to France's Mark Caljouw 19-21, 21-9, 17-21 in first round. On Tuesday night, Indian mixed doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa notched up an upset 21-18, 21-10 win over the world No 8 and second-seeded Indonesian pair of Hafiz Fajr and Gloria Emanuelle Widjaja in the opening round.

Pitch looks very similar to last Test: Root

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England skipper Joe Root on Wednesday said the pitch for the fourth Test looks very similar to the one on which his team was decimated in the third game but the visitors have learnt their lessons to be ready for the challenge starting Thursday.

"It's (the pitch) looking very similar...I think the most important thing is that we learn all the lessons from the last two Test matches and make sure we're back for it," Root said when asked about the raging debate over the pitch in the last Test and how this one was looking.

"It's important that if we get ourselves in a similar position in the first innings, we really make that count. And try and get some scoreboard pressure in the game, you know, early on," he said on the eve of the game.

Root said the English batsmen will look to build partnerships.

"I think that as batters if you don't score runs, you will sure look at yourselves, you'll always try and find ways to improve and we've certainly done that."



England coach Chris Silverwood, center, and players Ben Stokes, Dom Bess, James Anderson and Stuart Broad chat during team's training session.

"We've looked at a couple of dismissals and how we're going to find ways of building big partnerships and getting some significant scores on it if it is a similar surface this time around," he added.

'EVERYONE TRAINED'
England skipper Joe Root also revealed that an illness hit the touring party earlier this week but all members of the squad trained ahead of the fourth Test and are available for selection. The English captain

did not specify the nature of the dismissals and how he was going to find ways of building big partnerships and getting some significant scores on it if it is a similar surface this time around," he added.

"The guys are fit and available for the game tomorrow. That gives us a little more time to name the squad," Root said.

"So, everyone in that way is as prepared how they would have liked it for the Test match," he added.

Agar's 6/30 keeps Oz alive Zim beat Afghans by 10 wickets

AFP ■ WELLINGTON

Spinner Ashton Agar produced the best bowling performance in Australia's T20 history in a 64-run win over New Zealand in Wellington on Wednesday.

Agar's match-turning six for 30, including three

in one over, derailed a New Zealand fightback as Australia avoided a series loss in the third match.

Under-fire skipper Aaron Finch hit 69, his best T20 score for more than two years, and Glenn Maxwell smashed 70 from 31 balls. The result leaves the five-match series at 2-

1 in New Zealand's favour with two games to go.

Australia finished their 20 overs at 208/4 after losing the toss and being asked to bat. In reply, New Zealand were bundled out for 144 in 17.1 overs thanks to Agar's heroics.

"Once I started to have the courage to toss the ball up a little bit I got something out of it," he said. "That was a good lesson I can take out of today moving forward."

Only four players have taken six wickets in a men's T20 before, none of them from Australia. "It was an all-round performance from us that was outstanding and it's important for us that we move on quickly," Kane Williamson

AFP ■ ABU DHABI

A century from skipper Sean Williams coupled with destructive pace bowling from Blessing Muzarabani and Reda Nyauchi were enough for Zimbabwe to a rapid 10-wicket win over Afghanistan in the first Test in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Williams hit 105 to guide Zimbabwe to 250 all out before Afghanistan's trailing by 119 — were bowled out for 135 in their second innings.

That left Zimbabwe to score 17 runs which they got without any loss to end the match inside two days.

Afghanistan were bowled out for 131 in their first innings.

Lanky pacer Muzarabani finished with 2-14 — six wickets in the match — while his new ball partner Nyauchi took 3-30, also getting six in the match.

This becomes Afghanistan's third defeat in five Tests since gaining status to play the five-day format in 2017.